

## 2 Samuel 6

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[ 0 : 00 ] There are some parts of the Bible which we are more proud of than others. We know that we shouldn't feel that way and in our braver moments we will stand behind every word of it.

! But if we find ourselves in a fractious argument with someone about Christianity, there are definitely some parts of the Bible we hope that they won't bring up.

I don't know how you feel about that. There are some times out there where God expresses his displeasure at things that our world has got absolutely no problem with at all. Or there are those parts where we see God raining down destruction on those who stood against him.

And the simple fact is that today as Christians we find them quite difficult to explain. Especially to those who are sceptical to begin with. It's even fair to say, I think, that most Christians don't know how to make sense of many of those passages themselves.

And it's made worse, isn't it, by outspoken atheists who describe God in the most unflattering of terms. Here are some quite famous lines from Dawkins' book, *The God Delusion*.

[ 1 : 08 ] Let me quote them to you. The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction. Jealous, I'm proud of it. A petty, unjust, unforgiving, control group.

A vindictive, bloodthirsty, ethnic cleanser. A misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filocidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully. Now, let's put aside the irony of him getting really angry about a God he doesn't believe exists. But what are we to do with those claims? And what are we to do with them?

What are we to do with those parts of the Bible that people point to to make those claims? And I think that's happening probably more today than in the recent past. Large portions of the so-called Christian church have decided, let's just ignore those parts of the Bible.

Some of them go as far to suggest that the Bible, well, you just can't really take it seriously at those points. Others simply just feel clear from those parts. And so they focus on the positive.

[ 2 : 19 ] God is love, isn't he? So that trumps everything else. And so let's not worry about those other bits of God's character. People think of how endearing his love is.

They talk about forgiveness. They talk about his gracious acceptance of people. Of course that is right. But if we're going to take the Bible seriously at all, we have to take, well, we have to stand up for these pastures, don't we?

A path which denigrates the Bible, which puts the Bible down is not a path that we're going to take. Neither, hopefully, as a church, are we going to favour an approach that buries our heads in the sand.

That carries on as if these hard questions about the Bible don't really exist at all. Or don't really matter. And so I think we are compelled, when we come to passages like this, to work hard.

And I think I've said all that because I do think we have to admit the problem. It begins with us admitting that the Bible presents to us a picture of a God who at times we would rather not deal with.

[ 3 : 22 ] And comments like the ones made by Richard Dorsey's wives, they are outrageously unfair, and they are deeply offensive to Christians. They're not just plucked out of the air.

And admitting that there is an issue is the first thing we need to do. And we read 2 Samuel 6, and that is one of the parts of the Bible that we find tricky, isn't it? It shows us a God, a picture of a God who we find uncomfortable.

But hopefully as we wrestle with it tonight, we'll come to a point where actually we would be willing to gladly submit to the God that we find here. The outline's on the back of your sheet, there's two points.

Number one, when Uzzah gets carried away. And then when David gets carried away. First, let's think about Uzzah. Uzzah and his brother, Ohio, they are part of a team of men that King David has assembled to bring the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem.

And in the chapter prior to this, chapter 5, God is establishing the kingdom of David more securely. He's putting pains to Israel's rivals. And he's strengthening King David, and he's defeating his enemies.

[ 4 : 29 ] And he's handed Jerusalem over to David, where he's now got a palace for himself. So it seems to make sense that he would want to bring up to Jerusalem the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark that represented the presence of God, that God would be with his people.

So David builds a new cart, especially for the event. And the Ark was placed on the cart and the journey begins. Uzzah and Ohio, they are entrusted with the very important task of guiding the cart. And as this scene opens in 276, we see that people are celebrating. I mean, look at verse 5. They are celebrating before the Lord with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

Celebration was the order of the day. David was installed as King. There's peace in the land. And God was with his people. There's so much to be thankful for. And so they worshipped him and they make this a really joyful journey.

But all of a sudden, the celebrations were interrupted. Look at verse 6. When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah put out his hand to the Ark of God and took hold of it.

[ 5 : 37 ] For the oxen stumbled. Well, that seems a good idea, doesn't it? Thank goodness Uzzah's there to save the day. So the celebrations can continue.

Well, no. Look at verse 7. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah and God struck him down. God killed him. There because of his error.

And he died there beside the Ark of God. The celebration is officially over. And God does not see Uzzah as a hero. Quite the opposite.

God is furious that Uzzah touched the Ark. And he kills him. One moment, the man is alive. And he's singing God's praise. And the next minute, he instinctively touches the Ark to stop it falling. And the next, he's on the ground dead. Verse 8 explains it. It says, and God... It says, because the Lord had broken out.

[ 6 : 34 ] God's wrath had broken out. It's the same language that is used in chapter 5, verse 20. To describe the way that God dealt with his enemy. God's wrath broke out.

The wrath of God breaking out. Now here, Uzzah has received the same treatment as one of God's enemies. And so he's carried away in a body bag.

Why was God so angry? And our first instinct is to feel that God has been pretty harsh with Uzzah, hasn't he? Do you find yourself thinking, well, God has just overreacted?

Let me say three things. Firstly, this is God we're dealing with, isn't it? What do we know from the Bible? We know that God never overreacts. We know that God never loses it.

He is slow to anger. He is always just. And he is God. And so believe it or not, you and I, we are never in a position to question his moral integrity.

[ 7 : 36 ] Or the proportionality of his justice. You and I just don't know enough. That's the first thing. Second thing is, in our culture, in Western culture, we don't think, do we, very much of the sacredness of physical objects.

So in other cultures, they may be wrong about this. I'm told that Muslims will not put the Koran on the floor, will they? It's a holy book.

Christians throw their Bibles all over the place. We think the words in your Bible, they are sacred. But we don't think that the book itself is sacred. Something is a sacred object.

It feels a bit foreign to us. And I think this is one of the reasons why this incident is so hard to understand. But in the Jewish culture of the day, there were sacred objects.

And that would have been generally understood. So the best solution I can think of is, let's say you go to the Tate Gallery tomorrow. And as you're walking around the Tate Gallery, you see an original Monet.

[ 8 : 43 ] And so you go up to have a look at this amazing painting. But you don't touch you. Because you know that you're not meant to touch it.

You've got a pretty good idea that if you did touch it, an alarm would go off. And you'd be surrounded by security guards in an instant, wouldn't you? It is that sort of thing that is going on

here.

The Ark is sacred. And whilst we might want to shrug it off and say, it's just a box, isn't it, on a cart. I would have known that. That it wasn't just a box on a cart. It was the Holy Ark of God.

And that brings me to the third thing. In the law of God, God gave his people special instructions. Relating to how that Ark was to be transported.

And the Ark was the most sacred thing of all. And there were special instructions given. So, for example, in Exodus 25, it is explained. That the Ark was actually built with two rings, two gold rings on each side so that it could be carried on poles.

[ 9 : 44 ] And they would be slipped through the rings. In Numbers 4 and 7, particular instructions are given to the Kohathite branch of the Levites. About how they were to carry the Ark on their shoulders. And he explicitly said, you must not touch the Holy Things or you will die.

Now what we learn from that is, David must be held partly responsible for what happened. Because David built a cart, didn't he, for the Ark. But the Ark was never meant to be carried by an Ark.

It was meant to be carried on poles over the shoulders of the Kohathites. And it was designed that way so precisely incidents like these would not happen. God's very clear instructions in the law were given in his kindness to keep his people from death.

So David has got to carry some of the blame. But what we also learn here is that Uzzah obeyed, disobeyed a very clear command of God.

And instinctive, as though it would have been, to touch the Ark, he should have been restrained by his knowledge that the Ark is holy.

[ 10 : 53 ] It reflects God's own holiness. And God had said that anyone who touched it would die. Some of you remember, in 1982, the Queen went on a visit in Australia, didn't she?

Do you remember that? And the then Prime Minister, Paul Keating, was with her. And as she was going up the steps to meet people, you might remember this, if you remember it, he put his hand at the bottom of her back to guide her.

And it became an international headline. He touched her back. He touched the Queen's back. It was an instinctive moment. He was just trying to guide this older lady as she was making her royal tour.

And he was trying to introduce it to some other people. But it was a massive breach of protocol. It went all around the world. Prime Minister Keating forgot who it was he was standing next to.

And Urza's problem is that he forgot what it was he was carrying. That he did not treat as holy that which is holy. And that is why verse 7 describes it literally, well it should be, it says in the ESV, as an error.

[ 12 : 05 ] It's actually an irreverent act, literally. By touching the ark, Urza had not revered the ark's holiness. And by touching the ark, he had not feared the Lord.

Now we can only imagine what the crowd was like, can't we? No doubt many people looked in absolute shock. Some would have been very confused. Urza's family and friends would have been grief stricken.

But the only person whose reaction we are explicitly told about is King David. First he's angry, verse 8. And David was angry. David was angry because the Lord had broken out against us.

It seems as though it's a very fairly understandable reaction. No doubt at this point, David is not in time to reflect on his own responsibility in Urza's death.

And then, given that all that's happened, he decides to abandon the kind of ticker tape parade to Jerusalem. And he stores the ark in Obed-Egon. And it would seem that he's still thinking kind of pretty superstitiously about what's going on.

[ 13 : 09 ] It doesn't appear that he's really grasped Urza's sin against the Lord himself. And he thinks the problem is with the ark more than God.

However, he grasps enough to be afraid, doesn't he, verse 9. It tells us that David was afraid of the Lord. And that too is a pretty understandable reaction, isn't it?

If we'd been there and seen these events unfold as they did, I think you and I would have been pretty scared too. And David knows enough of God to know that he is behind Urza's death.

Even if he doesn't get all the reasons why. So David is terrified by God. And the author of Truth, Samuel, is deliberately contrasting Urza's irreverence here with David's instinctive fear.

Urza's sinned by failing to fear. And David responds full of fear. And that is the contrast that is right at the heart of this chapter.

[14:12] David sees something about God that widened his eyes and deepened his knowledge of the Lord. And what he saw left him scared witness. And it is absolutely vital that you and I don't miss that.

It seems to me that whenever people talk about the subject of the fear of the Lord, when it comes up amongst Christians, do you know what the first thing you hear is? It's that fear doesn't really mean fear.

People say it would be far better to use the word reverence. Or awe. Or something like that. Because God's people, God's people have got no reason at all to be afraid of God.

Try telling that to David. And I don't buy it. Because actually, when you study it, when you look at the fear of the Lord in Scripture, the fear of the Lord signifies a wide range of things.

And we understand, don't we, that God loves his people very, very much. And God promises always to do his people good. But that does not mean that God is no longer terrifying. Surely, some of the time, when the Bible speaks about fearing God, it literally means fear.

[15:27] And on this particular day, when David stopped singing, and stopped banging his tambourine against his hip, when he started to realise that the whole crowd had gone quiet, and when he looked over, and he looked over seeing Uzzah lying dead on the ground next to the ark, he was afraid.

And he was afraid of God. And he saw something of God in his terrifying glory, and it widened his eyes, and it stretched his heart.

And he was scared witness of God. And it seems to me that 2 Samuel chapter 6 is suggesting, that that is exactly the sort of reaction that he should have had. And I think this chapter is saying, that it is eminently sensible, it's an eminently sensible reaction, when you start to realise who God is.

Now more briefly, let's look at the second half. And we see that David gets carried away. Not in a body bag, like Uzzah, but in a very different sense. Three months have passed. Between the first half and the second half.

And you notice in verse 13, that David seems to have done more thinking about the Uzzah incident. And there's a new obedience in how the ark is being transported. This time there's no cart in sight.

[16:35] You notice? And instead, the cart, the cart is gone. Now notice what it says about the ark.

Notice what it says in the text. It says the ark is carried. And as it is carried, the people are rejoicing. And David was particularly joyful, wasn't he? Verse 14, David danced before the Lord with all his might.

Ah. There he is. David was wearing a linen ephod. An ephod is a kind of special, kind of tunic. That priests wore. And from what it transpires, that's pretty much all David was wearing. And presumably, David took off his clothes, so he'd be unencumbered.

And he danced. It's the same reason, you wouldn't wear a hat and scarf, would you? You'd go dancing. Or you wouldn't wear your overalls to a nightclub. You want to be uninhibited.

[17:32] To be able to dance. And that is how David danced. And he danced as he worshiped.

And as they came to Jerusalem, David's wife, Michal, was watching from the palace window, we're told. And she is appalled by what she saw.

She thought that David's conduct was unbecoming of a king. And she thought David had got carried away. And she saw it as an irreverent act. An irreverent way for the king to behave.

Listen again how she puts it. Verse 16. And as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal, the daughter of Saul, looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord. And she despised him in her heart.

Now at this stage, David is oblivious to Michal's reaction. And he is still getting the ark to its final resting place. And is making more sacrifice. David is blessing his people. And when he finally comes home to bless his own household, no doubt overjoyed to have the ark finally with him in Jerusalem.

His wife lets him have it. Doesn't she? Look at verse 20. David returned to bless his own household. But Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David and said, How the king of Israel honoured himself today, uncovering himself today, before the eyes of his servant's female servant, as one of the vulgar fellows, shamelessly uncovers himself.

[18:45] Listen to David's reaction. David said to Michal, It was before the Lord who chose me, above your father, and above all his house, to appoint me as prince over Israel, the people of the Lord. And I will celebrate before the Lord.

And I will make myself yet more contemptible than this. And I shall be a beast in your eyes. But by the female servants of whom you have spoken, by them I shall be held in honour. He simply says to her, Nothing is going to stop me from celebrating God's goodness.

And certainly not some inhibition about how folks see me. But I'm not concerned, he says. In the slightest, by this humiliation, if that's what you want to call it, I will keep doing it.

And I will do it more and more. Because do you know what the dance, well the dance, it wasn't for you. And the dance wasn't for the slave girls either. And it wasn't for anyone else. It was for the Lord. And if I was carried away, Michal, I was carried away from my God.

And he's reminding her here, that he is an audience of one. But he doesn't fear what others think of him, because he fears the Lord. And he fears the Lord alone. And in fact, he fears God to such an extent, that he has no fear whatsoever, in looking foolish to others, as he serves God.

[19:57] And you notice, just as Uzzah was judged, for his refusal to fear God, at the start of the chapter, the chapter ends with God's judgment, on Michal, for her failure to fear the Lord.

So childlessness, of course, whilst it is always painful, it is not always a punishment, you know that. It's not always the Lord's discipline, but on this occasion it was.

So let me try and draw some conclusions. What I hope is clear to me and to you, is that there's no avoiding a chapter like this.

And there is no wisdom, there is no wisdom in kind of just glossing it over, and failing to really think about it. And the issues they represent. 2 Samuel 6 tells us about a God, with whom we must deal with.

Here is a God who is not petty, or unjust, or vindictive, or bloodthirsty. But here is a God who does give clear, and kind commands, and he will not fail to keep his word.

[21:04] And he is a God who is not even close, to being a malevolent bully. But he is terrifying. And the Bible says so unashamedly, and so must we. What does that mean for us?

Well, three things. Firstly, there's fear on death. That really is the basic conclusion of the chapter. In us's case, failure to fear God led to death.

Now in this instance, God responded to a particular moment of irreverence, with a particular punishment. But what we see here in this moment, is true in a more general sense, of life in God's world.

Those who do not fear God, will die. Uzzah might not have lost his ultimate salvation. I don't think we can know that for sure. But he is nevertheless, a symbol of those who do.

And that is why I think we need to realise, that the fear of God, is the fear that leads to life. And this chapter reminds us, that there is no true life, without the fear of God.

[22:11] The second thing I want us to see, the Bible doesn't teach us, just teach us to fear God, in order to have life. It also teaches us, to fear God in this life. Fear God in life. So from the beginning, to the end of the Bible, the Bible tells you, fear the Lord.

And it's important to recognise, that this isn't some kind of bizarre, Old Testament kind of thing, that I think we're really tempted to think. That's what God was like in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament, he's much more friendly now.

And the sort of incident, that we read here, well it would never happen, in the New Testament, let alone, happen today. Do we think that God, has become domesticated, with the passing of time?

And he somehow, ceased to be terrifying? Well what about, Ananias and Sapphira? In Acts chapter 5, who lied to the Holy Spirit, and they were struck down dead. When Acts 5 tells us, that great fear, seized the whole church, do you think they were thinking, well that's just an Old Testament thing?

What about the Corinthian church? We don't read it, because we don't read that part, of the passage, in 1 Corinthians 11, but in Paul's letter, one of the reasons, some of their members had died, because they were eating the bread, and drinking the cup, in their gatherings, in an unworthy manner.

[23:26] And who are we to suggest, that God cannot, or will not, or would not, continue to discipline, his people like that today? When the author to Hebrews, says to his Christian audience, Hebrews 10, he says it is a dreadful thing, it is a fearful thing, to fall into the hands, of the living God.

Do you think that's an empty threat? One of the things, I love about the Bible, is the way that it, it not only tells you the truth, but it also so often, diagnoses our reactions, to the truth.

And this for me, is one of those chapters, and I think this chapter, particularly, diagnoses our hearts, by making us question, what is our response, to Uzzah's fate?

So I don't think, I have ever met, a Christian, whose first reaction, is to say, well Uzzah, got what was coming through. So more often, I find that Christians, respond to these verses, as I did, when I first read them, and we feel, Uzzah got a raw, end of the deal, didn't me?

And we sympathise, with Uzzah, because we think, he didn't really, do anything wrong. But as I've studied this, and as I read on, and as I see the fear, in David's eyes, and as it dawns on me, that the fear, David felt, is the fear, Uzzah should have felt, because God is holy, and terrifying, and his word, must be obeyed.

[ 24 : 52 ] And then, that all starts, to become clear to me, and I find, my heart is sliced open, by this chapter, and I begin to see, that my first reaction, to Uzzah's faith, is actually pretty telling.

My reaction, betrays the fact, that I am as casual, about God's holiness, as Uzzah was. And I'm quick, to excuse disobedience. And I think, this unholy act, was a small thing, and a pretty, defensible thing.

And my reaction, to Uzzah, betrays the fact, that I don't really, fear the Lord, any more than he did. Maybe less. And the lesson, that God teaches his people, in 2 Samuel 6, is exactly, the very lesson, that I need to learn.

And I want to make, a suggestion, and I want you to listen, carefully, at this point. The extent, to which you feel, Uzzah was treated, too harshly here, is the extent, to which you still, need to learn, to fear the Lord.

The extent, to which you feel, Uzzah was treated, too harshly here, is the extent, to which you still, need to learn, to fear the Lord. And you and I, must not hide, behind some, sophisticated, theological term here.

[ 26 : 11 ] As I said earlier, when the topic, of the fear of God, is raised, it does seem to me, that the first reaction, of many Christians, is to explain, that fear, doesn't really mean fear. But it meant fear, here for David.

And when Jacob, walked up from his dream, at Bethel, in Genesis 28, and he'd heard, the voice of God, I'm pretty sure, his fear, was fear. And when the Israelites, passed through the Red Sea, and they watched, from the other side, as the water, rushes back, to engulf the Egyptian army, and sweep them away.

Exodus 14, tells us, they feared the Lord, and I am pretty sure, their fear was fear. And when Gideon, spent an afternoon, cooking to the angel, of the Lord, only to have the meal, he prepared, swallowed by flames, that jumped up, from a rock.

I'm pretty sure, his fear was fear. And when the Lord, appears in the storm, at the end of the book of Job, and finally, silences Job's, ridiculous friends, and reminds Job, at the same time, of his awesome power, and his perfect wisdom, I am pretty sure, he was creaking in his boots, and his fear was fear.

And when God appeared, to Isaiah from his throat, and heard the voices, of the sarahs, and the tentacles shut, and was filled with smoke, and he says, woe to me, I am ruined, I am pretty sure, he was genuinely scared.

[ 27 : 30 ] And when the prophet Ezekiel, in Ezekiel chapter 1, sees the appearance, of the likeness, of the glory of the Lord, and he falls down, on his face, I am pretty sure, his heart was racing. And when Luke tells us, about the calling of Peter, and his miraculous catch of fish, and Peter falls, at Jesus knees, and says, go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.

I am pretty sure, that he had seen, something about Jesus, which had completely, freaked him out. When Mark tells us, about the time, when Jesus rescued, his frightened disciples, from the furious storm, on the lake, and they were more terrified, after the storm, than they were before.

I am pretty sure, that they met a fear, that just outstripped, any previous fear, they had ever known. And when Luke tells us, that they cast out demons, into a herd of pigs, and the locals, were overcome with fear, I am pretty sure, that they pleaded with him, to leave that region, because they were genuinely, too scared, of having a hang around.

When Peter, and James, and John, go up on the mountainside, with Jesus, and he is transfigured, and they fall down, on their face, to the ground, they are terrified, and I am pretty sure, that terrified, means terrified. When a Christian, hater, called Saul, met the risen Christ, on the road to Damascus, I am pretty sure, his life, is completely turned around, by what?

By real fear. And when John, tells us, about his encounter, with the risen Jesus, he says, I fell at his feet, as though dead. And I am pretty sure, that fear is fear.

[ 28 : 57 ] And Revelation, tells us, about the throng, of God's people, in heaven. A throng, to which all of God's people, will one day belong, and about how they fall down, and they worship the lamb, who was slain, the lion of the tribe of Judah.

And I am pretty sure, that they know, that he is someone, to be reckoned with. So brothers and sisters, many, many occasions, in the Bible, when people get a glimpse, of God, in all his glory, in all his white hot holiness, in his incomparable majesty, fear, means fear.

Fear, means fear. Seriously, you know this quote, I've read it too many times, he captures Christ's meekness, and majesty, very very well, doesn't he? There's that famous, conversation between, Susan and Mr. Beaver, and Mr. Beaver, tells Susan, about Aslan, who represents Christ.

And he is telling her, that Aslan is a great lion. Oh, said Susan, I thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel, rather nervous, about meeting a lion. Safe, said Mr. Beaver, who said anything about safe?

Of course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the king, I tell you. It's wonderful writing, but he's theologically priceless. He's not safe, is he?

[ 30 : 15 ] He's not safe at all. That's the testimony of the Bible, from the beginning to end. And in the face of an unsafe God, fear in life, well, it's eminently sensible.

And I want to say this, in fact, if you're not scared witless of God, then I suggest there's quite a bit about God that you don't understand. And thirdly, and finally, fear with delight.

Do you understand? And here I want to suggest an answer to a question that's really troubled me over the last few months. Why on earth has the author of 2 Samuel put the first half and the second half together?

Have you ever wondered that? I know the second half happened sooner after the first half, but why? He chose to include both halves of all the things he chose to include in this book.

Did he have a particular purpose in placing these two stories together? Well, of course, he did.

Could he be showing us that fear and celebration can occupy the same heart as it does David's?

[ 31 : 17 ] Now, we've got to really, I think, change how we think about God. God can feel true emotions. You can feel true emotions. They are not incompatible.

So our assumption is, isn't it, well, you can either feel great fear for God and then you won't be joyful, or you can be reverent and you have to be very serious. We think that about churches, don't we?

So people think that a church service is either very reverent and it's a serious one, or you have a joyful, unencumbered one. That's not biblical at all. So look at David here.

One moment he is stopped in his tracks with fear in his heart and the next moment he's taking off his clothes so he does. And as I suggested earlier, I think there is something of the resolute fear of God even in his answer to Michael in the second half of the chapter.

He fears God to such an extent that he no longer fears what others think of him. I don't think this is simply the case of David being terrified by God when it came to Urza.

[ 32 : 16 ] But then three months pass and he's forgotten about all that and now he can dance away to Jerusalem again. No, of course not. Now I think David's lived a lesson. And on his first trip to Jerusalem, a lesson he didn't forget, the fact that he's dispensed and got rid of that card is the clue, I think.

And his answer in verse 21 underlines it well. When Urza died, David saw more of God than he'd seen before. And his eyes widened by that experience and his heart stretched and it changed him. And David was a man who feared the Lord more after Urza died than he did before. And when we see in the second half of the chapter this funny picture of the king dancing uninhibited, it is the picture of a man, it's not the picture of a man who no longer fears, but a man who fears more deeply.

And it's a reminder to you and I that fear and delight are not incompatible at all. They live in the same heart. In fact, a proper fear produces a proper joy.

When fear leads to life and it leads to rejoicing. For we see many points in the Bible, particularly in the resurrection. Think about the women. They discover Jesus' body and they run away from the tomb.

[ 33 : 34 ] And Matthew tells us they were very, very afraid and yet full of joy. That's biblical Christianity. So we see in Revelation 5 that eternal throng gathered around the throne of the Lamb. Yes, they are falling on their faces in humble, fearful worship. And yes, they are full of praise and delight. And that is the pattern for our Christian lives. And that is what it means to deal with the God of the Bible.

It's a life lived in humble fear and trembling because unless we are scared, witless of God, then we've never widened our eyes enough to see Him clearly. And it's a life lived with unencumbered joy at the same time.

A sort of abandonment, a delight that no longer cares what others think of us because the fear of the Lord not only widens our eyes but simultaneously it scratches our heart in worship.

And that is a profound truth that's not easily learned. But when you find yourself living in trembling joy, you'll know you've learned it. And when we find ourselves living in delighted fear, we'll know that our eyes have been widened to see God as He really is.

[ 34 : 45 ] And our hearts have been stretched to submit gladly to His frightening and loving reign. Let me close with the exhortation of Psalm 2 verse 11.

It's a verse that captures this truth perfectly, I think. Psalm 2 verse 11. The psalmist urges us to serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.

That, my friends, is biblical Christianity. Let me pray. Let me pray.