

2 Samuel 6

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[0 : 00] Okay, one Samuel, two Samuel 6. There's a problem isn't there? If you read the Bible, I think we're confronted with problems.

! One of the problems is if you read the Bible, we're told again and again and again, 27 times actually the phrases used, fear the Lord. Fear the Lord. We're also told it's the beginning of wisdom to fear the Lord, it's the beginning of knowledge.

And then we're also told to serve the Lord without fear. Because fear has to do with judgment. So our question this evening is this, which is it? Do I fear the Lord this week or do I serve him without fear?

And the answer is yes. Two Samuel is where we are tonight. It's 3,000 years ago. The places Jerusalem, it's the newly formed capital.

It's just been appointed in the capital. It's just been taken over by King David. And the man of the hour is King David. It's been established by God for the sake of his people. By this time there's been about 1,000 years worth of promises scattered over the Bible so far.

[1 : 26] And they finally reached their fulfillment. We've got God's King, God's man David. He's really ruling God's people in Israel, in God's place Jerusalem, with God as their King.

God's people in God's place under God's rule. And so the coordinates are all fitting in. God is the God who makes promises and he keeps them.

The message in the Bible so far is you've got to be patient. And God will always come through. And there's a bit of a loose end, isn't there? There's a loose end because the Ark of the Covenant, which represented the throne rule of God, the Ark of the Covenant represented the presence of God.

And where is it? It's not in God's city. It's not a very big box. It contains the Ten Commandments. And God is, as it were, enthroned between these two angelic creatures.

The images called Cherubim, chapter 6 and verse 2. The Ark of the Covenant is not where it should be. And so David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, 30,000.

[2 : 39] And David rose and went with all the people who were with him from Baal Judah to bring up from there the Ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of Hosts, who sits enthroned on the chariot.

Between those two angelic figures. And they carried the Ark of God on a new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadam, which was on the hill.

And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadam, were driving the Ark. And Ahio, he went before the Ark. So the Ark of God, it represented the power of God.

And the presence of God. And the rule of God amongst his people. The Ark of the Covenant said to the people of Israel, God is king, not David.

God is the ultimate king. David, if you like, is a prince. And the Ark, if you like, at this point, is hymenating somewhere on the edge of Israel. At this point, it's about 10 miles away from Jerusalem.

[3 : 43] It's as if it's in Heston services, instead of being in the centre of London. David is installed as king. David's city, the capital, has had a conquest.

And so all the pieces are in place. It seems as if there's just one more piece of the puzzle. To bring the Ark that's on the edge of Israel, now into the capital city of God's great king.

And it seemed at this point that David could do no wrong. And remember this morning, he's innocent, he's innocent, he's innocent. That's what chapters 1-5 are telling you. And so it seemed that this was the right thing, the next natural step.

So off they set, David leading 30,000 of his men. I don't know how many were on the map this week. I don't think it was 30,000, was it? Might have been somewhere else.

So 30,000 of them, and at the front there are some priests, and they put the Ark on the cart. And they're led by these two boys, Uzzah and Ahio.

[4 : 44] It's a wonderful ceremony, they are pumped with praise. And it really is a big thing. They've just come off the back of the victory over the Philistines. And David's kingdom is with his strength.

And so we read in verse 5, David and all the house of Israel were making merry before the Lord. With songs, and lyres, and harps, and tambourines, and castanets, and cymbals.

And you might not know what all those instruments are, but basically they're saying the full band is out. It feels so good. It feels so right.

It feels so honouring to God. And then you read verse 7. And you say, what went wrong? The anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God struck him down.

There because of his horror. And he died of God beside the ark of God. What? Just one touch.

[5 : 47] Of the ark of God by Uzzah. And he dies, he's taken out by God. And you feel like saying, Lord please, like that. There's a part of you that wants to say, Uzzah didn't want the ark to fall.

It seems now a good idea, isn't it? When you don't want something precious to fall off a cart, you put your hands out and stop it happening. Uzzah clearly had good motives.

So what is God's problem? Well, probably a number of them. And if you read this chapter, and then the parallel chapter of 1 Chronicles 15, you get more details that fill out the problem.

So for a start, David didn't check with God about this move. If you read chapter 2, chapter 5, you'll read the phrase that David inquired of the Lord, but you won't find that phrase in chapter 6.

And the other problem is that God had given very, very specific instructions in Numbers chapter 4 about the who and the what of moving the ark.

[6 : 54] There was, when the ark of the covenant, a no look, no touch, no cart policy. And God does not speak to be ignored. You've got to understand that tonight.

Whether you know the Lord Jesus, whether you're inside the community of faith, whether you're part of the church, or whether the things of God are new to you, God never speaks to be ignored. God takes himself and you very seriously.

The specific problem is not only priests, but they were to be a very specific group within the priesthood, the co-affights. Only they were given authorisation to be involved in the movement of the ark.

The problem was that the ark was to be carried specifically on specially prepared poles, on the shoulders of the co-affights priests, in normal cars.

So like the Philistines had done decades earlier, they treated the ark as a sack of tentatives. The problem was that God didn't need us or anyone else to save him from falling out.

[8 : 06] It was a protocol breach of major proportions. So many of you will remember that in 1992, those of you who were alive in 1992, always embarrassing to ask us.

The Queen, Queen Elizabeth, went to Australia, some of you will remember it. Australian quite a long ago, Paul Keating. As she was walking up the steps, do you remember what he did?

He put his hand on the back of the Queen. The sudden he was speaking to the paper called him, The Lizard of Oz. He was doing it. He was doing it. He was doing it.

He was doing it. He was doing it. Because, believe it in the arts, you don't put your arm around the Queen. And I touched the Queen. How dare you? One touch and he got slammed.

Forever remember by him. And to this day, nobody knows whether he meant to do it or not. But it's a good reminder, isn't it? That even today, there's a sense of personal. Nobody this weekend went up and gave the Queen a big hug.

[9 : 14] There's not me too. And as a reminder with the death of Uzzah, we are reminded again that we are dealing with God. And I don't know what God you have in your imagination, but let me tell you that God, as he's revealed himself, he is holy and he takes himself very, very seriously.

And there are no exceptions. We live in an aggressively casual society, as one writer has put it. So I noticed a couple of years ago, probably about four or five years ago, when people from other cultures came to the church, they called me Pastor Paul.

And I would say, no, no, no, no, no, no, just call me Paul. Because, kind of in our culture, it's just kind of normal. But I realised that in their culture, there was an order.

And I was trying to follow down that order. And they were trying to preserve it. So you can call me what you want. God expects that we approach him on his terms.

[10 : 30] And there are occasions in the Bible where God allows you and I a little glimpse into the full-blown revelation of his holiness.

There are times in the Bible when it becomes just very, very evident of the God that you're dealing with. So think with me, even if you don't know your Bible very well, just walk with me through some of the major episodes of it.

You'll be able to think of others. So think of the Garden of Eden. Think of the Garden of Eden, just one sin of Adam, and the whole human race dies.

Just one. Just one sin by the sons of Aaron, who offered strange fire in Leviticus. Just one sin, and both of them are consumed in fire.

One time where a man picks up sticks on the Sabbath in Exodus 16, and he's taking that. Just one extra hit on the rock by Moses on the rock that produced water.

[11 : 41] One extra hit, and Moses was not allowed to enter into the promised land. Just one look into the ark in 1 Samuel by 70 men, and all of them are taken out.

Just one touch by Uzzah, and he's gone. Just one lie for Ananias and Sapphira in Acts, and they have to cut their bodies out of the body bag.

And the question's already been raised, isn't it, in one side, Will? How can anyone stand in the presence of a God this holy?

And the answer is absolutely nobody. Now this isn't how God normally works, thankfully. But there are certain points in the history of salvation, in the history of the Bible, where the full holiness of God breaks out.

So that you will understand who you are dealing with. That our God is a holy God. And Uzzah got what he deserved.

[12 : 54] And that the others were alive, but the rest got great. Well David's response is, David is angry, isn't he?

He's angry at God for taking out Uzzah. And you and I might be angry with God tonight. You might be angry with God for how life is playing itself out.

You might feel God has been unfair with you. You might feel unfair. God has been unfair, so I guess at this point if you've got a pen, you'll want to write this down. If you're into tattoos, you might want to get this tattooed.

And to be very clear, if you're in your life, God will show you mercy every day of your life. Today's expression of that.

Every day God will show you mercy. But on occasions God will give you justice. Like a penalty, like a speeding fan.

[14 : 05] God will always show you mercy. He will always show you mercy to the course of your life. And he will on occasions show you justice. But he will never give you what you don't deserve. He will show you mercy.

He will on occasions give you justice. But when he does that, he will never give you what you don't deserve. And David was angry, but interestingly his anger moved very quickly to fear.

And so I want to say, there are Christians out there, they're kind of stuck at the point of anger.

Towards God. Anger, how life has played itself out for you under the sovereign hand of God.

And as a phase of grief and so forth, anger has got its place. It's a place on a journey along with the other stages of grief. But as a place to settle down and live, anger is very, very dangerous.

So we fear the Lord because, in the words of Hebrews 13, he is a consumer of fire. And that's a fire that out. And that's a fire that out. So verse 8.

[15 : 12] Verse 8, David was afraid of the Lord that day. And he said, how could the ark of the Lord come to you? So David was not willing to take the ark of the Lord into the city of David. But David took it aside to the house of Obed, Edom the Kittite.

And so here's an important point from this passage. We do not tell God how he is to be worshipped. He tells us.

And another thing to learn, which I think we find very, very difficult to learn, is that sincerity is not enough. What do you think is the most popular religion in the world?

You probably think, well, Christianity, I think, statistically is the biggest. And Muslims, then Hindus.

But let me tell you, the religion, the biggest religion in the world is the religion of sincerity.

It comes across every religion. And it's driven by this core belief. That as long as I'm sincere, I'm not sincere.

people. And the ark is accompanied now by sacrifices, every six steps, it would take an awfully long time, wouldn't it, to get there. Because without a sharing of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. And without forgiveness you cannot approach a holy God, it's a dead end. But once that happens, once sacrifice has been made, once the means of access is open to you, well there is joy and there is dancing and celebration. Look at verse 14, David is wearing a linen ephod, it's like priestly underwear. And in a priest-like way, David is dancing before the Lord. With all his might. While he and all of Israel are bringing up the ark of the Lord, and there are shouts and sounds of triumph. It's beautiful, isn't it? It's wonderful joy. I don't know if you know that joy. It's a unique Christian emotion. It's a joyful weekend. But David's joy here is different. It's a reverent joy.

It speaks of deep emotion towards the salvation of God. God is holy. God is unable to be approached because we are sinners, and yet through Jesus Christ we have direct access to him. Ah, it's that joy. And if you don't know that joy, it's because either you don't know how holy God is, or you don't realise how much of a privilege it is to access him. Or you don't know how wonderful Jesus' death is on the cross. That actually dealt with all your sins. And so here is David, the anointed king, in a kingly, priest-like way. Leading his people in praise and worship, he's overflowing. Can you feel the joy? Can you feel the thrill, the relief? The holy God, who is a consuming fire, can be approached with confidence through sacrifice on God's turn. Lord Jesus Christ. See, God doesn't want you to stay away from him tonight. And he doesn't want to stay away from you. And he doesn't want to stay away from you. And he doesn't want to stay away from you. And the final picture at the end of the age is of God coming down himself in the new heavens and the new earth to live with us. And so Jesus says to you and I, when God becomes flesh in the person of Jesus, what does he say? Does he say go away?

Does he say go away? No, he says come to me. He says come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. So can you see in 2 Samuel 6, here was a man who feared God and so could serve God without fear. And when you fear the Lord, you can serve the Lord without fear.

It was grace that taught my heart to fear. And grace my fears relieved. Fear him, you saints, and you will then have nothing else to fear. Because when you fear the Lord, you can serve the Lord without fear. But not everyone is rejoicing in the story, is that? King David returns home, he's blessed his people in fellowship households, and now he's going back to his own home to bless his own household. And what he finds is his first wife, Michael, the daughter of Saul, and what you notice is that she's not sharing in her job. And she's not celebrating with God's people as they are, and God returns. And she remains in the palace, she keeps her distance, and she despises her husband. She despises the way that he's half naked, dancing in front of the people of God with this obsession to honour God. So look at verse 16.

[25 : 57] As the Archive Lord came into the city of David, Michael, 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.

Michael, she's the first woman in the Bible, explicitly in the Bible, to have said about her that she loved her husband. There's a number of books in the Bible, but before you get to all the people actually declaring that, I'm sure it happened earlier.

But it's the first recorded reference of a woman being in love with a man. Well, she's not in love with him now. Because in her heart flows words which reflect bitterness.

Bitterness that leads to cynicism of Sarah, resulting in shaping her husband in public. Because when she says to him in verse 20, in public, David, who has turned to bless his household, Michael, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David and said, How the King of Israel honoured himself today. Can you hear this, Calvin?

Uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants, female servants, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers themselves. To the impoer, all things are impoer. And let me tell you, here is a woman, my God, who has sided with the wrong king in her heart.

[27 : 17] She's died with her dad's view of kingship, Saul's view. Because Saul's view of kingship had no fear of the Lord of it.

And rather than sided with her husband, the anointed king, she despised her husband. And she despised her husband because David was willing to play for an audience of one.

She despised his joyful passion towards this God. And she shamed her husband, who was her anointed king. And her heart was filled with bitterness.

There's a story of marriage here, isn't that? And every marriage couple, male or female, needs to watch this to see.

Because David was not just a believer, he was not just her husband, he was the anointed king. God's appointed king. And she needed to be put in her place as yours.

[28 : 18] David said to Michael, verse 21, it was before the Lord who chose me above your father and above all his house. He was pointing me as prince over Israel. The people of all, and I will make marriage before them. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this, and I will be embased in your eyes.

But by the female servants of whom you've spoken, well, by them I shall be held in honour. And Michael, the daughter of Saul, had no child to the day of her death. Three times we are told when Michael is mentioned, daughter of Saul, daughter of Saul, daughter of Saul.

The previous king. She sided with the wrong king. It's two different views of kingship. Saul's fear of kingship. What have we seen over these last few weeks?

We've seen Saul's fear of kingship was about pride and power and prestige with no fear of the Lord. David's fear of kingship was one that humbled itself. David essentially was a servant king who humbled himself before God and his people, and he saw himself there for the sake of his people. He was one who humbled himself under the word of God on his best days. On his best days he was one who would lead his people in praise and worship of God, who would remind them and remind us of a greater son of David, Lord Jesus Christ.

[29 : 40] Who a thousand years after this, Jesus' own humiliation would allow him to go all the way to the cross. Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing.

Taking the very nature of a servant, being found in human likeness, was obedient all the way to death, even to death on a cross. So that when God became a human being and entered into this world of the person of his son, he allowed himself to be stripped and beaten in the presence of a sarcastic audience.

And they mocked him, didn't they? They said he can save others, but he can't save himself. All so that you can be forgiven. All so that you can approach a holy God of confidence to that.

And the last words are chilling, isn't it? God would not allow Michael to bear children. That would be the end of Saul's household. Because here was a woman who would not fear the Lord.

So tonight, fear the Lord. Come and put your trust in Jesus, him who knew no sin. Who became sin for us, that you might become the righteousness of God.

[31 : 05] Fear the Lord. Don't stand outside a relationship with him. Come and enter into a relationship with God through his son. Jesus' famous words, aren't they?

I am the way, the truth and the life. No one, no one, comes to the Father except through me. And you can be angry tonight that there is only one way.

Or you can be fearful. You can fear the Lord and be thankful that there is a way. Serve the Lord.

Fear the Lord so we can serve the Lord with fear. But more than that, serve the Lord with joy. I don't know if you've looked it up.

In Psalm 2, you are called to worship, rejoice with trembling. Isn't that the Christian life? Let the joy of salvation overwhelm you.

[32 : 07] Rejoice in the Lord, I say again, I say rejoice. It's a command. Let the praise of God be on your lips.

Let the joy and delight of the Lord fill your heart. Let the lens God has given you dance to his mercy. It's a lesson to people like me, not to despise those whose joy is more external.

Or those whose joy is more internal. They are God's servants who Jesus still is blood for. Between them and God. And so resist the urge to be judgmental of them.

People say to me, do people raise your hands in church? I say, do people raise your hands in church? I say, well I raise my hands every Sunday in the benediction.

Raise your hands, don't raise your hands. I couldn't care less. There are some of you tonight that will go home to homes when the joy of the Lord is not shared.

[33 : 20] David won't be the first believer who returns from a church service thrilled with God's grace. The glory of God's grace.

I mean to find that what meets them at home is an unbelieving or a bitter spouse or a cynical sibling. A bitter and sarcastic housemate who wants to tear down. Or maybe a cynical or not a

Christian.

A cynical older Christian that just cannot cope with the enthusiasm of someone who has discovered the joy of the Lord Jesus.

You know the older Christian saying to the younger Christian when it's joy of the Lord you'll get over it as if it's some kind of disease. To deal with your own not progressing and growing the Lord.

And a kind of wanting to bring others down who are excited rather than feed off their joy and be encouraged. And shut it down. And so tonight if you're going out open to a home that doesn't share the joy of the Lord that's very hard.

[34 : 27] And I want to say to you remember, remember King David. And remember David's greatest son the Lord Jesus Christ because he knew what it was like to go to a home where there wasn't the joy of the Lord and Jesus was not.

So as you go home tonight take heart you're in good company. Jesus was not on in his own town. And neither is David. Fear the Lord so you can serve him without fear.

But serve him with joy. Let me read you that verse from Psalm 2. Serve the Lord with fear.

I'm a rejoicing traveler. Let's pray.