

1 Samuel Chapter 3 v 10 -Chapter 4 v 1

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[0 : 00] Well, Lord our God, our wonderful Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are the God of power and the God of strength, that you are the God of grace, of mercy, and of love, that you are the God in whom are all good things.

Everything about you is good. Everything about you is perfect. Everything about you is without fault. You are the only God, and you are so exalted, so great, so far and above anything that we can ask or imagine.

You are beyond our wildest dreams in the way that you are, so magnificent. And Lord, we thank you that though you are all these things and so much more besides, we thank you that when we come this morning, we can receive from you strength, power, grace, help.

Lord, those wonderful qualities that make you who you are are qualities that you long to share with us too, that we might impart of, that we might receive from you.

And yet, Lord, we know that often we do not feel our need of your grace. We do not feel our need of your forgiveness or of your strength. We are confident in ourselves.

[1 : 15] But Lord, we know that you are the God who desires that we should come with broken hearts, with a contrite spirit. We want to come, Lord, acknowledging that we are sinful, that we are weak, that we are foolish, that we are people who need you more and more each day.

And we ask, O Lord, that you would show us our weakness. If we are, Lord, resisting that truth, if we are confident in ourselves, show us, Lord, what we are really like. And open our eyes to see, O Lord, just the vast treasury that you have of good things for us, if we will but ask.

We thank you that you have given us every blessing in the Lord Jesus. He is the source. He is the very one through whom every blessing comes. Because he is the one who came from you in heaven to us on earth.

He is the one who has made this wonderful bridge. He is the one who has made this great restoration of fellowship with you, which was broken by our sin.

We thank you that in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, we have, O Lord, one who is able to do in our hearts and lives all that we need, all that we, Lord, yes, even desire, and above that too.

[2 : 29] We pray, Lord, that wherever we are this morning, as we come, that, Lord, you would meet with us, speak to us, help us, that, Lord, you would give to us strength in our weakness, give to us forgiveness for our sins, give to us grace, Lord, in our foolishness.

O Lord, speak and bless as we come seeking your face and asking these things, because we ask them in Jesus' name. Amen. Our first hymn is a psalm which is put to music.

It's 103. God is our strength and refuge. And we can sing with that assurance that he is the one who protects and keeps, provides, and watches over us.

103. We'll stand as we sing. God is our strength and refuge.

The present helping trouble, And we have no will not fear, The lead us will change.

[3 : 52] No mountains shaken, dreadful, No stunning funds are raging, God Oh, Lord, is your heavenly love in my career, in the shadow of your head.

Be peace, our Jesus, on the remembrance of your eyes, and free from your will of your heart.

In you is the mountain of life, in your light is the light.

In you is the mountain of life, in your light is the light.

Thank you. That sounds very interesting, Tripp. Is that down towards Flamborough Head? Yeah, we were down there last year, and there's lots and lots of gannets and birds.

[5 : 35] Puffins were there, Elliot, puffins were there, mate. So that was a special treat for you to go and see them. That's an in-joke between us as a family. But I had an encounter with a flying bird this morning when I was walking down.

It gave me a message. But I've managed to clean most of it off myself, and I'm a bit better now. But we're going to read God's Word, of course, now, and that's far more important than anything else. 1 Samuel in chapter 3. Now, last week, last Sunday morning, we sort of began a series looking at the life of Samuel.

We're not going to do the whole of 1 Samuel. We're just going to look at the life of Samuel. Last year, we did a couple of messages from Hannah, from her life in chapters 1 and 2. But so we looked last week in chapter 3 at how Samuel first encounters the Lord, how he first meets with God, and how he hears God's voice speaking to him.

And we're going to pick up, then, from verse 10, when Samuel hears and responds to God's Word. To begin with, he didn't know what God, that it was God speaking to him. He was a little confused.

[6 : 46] And he's going to be, the Lord's going to speak to him, and he's going to give him a prophecy, as you'll see, concerning the sons of Eli. Eli is the chief priest. He's in charge. He's the big boss of the tabernacle, God's temple.

But his sons were very wicked men. They were immoral. They despised the Lord. They took things which were God's and rejected God's Word.

And so God speaks through Samuel to Eli to tell him what's going to happen and how these things are going to work out. So verse 10 of 1 Samuel in chapter 3, we'll pick up here from when the Lord meets with Samuel.

The Lord came and stood there calling, as at the other times, Samuel. Samuel. And Samuel said, speak, for your servant is listening.

And the Lord said to Samuel, see, I'm about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. At that time, I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family, from beginning to end.

[7 : 55] For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about. His sons uttered blasphemies against God, and he failed to restrain them.

Therefore, I swore to the house of Eli, the guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering. Samuel lay down until morning, then opened the doors of the house of the Lord.

He was afraid to tell Eli the vision. But Eli called him and said, Samuel, my son. Samuel answered, here I am. What was it he said to you?

Eli asked. Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you. So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him.

Then Eli said, here is the Lord. Let him do what is good in his eyes. The Lord was with Samuel as he grew up, and he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground.

[9 : 00] And all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, recognized that Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. The Lord continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.

And Samuel's word came to all Israel. We'll stop there, and we'll look at that event in a little while. We're going to come to a time of intercessory prayer.

We pray for the needs of our own fellowship, and the needs of our town, needs of our nation, needs particularly of our world. Lord, some of you have heard of the earthquake in Ecuador, and several folk killed, many folk killed there.

Other natural disasters around the world that are going on, and many people who are in need at this time. Well, let us pray together. Let's come before God, bringing our own needs, our own concerns as well to him.

We sang before, Lord, that we are your people who are called upon to bless you, to praise you, to worship and adore you in all circumstances, in all situations. We thank you that we can do that.

[10 : 08] That in the world in which we live, where there is indeed a great deal of heartache and sorrow and loss, we ourselves are not spared of that. We know, Lord, your people also suffer.

We know, Lord, your people, including ourselves, go through times of great struggle and trial and difficulty. And yet, Lord, we thank you that in all circumstances, in everything that we face, we can bless you, praise you, thank you, because we know that nothing happens by chance in our lives, that we are not those who are blown here and there by fate or luck, but rather those who know you and love you especially know that our lives are in your hands, that you care for us, you carry us, you provide for us, you sustain us.

And we ask, O Lord, that you would give us praising hearts in all circumstances, give us that faith which is able to glorify you and worship and adore you, even when things don't go our way, when things are tough, when we find times of challenge.

We thank you, O Lord, that you know everyone that's here this morning. You know those of us particularly who are facing challenges and concerns, anxieties, fears. Those, Lord, who are struggling with health or with other issues, we ask again, O Lord, that you would draw near to us. We ask, O Lord, that you would take away from us all fear, that you give to us greater faith and trust in you. And, Lord, most of all, that you would help us daily to lean upon you and look to you.

[11:40] And, again, O Lord, to praise you and thank you because the greatest gift you've given to us is not our health in our bodies, but that spiritual health, that health that, O Lord, has raised us from death to life, so that we know you as Samuel did, so we hear your voice, so that we walk with you and have fellowship with you.

So, Lord, we know that when this life, this brief life is over, we shall be with you in heaven. And we shall be with you in that place, Lord, where there is no more fear, anxiety, tears, pain or death. We thank you that that is your promise to all who come to you in Christ. That promise, O Lord, which we must receive. That promise which we must place our trust. Otherwise, we shall lose all those blessings, both now and through eternity.

We do want to pray for our world. We, Lord, particularly pray for the people of Ecuador, where there's been this earthquake. And elsewhere in that region, I remember there was a terrible hurricane as others have been injured and killed.

We pray, O Lord, for others still recovering from earthquakes in Japan and other disasters, O Lord, around the world. Many in poor countries, many without suitable housing, many who have to now live on the streets or have nowhere to go.

[12:59] Lord, we pray for them. We thank you for those agencies who work so hard to care for them. We pray, Lord, that you would swiftly bring the help to those in need. We continue to remember those who are trapped, as it were, between their home and Europe.

Those many tens of thousands of refugees, Lord, who are struggling to find a place of peace away from the warfare of Syria. Many who are looking for a place where they can be free from persecution, from Pakistan, Afghanistan, from Iran and Iraq.

Oh, Lord, we pray for them, that you would bring people into a place of safety. Remove the obstacles. Remove the barriers that are there, Lord. The hindrances. We pray, Lord, that there may be a welcome and a reception of those in need.

That we may be mindful of just how blessed we are in our own nation to have peace and prosperity. Not to keep it to ourselves, Lord. The gifts you give us are not for us simply to hold on to for ourselves.

You give us gifts that we might share them. We pray that we might be a sharing nation in these ways. We thank you again, oh Lord, for your church worldwide. We thank you for what you are doing in many difficult places.

[14:12] We pray that, again, you would watch over those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. And that, Lord, you would give them help. Those who are imprisoned for their faith. Those who are facing all sorts of persecution.

Lord, simply because they love you and own you. Pray, oh Lord, that you would give them courage and bravery in the face of these things. And that, Lord, you would bring them through these terrible trials. Pray, oh Lord, that you would give them through these things.

A spirit, a hardness of heart that will not listen to you. Cause us to hear your voice and to act upon your word with the power that you supply by your Holy Spirit.

For we ask all these things as we bring all our prayers, all our concerns, all our cares to you. In Jesus' name, amen. Let's sing together one more hymn before we come to that passage in 1 Samuel 3.

Let's sing 119. 119. 119. I'm take währendd compassion.

[15:48] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.y All the changing seats of life, in trouble and in joy.

The praises of thy God shall still thy own chapter employ.

From these deliverance I will voice till all that are dispressed.

From high example thou canst say, and shall thy priest rest.

[17:02] The praises of thy God shall still be. Give me his things that you will bear, and love me else to fear.

When you will serve his holy land, the Lord shall be his friend.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you. Bible to 1 Samuel 3, where we read just a little while ago, particularly verses 10 and following.

As I said there, just by way of introduction, showing the words that God spoke to Samuel the first time he met with him, the first time that God revealed himself to him, and what he called on him to do. Now, I'm sure each of you have had something of the experience of being thrown in the deep end. It may even have happened when you learned to swim, I don't know, but being thrown in the deep end is that place where you're put in a challenging situation, where you feel out of your depth, you feel like it's something you're ill-equipped or unable to do, ill-prepared even. It may have been that first day at university, when you weren't sure where to go, what to do, or first day at work, where the boss gives you a job, go and do this, and you don't know your way around the office, or the factory, or whatever it may be. It's an unsettling feeling, isn't it, to be in that place where you're thrown in the deep end, you're in a place where you feel as if you're floundering, you feel as if, how will I cope? How can I do this? How can I get through this circumstance as I should? Since we know that being thrown in the deep end is such a difficulty and such a hard thing, then it's quite surprising perhaps for us to find that that's exactly what God does with Samuel here on that very first day that he is a prophet. Within hours of listening to the Lord's voice, we know that was in the middle of the night, God spoke to him, within just a few hours the next morning he had to deliver a most, his first prophecy to Eli. And what a prophecy it was, it wasn't a sort of a nice fluffy prophecy, if I put it that way, God loves you and God's with you and everything's going to be okay, Eli. No, it's a word from God which has no peace, no comfort.

It's a word of judgment and disaster. Verse 14, therefore I swore to the house of Eli, the guilt of Eli's house will never be atoned for. It's a harsh word, it's a difficult thing to do.

[19:51] It's something which is really quite overwhelming, I'm sure, for this young man.

Remember, he's only probably a boy of 10 or 11 years old at the time. But to change the illustration slightly, it's vitally important for Eli that he doesn't fall at this first hurdle. It's vitally important that he gets through and does this thing, that he survives, that he obeys God's voice, that he gives the prophecy because ultimately he had a lifetime ahead of him of serving God as a prophet of Israel.

A lifetime ahead of him of doing God's work, of leading the nation, of accomplishing with God's grace and help amazing things, tremendous things. And if he was to fall here, if he was to fall flat, if he was to not do what God had dropped him in to do, then that would be possibly the end of all the potential, all the future that God had in store for him. The truth is that whenever you become a Christian, whenever somebody comes to this living relationship with the Lord God, then inevitably, very soon, you will find yourself in at the deep end. You'll find yourself out of your depth. God does that to us. To become a Christian means that immediately we are plunged into a whole new experience of life, which is in many ways contrary to anything we've known before. That newfound faith in the Lord is put to the test because we have to apply what we know now of God to our lives day by day.

And as you go on through the Christian life, it doesn't change. It's not just at the beginning that there are all sorts of challenges and tests for you as a young Christian, but even as you grow through the Christian life again and again, there will be experiences that God will call us to go through, which we feel utterly helpless to accomplish. Challenges to our lives, which we feel as if we are ill-equipped, ill-prepared to do. We are challenged by the circumstances of life around about us. Challenged as to how we will act in certain circumstances. How we will speak. How we will respond. And immediately, of course, we can understand then why Samuel feels the way he does when God calls him to give this word of judgment. We're told there in verse 15, whether Samuel slept the rest of the night, I doubt it, quite honestly. But he lay down at least until morning. It's not told he slept, but he lay down until morning, opened the doors of the house of the Lord. He was afraid.

He was afraid. God had given him this challenge, given him this incredible responsibility, called upon him to give this prophetic word of judgment, and he was afraid. And we can fully understand why he was afraid. He was going to speak to Eli. And Eli, after all, was someone who really had been like a father to him. From when he was very young, probably five years old, he had lived in a tabernacle under the care of Eli. Eli speaks to him and says, Samuel, my son. He has this fatherly, tender care for the boy. He doesn't want to upset the old man. He doesn't want to say something

nasty to someone who's been so loving and kind towards him. It goes against everything he's seen. [23 : 23] Then, of course, naturally, he would be afraid of Eli. How can I, this young boy, this whippersnapper, how can I go and speak to Eli? He's the top man in the church. He's the chief priest. He's the one who's in charge. You know, he's the boss. Everybody looks up to him. And here I am. I'm just a boy, and he could be angry with me. He could say to me, Samuel, after all I've done for you, here you are serving, and that's it.

You're out of the Lord's house. You're out of the tabernacle. That's the end of your ministry, the end of your vocation. Anything could happen. I'm sure that Samuel lay there in the night. I'm sure that through his mind, like with us, would go. Those thoughts, those concerns, how can I put it? How can I say it? Can I avoid saying it, maybe even? Now, there are real fears in following Christ. Real fears in following the Lord Jesus Christ. Fear of what people will think of us, what they will say of us, what they will do to us. Fear of the consequences of our lives as well, if we follow Christ. What will the outcome be? I may not be able to go up the career ladder that I've got at the moment because there are certain practices that I'm called upon to do which really go contrary to the Christian life. I know that I have to do this or do that or say this or say that and join in and be part of the gang, as it were, with their banter and their filthy talk and their language and their jokes. I can't do that anymore. I'll be ostracized. All sorts of fears run through the mind of people who contemplating, thinking about following Christ. And again, for those of us who have been Christians for some time, there are points in our lives where we are faced with, do I compromise? Do I just back off a little bit in being so zealous and talking about Jesus? Do I sort of pretend or not mention that I go to church on a Sunday when I make new acquaintances? All these challenges come to us regularly. We feel as if we're out of our depth. What can I do? How can I cope? How can I follow the Lord in this situation? Of course, the reality is that fear itself and the fears that we have, even just general fears, natural fears, are often unfounded fears, aren't they? Often they're misplaced fears. I've told you many times that I'm afraid of the dark. But it's a silly fear to have, isn't it? Nothing has ever happened to me in the dark. I've never been mugged or attacked or anything horrible. But it's an unfounded fear. People I know here are very afraid of spiders. One person in particular, afraid of spiders. Well, what can they do to us? Nothing really. Can they? You see a spider and you shriek. I don't, of course. I'm a man. But you shriek, don't you? There's a spider on the floor. And Andrew always sends me to go and pick up the spider and throw it out the window or something. I don't like killing spiders, but I'll throw it out the window into the cold and the wet and the rain and so on. But there's some, you know, how many of us have been bitten by spiders?

Anybody here been bitten by spiders? No, but why are we afraid of them? It's misplaced. So the same, the fear of failing, the failure of being ostracized, the fear, the fear of not being accepted, the fear of also, all our fears often are unnecessary fears.

But Samuel was afraid. So let's look at this. Let's understand this. If we are afraid at times to follow the Lord, afraid maybe to put our faith in him, but afraid even as Christians as we go on to be faithful to him, to be obedient to him, to follow him wholeheartedly, is there any reason we should be?

[27 : 06] Should we be controlled by those fears? Should they have a part in our lives? Well, let's look. What can we learn from Samuel's experience here? What can we learn about how we can be better prepared to follow Christ, to obey his voice, to follow his way? The first thing we need to recognize, and it's so important that we do, is that every single person who has put their faith and trust in God has known fear. Every Christian, every believer knows what it is to experience fear.

There's never one person who has not been afraid in following Christ. Just think of David. David, who's going to come a bit later, of course, in the story. David is this man who, as a boy, faced lions and bears, and of course, we know, faced Goliath, this eight-foot-tall Arnold Schwarzenegger, when he was in his prime, sort of warrior type of fellow, with a great spear and a great shield. He stood before David. David, the boy, stands before Goliath. His knees aren't knocking.

Teeth aren't chattering. Not bothered. I'm going to put you down, basically, he says. The Lord of God of Israel is going to put you down. You haven't got a hope. This huge, hulking fellow. But listen to these words.

Just a bit later on, 1 Samuel chapter 21, we're told that he was in the presence of the King Achish of Gath. David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish, king of Gath.

How can he be afraid of this king? He's very much afraid. David, the warrior who's slain his tens of thousands. Think of Joshua as well. Joshua, the one who led God's people into battle after battle

after battle. Joshua, who's at Jericho. Joshua, who's in the battles that went through the promised land again and again. But what does God have to say to this warrior, this brave Joshua? Joshua chapter 1, have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified. In other words, he was terrified. He was afraid. That's why God had to tell him not to be. Joshua. We can go on, can we? What was it that led Peter, the apostle, the brave apostle who said, Lord, I'll never leave you. I'll never deny you.

[29 : 24] I'll leave you. I'll leave you. I'll leave you. I'll leave you. I'll leave you. I'll leave you. Jesus three times in front of a young maid. What was it that caused him and all the other disciples to run away when Jesus was arrested and to flee for their lives? Fear, wasn't it? Fear was real to them. They knew what it was to be afraid. So if you know fear, dear friends, as a Christian, if you know fear and you're afraid, then you're in good company in that sense. It's something that we all experience.

We all know. So don't say, first of all, I must be a terrible, awful person or a terrible Christian because I'm afraid to follow the Lord Jesus. Following God should make us afraid. But that's not the end.

How can we overcome fear? How did Samuel overcome fear? How did these others overcome fear?

Is it that we just have the English stiff upper lip and we just go walking into the valley of, was it the valley of the, into the valley of death road, the 500? You know, just charging in. We're all going to die, but yes, we're British, so it doesn't really matter. Or do we just sort of say, well, I've got to really steal myself. How do we live without fear? Well, very simply put, we sang it here in the hymn. That's the reason I chose it there. Verse 6, fear him, you saints, and you will then have nothing else to fear.

The fear of God is the only fear we need to have. Fearing him delivers us of all other fears. Now, we don't hear many people speaking of the fear of God nowadays. It used to be, of course, quite often in the old days, when some of you were young, people thought, that's a God-fearing woman there, or a God-fearing man. It didn't mean they went around shaking everywhere and were nervous disposition.

[31 : 23] It was people who were godly, people who had great faith. God-fearing is something we don't hear much of. Perhaps because we think that to fear God is a wrong thing to do. It shows a lack of faith. We have to trust God, have faith in God, not fear God. Or perhaps we prefer that people speak about loving God and the love of God, as if somehow fear of God and love for God were incompatible. They're two opposites.

They were really the very antithesis of one another. But actually, the Bible tells us that fear and love for God go together. They are taught in the Bible as being two sides of the same coin. They are necessary. In one sense, you cannot have a true fear of God without a true love of God, or a true love of God without a true fear of God. Here's what the Lord says in Deuteronomy chapter 10, verse 12, through Moses. And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you? Okay, so what does God want? What does God ask of you? But to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and strength, to walk before God in his ways, to serve God. They're the same thing, aren't they? To live before him. We need both fear and love.

The psalmist, Psalm 147, says this, the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love. So fear is to do with love. There's true fear. When we come into the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, the church there was a church that had a fear of the Lord. But listen how it's described. Acts chapter 9, then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit. It grew in numbers. Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that amazing? Isn't that what we long for as a church? That it would be strengthened, encouraged in the Holy Spirit, grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.

Not contradictory, is it? But to be blessed, to be encouraged, to grow, to be led by the Spirit, means living in the fear of the Lord. We're going through 1 Peter on Sunday nights as well. Again, Peter there stresses part of our Christian duty is fearing God. 1 Peter chapter 2, show proper respect to everyone. Love the brotherhood of believers. Fear God. Honor the king. Loving one another includes fearing the Lord. So fear and love are not contradictory. And what is needed for Samuel here is that he should have a right fear of God? What we need is a right fear of God. Because a

right fear of God will mean that we shall have all that we need to overcome those other fears. Fears of what people will say. Fears of compromise. Fears of not being obedient. Fears of the world around about us.

How does that happen? It happens through Eli, particularly. Because when Eli speaks to Samuel, he impresses upon him the fear of God as the motive for him to be able to speak this prophetic word.

[34 : 41] Remember there, verse 16, Samuel, my son. Samuel answered, here I am. What was it he said to you, Eli asked? Do not hide it from me. May God deal with you, be it ever so severely, if you hide from me anything he told you. So Samuel told him everything. See, he's impressing upon Samuel that God is a God to be feared in the right sense of the word, as we've been thinking. That his natural fears of what Eli might say or what might happen must take second place and will be overcome and conquered through fearing the Lord. Well, what is a right fear? What will a right fear of God mean for us?

What will a right fear of God mean as we seek to obey God, as Samuel did, either as he calls us to obedience in him, calls us to faith and trust in Christ, or he calls us to live dynamic Christian lives today as those who are not compromised, but those who are wholeheartedly seeking God.

What will a right fear do? How will we see it? How do we know if we've got it? What will it do for us? What did it do for Samuel? Let's look at that. Well, first of all, of course, a right fear of God will make us faithful. So Samuel told him everything, hiding nothing from him. So the whole message that God had given him, he didn't water it down a bit or try and make it a bit more easy on poor Eli's ears. He just told him what God had told him to say. Doesn't cover it up, doesn't make it sound good, tells him the truth. See, the reality is that God can't be fooled. You can't fool God. It's no good being a hypocrite. It's no good trying to be something we're not, particularly if you're a Christian. It's no good trying to live that double sort of life that says, well, on the one hand, to my church friends, I'm a Christian and I go to church, but to everybody else, I'm just one of the blokes or one of the girls or just one of the crowd. Living like that just tears you apart.

You can't be one thing and not another. You need to be either the Lord's, following him, trusting him, living for him, or not at all. You see, every one of us, dear friends, is under the very eye of God. When Samuel was standing before Eli, Eli is saying to him in one sense, look, God is listening to what you're going to say now. God is seeing what's taking place now.

[37 : 19] He's not going to be, you can't fool him. You can fool me maybe, but you can't fool him. Dear friends, whenever we go home, whenever we go to our place of work, whenever we're out in the streets, we are under the very eye of God. We are within the earshot of God. Everything that you say, do, and think is known to God. So what's the point of trying to be something you're not? What's the point of trying to put on a pretense to other people? If we have a fear of God, we'll be faithful.

Faithful to who we are. Faithful to him who saved us. Faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. A right fear of God will mean this, though, dear friends, that he will trust us with his honor and glory. He will trust us with his honor and glory. Remember the parables that Jesus taught? There was one particular parable. We call it the parable of the talents. It's when Jesus told a parable about a king and he was leaving the country and he gave certain amounts of money to certain servants.

And in that parable, the king comes back and he basically says, what have you been doing with the gifts I've given you? What have you been doing with the talents that I've given you? And the first two, they had used those talents. They had put them to work and they had gained more. They'd increased the king's wealth. The last one had hidden his talent away and he'd been afraid.

And that's quite clearly in the story. He was afraid to use the talent God had given him. And he was judged harshly. But this is what the king said to the other servants when he returned.

He said, well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. If we are faithful to God in our lives, even in the daily routine of our lives, then God will bless us and give us greater opportunities to honour and glorify him. That's one of the principles that comes out, surely, from this event in Samuel's life. The outcome of his faithfulness to God's word was surprising to him. First of all, because Eli wasn't angry with him.

[39 : 34] Here's Eli's response in verse 18. Eli said, he is the Lord. Let him do what is good in his eyes. He accepted Samuel's words. Sometimes we're afraid that if we speak for Jesus, if we live for him, if we say to people, no, I can't come and play. I won't use the illustration of golf because that's not fair. I'm always having a go at those poor golfers. So not golf on a Sunday. I won't go and play

football or whatever it is because I need to be in church. We may be surprised at the response we may get. We may be afraid that he'll say, oh, goodness me, what another Bible basher. What another do-gooder. What another, oh, we don't. You may be surprised. Samuel was surprised.

And there may be more opportunities for us from that to be able to speak for the Lord, more opportunities to speak. Well, why do you go to church? You're an ordinary, upright guy. Why do you go on a Sunday? Why aren't you out in the sunshine like today or on the football pitch, wherever it may be? God will give us greater opportunities to honour him, to speak for him, to exalt the Lord Jesus. And that's what happens with Samuel, isn't it? Samuel, thrown in the deep end, as it were, he swam. He looked and he did what God had called him to do. He wasn't overcome by the challenge. And so we're told, verse 19, the Lord was with Samuel. He grew up. As he grew up, he let none of Samuel's words fall to the ground. All Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, recognised Samuel was attested as a prophet of the Lord. God gave him more opportunities to speak, more prophetic messages to speak, to speak God's word into people's lives. And the people accepted him and received him and God honoured him. Now, if he'd been afraid of Eli, if he'd been afraid of what Eli would do to him or what might happen, and he'd been stunted and kept back from putting his faith in God and obeying God, then none of these things would have happened. None of these opportunities would have taken place. See, God cannot trust us with his truth to speak for him if we were not doing it in the small things, if we were not doing it in the little things. If God had not, if Samuel had not spoken in front of one man, Eli, how could he speak in front of many people, the people of Israel?

The fear of God gave him greater opportunity. Fear of God meant that God used him more, blessed him more. And thirdly and finally, which is surely the great desire of all of us, verse 21, the Lord continued to appear at Shiloh and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word. A greater fear of God means that we shall have greater fellowship with God. A greater fear of God will mean that we'll enjoy his nearness more and more. We saw that in Psalm 147, didn't we? God delights in those who fear him.

So what is God going to do with those he delights with? He's going to spend time with them. Do you want to know more of Christ in your life? Do you want to have a closer walk with him, dear Christian friend? Do you want him to be more influential in the way that you live? Do you want more of the Spirit?

[42 : 45] Do you want more to understand the word of God? Then fear God. Fear God and do the things that he calls us to do, those small things, those little things he calls us to do, because his desire will be then to reveal himself more to us.

The sad thing is, is that many people do not fear the Lord. And because they do not fear the Lord, whether they are unbelievers or Christians, they miss out on the blessings of God.

The worst thing we can do is not fear God. Because if we don't fear God, then we will do several things. If we don't fear God, then as a non-Christian, we'll say, well, I can just continue my life as I am. Things will go on as they do, and really I don't need to bother. I don't need to fear God's judgment on that day when I stand before him. I don't need to fear hell. I don't need to fear that God sees all my sins and that he will call me to account for them. I don't need to fear him in any way. So I will just continue through my life. I will not put my faith in Christ. I will not look to him for my saviour. I will just be fine.

But what does that person miss out on? That person who will not fear God, what will they miss out on?

Not only the blessings of sins forgiven now, not only the blessings of life in fellowship with God now, not only the joy of living for him, but, oh, dear friends, words cannot express, cannot express the loss of hell, cannot express the sorrow, the grief, the gnashing of teeth, the kicking of oneself when we stand before God, and we have not had a fear of God to trust in his son, the saviour, and we shall spend all eternity. Oh, tears will never dry up.

[44 : 39] I don't want to make some nonsense about hell, but hell, dear friends, is so bad. It's so bad. Fear of God should drive us to him, drive us to the saviour, drive us to the one who forgives, drive us to the one who only too gladly welcomes and receives and cleanses from sin and makes us his child and makes us his servant. But, dear friends, what about those of us who are Christians? How many times have we been controlled by fear? Fear of what people will say, fear of failure, fear of losing pleasure or benefits or career choice or whatever. How often have we been controlled by those things and we have missed out on all that God has for us, all the opportunities

that we may have had to be those witnesses, those lights to our work colleagues, our family, all the blessings of the nearness of fellowship with him in his word. Fear has taken hold of us, not the fear of the Lord, but the fear that cripples, that paralyzes, that robs, that steals. That's why I'm sure the Bible makes it clear that to not have a fear of God is the worst thing. Psalm 36, David says this, I have a message from God in my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked. There's no fear of God before their eyes.

What does the Bible say about those who fear God? Those who fear God, it says, Proverbs 10, it adds length of life. Fear of God is a fountain of life. Chapter 14, the beginning of wisdom. God spoke to Samuel clearly, called him by name, to follow him, to serve him. As we thought last week, God does speak to every single one of us and call us to fear him, to trust him, to follow him, to love him.

What is it that's keeping you back? What is it that's keeping you back, dear Christian, from obeying the Lord's voice? You're living that mediocre Christian life, you know it. It's half-hearted. It's just when it pleases, when it suits, when it goes with everybody else. What's keeping you back? Is it fear? Is it lack of faith? I don't know if I can trust God. Is it worse? Disobedience? How we need that the Holy Spirit would search our hearts. Ask us. Show us. What is it that I'm afraid of? That he might give to us a true fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of life. Let's pray together now.

Every heart, every mind is open before you, O Lord. We can't hide anything from you. We can put it, we can put on the mask and we can pretend and we can be all things to other people, but Lord, to you, there's nothing we can hide. And we thank you for that. We thank you that you know us so completely. You know us absolutely, totally. You know, Lord, our sins, yes, but you know our fears too. You know those fears that have kept us from trusting you, putting our faith in you, obeying your call to repent of our sins and take Christ as our Savior. O Lord, we ask that you would deliver us of those fears that we would just see, Lord, that there is something much, much, much greater to fear, and that is your judgment and wrath. Something to fear losing out on the riches and the blessings of forgiveness and salvation. O Lord, please impart to us that fear of God. That's the beginning of life. Those of us who are believers, who are Christians, we put our trust in you, and Lord, at times, [48 : 33] Lord, we have stood up to those fears and overcome them, but we know that at this time there are those fears that control us. We aren't being the people that you call us to be. We aren't delivering the full message.

We're giving it half measure in the way that we live day by day, in the way we speak, and O Lord, we ask you to forgive us for that. When we think that the Lord Jesus went to the cross for us, went the full measure, how can we be half-hearted, lukewarm? But we are. Please come upon us by your spirit and give us that fear of God, not a fear that cringes, not a fear that overrules, but a fear of love, fear that goes together hand in hand with love for God, a fear, Lord, that honors and respects and exalts you because we know that your way is best. And surely the way of this world and the way that we follow and the way that we fear upsetting the apple cart, Lord, is just foolishness. Search our hearts, O Lord, show us, reveal to us these things and empower us with that power, empower us with that power of which Paul spoke at the very beginning of our service.

My grace is sufficient for you, my strength made perfect in weakness. We come as weak men and women, give us strength, strength, O Lord, from yourself to live in the fear of the Lord and the freedom from the fear of all other things. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

And four. ■ Thanks Come you The free he shares of the way.

[50 : 38] Turn him to his goodwill. He provides with a skill. And we all will trust and obey.

Trust and obey. For there's no other way. To be happy in Jesus.

Trust and obey. Not a burden we end. Not a sorrow we share.

Not a joy we know which we repay. Not a dream no hellos. Not a crown no red cross.

But it's less if we trust and obey. Trust and obey. For there's no other way.

[51 : 39] To be happy in Jesus. But it's less if we trust and obey. Not a dream no hell.

But it's less if we trust and obey. The grace of his love. But it's less if we trust and obey. Not a dream no hell.

But it's less if we trust and obey. No, it's less if we trust and obey. But it's less if we trust and obey.

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But it's less if we trust and obey. cies if we don't mistake if they are. ope of ■■ But it's less if we trust and obey.

[52 : 47] When He stands, we will go Let Him be in only trust and obey Trust and obey For there's no other way To be happy in Jesus And to trust and obey Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead, our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, may He equip you with everything good for doing His will.

And may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs all the glory forever and ever. Amen. Amen.