

# **Spiritual Progress Requires Right Attitude**

## **The Essential Work of Godly Fear - Part 1**

Scriptures 2 Samuel 6 and 1 Chronicles 13 & 15

### Background

David at this time had become the undisputed King of Judah and Israel. After consulting many people he decided to bring the Ark of God to Jerusalem.

Both the above Scriptures give accounts of David's initial unsuccessful attempt to bring the Ark of God to Jerusalem. Contrary to God's law and instructions, the Ark was transported on a cart pulled by oxen. On the way, the oxen stumbled and one of the drivers called Uzza, put his hand out to steady the ark and God struck him down dead. David was angry and too afraid of God to move the Ark any further and so left it nearby in safe keeping for three months.

Later, later after proper preparation, David successfully brought the Ark of God up to Jerusalem. This time, the Levite priests in accordance with God's law carried it and they came to Jerusalem with great rejoicing. In this article we shall examine the spiritual lessons and challenges for us today from the Godly fear created in David.

### The Affect of Godly Fear on David

God struck down Uzza and his death had very profound effects both on the short and long term.

In the short term, the enormous procession with its loud singing and music came to an abrupt halt. God caused a fear to fall upon David and the whole congregation. David was so afraid that he decided to leave the Ark of God right there, carrying it aside to the house of Obedom. It caused David and people to examine their hearts and sanctify themselves.

This Godly fear affected them greatly for the rest of their lives and the benefit continued on to affect subsequent generations.

## Is Godly Fear Necessary Today?

The modern Christian church seems to on the whole to have decided that Godly fear is no longer necessary. 1 John 4 verses 17-19 is frequently quoted to support the view that all fear is unnecessary and detrimental.

This simplistic use and erroneous interpretation of this scripture has a contrary effect on congregations. They are falsely reassured that Godly fear is wrong, nullifying its beneficial work in their hearts. The many references to the positive effects of Godly fear in the New Testament are frequently ignored.

Adam Clarke in his Bible Commentary states re 1 John 4v18

*“We are not to suppose that the love of God casts out every kind of fear from the soul: it only casts out that which has torment. A filial fear is consistent with the highest degrees of love and even necessary to the preservation of that grace. This is properly its guardian and, without this, love would soon degenerate into listlessness, or presumptive boldness. “*

At times 1 John 4 verses 17-19 seems to be used as a talisman in church services to provide a temporary “lift” to the congregation, but ignoring the reality that peoples lives are often full of the fears they claim have been destroyed. It is used to reassure us that all is well when many of the hearers know in the depth of their heart that this is not true.

What we fail to understand is that Godly fear is the antidote for all the other fears, such as the fear of man, fear of circumstances, fear of the future, fear of disasters, a fear of poverty and the fear of death. The one good fear will destroy all the others that so easily and effectively rule our lives.

## Godly Fear Brings a God Reality

God moved striking down Uzza and evoking fear. This Godly fear was the beginning of wisdom for David and the people of Israel. Suddenly they were acutely aware of their presumption, sin and the need to get right with God. They were brought into a “God Reality” about their spiritual state and this is the first essential benefit of Godly fear.

Are we living in a “God given reality” created by Godly fear? Or have we constructed a religious belief system and dare not let Godly fear come anywhere near, unless like the destruction of the Tower of Babel it is brought to nothing.

## What is New Testament Godly Fear?

There is often a mistaken understanding regarding New Testament Godly fear. It is somehow considered old fashioned and has become associated with lifeless religiousness. However, real Godly fear is something very wonderful and the vital essence of a spiritual relationship with the Godhead.

The Christian fathers were very clear on the subject. They believed Godly fear to be essential to our spiritual walk and they called it filial fear. The Oxford dictionary definition of filial is - *relating to or due from a son or daughter*. Filial fear is that of a son or daughter fearing to offend the father whom he or she loves.

Spurgeon describes filial fear

*“like the child’s fear of his father. Not a naughty child but a young man who loves his father and who is his father’s friend, his father’s most familiar acquaintance.”*

and

*“Godly fear is not a fear of the person of God but a fear of not believing him or his actions, or not believing his character.”*

Godly Fear and its Godly Consequence, 1290, 1876, Met Tabernacle.

John Gill in his Bible Commentary states:

*“The filial fear of God, the new covenant grace of fear, which is the beginning of wisdom, and is consistent with faith, hope, love, and spiritual joy.”*

Rather than being considered detrimental, this filial fear was considered by our Christian fathers as an essential part of the highest form of love.

Having Godly filial fear is not an indication that we do not know him, but rather that we know and love him deeply and therefore cannot bear to displease him.

## Godly Fear Is Relationship Not Religiousness

The counterfeit for this divinely wrought filial fear relationship is the manmade observance of religious habits, traditions and rules. The Pharisees had a multitude of religious rules but condemned and crucified the Son of God whose heart was always to please his father. The Christian church has a strong tendency to substitute rules and traditions for this wonderful loving relationship because its easier to give a man a few rules and stipulate the use of religious habits rather than bring him into a divinely created loving relationship.

## Godly Fear – A Vital Spiritual Key

Why do so many Christians seem to struggle with really loving and wanting to obey God? Why do so many seem to lack confidence and faith in God? It is in part because they have not been brought into this relationship of Godly Filial Fear.

Men and woman will be loving, confident and full of faith when they have filial fear. A characteristic of their loving heart is that it pains them in anyway to disbelieve their beloved Christ. They fear to obey any one but Jesus and will brave and endure anything rather than disappoint him. They hate their own fleshly desires having dominion instead of the Father of Spirits. This is the same heart attitude exhibited by Christ on the earth, that of the ever loving son fearing to displease his beloved father.

### Why do people want to ignore the need for Godly fear?

It's very convenient to our self-life to be told we should have no fear at all. Godly filial fear brings an inherent desire to please God and that will demand a death to our own desires and wishes.

### Filial Fear is God's Grace to the Church

The provision of Godly Filial Fear is the grace of Christ to his church. It forms and solidifies the nature of Christ in a man or woman's character. It creates in them the highest form of affection for Christ.

We may not have experienced very little of filial fear so far, but God make it grow in our hearts. We should look to it being increased in us, as it will transform those areas of our lives that have for years have stubbornly resisted change.

In the next article, we shall examine the New Testament references to Godly Fear and examine further benefits for our spiritual life.

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