

Trembling for the ark of God

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

- [0 : 0 0] This passage we read in the Old Testament in the first book of Samuel chapter 4, where you'll find our text for today in verse 13 of that chapter.
- 1 Samuel chapter 4 and verse 13. We'll read from verse 12. There ran a man of Benjamin out of the army and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent and with earth upon his head.
- And when he came, lo, Eli, sat upon a seat by the wayside watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God.
- His heart trembled for the ark of God. There are few figures in the Bible that touch our hearts as deeply as the figure of Eli.
- It is almost impossible to read the account that we have brief though days of the life of Eli without feeling desperately sorry for him.
- [1 : 1 3] Our heart is truly touched when we read what we find told us about this man Eli. There was no doubting his godliness. He was a godly man.
- He was a man of mild and gentle character. A man who would not offend anyone. A man who truly showed many, many qualities of godliness.
- You don't find him, for example, when Samuel, having come to know the Lord, brings the message that the Lord brought him to Eli when Eli forces him more or less to tell him what the Lord had said.
- When that message, with all that it holds for Eli and for his house, comes to Eli through the mouth of Samuel. You don't find Eli responding in animosity to Samuel, in anger against God.
- You don't find resentment. You don't find jealousy. None of these things. Acceptance. Acceptance. Submission. Quiet resignation. Into the hand of God.
- [2 : 2 4] It is the Lord. Let him do what seems good. And yet, for all that godliness. For all his character. There is something in the life of Eli that is missing.
- Something important. Something crucial. He misses the matter of moral strength. He has convictions, but he doesn't have the courage to stand for them.
- He doesn't have the courage to stand for them, at least with the firmness that ought to have characterized him as a man of God. It doesn't matter whether you look at him as a parent.
- Whether you look at him as a judge. He judged Israel for 40 years. He was the leader of Israel for 40 years. He was a priest of the Lord. He was in charge of the business of the house of God.
- Of the sacrifices of God. Of all the arrangements of God's house. Whether you look at him as a judge. Or as a priest. Or as a parent. This is one thing that always comes through in the life of this miserable man Eli.
- [3 : 3 2] For all his godliness. He is spineless. He doesn't have the strength to stand as he ought for his conviction. He lets many people in Israel do what is wrong in the eyes of the Lord.

He lets the sacrifices of God's house be defiled. He lets his sons live in open sin with only a mild rebuke to them. And now that they are adults.

With houses of their own and families. It's too late. He has so little control over them. It's such a pathetic figure. For all his undoubted godliness.

How our heart is touched. By all that was missing in the life of Eli. As he sits there by the wayside. Watching with his heart trembling.

And I would like today to try and. For us all to try and get into the mind of Eli. As he sits there on that seat in his loneliness. Watching for and waiting for news.

[4 : 38] Coming from the field of back. Because there is much information given us. As to what must have gone through the mind of Eli. And particularly in reference to the act of God.

There are many things that could have caused him to tremble. This was a decisive day. In the history of Israel. At least at that moment. Because it seems to have been the kind of situation.

Where one battle. One decisive battle. Was going to decide for generations. The future of Israel. Were they going to be in the ascendancy over the Philistines. Or were they going to be subject to them.

All of that was suspended. On these vital moments. In the field of battle. But that wasn't what made the heart of Eli tremble.

He was no doubt thinking of all the mothers. The daughters. The sons in Israel. Who were the next morning going to mourn. The 30,000 that were slain on the field of battle.

[5 : 42] The daughters. The mothers. The sisters. The brothers. Who would never see their loved ones again. He was no doubt thinking of how that was in view.

In concerning this battlefield in which these men were engaged. But that wasn't what made his heart to tremble. He was no doubt concerned about his own two sons.

His flesh and blood. Not only were they involved in the battle. But they were involved in the battle with. A dark prophecy of the Lord.

Suspended over them. The Lord had said to Eli. That his house was going to be judged. That his house was going to.

Come under the retribution of God. Because of the way. That he had failed to run. Regulate his sons. Because of the ungodliness that was there.

[6 : 45] Alongside the undoubted godliness. God says I'm going to cut them off. In the flower of their age. And they went into battle. With that dark prophecy of God.

Suspended over their heads. Oh whatever Eli would have thought. Of the swords of the Philistines. The sword of the hand of God. Was undoubtedly in his mind. As he thought about his flesh and blood.

As he thought about Hophni and Phinehas. In the forefront of the battle. But that wasn't. Not even that. Made his heart to death. His heart trembled.

For the ark of God. For the ark of God. That single most holy and sacred. And symbolic piece of Israel.

And symbolic piece of Israelites. Religious history. History. And practice. And practice. The ark of God. That contained the law of God.

[7 : 44] The ark of God. That symbolised. And visibly manifested. The presence of God. In the cloud. That dwelt. Between the children. Over the mercy seat.

That covered the ark of God. The ark of God. That they had carried into battle with them. The ark of God. That was the. Most precious. Surely the most precious.

Possession of Israel. The ark of God. That symbolised. The presence of God. The favour of God. The dwelling of God. His heart trembled. And his heart trembled. Not for his sons.

Not for the people. Not for the mothers of Israel. Not for himself. But for the ark of God. His heart trembled.

Because he knew. Two things. Two things that we can use. As our headings. As we try to. Realise. What Eli thought. First of all.

[8 : 40] He realised. The men that were in charge. Of the ark. And his heart would tremble. Because of that. Secondly. He realised. The manner in which.

They had taken the ark. And his heart would tremble. Because of that. First of all. The men who took the ark. His own two sons. Hophni and Phinehas.

Were in charge. Of the ark. The two sons of Eli. Hophni and Phinehas. Were there. With the ark. Of the covenant of God. Now Eli. Eli's two sons.

Hophni and Phinehas. Were not known. For their godliness. Oh. Whatever defects. Eli had in his life. Eli was a man of God.

Whatever defects. We may find. In his character. In his standing. For what he knew. To be right. Hophni and Phinehas. Have far greater defects. Than that.

[9 : 33] They are men. Who don't know the Lord. Who didn't know the Lord. Who didn't fear the Lord. Men who were priests. In the house of God. And yet defiled. The house of God. Men who had office.

In the church of God. And yet. Were engaged. In all kinds of. Immoral practices. Along with the way. That they offered the sacrifices. Of God. In the wrong manner.

In the wrong fashion. They were evil. Characters. Hophni and Phinehas. And just think of Eli. With his mind.

Upon the ark of God. And all that it signified. And thinking to himself. Who has charge. Of that ark of God. My two sons. Hophni and Phinehas. The ark of God.

In these hands. In these hands. That defile. The sanctuary of God. The ark of God. In these hands. How my heart trembles. How he would have gone back.

[10 : 30] In his mind. To his own deficiencies. Surely. How he would have thought. Of the way. That he had neglected. To bring them up. By applying the authority. That God had given him. Not only as a priest of God.

But as a parent. The authority that was his. To regulate his family. As one who was head. Of his household. How he would be filled with regret.

Sitting there by the wayside. Thinking back. As well as thinking forward. Filled with regret. For his lack of firmness. Filled with regret. For the way he had not actually.

Brought these sons up. In an authoritative. Disciplined man. Filled with regret. That now that they were old. And mature themselves.

It was long past. Remonstrating with them. He had lost his control. Of them long ago. He had lost it. From the very beginning.

[11 : 32] Because Eli. Had failed to overcome. In his own heart. That deficiency. And that's for he had failed. To bring them up. As he ought to have brought them up. He had failed to reckon.

With his own weakness. He had failed to overcome. That weakness. That spinelessness. Of himself. And that's for he had failed. In the bringing up. Of his sons.

Before we go on. Isn't there a lesson in that. For ourselves. Isn't there a lesson in that. For all of us. Who have families.

For all of us. Indeed. Who have contact. With children. Elsewhere. With children. Of our own families. For whatever way. We have contact. With children. Whatever way. We seek to.

Witness to. And to bring up. The generation. That's following us. This in Eli. Is surely filled. With lessons for us. That God has given us. Parental authority.

[12 : 26] To be used. To be applied. Eli was too soft. He was undisciplined. He didn't apply the authority.

That was his as a parent. The authority of advice. The authority of the will of God.

Revealed to him. And passed on to them. The authority of good example. The authority of bringing before them. The way we live our own lives. All of these things.

Are matters where the authority God gives us. Is passed on. Surely effectively. To the following generation. We don't have any right.

To speak about other people's children. We have plenty in ourselves. To deal with. But God's. Directives must be passed on.

[13 : 20] And must be taken note of. The matter of discipline. In the home. Of parental authority. In the home. Is not to be regarded.

As something. That is cruel. Something that is. Tyrannus. Or anything like that. It need not be that kind of thing. Because the secret to it all.

Is told us. In this very chapter. What is it? It is this. The honouring. Of the Lord. That is what Eli had failed to do.

Yet failed to honour the Lord. And the Lord had said to him. Specifically. That his two men. That his two sons. Were evil. And yet he did not restrain them.

But he said more than that. He said to him. That you have honoured them. Above me. What do we do. When we fail.

[14 : 15] To apply the authority. That is ours. As parents. Grandparents. Whatever it might be. Whatever it is. In the way of authority. Whatever kind of authority it is. However it must be passed on.

When we fail. What are we doing? What are we failing to recognise? We're failing to recognise. The honour of God. Honour God. Honour God first. Honour God primarily. Don't let anyone else.

Take the honour of God. Don't let anyone else. Be given the honour of God. Don't give it to yourself. Don't give it to your children. Don't give it to your families. Give it to God. Give him his place. Them that honour me.

I will honour. Them that despise me. Shall be likely a scene. The lessons. The lessons. Of Eli's house. For all the godliness.

There is this great deficiency. And his two sons. Hophni and Phinehas. Are the product. Of the weakness of his heart.

[15 : 14] And these are the men who are in charge. Of the ark of God. That is why Eli's heart trembles. When he thinks of the ark of God. He thinks of the men.

In whose hands the ark truly is. Can we not apply that more. To our own age as well. There are lessons in this. For our day. And for our generation.

Because you see. Eli is thinking. Of the spiritual. Leadership. Of Israel. In battle. In battle. With the enemies. Of the covenant of God. Of the people of God. The leadership.

Is not what it should be. And therefore the outcome of the battle. Is almost certainly. Defeat for Israel. He trembles for the ark of God.

- [16 : 13] When he recognises the kind of men. That bear the ark. That are in charge of the ark. That are in charge of the ark. In battle with the foes of Israel. He trembles. Because he realises.
- That it's almost inevitable. That the ark of God. Is going to be captured. That the ark of God. Is going to be delivered. To the hand of the Philistines. That the heathen. Are going to take. Israel's prized possession.
- He was right. And his daughter-in-law. Recognised. The seriousness of it. She named the child. That she bore. In her travail.
- And in a travail. That led to her death. Ixapod. The glory. Is departed. Now as you and I look out.
- Over. The situation. Of our own day. We're not in the business. Of setting ourselves. Above others. We're not in the business. Of comparing ourselves. To others. Or imagining.
- [17 : 12] That we are better. Than others. But look at this. Whole range. That you see. Today around you. Of spiritual leadership. For one thing. When you have men. Not making a profession.
- Of faith as such. But a profession. Of unbelief. That is taken. To be a profession. Of faith. People who will tell you. That they don't accept. The bible.
- Of the word of God. People who will say. Well I accept. Parts of it. But I must reject. These parts. People who will tell to you. That you must interpret. The bible. In a way that conforms.
- To modern thinking. That you must give way. To such movements. As feminist movements. And other movements. In order to accommodate. Such movements. Into the interpretation. Of the word of God.
- That this must change. And keep up with the times. You could add to that list. Almost Adam. Adam tonight. Is our heart today.
- [18 : 10] Not trembling. For the heart. For the ark of God. If you consider. The ark of God. To be in the hands.
- Of men. Who don't believe. The scripture. Who wondered. Why so called. As they put it. Simple believers. Cannot radically. Question. That Christ rose.
- Literally. From the dead. Are we not trembling. That the ark of God. Is in the hands. Of people like that. Are we not looking. To ourselves. In a way that would.
- Seek to set against. That movement. Are we not trembling. As we see. The outcome. Of that kind. Of idea. Of leadership. The outcome.
- Of that kind. Of leadership. That undoubtedly. Is that people. Think profession. Of faith. In Christ. Is something. That you can do. Just as any other matter. In the world. That it's a matter.
- [19 : 04] Simply of joining. The church. But there's nothing. More to it than that. That you can turn up. To church now. And again. And especially. At a time of communion. That there is nothing.
- Inconsistent. With going to the Lord's table. And then going to the golf course. Or to the pub. Or to do your gardening. Isn't that the legacy. Of the kind. Of leadership. Of the kind.
- Of declaration. Of the kind. Of preaching. Of the kind. Of situation. That prevails. In our day. Let's face it. That prevails. In our day. That ridicules. So called. Fundamentalism.
- The kind of leadership. That says. God will see to it. Friend. With a smile. On his face. That no one. Who goes to church. Will be lost. Is our heart.

Trembling. For the ark. Of God. Is our heart. Trembling. For the ark. Of God. When unbelief. Rules. Our day. When skepticism.

[20 : 01] And philosophies. That do not accord. With our view. Of scripture. And with scripture's. View of itself. And with God's. Declaration. Of himself. In the scripture. With God's. Declaration. Of the scripture.

As his word. Is our heart. Not trembling. Today. For the ark. Of God. Surely. It should. Just as it was. For Eli. Sitting on his seat.

By the wayside. When he thought. Of the hands. That had charge. Of the ark. Of God. His heart. Trembling. There are few things.

If anything. In this world. As serious. As important. As vital. As spiritual. Leadership. I know you recognize that.

But sadly. Very few others do. Spiritual leadership. Is something. Which is. A massive privilege. With massive responsibility.

[21 : 03] With a massive responsibility. That attach themselves. To that kind. Of God. Given privilege. And position. How little. Is realized. In our day.

What it means. To be. A preacher. Of the gospel. What it means. To be. In position. In the church of God. In a way that regulates. That has office. In the church of God. In a way that has leadership.

In the church of God. How all of these things. Are treated so lightly. And yet. Do we find ourselves. Trembling in our hearts. For the ark of God. Do we find this. Carrying us. To the throne of God.

Do we find this. Carrying us. With the burden. Of our hearts. With this. As the burden. Of our hearts. Bringing it to the. To the presence. Of God. In prayer. Eli trembled.

For the ark of God. When he thought. Of the hands. Into which the ark. Had been deposited. His own two sons. His own unbelieving.

[21 : 59] And wicked. And godless sons. But also. The manner. In which the ark. Was taken. Because I don't like.

I don't. I wouldn't like. Any of us here. To think. That it's all. A matter of. Them out there. And not us also. That it's all. A matter of.

The leadership. Of our day. Elsewhere. Or that it's all. A matter of. Christian. So called. Elsewhere. Without involving. Ourselves. The manner. In which these men. Took the ark. Is a lesson.

To ourselves. Also. And speaks. Forcibly. To ourselves. Today. As I hope. We'll see. In these next. Few moments. How did it come about. Taking the ark. Well.

It came back. From. A defeat. At the hands. Of the Philistines. They asked. The question. Wherefore has the Lord. Smitten us. Today.

[22 : 53] Before the Philistines. And in the next breath. They say. Let us fetch the ark. Of the covenant. Of the Lord. Out of Shiloh. That when it comes. Among us. It may save us.

Out of the hand. Of our enemies. In the next. What does that reveal. Well. It reveals. A profound.

Lack. Of appreciation. Of how. They ought to go into battle. They didn't go into battle. As men. Who had the power.

And the might of God. On their side. They didn't go into battle. As men. Who were victorious. And would be victorious. At the end of it. They went into battle. Defeated. Before they started.

They went into battle. As men. Who were crushed. They went into battle. As men. Who took the ark. Of God. Out of some. Mere superstition.

[23 : 48] Or looking back. To the past. In a historical. Kind of way. Without ever bothering. To come. To think. Of the question. Seriously. Why. Did we lose.

The first battle. You see. The point is this. If they're now saying. By. This. Let us fetch the ark.

Of the covenant. If they're saying. By that. As they are. We want God. To be with us. Then that itself. Shows.

How they understood. That God. Had not been with us. In the first battle. And they imagine. That the mere. Taking of the ark. Is going to lead.

To God. Being with them. When they haven't. Even analyzed. Why he wasn't with them. In the first place. How it was their sin. That prevented his being. With them. In the first place.

[24 : 43] How that was the root cause. Of that powerlessness. The fact. That they bring. The ark of God. The manner. In which they bring.

The ark of God. Is bound. To lead. To their defeat. Because they're entering. Into battle. Already defeated. They're entering. Into battle. In their own strength. They're entering.

Into battle. With the ark of God. As an empty symbol. For them. As far. As the situation. Goes. Because they have no more. Of God with them. This time. Than they had the first time.

They have not dealt. With the crucial matter. Of their own sins. Of their unbelief. Of their backsliding ways. Of their coldness. Of heart.

Of their indifference. To the religion. That God has given them. And because of that. However often. They take the ark with them. They're going to fail.

[25 : 39] They're going to fail. Miserable. Now you and I today. Can't we. Apply this to ourselves.

Surely we can. Don't you have to admit. As I have to admit. With you. That there are times. Perhaps even here and now. When you are conscious.

In the presence of God. As you go out. And as you engage. The enemy of your soul. In battle. In mortal combat. As it were. That there are times.

If not now. Then in the past. Certainly. When you have retired. From the field of battle. Defeated. When you know. That he has actually. Overcome you. When you have given in. To temptation.

When you have sinned. Against the Lord. When you have said to yourself. Oh my leanness. My leanness. When you recognize. Your lack of holiness. When you know. That in yourself.

[26 : 33] All that you have not done. In the presence of God. And for God. That you ought to have done. Cries out to God. Just as much. As the things. That you have done. That you ought not to have done.

Your sins of omission. Your sins of commission. They come together. As a massive pile. In your experience. In your. In your. In your mind. As you sit. And as you look back.

And as you wait. As you sit with Eli. As you think of the outcome. Of the battle. Aren't you. Aware. As I am aware. Of. The compromises.

The broken resolutions. The failed vows. The promises. We haven't kept. The sins we've committed. The backslidings. Of our heart. Aren't we aware.

Of our own. Inward hardness. Our coldness. Our indifference. Is the matter. Of reading God's word. Something that really causes. Excitement in our hearts.

[27 : 28] Do we find it easier. To read magazines. Newspapers. To watch television. Are we more drowsy. When we're reading. The word of God. When we're thinking of God. When we're thinking. Of the things of God.

Is it easier. In that sense. To do the things of the world. And the things of God. Don't we all. Have to admit. To failures. In these things. Now you see.

This is the vital question. What are we doing. Here. Today. Is it simply.

A matter of. Taking the ark of God. As Israel did. Is it simply. A matter of. Coming to the services. Hoping. And thinking.

That somehow. That by itself. Will correct the issue. Will correct the heart. Will turn us. Into what we should be. Will have the power of God. On our side.

[28 : 24] Is it simply. That kind of thing. That Israel had. That superstitiously. On some way like that. Took the ark of God. And said. Well this is going to. Guarantee our victory. Oh friends.

I hope not. It is one thing. To be. At a service. Such as this. It is one thing. To be at.

Other services. Whatever they might be. Pertaining. To the house of God. To the cause of God. It is one thing. To go to the Lord's table. To partake of the sacraments.

To read your Bible. To pray to God. But it is another thing. To do that. With repentance. With contrition.

With seeking. With seriousness. With the heart. And all seriousness. Before God says. Search me. Oh God.

[29 : 25] Try my heart. And see if there be. In me. Any wicked way. And lead me. In the way everlasting. That is precisely. What Israel did not do.

That is what they did not do. In taking the ark of God. And because. They did not do it. In that fashion. Taking the ark of God. Was useless to them. By all means.

Let us attend. Church services. By all means. Let us attend. Every service. That God has instituted. Every means of grace. That he has set up. For our good.

By all means. Let us be there. Let us be there. Constantly. Let us be there. Consistently. Consistently. Let us use. All these means. By all means. Let us read out Bibles. Let us hold.

Family worship. By all means. Let us do. All of these things. But if you and I think today. But leaving our hearts.

[30 : 21] As they are. In their cold. Backslidden conditions. And entering into these things. With that root. Of unbelief. With the root of backsliding.

With the root of sin. In ourselves. Still not dealt with. Still not. Really grappled with us at all. Friends. Friends. With the root of God. Friends. Being at all these things. Doesn't mean at all.

That God is going to be with us. If your heart is still set on backsliding. If you have not dealt with the sin of your heart.

If it has not been brought to God seriously to question. Why has the Lord smitten me today before the Philistines. Why is the power that I seek and that I would like to have.

Not so with me. As I come to engage the enemy. If we are not grappling with that seriously. If we are not with a repentant. Contrite man. Pouring that out before God.

[31 : 23] He assured. The grace of God. Is not guaranteed to you in power. To overcome the end. Eli trembled.

For the ark of God. He knew the manner of taking it was not right. He knew that these men had not actually asked the right questions.

Dealt with the matter in a way that they always knew. God to have. He knew that their hearts were still backslidden. He knew that they were still alienated from God.

He knew that the root cause of the thing was undealt with. He knew that they carried the ark into battle. In their own strength.

And that means defeat. And there is little of anything better today. That Satan wishes to see in you. And to see in me. And carrying the ark of God against him.

[32 : 22] In our own strength. He loves to see you leaving the sin of your heart undealt with. He loves to see you in your coldness. As my coldness is. Leaving that undealt with.

Without seeking of God. That quickening spirit. That quickening spirit. That will fire us into life. He loves to see our backsliding ways undealt with. He loves to see us going through the motions of religious exercises.

Without really seriously grappling with the issue that is at heart. And he loves to see that. Because he knows. That he will have an easy slaughter. Yes. Yes.

He will have an easy slaughter. Among the ranks of Israel. And the ark is carried into battle.

In such a manner. You and I have got to come. In all these issues. In the manner prescribed by God.

[33 : 22] Repentance. Faith. Clinging to Christ. Seeing him. As the foundation of strength.

Seeing ourselves as nothing. Realising our own absolute impotence. Drawing our source of strength. Drawing our strength from him as the source.

Are we trembling for the ark of God? As we see ourselves. As we realise the ark of God is deposited in our midst. As the cause of God. As the name of God.

As all of these things are given to us and placed in our midst. That we are bearing the ark of God into battle today. Have we caused to tremble?

What are these hands? That carry the ark of God into battle? Are they hands stained with blood? Stained with guilt?

[34 : 20] With backsliding? With unrepentant sin? And if so. You and I must tend. For the ark of God. One other thing.

Regarding the ark of God. As you know. The people were not allowed to touch. This ark. No one was to touch it. It was carried on staves.

Through rings attached to it. The ark is not just symbolic of the presence of God.

It is symbolic of the presence of the Holy God. How little. Oh how little. These men realised what they were carrying.

How lightly did the holiness of God. Weigh upon their shoulders. As they carried the ark of God into battle. How little did they realise.

[35 : 19] That it was symbolic of the presence. Of the Holy God. What is the holiness of God. To ourselves today.

As we carry the ark of God. Into battle against the enemy. What is the holiness of God. Not just his own holiness. As he describes himself in the Bible for us. But that holiness of his.

That is communicated as it were. To everything that belongs to him. And belongs to his service. The holiness of God. That attaches itself to the name of God. That attaches itself to the house of God.

This is bricks and mortar like any other house. In itself it is no different. But because of all that takes place here. Of all that is associated with it. It is the holy place.

Where God is pleased to manifest himself. The heart of God's people. The temple of the spirit of God. The holiness of God.

[36 : 18] As communicated to such. Because of his own dwelling in that place. The name of God. The people of God. The house of God. The service of God.

All that you have Christian. All that you have believer. In the service of God. Is stamped indelibly with this. With these words.

Holiness. Holiness. Holiness. Holiness. Unto the Lord. There is nothing that you do. Nothing that you say.

Out with that. It affects absolutely everything. In the service of the Christian. In the thoughts of the Christian. In the actions of the Christians.

In the doings of the Christian. Holiness unto the Lord. Is stamped upon it. Because of the Lord. Who stares it in. Are we trembling for the ark of God.

[37 : 15] Do we appreciate. What it means to be a Christian. Do we appreciate indeed. The seriousness of that. The solemnity of that.

By all means. Let's rejoice in it. Let's take all the joy. That belongs to the Christian life. It's there for the Christian. To enjoy and to partake of. But oh. Let's not forget.

The holiness of the God of the earth. Is imparted. To the Christian's life. And conversation. And behaviour. And thoughts. And speech. Holiness. Unto the Lord. How then should we pray.

The prayer of the psalmist. Hold up my goings Lord. Me guide in those thy paths divine. So that my footsteps may not slide.

[38 : 13] Out of those ways of life. How that should be our prayer beginning. And ending every day. When we realise what it means. For the Christians to bear the ark of God.

And thereby. To bear the name of God. And to have the holiness of God. The name of God. How little it takes. For the garment of Christ to be soiled.

But a tiny inconsistency. Can lead. To the greatest defilement. The name of Christ. The holiness.

That is part of. The service of God. Should make us tremble. Prayerfully. For the ark of God. And you might say.

Against all that. Well. Who then is going to profess Christ? Who can possibly come. To make a confession of faith? You might say of yourself.

[39 : 14] I'm certainly not. Because I see others who are. Making a confession of faith. They're so far ahead of me. And if you're telling me today. That that is what it means. To be a Christian. To come out openly.

On the side of Christ. That it has all that attached to it. I'm certainly not going to do it. I'm afraid that I will defile the whole matter. It's better that I take no part.

In that open profession. That I take no part. In manifesting the name of Christ. In joining myself. By professing his name with his people. Oh how mistaken you are.

How mistaken. If it is dishonour to God. To make a profession of his name. Of faith in his name.

And compromise him. It is also. Both dishonouring. And a compromise.

[40 : 14] To love him. And not confess him. To believe. And believe in him. And not declare him.

And not be openly among his people. You have to consider. Both sides. Of the issue. Don't let us say.

The seriousness of the issue. Must keep me back. But say. The seriousness of the issue. Must mean that I go forward. With the people of God.

But make even greater effort. At prayerfulness. At consistency. At claiming the blood of Christ. To cover.

Our failures. And our wrinkles. Trembling for the ark of God. Doesn't mean. You hold back. Doesn't mean you love him.

[41 : 11] But don't make it known. That will not ease your heart. That will not help his cause. That will not bring honour to him. As you might imagine.

And a word in conclusion. Concerning. The death of Hophni and Phinehas. We've been looking at some very solemn issues today.

Concerning the people of God. As we find that in Eli. As he sits there. On his seat by the wayside. Trembling for the ark of God. It's sad.

To see him there. He's a sad figure. To see a man of God. Coming to the end of his days in this world. In those circumstances. To have that misery.

At his latter end. And yet. It is not an eternal death. He does not die. As an unsaved man.

[42 : 13] He dies the death. Of the godly. For all his failures. For all the seriousness of the circumstances.

He dies as a man of God. While his inconsistencies are inexcusable. He is still. Dying. As one who trusts in God.

He cannot say the same for his son. However serious it is. To have a godly man die.

In these circumstances. That is nothing. To the seriousness for you and I today. To consider the death of the ungodly.

Hophni and Phinehas. Died. In battle. Not on earth. But in shame. And the Bible tells us.

[43 : 14] You remember in 1st Peter chapter 4. I leave you with the text. A chapter that deals with the sufferings of the people of God in this world. If the righteous scarcely be saved.

Scarcely meaning not with difficulty as far as God is concerned. There are no difficulties with him. But scarcely in the sense of coming through so many difficulties and trials.

If that is the way that the Godly are saved. If the righteous come to the fullness of salvation. Through such pain and through such sorrow. And through such difficulties.

If the righteous scarcely be saved. The way shall the ungodly and the sinner. A pain.

If there is pain. If there is pain. In the life of those who go to heaven. What about those who will never be paid.

[44 : 17] What about the pain of the lost. Christ. What about dying. What about dying. In your sins. Doesn't that very thought make you today.

Run to Christ. Claim Christ as you are. Cast yourself upon him. Don't you say.

Don't you say. As you consider these things. With another wicked man. Balaam long ago. Who yet spoke.

Such sublime. Don't you say today as you see. The people of God and all that belong to them. Don't you say with Balaam as he saw them.

Let me die the death of my Jesus. Let my last end. Be like his.