

## Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 4

### 1 Kings 2

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Good to see you. Thanks for coming out tonight. We're looking at chapter 2 of 1 Kings.

When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon, his son. I'm about to go the way of all the earth, he said. So be strong, act like a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires.

Walk in obedience to him, keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations as written in the law of Moses. So, the question is, why does walking in the instructions God gave to Moses require strength and manliness? Be strong. Act like a man.

Observe what the Lord your God requires. You remember that the same kinds of instructions were given to Joshua in Joshua chapter 1 verse 7. Be strong. Why does walking in the Lord's way require strength? You're not very strong.

It's not always the easiest. Let's pursue that. Why isn't it easy to walk in God's way? It's not popular.

What else? It takes discipline. Let me pursue that a little bit. Why does it take discipline? I mean, why not just fall off a log? It doesn't come naturally.

There is a fifth column within us which, left to itself, says that God's way is not good. My way, on the other hand, oh, that's good. But God's way is not good.

And it's that resistance that right through the Bible has to be dealt with. And it's dealt with in part by discipline. Okay, I know I want to walk in God's way.

So, I'm going to exercise my spiritual muscles to do that. But exercise is never fun. I've always thought I've always liked the line I saw years and years ago.

The next time I see a grinning jogger, I'll take up jogging. No, it's work. And it takes work.

It also takes attention. Paying attention to what it is that God is asking. And what it is that is involved.

And you notice the repeated words, His decrees, His commands, His laws, His regulations. Over and over again in the Old Testament, you get that repetition. Trying to make a point.

Now I think I said before, I talk in different places, and I'm not always remembering where I've said what. But when we hear command, decree, or law, there is almost an automatic response. No, no, I don't want to do whatever it is I have to do.

But again, the issue is our relationship. If I am truly living in the joy of having been redeemed, then, as Paul says, His commands are not burdensome. Father wants me to do this.

Yes, I want to do that. And it seems to me that this is the goal of the Holy Spirit in our lives: to bring us to a place where God's wishes don't have to be commands.

His desire is my desire. That's the goal. That's the goal.

What He wants, I want. And so, it's a response of love, rather than the response of the slave, who says, well, I've got to do this, or He's going to get me. So, walk.

So again, I'll say this many, many times, over and over through the Bible: a relationship with God is a walk. That means progress. It means you're going from point A to point B. But it's not a dash.

It's not a sprint. It's a walk. One foot in front of the other.

You know the old Chinese saying, a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. And another, and another, and another. So, this is what the old man David says to his young successor, Solomon.

Then, going on in verse three, do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go. Now, that Hebrew word is interesting. Like so many Hebrew words, it has a broad, broad pool of meanings.

There are only 2,000 words, or I shouldn't say only 2,000 words, but let me say it another way. If you have a 2,000-word Hebrew vocabulary, you could read the Old Testament without a dictionary. You cannot read anything in English, if it's a second language, without a 5,000-word vocabulary.

But what that means is every Hebrew word has lots of English meanings. So this word, which is customarily translated as prosper, also means to be wise. And it also means to be effective.

And it also means to succeed. So, which of those is being used depends on the context. We tend to think of prosperity in physical, material, and economic terms.

And it is used that way sometimes. But be wise, be effective, and succeed. Yes, all of those.

Now, why is it? So, to back up a moment, we can sometimes, we don't hear it much, but sometimes you'll hear, his plans are prospering. His plans are succeeding. They're achieving the goal.

They're what was hoped for and planned for. So, my question here is, David says to Solomon, if you do this if you walk with God strongly, courageously, and determinately, you will succeed. Now I've got two questions.

Is that a guarantee? That's one question. The second question is, what are the successful ways? In this larger context. So, what about it? Is it a guarantee? I could ask for a show of hands, but I won't.

Do this, and you will succeed. Bingo. No ifs, no ands, no buts.

Has that been true in your life? Well, it hasn't been true in my life with one narrow interpretation of success. If it's success according to my standards, according to my expectations, according to my desires, not so much. So how can God say it then? If you obey God, if you walk in His path, you will succeed.

In what sense? You will succeed according to what He wants, not according to what you want. You will succeed according to what He wants and not necessarily according to what you want. Yes.

Yes. Yes. And where is it that you and I need to prosper? In our souls.

Within us, in our hearts. And so we can see as we look at the history of the saints, at people who have been failures as far as the world was concerned. Failed again and again and again.

And yet, and yet God was at work in their lives, and they achieved great success in who they became. I think again and again of Amy Carmichael. Amy Carmichael was a missionary in India.

She was a misfit. She just didn't fit. When she was very young, 18 or 19, as a missionary, the governor of all India was coming.

And they were all prepared. They were in their long dresses, high collars, and top hats. They had a beautiful buffet laid out.

And Amy Carmichael, in her casual clothes, rode her pony out to greet the governor as he was coming in. Oops. She was basically cut loose.

They basically said, either go home or go on your own. So, she went on her own. And she became deeply, deeply burdened over the fate of girls in India.

An orphan or an unwanted girl who survived. Oftentimes, an unwanted girl baby was just put on the dump heap and left to die. But if an unwanted girl survived, she became a temple prostitute.

Amy Carmichael developed a home for these girls. When she was 52, things were prospering, and people were sending money.

They heard the stories—touching, moving stories. They were building more buildings. One evening, she went out to look at some work that was being done.

The workman had not covered a trench. And she fell into it and broke her ankle. They thought she would be laid up for a matter of weeks.

She did not leave her bedroom for another 20 years. One thing led to another. Ultimately, she had arthritis, so she became almost immobile.

God, what are you doing here? We were succeeding. We were prospering. During that 20 years, she wrote 30 books.

30 books that are just sparkling with devotional depth. Books that never would have been written if God had healed her. I cannot forget one of the people whom I have looked up to across the years who said once that God does not will that anyone should be sick.

Think of it, you as a parent. Would you wish your child to be sick? Of course not. I thought for a moment.

And I thought, suppose I knew that the school bus was going to get hit by a train that morning. I would give my kid a case of the flu so fast it would make your head spin. We don't know everything.

Sometimes, our definition of success, our definition of prosperity, is not his. And the question is, will we walk with him? Will we walk in obedience as men and as women? Courageously, confident that he's going to keep his promise. Not necessarily in the way that I would dictate or in the way that I would understand.

But he's going to keep his promise. All right, that's four verses. We've only got about 40 to go.

And if your descendants watch how they live, if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel. Now, as I say here, I think we're fairly comfortable with those four verses. But I'm not sure we're so comfortable with the next ones.

Now, you yourself know what Joab, son of Zeruah, did to me, what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies. Abner son of Ner, a massive son of Jethro. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle.

And with that blood, he stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet. Deal with him according to your wisdom, but don't let his gray head go down to the grave in peace. Now, who was Joab? Joab had been David's general for 40 years.

Joab had been a man who would defend David to the death. A man who basically was a one-man man, David. So, is this how you treat loyalty? You tell your son you're rid of him.

Hmm, what's going on here? Well, first of all, there's Abner. David had been crowned king by the Judeans, by the people from the tribe of Judah. And Joab was his soldier, was his general.

In the northern 10 tribes, a general, Abner, took one of Saul's sons, a guy named Man of Shame, Ish-bosheth; probably his name was Ish-baal, Man of Baal, and made that son king. But it very clearly began to be seen that David was on the upswing and Ish-bosheth was on the downswing. Things were not going well, and Abner came to David and said, David, I'll bring those 10 tribes to you if you want me to.

And David said, sure, let's do it. Joab is away. Joab comes home, and he hears Abner has been here, and David lets him get away.

Joab went to the king and said, what have you done? The old Abner came to you. Why is it you've sent him away so that he's gone? You know that Abner, son of Ner, came to deceive you, to know you're going out and you're coming in, and to know all that you're doing. When Joab came out from David's presence, he sent messengers after Abner, and they brought him back from the sister of Sirah.

David didn't know about it. When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside into the midst of the gate to speak with him privately. And there he struck him in the stomach so that he died because of the blood of his brother Asahel.

Three brothers, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. In an earlier battle, Abner and the armies of the north were retreating and running away, and Asahel ran after Abner, but he would not stop. Abner told him, look, kid, go back, go home, don't do this.

And the guy kept coming after him, and Abner killed him. Joab has never forgotten. Afterward, when David heard of it, he said, I and my kingdom are forever guiltless before the Lord for the blood of Abner, son of Ner.

May it fall on the head of Joab and upon all his father's house. That's what's going on here. What about the other general? Absalom was crowned king by the Judah tribe.

And Judah has made Joab's first cousin, Amasa, his general. Now Absalom is dead. He was killed by Joab.

Again, remember this story? I just got to believe the Bible's inspired by such a great, great piece of literature. Absalom had, we're told, the Bible says it, I believe it, 18 pounds of hair. That's a hairy man.

I suspect he was pretty proud of it. And in that last battle, when David has said to his soldiers, don't kill Absalom, don't kill Absalom. Absalom is riding through the forest on his mule, and his hair catches in the tree, and the mule keeps going.

And there he hangs. Somebody comes running to Joab. Hey, Absalom's hanging in that tree.

Joab says, did you kill him? Kill him? No, the king said not to. Joab went and killed him. And the news got back to David.

He was just destroyed. Again, we talked, I guess, on our first night about David's inability to be decisive with regard to his family. He's just devastated.

He's weeping, he's crying. And the soldiers are all just. They've won a battle. And Joab comes to him and says, look, if you don't go down there and sit in the gate and welcome your victorious soldiers, by nightfall, you're not going to have an army.

That's Joab. That's David. Oh, Absalom, Absalom, my son, would that I had died for you.

He's a rebel, David. He's a rebel, God. Would that I had died for you.

So, the rebel army was defeated. What's going to happen now? Is Judah going to stay estranged? Are they going to be brought back? The northern tribes, they're saying, yeah, yeah, he's our king, we're going to go with him. What about Judah? So, David says, say to the elders of Judah, why should you be the last to bring the king back to

his house when the word of all Israel, remember, all Israel describes the northern tribes, has come to the king? You're my brothers, and you're my bone and my flesh.

Why, then, should you be the last to bring back the king? And say to Amasa, are you not my bone and my flesh? God, do so to me, and more importantly, if you are not the commander of my army from now on, in place of Joab, Joab, who brutally killed my son Absalom. Amasa, who can bring Judah back to me?

And he, this is Amasa, swayed the heart of all the men of Judah as one man so that they sent word to the king, return both you and all your servants. So, the king came back to the Jordan, and Judah came to Gilgal to meet the king and bring the king over Jordan. So, there's this guy Shammai from the north, from Benjamin, one of the family of Saul, who tried to lead some of the northern tribes away.

And David sends word to Amasa, okay, get the army together and go after him. Well, Amasa delays. We don't know exactly what's going on there.

And so, David says to Joab's brother Abishai, okay, you take the army and go get Shammai quick before he takes the whole northern kingdom away. Not Joab, Joab's brother Abishai. Amasa shows up a couple of days late.

When they were at the great stone that is in Gibeon, Amasa came to meet them. Now Joab was wearing a soldier's garment. He's not general anymore.

He's just a soldier. Over it was a belt with a sword in its sheath fastened on his thigh. As he went forward, it fell out.

Now, whether that means fell out on the ground or fell out into his hand, I think it's the latter. Joab asked Amasa if it was well with you, my brother. Remember, he's first cousin. Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him.

But Amasa did not observe that the sword was in Joab's hand. So, Joab struck him with it in the stomach. It seems to be his favorite spot for killing people.

He spilled his entrails on the ground without striking a second blow, and he died. That's what we're talking about here in Kings, what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies, Arab Abner, son of Ner, and Amasa, son of Japheth.

Then he says, show kindness to the sons of Barzillai of Gilead. Barzillai gave them food while they were escaping during Absalom's revolt. And remember, you have Shimei, son of Gerah, the Benjamite from Baccharum, with you, who called down bitter curses on me on the day I went to Mahanaim.

Yes, when David was running away, that decisive moment, get out of town, Absalom is coming. There came a member of the family of the house of Saul whose name was Shimei, the son of Gerah. And as he came, he cursed continually.

He threw stones at David, at all the servants of King David, all the people, and all the mighty men who were on his right hand and on his left. I mean, he must have been a fast man with a stone. Shimei said as he cursed, get out, get out, you man of blood, you worthless man.

The Lord has avenged on you all the blood of the house of Saul in whose place you have reigned. And the Lord has given the kingdom into the hand of your son, Absalom. See, your evil is on you, for you are a man of blood.

Then Abishai, Joab's brother, son of Zeruiah, asked the king why this dead dog should curse my lord, the king. Let me go over and take his head off. King said, what have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, if he's cursing because the Lord has said to him, curse David? Who then will say, why have you killed this guy? Again, I'm fascinated in David here. Well, it could be that it's from the Lord.

Maybe, and again, it's Bathsheba and Uriah and all that tragedy in his mind. Maybe, maybe, this is the Lord's work. Don't touch him, don't touch him.

And then when they're coming back, Shimei comes out, oh, sweetness and light. We're not going to. Sorry I said those things, David. And so, Abishai says, yeah, okay.

He wasn't speaking for the Lord, was he? Let me go get him. David said, what have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah, that you should this day be as an adversary to me? Shall anyone be put to death in Israel this day? Do I not know that I am this day king over Israel? We're not going to have bloodshed on this, my first day back on the throne. He's just crossed the river and ended up in Jerusalem.

We're not going to have bloodshed. But now, he says, I swore to him by the Lord, I will not put you to death by the sword. But now, do not consider him innocent.

You're a man of wisdom, and you'll know what to do to him. Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood. Yikes, yikes.

This isn't the David we like to see. This isn't the David who is gracious when Shimei comes. Now let me ask you, what about this? Remember what chapter one said about David's condition? He's pretty clearly suffering from a degree of dementia.

So, what's the word for us as we get older? Isn't it that in our good days, we don't dwell on the things that have been done to us in the past? So that when the bad days



come, they're not there to bubble up. Again, this is the beauty of the Bible. It does not whitewash its heroes.

It shows them to us in all of their goodness and all their glory. But it also shows us them in their weakness and their failure. So, I say again, the issue is, what am I allowing to sit in my gut? What am I nurturing? Now, particularly with Joab, is this deserved? Certainly, it is.

The very thing that David says. He treacherously killed these two decent men. He treated them in peace as though it were war.

That's an interesting point. This was murder. This wasn't a battle.

This was murder. But my question would be, then, why wait, David, and put the burden on your son Solomon? And again, I have to think that some things have been boiling in David's soul over the years. Now, when he's no longer quite in so much control of his mental faculties, they go. Here they come.

So, what about Shammai? If we can say that, yes, in some very important sense, what happened to Joab was deserved, what about Shammai? Is this deserved? What did Shammai do? He cursed whom? The Lord's anointed. The Lord's anointed. This was not just any average person.

This was the one whom the Lord had placed. And you remember what David refused to do with Saul? I will not lay my hand on the Lord's anointed. Now, what does that have to do with us? Danny keeps asking me, as he's thinking about hymns, what's the takeaway? What does that have to do with us? If Shammai's death is, in fact, because he has cursed the Lord's anointed, what does that have to do with us? Number one, it has to do with our attitude toward Jesus.

You say, well, I would never curse Jesus. I understand that. I agree.

But it's still a question, in my heart of hearts, do I honor him as he deserves to be honored? But second, I don't know about you, but I know that some places, for Sunday lunch, they have roast preacher. Preacher is the Lord's anointed. He or she may fall far short of what we might like, but you don't treat the Lord's anointed casually or lightly or destructively.

I think that's the lesson there for us. How will I speak of the Lord's anointed? And I don't think it just has to be a preacher. I think it has something to do with the way we treat one another.

In a real sense, in that we are all priests. We're all the Lord's anointed. How easily, how easily we cut one another down.

Oh, not to each other's faces. No, no. But quietly and in secret.

Just so, they need to cut them off at the knees, get them down to our level. So, leaving that uncomfortable topic, we move on.

Now Adonijah, the son of Haggai, went to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. Bathsheba asked him, Do you come peacefully? He answered, Yes, peacefully. Then he added, I have something to say to you.

You may say it, she replied. As you know, the kingdom was mine. Oh, all Israel looked to me as their king.

But things changed, and the king was gone to my brother, for it's come to him from the Lord. Oh, that's good.

Now I have one request to make of you. Do not refuse me. Isn't the Bible great? You may make it, she said.

So, he continued, Please ask King Solomon. He will not refuse you. Now we know why he went to Bathsheba.

To give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife. Now my question is, what does Solomon's request here confirm to us about Adonijah and his character? Shifty. Shifty, yeah.

Shifty, that's good. I have another word. Dumb.

Doesn't he understand the implications of marrying the girl who spent the last hours with David? Why wouldn't he understand that? Remember what we were told about what David didn't do? What didn't David do to Adonijah? He never touched her. He never, never straightened the boy out. He never asked him, Why are you doing this? So if I want it, it's a good idea.

It also suggests, as Mike said, a kind of sneaky, okay, okay. If I can get David's last consort as my wife, then. Now, I have to think Bathsheba doesn't come off very well here either.

Very well, Bathsheba replied, I'll speak to the king for you. Or is she sneakier than we might imagine? Does she understand the implications of this action and how Solomon will respond to it? Harems were places of terrible intrigue where a woman's whole life was in her children. And the intrigues among these women, you can hear the stories today among the harems of Arabia.

So she may know very well what she's doing and what the implications of what Adonijah's asked are. But how does that relate to you and me? How do Adonijah's actions relate to you and me? I think it says to think about the implications of some of your requests. Requests to God, requests to others.

What are you really asking? Because again, these things come out of our character, out of who we are. So, Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah. The king stood up to meet her, bowed down to her, sat down on his throne, had a throne brought for the king's mother.

She sat down at his right hand. This is a big deal. I have one small request to make of you, she said.

Don't refuse me. The king replied, make it my mother. I will not refuse you.

Let Abishag the Shunammite be given in marriage to your brother Adonijah. Kaboom! Why do you request Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? You might as well request the kingdom for him. After all, he's my older brother.

Yes, for him and for Abiathar, the priest and Joab, son of Zariah. So, I say, either she's a fairly dim bulb, or maybe she knew how this would work out. Now again, remember, Solomon had been very generous to Adonijah at the outset, back there at the end of chapter one.

If you are found worthy, not a hair of your head will fall to the ground. You may be my chief rival, but I'm not going to kill you. Exactly, exactly.

And I just have to feel that, again, Adonijah is this totally self-absorbed person, and he cannot get it through his head that he's living on a knife edge. And again, I think about myself. What about me in my relationships to God and to others? Do they grow out of a clean heart, a pure desire for God's way, a genuinely surrendered way? King Solomon swore by the Lord, may God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if Adonijah does not pay with his life for that request.

I think whatever Solomon might have hoped for, he now knows Adonijah is not going to give up. He's going to keep scheming all of his life to try to get the kingdom back. It's not a workable situation.

So, he gave orders to Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, and he struck down Adonijah, and he died. Benaiah is the executioner all through here. He's going to become the general and he's going to be the general.

But look, Abiathar, here's Adonijah, chief danger, right under him are Joab and Abiathar. Joab is going to be killed. Abiathar is not.

Why not? He was a priest from the Lord. Here's the Lord's anointed. Solomon is not a dummy.

I think there's another issue, though, that here are the chief conspirators. There's a sense in which both of these guys killed themselves. Adonijah, with this stupid request.

Joab with the blood guilt upon him. So, what this says is these people are not primarily killed because they are rivals. If that were the case, then Abiathar should go as well.

So, this is not. Despite what a lot of commentators say, this is not merely the winner wiping out the losers. These guys, in a real sense, brought this on themselves. Abiathar did nothing to make himself guilty beyond being part of the losing group.

And he is the Lord's anointed. So again, what all this says to me is that Solomon, and you're going to hear me, I'm not going to quite wash Solomon either, but at this point, I think Solomon is acting faithfully and wisely. So, down through verse 33, look at verse 33.

May the guilt of their blood, Abner and Amasa, rest on the head of Joab and his descendants forever, but on David and his descendants, his house, and his throne, may there be the Lord's peace forever. Again, we have to recognize, in the Old Testament, the inescapable impact of bloodshed. You go right back to Genesis chapter nine when God is giving Noah the instructions.

And he's saying, the one who sheds blood, their blood must be shed. This is the miracle of life in the image of God, as represented by the blood. And shed blood has to be dealt with.

And so here, again, all of that, it seems to me, points straight forward into the New Testament. Jesus didn't just die. Jesus shed his blood.

And so here, Joab has shed innocent blood, and there must be repayment. Then, the king sent for Shimei. Again, this story is so fascinating.

He told him to build a house in Jerusalem and live there, but not go anywhere else. The day you leave and cross the Kidron Valley, you can be sure you will die. Your blood will be on your own head.

Shimei answered the king, what you say is good. Your servant will do as my lord the king has said. Shimei stayed in Jerusalem for a long time.

But three years later, two of Shimei's slaves ran off to Achish, son of Macah, king of Gath, and Shimei was told, your slaves are in Gath. So, what does he do? Hmm, I wonder. Let's see now. I said I would stay here, the king said I would die, and I guess I'll say goodbye to those guys.

Uh-uh, what did he do? He sat on his donkey and went to Achish at Gath in search of his slaves. So, Shimei went away and brought the slaves back to Gath. What does that tell us about Shimei's character? He's got a poor memory.

He's got a poor memory, yes. Think about the description of him when David is going into exile. What kind of a guy are we talking about? Wasn't that when he was stuck in a monastery catapult? Yes, a man who has a very short fuse.

A man who is impulsive, a man who's rash. And I have to ask myself, did Solomon know that when he put the limits on him? Did Solomon know that there would come a day when Shimei's fuse would be lit, and off he'd go? I don't know. Solomon's a wise guy. But here again is the issue.

Over and over again, as we've seen here in the case of all three of these characters, the character is destiny. In each case, it seems that who they were caught up with them in the end. In these two cases, it is in the end.

In the case of Joab, it's along the way. A Joab who's not going to be displaced by anybody else. I'm going to be David's right-hand man, nobody else.

And I suspect that his support of Adonijah was along those same lines. Adonijah will be easier to manipulate? I don't know, but there it is. Nobody's going to get in my way.

I will have my way, and because I want it, it's good. Bingo. Explosive, impulsive.

And so, I say, in a real sense, character is destiny. What's your character? Noah and Peter gave us that list. And I can't quote it to you, but endurance yields patience.

Patience yields hope, and all of these give character. What character are you building? What character am I building? People often ask me, well, what kind of God would harden Pharaoh's heart? God did not do anything to Pharaoh against Pharaoh's will.

Pharaoh was not a nice man. Pharaoh was not sitting there on his throne saying, you know, I just feel so bad for those Hebrews. We really need to let them go, and they shouldn't live a life of slavery.

No, this is a man who has been taught all his life, I am God, and I do what I want. Well, you think that long enough, and you cannot choose anything else. You cannot choose to go against what you want to do.

Now, I'm talking to people here in their 50s, 60s, 70s, and so forth. There may be people watching on the screen who are younger, but I say to all of us, what kind of a character am I building? What kind of a character are you building? But by the same token, because we know an almighty God, character can be counteracted in terms of our destiny. Yes, this is what I've been making of myself.

But praise God, we know a God who can deliver. We know a God who can alter that pattern, even across 50, 60, 70 years.

Thank God. Thank God. I don't have to end up as Adonijah ended up, or Joab ended up, or Shumai ended up.

Yes, ma'am. Um, character. Yes.

I'm a little confused by what that means exactly. I mean, um, is character the whole sum of the choices we've been making? To a large degree. I don't know whether people online can hear that or not.

Is character the sum of all the choices we've been making? And my answer is yes, to a large degree. If I choose to be self-controlled and choose my way again and again and again, I'm making myself into that sort of person. So, yes.

And so that's where, when redemption comes, we can begin to make another cascade of choices that leads us to the right place. Exactly, exactly. When redemption comes, we can begin to make another cascade of choices that takes us to a different place.

Absolutely, absolutely. So, the question for me, the question for you, is do I want to be the person I'm becoming? Or does God have a different vision?

Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you. Thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for its vividness and its power. Thank you, Lord, for lessons to be learned and for truths to be assimilated.

But more than that, much more than that, thank you for your face that you show to us in its pages. Thank you, Jesus. In your name, amen.