

Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 6, 1 Kings 4-5

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Looking at chapters 4 and 5 tonight, I've entitled them "Wisdom, in action." And what we'll see here, I think, is this interesting sort of chalk walk. Walking the chalk line, and sometimes on one side, and sometimes on the other.

As I say in the background, it further develops the theme of Solomon's wisdom, as seen in two areas. Administration, chapters verses 1 to 28, and insight into the workings of the world, especially in classification. I'll say more about that as we get there.

29 to 34. The chapter tends to be laudatory, but as before, we see that the author-compiler, more by what is not said than what is said, letting us see there's a worm in the apple. Chapter 5 develops that same theme and its attendant questions.

As I said in the introduction to the study, there's no real agreement among scholars as to how the Books of Kings were put together. It's pretty well agreed there was not an author who sat down and wrote the whole thing, although some would argue that, arguing that it was done during the exile. I don't believe that.

Rather, it's generally thought that you had a series of editors, and I suggested, especially on the basis of the Book of Chronicles, which speaks again and again of the prophets as the collectors, I think they're the ones that did this. And it's pretty clear that they used a variety of things. They used their own personal observations, and they also used chronicles from the royal libraries.

We'll see that especially as we get beyond Solomon into the other kings. They used records of various sorts, and I think we see that here in these two chapters, where I think it's reasonably clear that verses 1 to 6 of chapter 4, 7 to 9, 20 to 28, and 29 to 34 may have all been separately written pieces that have been collected and put together. In the same way, chapter 5, verses 13 to 18 may be a record.

This might explain some discrepancies. What are we doing here with Abiathar showing up again? We'll talk about that. In chapter 4, verse 6, Ahishar, or Ahishar, is said to be over the house.

The NIV translates palace administrator. I, along with a handful of others, think that position is equivalent to prime minister. Again, I'll discuss that a bit more.

In the list of things that were brought to the palace for the daily menu, there's a statement that 30 cores were brought. That's about five and a half tons. That much stuff was being brought to the palace for consumption there.

In that case, each month. That's still a lot of stuff. Solomon, by controlling the world from Egypt up to the Euphrates River, had a stranglehold on the trade of the ancient world.

People often say, well, why in the world did God put Abraham in such an out-of-the-way place as Canaan? The fact is, it wasn't out of the way at all. The ancient world, that's Turkey, and that's Egypt, that's the Euphrates River, that's the Tigris River, down here's the Persian Gulf, there's Babylon, there's Assyria, as I said, over here is Egypt. And here is the Arabian Desert.

So, how do you get from Babylon to Egypt? You go up here, and down there, and there. How do you get trade from the Red Sea out to Greece? So, you've got two highways. The one that is called the Way of the Sea, and one that's called the Way of the Kings.

If you control from the border with Egypt to the Euphrates River, you have a stranglehold on the trade of the world. And you're in a position to become fabulously wealthy. And so, what is described of Solomon here, sometimes people say, well, that's impossible.

Not in the least. I've loved to say to students over the years it's as though you have the only toll booth on I-75 between the Mackinac Straits and Miami. Are you going to get rich? You sure are.

And that's exactly what was the case for Solomon. Finally, a word about wisdom. Wisdom in the ancient world was completely pragmatic.

It was looking at life, what works and what doesn't work. So, the person who is diligent will become wealthy. The guy who sleeps all day will become poor.

Every time, all the time? No, not necessarily. You're stating a general principle. I've always liked the one where, if the king invites you, young man, to dinner, do not sit down beside him.

Sit at the foot of the table. That way, he will not say to you, who are you? Move. Rather, he might say, oh, young man, come up a little closer.

Pragmatic wisdom. Now, it's interesting in the Bible, that gets tweaked a bit. Is this wise because it works? Or is it wise because it's right? Is it an expression of the fear

of the Lord? Or is it just a desire to get ahead? But at its base, wisdom is simply the observation of the world.

And that's why in chapter 5, it'll talk a bit about, he classified all the animals and all the plants and everything else. Again, it's tremendous observational skills. But it has its limitations.

And we'll be looking at that rather carefully. Well, we begin with, again, this gift of administration, which he clearly had in spades. And you see his organization.

Now, on the screen I've projected, it's 2 Samuel 8:16 to 18. Just in the notes, for some reason, only put 8:16. But it's 2 Samuel 8:16 to 18.

So that's the top one here. And this is David's first organization. Joab, son of Zariah, was over the army.

Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud, was recorder. Zadok, son of Ahitub, Ahimelech, the son of Abiathar, were priests. Sariah was secretary.

Benaiah, over the Cherethites and the Pelethites, that's David's bodyguard. And David's sons were priests. I want to talk about that in a minute.

But there's the first royal cabinet put together by David fairly near the beginning of his reign. The second one is from 2 Samuel 20, 23 to 21. This is old David.

This is the royal cabinet toward the end of the reign. Not many differences. Joab in command of the army.

Benaiah, Cherethites, and Pelethites. But here's a new one. Adoram was in charge of forced labor.

Oops. Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud, was the recorder. He's still there.

Sheva was David's secretary, Zadok and Abiathar were priests, and Ira the Jairite was also David's priest.

That's interesting. Now, then, we look at our passage tonight. And what I've done here is the first column of X's is 2 Samuel 8. The second column of X's is 2 Samuel 20.

And the third column is our passage. So, all three of them have a recorder. Now, there's a good deal of argument about the difference between a recorder and a secretary and why they got both.

Probably, the recorder is the guy who keeps the royal chronicles. You know, like on a ship, there's a log where they report everything that happens. Each guy who is in charge of the deck, the officer of the day, is in charge of keeping that log up to date.

So, probably that's the recorder. Now, the fascinating thing is this guy is the same fellow. Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud.

He was there in the beginning with David. He's there toward the end of David's reign. And he's still there in Solomon's reign.

He must have been pretty competent. The secretary is probably the one who keeps the minutes, sends out the memos, and is probably the king's leg person. So, again, you've got a recorder in all three.

You've got a secretary in all three. You've got a commander of the army in all three. And you've got priests in all three.

And Zadok and Abiathar show up in all three. Interesting. Come back to that.

The Commander of the Cherethites and Pelethites doesn't show up in Solomon's. Now, one of two things happened. Number one, maybe Solomon dissolved David's bodyguard.

Maybe these guys were more loyal to David than they were Solomon. That's my best guess. But it's also possible, since Benaiah was the commander of the Cherethites and Pelethites, and he's now the commander of the army, maybe they've just been folded into the army.

But in any case, they don't show up anymore. Forced labor does show up again. And, again, we'll have reason to talk about that.

David's son's priests were only in that first cabinet. What's going on? Well, if you remember, last week we talked about the chaotic religious situation in Israel after, apparently, not only was the ark captured, but the tabernacle burned. And although Samuel is given a kind of a long Levitical connection in Chronicles, it's a very, very long one.

It doesn't seem likely that Samuel was... I mean, maybe he was a fourth cousin of a fifth brother of an aunt's uncle and a grandfather's brother of a Levite. So, here's Samuel, the guy who really is operating as the chief priest in the land, who's not a Levite. So, it's not out of the question for David to have anointed a couple of his sons to act as his priests.

Interestingly, it doesn't show up again. They're not there in the later cabinet and they're not anything of that sort in Solomon's cabinet. Then there is, though, in the second cabinet, David's priest.

And in Solomon's, the friend of the king and priest. I wonder if this was a chaplain, the king's chaplain. Don't know.

Then, in Solomon, you have the priest. I take it this is the high priest. And Zadok and Abiathar, by this time, both are old men.

I suspect they are priests emeritus. And even though Abiathar has been exiled out of Jerusalem, he's still alive. And sort of like our Methodist bishops, you're a priest for life.

So, I suspect that's what's going on there: neither Zadok nor Abiathar was active. Zadok, still in the city, but Abiathar, not. Then you also have somebody who's in charge of the officers.

Remember, talk about this in a moment: Solomon had 12 administrative officers over the 12 regions. And this guy seems to have been in charge of that. And then finally, for the first time, somebody who is over the house.

As I said, most translations are going to take this as palace administrator. Well, maybe so. I mean, you've got this huge palace complex now, palace, temple, administrative buildings, all that.

So, it may well be that somebody was appointed. But when you get down to Isaiah, a couple of hundred years later, this guy is exercising more authority than just being over the house. So, it may well be that that's where he started as palace administrator.

But I think by the time of Isaiah, he's really prime minister. He's the chief guy who's running the kingdom for the king. So, what we see here is an increasing bureaucracy, don't we? We've got more officers in each case and more people involved in running the kingdom.

Again, here is wisdom. Don't try to do it all yourself. Divide it up.

Going all the way back to Moses' father-in-law. Back in Exodus, when he says, hey, you're killing yourself. Divide up the work.

So, here it is with Solomon continuing that and carrying it on. All right. Questions or comments there on the developing cabinet? All right.

Verse 7. Solomon had 12 district governors over all Israel who supplied provisions for the king and the royal household. I think that's kind of interesting. They were governors.

And what was their job? Supply the royal household. Oops. Each one had to provide supplies for one month in the year.

If my math is correct, that's a twelfth. So, everybody had to give a twelfth of their income to support the king and the king's establishment. Hmm.

Okay. Now, good. Here they are.

Interestingly, they don't quite correspond to the tribes. They are separate in various ways. And if you do, I hope you can see that.

Over on the east side of the Jordan, it's closer. Number 12 is where the tribe of Reuben would be. Number 7 is where the tribe of Gad would be.

And number 6 is the half-tribe of Manasseh. And 8 is Naphtali. 9 is what's left of Asher.

They were never quite able to take their whole coastal allotment there. 10 comes close to Issachar. But the two big core tribes of the north, he really splits up.

Manasseh and Ephraim. And it's interesting how those are divided. There's 1, there's 3, there's 4, there's 5, there's 11.

Number 2 here is pretty close to Benjamin, plus what had been ascribed to Dan. So, there are 12 regions. What's left out? Judah.

All Israel is the terminology given to the rest of Israel except Judah. All of Israel is required to supply the king's table. Judah is exempted.

Why do you think that might be? Why would Solomon exempt Judah? It's his family. He's a Judean. David is from Judah originally.

Bethlehem, remember? This smacks of favoritism, doesn't it? Now, how would he explain that to himself? What are your thoughts? No, no, you got it backward. Yeah, yeah, Judah went with Absalom against all the others. Alright, alright.

I don't think that's off base. I think indeed that there may have been some thought; boy if I put too much of a burden on them, they'll pull out again. My own people will pull out.

So, there may... I'm certain there was some of that sort of thinking. It wasn't just plain old favoritism, although I think that's a big chunk of it. These are my people.

But I think there's also some scheming. If you want to use that word for wisdom in what we do here. Judah is... And again, you see the size compared to the others, especially after he's divided up Ephraim and Manasseh.

Judah is in a position to wield considerable power. And so, you better keep them happy. But here are the seeds.

Remember, even as far back as Joshua, there are references to Judah and all Israel. And when Saul died, it was Judah with David and all Israel with Ish-bosheth. So, this division is very much at the heart of Israel's experience.

As I've said to you before, part of it is geographic. The ridge that runs from Beersheba up to Jerusalem is pretty much a straight line. It's got some curves in it, but still, it's unbroken.

So, you've got good communication from Jerusalem south. From Jerusalem north, the ridge line is broken up. And so, communication is much more difficult.

So, there's a natural division here that David has healed. After the Absalom thing, David is working very carefully to pull Israel and Judah in and get them together. And it seems as though Solomon, in his wisdom, is, in fact, preparing the way for what's going to happen 30 years down the road, when they're going to come apart forever.

So again, what may appear to be wisdom at the moment, I've got to keep Judah happy. I can't impose too heavy a load on them, but it begins to raise issues in people's minds. Now, wait a minute; I've always said that the first word our children learned was no. And the first sentence they learned was, it's not fair.

And how easily that question could arise here. Again, I want to keep pushing this point that there's wisdom, and there's wisdom. It seems to me as though it would have been wiser for Solomon to find a way to not protect Judah off at the side, but to integrate it into the whole.

Now again, it's very easy at a distance of 2900 years to tell somebody how they ought to do things. Nevertheless, the issue is that the seeds of the final split are sown in this action. Verses 22 and 23 then talk about the daily provisions.

What is this twelfth? What is it that each of these districts has to provide for? Solomon's daily provisions were 30 cores of the finest flour, 60 cores of meal. So, 5 1/2 tons of flour, 11 tons of meal, 10 head of stall-fed cattle, 20 of pasture-fed cattle,

100 sheep and goats, as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks, and choice fowl. Wow! Now, it's called daily provisions.

I think that's for a month of days. Here's what Samuel said back in the beginning when they said, Give us a king. This is how a king will reign over you, Samuel said.

The king will draft your sons and assign them to his chariots and his charioteers, making them run before his chariots. Some will be generals and captains in his army. Some will be forced to plow in their fields and harvest their crops.

Some will make his weapons and chariot equipment. The king will take your daughters from you and force them to cook and bake and make perfumes for him and maybe be his concubines. He will take away the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his own officials.

He will take a tenth of your grain and your grape harvest and distribute it among his officers and attendants. He will take your male and female slaves and demand the finest of your cattle and donkeys for his own use. He will demand a tenth of your flocks and you will be his slaves.

Hmm. Prophet, huh? Prophet. So, what's happening here? What is Solomon doing? He's implementing... Yeah.

Why... Why this opulence? He's living high off the hog. Now again, as I said, he's got control of the trade of the world. Money is flowing in.

So, he's just making the best of what he's got. What's the principle here? What's the biblical principle with regard to wealth? This principle is, if you got it, spend it. What's the biblical principle? Share.

Just because you have it doesn't mean you need to spend it. One of the things that is commonly remarked about America is, instead of living 10% below our income and saving 10%, we're living at 10% above our income. Just because you can doesn't make it right.

Now again, Samuel describes typical kingship, and Solomon is simply a typical king. Hey, all the kings around here do this. All the kings around here live like this.

What's the problem? And notice, notice how that thing is led into. The people of Judah and Israel were as Judah and Israel, get it? They are as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They ate, they drank, they were happy.

Nobody's complaining. They've all got food and drink, peace. So why shouldn't I live like a king? What's the biblical principle with regard to wealth? It's interesting that the Bible is very, very ambiguous about wealth.

On the one hand, if you've got it, receive it as a gift from God and share it. But most wealthy people didn't get it from God. They got it from crookedness. That's the biblical position.

And that's the great irony in Isaiah 53. He was buried with the wicked rich although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth. The final insult to Jesus was he wasn't even allowed to be buried with the poor whom he loved.

He's buried with the wicked rich. So, if you have wealth and you didn't steal it, you didn't achieve it by crookedness, that does not give you the right to blow it all on yourself. My heroes in this regard are three guys whose pictures are in the FAS building.

George and Buddy and Joe Luce. Multi-millionaires who lived in three- and four-bedroom ranch houses and drove five-year-old Oldsmobiles. I love the story of Southern Territory Salvation Army Commissioner Andy Miller.

When George Luce died, Andy and, of course, as a Salvation Army Territorial Commander, you know everybody. Andy called up the president of AT&T and said, Hey, come with me to this funeral. I want to show you how a millionaire lives.

Yes. Yes. Just because you have it doesn't mean you need to spend it.

God help us to learn how to live below our income. We may not be a Solomon and I think it's pretty easy for me to say that. Well, I'm not a Solomon.

I'm not living in some palace somewhere. Okay. Am I living within my income? Am I living beneath my income? There's a principle here.

And it appears to me that Solomon is just being swept along. I mean everything is to use a very, very learned Hebrew word hunky-dory. Everything is fine.

We got no problems. The money is flowing in. Why not? Go with the flow.

Or not. So, look at 20 through 28 now. We've talked about the middle of it.

22 and 23. The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They ate, they drank, they were happy.

Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon's subjects all his life. And then the two verses on his food supplies.

Verse 24, For he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the Euphrates River from Tiphseh to Gaza and had peace on all sides. During Solomon's lifetime, Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and fig trees. Solomon had 4,000 stalls for chariot horses.

Joshua had been commanded not to have chariots or chariot horses. See, at that time, the chariot was the ultimate weapon, and Joshua was commanded not to use them. 4,000 stalls for chariot horses, 12,000 horses.

The battle chariots were three-horse chariots. The district governors each in his month supplied provisions for King Solomon and all who came to the king table. They saw to it that nothing was lacking.

They also brought to the proper place their quotas of barley and straw for the chariot horses and other horses. Now let me ask you, is that good or bad? Is that praising Solomon or not praising him? Or what do you think? Sounds pretty good, doesn't it? He's got bragging rights. Everything was at peace.

That's why it was at peace. That's why it was at peace, yeah. Could be, could be.

Yes, I don't know whether you all heard that or not, but she thinks of Jesus' parable of the wealthy farmer who tore down his barns to build bigger barns to contain all the stuff that was there and said to his soul, take your ease, you fool, your soul is required of you tonight. Yeah, yeah. It's all so surface.

There's not a word about God in that entire paragraph. Not a word about evangelistic attempts in these conquered territories. There was not a word about it, and there was shalom in their souls.

It's all outward. And again, I wonder, I wonder if a description of America was written. Would it be like this? I don't know, I don't know.

But I think this is a good example of what I've talked about all the way through that in this laudatory description of Solomon, there's this hint, there's a worm in the apple. The apple looks great. There's a worm in it.

All right, let's push on. Again, positive stuff here. God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than anyone else, including somebody evidently famous for being wise, Ethan the Ezrahite, wiser than Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol. His fame spread to all the surrounding nations.

He spoke 3000 proverbs. His songs numbered 1005. He spoke about plant life from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the walls.

Again, observation, categorizing, organizing. That's wisdom. He spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish from all the nations.

People came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, which was sent by all the kings of the world who had heard of his wisdom. Again, now here God does show up once. God gave Solomon wisdom and great insight.

But you know, there is... I need to be careful I don't hang myself on all my wires here. There is... and that's a gift of God. That's a gift of God.

But intellectual ability does not always issue in what James calls the wisdom coming down from above. I think we see that in our universities today. I would not denigrate for a moment the great intellectual ability that is being demonstrated.

The wonderful discoveries that are being made. But I would argue those two have got to be coupled. And this wisdom that comes down from above is a heart wholly surrendered.

A heart turned outward. A heart that knows it is not God. Now, I'm not suggesting to you that Solomon, especially in his earlier days, necessarily lacked these.

But I'm suggesting to you that yes, yes, God gave this to him. But I'm not sure that as his life went on he was careful to couple the two. So, you know, here's a guy, I think we would say in our language, with an IQ of 190.

He is really, really a bright guy. But I would suggest to you that's not enough. And again, I remind you that we begin this whole section with chapter 3, verse 1. He married the daughter of Pharaoh.

The seed was sown. A seed that slowly, I think, came to destroy that. I've been in the higher education racket now for almost 55 years.

And again and again, I've seen this happen. Again and again, I've seen bright young men and women gifted by God who have lost this wisdom. All right, hang on.

Chapter 5. When Hiram, king of Tyre, heard that Solomon had been anointed king to succeed his father, David, he sent envoys to Solomon because he had always been on friendly terms with David. Okay. I want you to notice that statement.

I'm going to come back to it. What's his relationship to David? Friendly terms. Yeah, yeah.

I think that's significant. So, now let's go back here. Tyre is way up there at the top where the red line starts.

This is the land of Phoenicia. It's interesting, when we were in grade school, we learned about the Phoenicians, famous sailors who sailed all across the Mediterranean, who established their colony at Carthage for a long time was a very serious rival of Rome. People who quote invented the alphabet.

That's not true, but they certainly are the ones that propagated it. Uh-huh. Yes, yes.

And the ancestors of a lady named Jezebel. Worshippers of Baal. The god of the storm.

The god of vegetation. Those folks. So, Solomon gets the word.

He sends back a message. You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple in the name of the Lord his God until the Lord put his enemies under his feet. But now, the Lord my God has given me rest on every side.

There's no adversary or disaster. I intend, therefore, to build a temple for the name of the Lord my God. For the name.

For the reputation. For the character. As the Lord told my father David when he said, your son whom I will put on the throne in your place will build the temple for my name.

So, give orders that cedars of Lebanon be cut for me. My men will work with yours. I'll pay you for your men whatever wages you set.

You know that we have no one so skilled in felling timber as the Sidonians. Okay? Sidon is just off the top of this map. It's the other prominent city of the Phoenicians.

Tyre and Sidon. And there's no timber anywhere in the ancient world like those cedars up in the Lebanon mountains. When Hiram heard Solomon's message, he was greatly pleased and said, praise be to Yahweh today for he has given David a wise son to rule over his great nation.

So, Hiram sent word to Solomon. Then you have the deal. What are we going to do here? I'll have them cut down in the forest up there, dragged down, and then shipped by water.

Great rafts of cedar logs pushed down along the coast there. I'll send them to the place you specify. This map suggests Joppa and that's most likely the place.

It's the closest. It's not a good port, but it's the best you got and the closest to Jerusalem. Solomon gave Hiram 20,000 cores.

I think that's something in the neighborhood of 500 tons of wheat as food for his household in addition to 20,000 baths of pressed olive oil. Solomon continued to do this for Hiram year after year. The Lord gave Solomon wisdom just as he promised him.

That is, Solomon knew how to get that amount of produce out of his people. There were peaceful relations between Hiram and Solomon. Now, look at this last phrase in verse 12.

What did they do? Here's the Hebrew language. They cut a covenant. Virtually everyone has agreed that that particular term is used because this is a blood covenant.

I can't draw a good picture of a cow, but there are two halves of the cow. The bloody halves of the cow. And the two parties pass between those two and swear, may God, your God and my God's, do so to me if I ever break this covenant.

This is not friendly relations. This is a blood covenant. Something that is strictly forbidden in the book of Deuteronomy.

You shall not make a covenant with any of the people of the land. There's a reason for you to call witnesses to make your decision.

And the witnesses are the gods. So that you, as you pass through those bleeding halves, recognize the gods of your partner. But it's such a good deal.

I mean, God wants me to build this temple. Okay. I'll agree with that.

And how am I going to get it built unless I get all these logs? What's the biblical principle here? Putting faith in man instead of God. For anything, the price is too high if you have to sell your soul to get it. And how are you going to get it? King Solomon conscripted laborers from all Israel.

All Israel, not Judah. 30,000 men. He sent them off to Lebanon in shifts of 10,000 a month so that they spent one month in Lebanon and two months at home.

I think that's four months a year. Adoniram, was in charge of the forced labor. Solomon had 70,000 carriers and 80,000 stone cutters in the hills, as well as 3,300 overseers who supervised the project and directed the work.

At the king's command, they removed large blocks of high-grade stone from the quarry to provide a foundation for the temple's dress stone. He will take your sons. He will take a tenth of all your crops.

He will take your daughters. But it's in such a good cause. This is for God.

And somewhere, I hear God saying in the words that He later said to Isaiah, Isaiah, do you think I need a house? Who would build a house for me? Again, there's a principle here. There are good things to be done. But it's not good if you have to sell your soul to get it.

So again, if the 12 districts drove a wedge between Judah and all Israel, what do you think this did? The Judeans didn't have to give four months a year to work in Lebanon cutting down trees. But the Israelites did. Again, I'm reasonably sure that Solomon had some very good political arguments for why this was necessary or a good idea.

But seeds are being sown. So, do you remember what the Hebrews did in Egypt? They made bricks for what? For Pharaoh to build two pharaonic cities. They're back in slavery.

They're back in slavery. A temple for God. Yes.

Yes. Now, again, I'm being very hard on Solomon here. And I want to be faithful to the text.

As I've said to you, the text is very ambiguous. The text says Solomon did a lot of good things, and the people clearly loved him.

We're comfortable. We're secure. We're full.

What's not to love about that? So, what do we learn from these two chapters? First of all, earthly wisdom is not necessarily heavenly wisdom. Second, we must not do anything merely because we can. We must not.

Good idea. Thank you. Third, riches are a snare.

And friends, we are the richest people in the world. This is a very, very dangerous thing to say, but I will. On that point, I want to share with you this passage from Genesis.

The king of Sodom said to Abram, give back my people who were captured, but you may keep for yourself all the goods you've recovered. Remember the story? Sodom and Gomorrah were defeated in battle. And the people and the spoils were all carried off.

And one of the people was Lot and Lot's family. So, Abraham went after him. And he got the people and all the spoils back.

And now the king of Sodom says, hey, you won the battle. You keep the spoils. Well, why not? It's the normal practice.

To the victor belong the spoils. Why not? Abraham replied to the king of Sodom, I solemnly swear to the Lord God, Most High Creator of heaven and earth. Wow.

I will not take so much as a single thread or sandal thong from what belongs to you. Otherwise, you might say, I am the one who made Abram rich. Oh, my.

Oh, my. If God hadn't loved him before that, he had to love him then. Yeah.

Yeah. The world is not our friend. Now you say, hey, we can't go all live in a monastery or a nunnery, for pity's sake.

I agree. I agree. But God gives us that kind of wisdom.

I'm not going to allow this bad man, and I'm confident that's what's going on. Probably if the king of Sodom had been somebody else, Abram might have accepted the spoils. But he knows what kind of a guy this is.

This guy's a crook. Not going to do it. Could the temple have been built without Hiram? Yes.

Would it have been a little dinky thing? Probably. Probably. But if, in the process, it had somehow cemented the souls of the Hebrew people to God, it would have been the greatest building in the world.

Pardon? Yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

They cried when they saw the foundations because it was only going to be half the size maybe of Solomon's. Yeah. Yeah.

And Haggai says, get at it. Don't worry about how big or how little it is. It's God's house.

Go for it with Him if we have to force the accomplishment, back off. Well, I can't get this done unless I force these guys to go do it.

Then stop. Well, Dad had forced labor. So what? I read these chapters and weep.

It is so good in so many ways and yet underneath growing rottenness. Oh, Lord, is it I? Is it I? Every one of us has got to look in this mirror and say, if Solomon could go there, then, my goodness, how easily I could go there. May it not be.

May it not be. God has better things for you and me. Questions, comments, or observations before I let you go? Yes.

That's called sexual addiction. That's what that's called. No, no.

And maybe I said this in the introductory section. This almost certainly is political. These are deals made with surrounding countries.

More of these, I suspect, he got a whole bunch of Phoenician women in this covenant with Hiram—women who may never have spent a night with him in the rest of their lives but were shut into a harem alone.

So, almost certainly, large numbers of these were political prizes. Well, that makes a lot more sense. Yeah.

My son said one time, you must have a really big bed. Yeah, right. I'm afraid so.

I think I learned one other thing, too. Yes. We can use godly-endowed gifts for our own agenda rather than for the advancement of the kingdom.

Yes. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Was this for God's name, or was it for Solomon's name? Yeah.

Let me pray.

Dear Father, we know that Your Word is given to us to be a light unto our path, a lamp to our footsteps. Oh, God, help us as we look into the picture of Solomon to see whether there is a reflection of us. Oh, deliver us, Lord.

Deliver us from using your gifts to make ourselves look good. Have mercy upon us, Lord. Rather, let us use Your gifts for the blessing of others and the salvation of the world. In your name, amen.