

Dr. John Oswalt, Kings, Session 10, 1 Kings 11

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We are looking at, as you've heard, Chapter 11, the final epitaph on Solomon. As we were concluding last week, we looked at Deuteronomy 17:15-19, which is the guidance that the Lord gives in Deuteronomy for what to do about a king. And there are three things that are mentioned here.

1. Do not acquire many horses for himself, or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the Lord has said you shall never return that way again. 2. He shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away. 3. Nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.

In Chapter 10, verse 26, Solomon accumulated chariots and horses. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore figs on foothills.

Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Sicilia. The royal merchants purchased them from Sicilia at the current price. They imported a chariot from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver and a horse for 150.

They also exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and of the Arameans. King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites. They were from nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, and you must not intermarry with them because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.

Nevertheless, Solomon clung to them in love. He had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines, and his wives led him astray. So what has gone wrong? Look, please, at the final paragraph of this section from Deuteronomy.

When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law approved by the Levitical priests, and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes and doing them. What do you think has happened? He didn't do it. I think we can see this as we go on in Kings.

We'll see that most of the kings did not do this. The very simple truth for you and me is we've got to be in the Word. We've got to have the Word continually, as we saw, continuously energizing and training our consciences.

It's obvious to me that Solomon simply didn't know this. I can't imagine that if he had known it, he wouldn't have at least guarded himself a little bit. But it's evident that he didn't guard himself at all.

Whatever came to hand, he did it. We talked again last week about wealth and how wealth can be, as far as the Bible is concerned, a blessing or a curse. And I think clearly, in Solomon's case, it had become a curse.

So, we're reminded then in verse 2 of that prohibition against marrying these foreign wives. You must not intermarry with them. But do you remember what happened in chapter 3? And you may want to turn back here.

At the very beginning, after the two chapters on Solomon's kingdom being established, and at the beginning of that lovely statement about asking for wisdom, prior to that, the very first verse, Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh, came to Egypt, and married his daughter. He brought her to the city of David until he finished building his palace and the Temple of the Lord. Why do you suppose the editor, author, or compiler of the book mentions the prohibition here in chapter 11 but doesn't mention it back there in chapter 3? And why not highlight it right there, where the practice is obviously beginning? At the very beginning of his reign, he breaks the law of God by marrying a foreign woman.

Why does the editor wait until now to remind us of that and didn't tell us back there in chapter 3? Things were going well then. Things were going well! Okay? Yes? Well, verse 3 says he loved the Lord at that point. He loved the Lord.

And? Okay? Then he thought he'd stopped with one. Yes? Yes? It was already a done deal. Yes? But why doesn't the author remind us that this was not the right thing to do? Now you say, well, did God communicate the answer to you, Oswald? No, He didn't.

But again, this is part of Bible study, is observing and asking. I think, all the way through here, the editor wants us to pick up things for ourselves. He's wanting us to say, wait a minute, hold it.

In all of these glowing pictures of Solomon, I think he wants us to say, but what about, and finally, when he comes here to 11, in case we didn't get it, he now wants to hammer it on. But I think this is, it's very similar to the book of Judges. The author wants us to be engaged.

He wants us to think. Now, wait a minute, wait a minute. And so, it's very easy, I think I can say for myself, for years, I just floated over chapter 3, verse 1, and got on to the lovely passage about him asking for wisdom, and didn't see that right there at the outset, the evil seed is sown.

As I said when we were talking about chapter 3, I mean, what a deal, what a deal. The Pharaoh of Egypt? Now Egypt had fallen on hard times. They were not what they were when they were building pyramids.

But still, it was a great country. Powerful country, rich country. Wow, does he want to make an alliance with me? And he'll give me one of his daughters? Oh, such a deal.

The devil works that way. Such a deal. Such a deal.

And so, we see here, eight chapters later, the flowering of the evil seed. Now, many hundreds of years later, after the exile and the return from exile, Ezra and Nehemiah both are horrified to discover that a hundred years after the return, the Israelite people, including the priests and the leaders, are intermarrying with foreign women. Both, Ezra and Nehemiah, are just stunned.

And they require the people to put away their Gentile wives and children. This is regularly, regularly attacked as a prime example of religious bigotry. Being so unkind as to break up these marriages.

Well, I want us to think about that. What about this prohibition of intermarriage with unbelieving people? Is that religious bigotry? Or not? What do you think? Well, in some sense, it was their being; they were looking out for national survival, which had to be based on obedience to God. Yes.

So, they were looking, they weren't being bigoted, they were being proactive for the sake of the nation that God had set up to reveal to them. They were being proactive for the sake of the nation as God had set himself up to reveal to them. Yes.

What's the problem with marrying unbelievers? David? Well, one thing is that since these unbelievers have a totally different faith system, totally different worldview, they're going to be raising the children. Children don't sit around with daddy unless they're going to follow his profession. They're with mom.

All those children will be little pagans, and that's the end of the story. The other thing is that even the guy can sit there, and you can put up with the drip for so long until it breaks through.

Yes. Intermarriage with unbelievers is a prescription for tension at the least. You believe this, I believe that.

I want to go to church, and you don't. I don't want to go to your church; you can go to my church. Tension.

And, at the worst, tragedy. You're becoming one flesh with those who disdain the God you worship—becoming one flesh with those who disdain the God you worship.

Yes, yes. Interestingly, Paul describes it as being unequally yoked—like a horse and an ox together.

And it's not going to work. It's not going to work. So, right from the outset, God says, you have to become one flesh, and becoming one flesh means becoming one mind.

And if you're double-minded as a couple, you're probably going to be double-minded as individuals in the couple. So, he's saying, and I don't get as many opportunities to speak to teenagers now as I once did, but I always make a point to hammer this. Don't date unbelievers.

Because it's very easy to fall in love with what you thought was just a simple date, now, again, there are exceptions to the rule. I've known people where a believing girl won an unbelieving husband to Christ, but I've known many, many more where both have just drifted off.

Maybe she has still gone to church, but her faith has been diminished and drained, and her children, very frequently, have become unbelievers. David mentioned, in particular, the point here that the male should not marry an unbelieving female. It's still true today that you cannot become an Israeli citizen unless your mother was a Jewess.

If your mother was a Jewess, then they think, yeah, there's some hope. But if it was only your father, forget it. You don't have a chance.

So, there it is. That stress on keeping the unity of the faith in order to preserve the faith. And in particular, as Marcus mentioned, in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, when they are so tenuous, just bringing the daughter of a foreign god into the sanctuary of the Lord, which is the way Malachi puts it.

He says, we have a covenant with one another, and you have broken that covenant by bringing the daughter of a foreign god right into the sanctuary. Well, they didn't bring her into the temple. I think there's no question of that.

So, what sanctuary is he talking about? The sanctuary of the body. You have introduced paganism into God's sanctuary. So, this is not a matter of religious bigotry.

This is a matter of the endurance and the preservation of the faith. So, again, as we have opportunities with the grandchildren and others trying to make that point, don't date unbelievers. Now, the kids can't understand how tricky affection is.

But all of us know it. Okay, so, in verse 4, Solomon's heart is described; back in chapter 11, now for sure, Solomon's heart is described as being no longer whole. And on your sheet there, I gave you some other translations of the Hebrew word.

King James is perfect, ESV is wholly true, ASV is wholly devoted, IB is fully devoted, and LT is completely faithful. All of them struggle to get this concept of something that is whole, that is complete in and of itself. So, what does that mean? What are we talking about when we speak about someone having a heart that is wholly God's? What does that look like in life today? Every aspect of life is under God's... Every aspect of life is under God's demand, yes, or God's command, yes.

What else? You're totally detached from the world. Okay, I want to push you on that. How can I be totally detached from the world? By not allowing anything in the world to define who you are.

Okay, I think I need to have you define the world for me. The system that's in place is not of God. Okay, okay.

The darkness... What do they call this? The kingdom of darkness, or the kingdom of this world? Okay, okay. In Greek it's stoikia, which means... So, you're not talking about living in a monastery? No. Okay, okay, okay.

So, the attitudes and the mindsets. Let's talk about that a little bit. What are the attitudes of the worldly system? Power gives you significance.

Okay. For others of you, feel free to chime in here. Politically correct.

Politically correct, okay. Okay. What else? Satisfy yourself.

All right. Satisfy yourself at all costs. What else? Follow the expectations of whatever is in vogue at the moment.

Possession of things is everything. What else is there to live for except more stuff? And this is all there is. That's right.

Stuff is all there is. Everything is subjective. Stuff is our security measure of all things.

I have a wonderful comment on that. It's number six here. In Sunday school, I was opening up my computer and put in one wrong letter in the password, and it would open.

And I said, no, these computers always insist on you getting it right. One of the class members said that there are no absolutes. Yes, there are.

Ask the computer. All right, all right. And I would say there, pleasure of every kind.

Not only is everything subjective, it's all relative. Yes. Okay, so we're defining what a heart that is whole does not look like.

It is detached from this worldly system. Let's go back to the positive again. What does it mean to have a heart that is wholly God? David? I'm not going to get this right.

That's not the way to begin. But, yeah, because there's a phrase and it is something to the effect, that's what I've been thinking about this whole time: that love has the power of an exclusionary commitment. In other words, once you have it, it is so complete, so filling, that there's no room for any of the others to come in.

Yes, yes. The expulsive power of a new affection. That's Thomas Campbell, a British Puritan pastor, about three centuries ago.

It simply empties out everything else. It is all-consuming and, therefore, affects everything else in our lives. So this kind of commitment to him excludes all the other kinds of things that would come in.

It's a wonderful picture. How do you get the air out of a glass? Well, you turn it upside down and shake it. Good luck with that.

No, you fill it with water. So, how do I get the evil desires out of my life? I fill my life with Christ, and no room is left. This is what we're talking about.

Nothing, nothing is a rival to him in our lives. Things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace. And as we all know, that has to be constantly nourished.

Here again, it is important to be in the Word. And in prayer every day. Nourishing this commitment, but more than that, this surrender to him at every turn.

And so, as Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods. Now again, the ancients put faces on these various forces and called them gods. But pleasure, we've taken the face off it.

But Aphrodite, or Ishtar, or whatever name the ancients gave her, she's still the goddess of pleasure. And millions of Americans bow down at her altar. She is also the god of wealth.

The god of comfort. This is where Solomon came to his end. We saw very early on, in the second session, I think, that David in 1 Chronicles prays that Solomon's heart would be perfect toward the Lord.

In his prayer, Solomon this is chapter 8, the dedication of the temple. Solomon prays that the hearts of the people will be perfect toward the Lord. And so the judgment here is the more terrible. And every one of us who has been a preacher runs the danger of calling for things in our congregation that we excuse in ourselves.

And that's what had happened to Solomon. Inch by inch by inch by inch. As Delilah crept closer and closer and closer to the secret of Samson's strength, so did he.

Inch by inch by inch by inch. Creeps closer to ours. And so we have. It's not merely that his heart is no longer whole towards the Lord.

He's worshipping Ashtoreth, goddess of the Sidonians, and Moloch, the detestable god of the Ammonites. So, Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord. He did not follow the Lord completely.

Now it says there that he did not follow the Lord completely. The Hebrew is interesting. It says he did not fill after the Lord.

He was not fully, fully behind God. His attention was wandering. Here, there, elsewhere.

And again, here is our hymn for this evening. O God, O God, give us that principle within of watchful, godly fear. A sensibility to sin, a pain to fear it neither.

Help me, the first approach to feel of pride or wrong desire. Quench that kindling fire. That's what this chapter, or these verses say to me again and again.

And you follow it out there. The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. What were the two times? We talked about the first one a few moments ago.

At Gibeon, when he asked for wisdom. And the significance is, we don't know exactly what Solomon saw, but the verb is appeared. What was the second time? Pardon? In chapter 9. Good, I don't have to take up drunk driving after all.

Alright. Yes, after the temple had been dedicated, the Lord appeared to him. Now, why do you think the point is made here? The Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.

Why do you think that point is made? Okay. The Lord does not appear to many people. Yes.

Yes. This was not simply, well, the Levites had given him instruction. It is he had had two remarkable experiences of the presence and the reality of God.

And yet. And again, this says to me, there are no experiences that will guarantee you against falling unless indeed you are paying attention. Do you think that maybe that shows why we really need each other as well? Absolutely.

Absolutely. One of my very favorite passages in the scripture is in the third chapter of Malachi, where you just had the statement of the cynics: well, God obviously loves the crooks because they're rich and they're comfortable. So what's the point of us going around in mourning for God all the time? The next verse is, then, those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and God heard and caused their names to be written in a book of remembrance.

I love that. Here I am saying, oh man, I just, I don't understand. I don't understand evil in the world.

I don't understand why crooked people get rich and good people suffer. Man, I just wonder, and I need you to come along beside me and put your arm around my shoulder and say, John, I believe. Here are the great things God has done in my life, and John, I know that he's done some good things in your life, too.

Let's go on together, huh? And God says, Gabriel, Gabriel, write their names down quick. Yeah. Yes, absolutely right.

Absolutely right. We need one another. We need the word.

We need prayer. We need Christian fellowship that encourages us along the way. Yes, yes.

So, in those two appearances, what had God done? Again, we talked a bit about this last week. The first one tends to be a little more positive. The second one was not quite so positive.

But in both of them, what did God do? He challenged Solomon to walk with integrity and to follow his ways. He challenged Solomon to walk with integrity and in his ways. There was a warning in each of them.

A blessing. In the first one, God says, I'm so pleased with you. You didn't ask for wealth.

You didn't ask for power over your enemies. You asked for wisdom. And I'm going to do that for you and I'm going to give the others as a benefit.

In the second one, he says, I will bless this house. I will make this a place of my name. Unless, unless you turn away.

If you and your people turn away, I will reject this house and turn it into a dump. There's nothing sacred in and of itself in this place. The only sacredness is me.

And if I'm here, it's a holy place. But if I leave, forget it. Again, I look at churches that have been turned into antique shops, and my heart sinks.

But I'm reminded. If God's not there, it's just a building. It's just a building.

So, Solomon has been warned. He's been warned personally. And yet, he has turned away.

Now we're told that Yahweh is going to leave one tribe for the house of David. He says, I'm going to tear the kingdom out of your hands. For the sake of David, I'm not going to do it to you.

I'll do it to your son. But I'm going to tear the kingdom out of your hands. But I'll leave one tribe for David.

And for the sake of Jerusalem, which I've chosen. That's verse 13. Now, why does God do that? Why does God leave one tribe for David? Well, in spite of all his sins, it does say he was a man after God's heart.

Alright, alright. At that point, it is said that he was a man after God's own heart. In spite of Bathsheba and Uriah, that one terrible incident, his way of life was, I want God, and I want God's way, and I want God's will.

That was the pattern of his life. And it's interesting to me when you contrast David with Solomon. With Solomon, you have this slow, slow progression toward a final apostasy.

With David, you have this isolated, terrible incident. But it's an incident that is an exception to the settled pattern of his life. So, yes, there's a sense in which God says, I want to keep the memory of David alive.

And right through the book of Kings, Kings will be judged on whether they walked in the way that David walked. That will come up again and again, and we'll see it. So, yes, that's one. Simply as a reward, as a memory.

What else? David? Yeah, God gave his word. Alright, God promised to David an eternal kingdom. Yes, so one, a reward to David.

Two, keeping his promises. What's the third reason? It's a witness of incarnational presence or experience. Okay, I like that.

It sounds a little bit pulpit-ish, though. A witness to incarnational experience. Spin that out.

Just the fact that in the human condition, there is a location. There's a memory. Okay, alright, a memory, a location, a position.

He mentions David and Jerusalem. Yes, yes. I thought the other would be too obvious.

Why did God choose David, ultimately? It's hard. Jesus! Jesus! It's through David that the Messiah is going to come. So, we've got to preserve a tribe for David.

We've got to preserve a boundary, a condition where the faith can be preserved until the Messiah comes. And I ask you to look at Psalm 2. This is a wonderful picture of multiple voices. We begin with the psalmist, who is quoting the voices of the nations.

Why do the nations rage at the people's plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and His anointed, saying, Let us burst their bonds apart, and cast away their thorns from us. So, how does God react? Oh dear, oh my goodness. The nations are in revolt.

What am I going to do? He who sits in the heavens laughs. The Lord holds them in derision. It's like the 2-year-old in the high chair.

Get out of here! Dad laughs. Then He'll speak to them in His wrath and terrify them in His fury, saying, As for me, I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill. It's a done deal.

So, we start out with the psalmist speaking and quoting the nations. Then we go to God speaking. Now we come to the Messiah.

I will tell of the decree. The Lord said to me, You are my son. Today I have begotten you.

Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, the ends of the earth your possession. You will break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Yes, all the nations are going to be in possession of David's son, and God's son.

Then we come back to the psalmist. Now therefore, O kings, be wise. Be warned, O rulers of the earth.

Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. And isn't that a great line? Rejoice with trembling. Wow, He's God.

Isn't that great? Yes, yes, He is God. And it's great. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way.

For his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in Him. I'm going to keep one tribe for David as a reward, a memory, keeping of His promise, as an indication that God works in time and space with individual human beings, and as the foundation for the Messiah's coming.

I didn't put it on a sheet, but I'd also like us to look at another reference. These are the opening four verses of Psalm 89. I will sing of the steadfast love.

Hesed. If anybody's in my class, will learn the word hesed. The steadfast love of the Lord.

Anybody who tells you that the Old Testament God is a God of wrath, please tell them about hesed. 250 times in the Old Testament. The steadfast love, the loving kindness, the unfailing love, the grace, the mercy, all caught up in this word.

I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord forever. With my mouth I will make known your faithfulness. And the Hebrew word is emunah, which means truth.

I think too often we separate faithfulness and truth. And the Old Testament won't let us do that. We talk about truth out here as some objective set of ideas.

Well, that's correct. It's true. But the foundation of all of that is the fact that our God is true to His word.

I will sing of your hesed, I will sing of your emunah to all the generations. For I said, steadfast love will be built up forever. In the heavens you will establish your faithfulness.

Do you want to know who God is in the Old Testament? He is steadfast love and revelational truth. That's who He is. You have said, I have made a covenant with My Chosen One.

I have sworn to David My servant. I will establish your offspring forever and build your throne for all generations. So yes, yes, in one generation it has come to this that ten of the tribes are torn away.

But one, one is left for David. God will punish sin, but that sin will not obstruct His final saving purposes. All right, so it's taken us this long to get through 13 verses.

Now, we need to do the rest of the chapter. But I think that's not too hard, because the rest of the chapter tends to be narrative. And we have here then two adversaries who are raised up.

This is verses 14 through 25. Two adversaries. And I think it's interesting, the one is from Edom, which is in the south, the extreme south.

That's Hadad. The other is Reason, and he's in Syria, which is in the north. So there's a sense in which we're getting this picture, oh, even in his days of peace, there were enemies at work in the north and the south of the country.

The worms were there. And unless they were kept away by spiritual faithfulness, they were waiting. Pac-Man.

Some of you are old enough to know about Pac-Man. So, there they are. Now, the question that I raised is, it's very interesting, both in verse 14, the Lord raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite, and then again in verse 23, and God raised up against Solomon another adversary, Reason, the son of Eliadah.

But then, in both cases, it goes on to tell how these guys fled because of what David had done. In Edom, they tried to kill every Edomite male. Hadad was a boy who escaped with a few of the Edomite leaders to Edom.

With Reason, we're told that when David destroyed Zobah's army, Reason gathered a band of men around him and became their leader. So, in one sense, these bad feelings, this rebelliousness, grew out of what might have been David's excesses. Well, did David cause it? Or did God raise them up? I think the answer is yes.

I think it's rather similar to Joseph. The Bible tells us that Joseph was sent to Egypt because God knew that the famine was coming, and he wanted somebody there in Egypt who could save the family. Oh, so God caused those brothers to be jealous.

No? No? What we see, I think, as we look at life is this wonderful example of God's creativity. He can use anything to accomplish His good purposes. Even our evil choices.

That doesn't mean He made us commit the evil choices. If we hadn't committed the evil choices, He would have found another way of accomplishing His good purposes. But He is so powerful and so creative that He can take even that stuff that we did wrongly and accomplish His good purposes through it.

By the same token, I had this discussion in my Old Testament theology class today. I don't know that I was very successful at it, but it was God who, in the end, did it. Nothing happens that does not, in one way or another, come through God's hands.

There is such a fine line I've said this before, I'm sure, on almost every issue. The middle of the road is as wide as a razor blade's edge, and there are deep ditches on both sides. On the one hand, you have divine sovereignty.

He is the King. And anything that happens in the world happens by His will. On the other side, there is free will.

We have real choices to make. And those real choices have consequences. So, which is it? Is God ruling the world and accomplishing His will in everything? Yes.

Do we humans have freedom and responsibility? Yes. How do you put them together, Oswald? I don't know. Except to say that we dare not wipe out sovereignty in our attempt to teach the reality of free will.

And we dare not wipe out human freedom and responsibility in our effort to hold up divine sovereignty. Does it go along with the verse in Romans where it says God works all things together to achieve His purposes? To those who are called according to His purposes. Yes.

God is at work in all things. Yes. Yes.

The great danger of and I've in my long, ill-spent life have seen a fascinating shift of some people who were five-point calculus. Nothing happens that isn't determined by God. Therefore, there really is free will as an illusion.

I've seen them shift completely over here and say, yes there's free will, so therefore God does not know the future. They've gone right out of one ditch into the other ditch. But somehow in the difficulties of our small minds we have to hold those together.

And the way I do it, the way I say it, is nothing happens that does not come through God's hands. That means He may have allowed it, but He didn't cause it. And having allowed it He therefore has grace to give me in whatever it is I'm called to bear.

To me that's good news. If it just happened then I'm on my own. But if God has permitted it then I'm not on my own.

So, I see this passage as a confirmation of that point. Yes, David very possibly was excessive in his battles and in his fighting. If so, and he is the proximate cause of these rebels God is at work in it to accomplish His larger purpose.

Okay so then we come to Jeroboam. What a fascinating person. We see him as I mentioned there in the background.

He is the overseer of the forced labor from two of the northern tribes. The house of Joseph is Ephraim and Manasseh. These are the two biggest tribes in the north.

The most influential, the most powerful. And you might think that in that capacity, he would have been hated. But he clearly is not.

When he runs off to Egypt the people from those tribes are keeping touch with him. And when things begin to look bad they call him back again. So interesting.

But he is the one. And the prophet goes out to him. It was tough being a prophet.

God says to him, okay, Ahijah, I want you to go buy a new suit. Go downtown to Howard Miller and get yourself the best suit you can find. Oh good.

Now go out and see Jeroboam. Catch him on the road as he is going out of town. Okay.

And then tell him now, Jeroboam, take this \$500 suit and tear it up into 12 pieces. God! God! Take 10 Jeroboam. Take 10.

The 12 are Judah and Levi is just out of the picture in terms of territory and that sort of thing. Judah is the one tribe that's left that has territory. And then there are 10 other tribes that have territory.

And then Levi is scattered through them all. So, yes. Yes.

And the answer is yes. Remember that Benjamin has a reading relatively small. Here is Ephraim here more or less and Manasseh there and then Manasseh also went across the river over here and well Ephraim went all the way to the river.

Benjamin was this strip here. Dan was supposed to be out there, but they could never take it. Ended up going up to the north or to make a trajectory.

So, Benjamin is here and Jerusalem actually is in the territory of Benjamin. So at the outset Benjamin was part of Israel, part of the northern tribes, but very quickly the Judeans basically extended their territory up there and took in most of Benjamin. But in the beginning it was just Judah, but eventually it becomes Judah and most of Benjamin.

Good. So, Jeroboam is given carte blanche. He says, the prophet says, for God this is verse 38, the end of it, I will be with you, I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you.

My land. An enduring dynasty. David's dynasty lasted 350 years.

Jeroboam could have had the same thing. That's what it looks like. But, he says there are some requirements.

Requirements, which if you look at this is in verse 38; if you look at verse 33, they are precisely duplicated negatively in Solomon. Number one, if you'll do what I command, Solomon he forsook me. The same word that's used for divorce.

He abandoned me. And prostrated himself. Now again, I'm sure I've talked about this, but I always laugh when, in a contemporary service, the band leader says, now please stand up and assume a position of worship.

Write this down. Every time you read worship in the Old Testament, it is prostrate. You want to assume a position of worship? Flat on your faces, everybody.

It's a little tough to sing when you're flat on your face, though. He forsook me, and he prostrated himself to Ashtaroath and Milcom and Chemosh.

Walk in obedience to my commands. We've talked about this before, and as long as I'm around, we'll continue to talk about it. Life with God is a walk. I've said sin grows inch by inch. Devotion grows step by step.

Walking with Him, holding His hand more and more tightly, more attuned to every speeding up or slowing down. Walk in obedience to my commands.

He did not walk in obedience. Do what is right in my eyes. I like that expression.

I know why I like Hebrew. It's because it is so concrete. You could say do what's right to me.

Let's do what's right as I look at life. As I look at you. Do what's right.

He did not do right in my eyes. Obey my decrees and commands. He did not keep.

And I'm fascinated at the difference in wording there. Obey and keep. And in fact, they are synonyms.

But to obey is to pay attention to, guard, and watch over. So, I want to know what God wants, and I want to be very careful to do it. To guard.

To keep. Because what He wants is good. So, God says to Jeroboam, if you do what Solomon didn't do, if you do what I command, if you walk in obedience to my commands as David did, is what the full sentence says: if you do what's right in my eyes, if you obey my decrees and commands, you've got this kingdom forever! Wow! And so, how did Solomon respond? Just like Saul did with David.

Solomon heard the word. Your successor has been anointed. Kill him! Kill him! And so, like David, Jeroboam fled.

But as I mentioned in the background, when David fled, he only fled just over the border from Judah into Philistia. And he kept very close contact with the Judean folks back at home. When Jeroboam fled, he went to Egypt, where they're not supposed to go back to.

And I have to wonder if those years in that distant pagan land affected him and caused him to make the bad choices that he did make later on. I don't know. I just find that interesting.

So, what does this say to us? Trust and obey! Trust and obey! Love me! Love me! Love him! Love God! Guard your soul! Help me. The first approach is to feel pride or a wrong desire. To catch the wandering of my will, to quench the kindling fire. There are no prizes given out for good beginnings.

The trophies are given when you end the race. By God's grace, let every one of us end it well. Let every one of us determine to know his commands and do them.

Do them with joy. Again, the enemy has done such a number on us. There's this evil God who's demanding that you be unhappy.

No, he's not. There's a good God saying, this is the way you were made to live. There's swamps on either side.

You don't want to go there. Walk with me. Hold my hand.

And I'll keep you out of the swamps. Watch my eyes and do what's right in my eyes. Keep my decrees and my commandments.

Amen. Thank you, Heavenly Father, for this difficult, difficult picture. We grieve what might have been how Israel might have been used to touch the world.

But Solomon was deceived. Deceived by his own desires. Deceived by his intelligence. Deceived by his incredible wealth.

Help us, Lord. The level of our temptation is not nearly what his was. But it's still very real. Watch over us and keep us. Help us to keep our hand in yours right to the end of the road. Guard us, in your name, we pray. Amen.