

Kings and Prophets 13-09-27b

We pick up our study now in 1 Kings, and we're exploring pretty much topically rather than chronologically some of the episodes in the career of Elijah. We had mapped them out chronologically at the beginning. You remember when we laid out the list of seven kings culminating in Ahab, the seven great signs culminating with Elijah.

And what we are looking at now by standing back a little bit and examining the impact of these colliding forces, you have the degeneration and the departure, the rebellion toward God in the northern kingdom. And you have God's rebuke, God's confrontation, God's judgment at first corrective in nature to try to turn the people of Israel back to Himself. And it will ultimately culminate in the fulfillment of the discipline that was promised back in the days of the blessings and curses on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim with the carrying away of these people by the Assyrians.

But for now, God is offering opportunity to respond to the prophetic message. It is vetted, it is authenticated by these miracles. And this great public miracle, if we flip back a few pages to chapter 18, because Jezebel came down from Tyre and actively, it was one thing, it was bad enough when Solomon married foreign wives and then set up temples for them to worship to sort of keep them comfortable and make them happy.

They could go worship. Jezebel doesn't just have her own little private Baal altar. She is actively encouraging, promoting, expanding and encouraging Baal worship.

She is its great promoter. She wants it to replace the worship of God. You didn't see Solomon's wives going through the United Kingdom proselytizing for their God.

Their private desire to worship the God of their people was tolerated. Wrongly so, but it was tolerated. But back then it was small, it was isolated, it was somewhat passive.

The people of God sort of humored these pagans that the king had chosen to marry for political reasons. This goes way beyond that. Jezebel is a very active proponent for Baal and for Ashtar.

You don't end up with 450 Baal prophets, 400 Ashtar prophets, because she wants to go to a little chapel and worship. This is the desire to overtake and replace the worship of God in Israel. This had begun years earlier.

It has been an increasing trend of idolatry and departure. She is really trying to push this thing over the top. But in verse 17 of chapter 18, when you have the appearance of Elijah announcing that there will be no nation, no kingdom.

Well, go back to verse 6. They are searching to try to find Elijah. And Obadiah finds him. And Elijah says, go tell your master Elijah is here.

He says, how have I sinned? I am going to get in big trouble if I go back and say this. And in

verse 12, as soon as I am gone from you, the Spirit of the Lord will carry you to a place I do not know. So when I go tell Ahab he cannot find you, he will kill me.

Elijah was somewhat famous for making this proclamation about the drought and then disappearing. And he could not be found. And Obadiah figures this will happen again and he will be on the hook.

So Elijah says in verse 15, as the Lord of hosts lives before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today. Obadiah goes to tell Ahab. Ahab goes to meet Elijah.

It happens when Ahab saw him, he said, is that you, O troubler of Israel? Now, that is not without significance in our modern day. What does Elijah actually represent in Israel? This is old school. This is the original basis on which the nation was founded.

Elijah represents conservative values, godly biblical values that have defined this nation for literally centuries, right? So how can Ahab look at this representative of everything that is foundational and central and essential in Israel and call him the troubler? Well, this is what you do. You take what applies to you and call the other guy the problem. This is what happens today.

People say the reason there is so much hatred and problems in America are these religious people that have hang-ups and phobias about people who just want to live their lives and be happy. It is conservative Christians who are the troublers in Israel today, the troublers in America. If we could just get these Ten Commandments off the wall, if we could get these Christian displays at Christmas off the lawns, if we could just eliminate mentions of God in prayer in public, everything would be great.

Christians are the troublers of Israel today, right? But what is in fact the case? Don't buy that. Don't be convinced by that. Don't be browbeaten into silence and submission.

We are not the troublers of Israel. It is what the leadership has become. It is what the nation has become.

It is what our people have embraced and have swallowed whole in terms of an alternate system of morals, an alternate view of ethics, or a complete absence thereof. That's what troubles the nation. Don't lie down and let people get away with saying that Christianity is the troubler of the nation.

This is what Ahab does. It's a clever ploy. And it's immediately an ad hominem argument.

Already, we're not talking about what's right and wrong. We're talking about you are a troublemaker. It's a personal attack.

Instead of, what is the issue here? Why do you think God declared a drought, O king? Because I'm a troubler in Israel? Or because you're an evil king? And because the people are following

you wholeheartedly into idolatry and into apostasy? Who's the troubler? But this is the ploy, and you can count on it. You're going to get called names. You're going to be attacked and blamed for the problems that people bring on their own heads.

It's just the nature of humanity. So Elijah responds, and he answers this charge. And some of us as Christians need to stand up and answer this false allegation.

I have not troubled Israel, you and your father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed the Baals. This is where the problem actually lies. Now therefore send, gather all Israel from me on Mount Carmel, the 450 prophets of Baal, 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.

She's their sponsor. She pays for their presence. She funds and underwrites this whole takeover of the religious system.

So you know the story, Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, gathered the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah came to the people. How long will you falter between two opinions? How long will you waffle? How long will you vacillate? How long will you straddle the fence? Stand up for one thing or the other.

If the Lord is God, follow him. Can you imagine Elijah hearing reports perhaps of what Jehoshaphat is doing down in the south at some point in his career and thinking, why didn't I get that assignment? I want that job. Why am I up here talking to these people? My life is on the line at some points.

If Baal is the Lord, follow him. The people answered him not a word. We've already reviewed the nature of Baal.

Baal is the storm god, the god of fire from the heavens. He's got daughters named Dew and Raindrop. He is the god of lushness and agricultural prosperity.

He's the god that can bring rain and irrigation to. And Mount Carmel, by the way, was notable for its lush vegetation on the mountaintop, and it was thought to be one of Baal's most favored places for that reason. This is like Baal's home.

This would be the equivalent of if Elijah was a prophet of Baal and was saying that the Lord of Israel was false, he'd say, let's have this convocation in the temple courtyard. We'll give you the home field advantage. This is your most holy place.

Let's do it on your ground. That's what Mount Carmel is. This is Baal's tabernacle, so to speak.

And you know there's this big Baal temple altar there for worship, and there's a fallen, broken down, disused remains of what used to be an altar to the Lord God of Israel off to the side, which is what Elijah is going to rebuild and use. So that's the scenario. That's the locale.

Every advantage is given, and they get to go first. We don't even have to toss the coin. You

choose.

You want to kick or you receive. Go ahead. Elijah says, I alone am a prophet of the Lord.

Baal's Prophets 450. Let them give us two bowls. Let them choose one bowl for themselves.

Cut it in pieces. Lay it on the wood, but put no fire under it. I will prepare the other bowl.

Lay it on the wood. Put no fire under it. You call on the name of your gods.

I will call on the name of the Lord. And the God who answers by fire, he is God. And you think, well, Baal, he's the storm god.

He's the god of fire from heaven. This ought to be duck soup for him. All the people answered and said, it is well spoken.

So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, choose one bowl for yourself. Prepare it for your many. You remember this.

They danced around. They slashed themselves. Nothing happens until evening, when it is the time of the evening sacrifice.

This isn't just any old sacrifice. Elijah waits until the proper time for sacrifice, using the proper altar for sacrifice, to the proper God worthy of worship through sacrifice. Verse 31, he took 12 stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, Israel shall be your name.

Why is this in the middle of this story? Apparently, Elijah pointed this out as he rebuilt the altar. He said, you know why I'm using it? He's got to remind the people of why there are 12 stones. And Yisrael shall be your name, prince of God.

The true God shall be your name. This is the identity of your people. How is this guy, the troubler of Israel, he is seeking to rebuild the very foundations and remind people of their origins and their heritage and their obligations in covenant relationship with the God of their fathers.

And so he is teaching. He's using this altar building opportunity to communicate to the people and remind them. This is something, by the way, in point of application, that you see people doing in the homeschool movement and in the training of children by reminding them of who the founding fathers were in this country, how many of them were God-fearing, church-going believers, not deists, not slave-raping hedonists, how many of them were seminary graduates, how many of the early founders and makers and movers in our country were very healthy, vibrant, faithful Christians, and they incorporated those values into the documents and into the early workings of our government.

It wasn't perfect. It wasn't without naysayers and compromise with other things, but it was

largely founded and built and run in its early days on these principles. And those Christians in the modern day who remind the nation of what the stones of the altar mean are doing a wonderful thing.

It's the only hope for our nation is that the population turns back to God. It's not change of government that will heal us. It's change of heart, individual by individual.

That's why it's such a wonderful privilege to let our light shine before men, that they can see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. Don't be shy. Don't be browbeaten.

You don't have to be a crusader. You don't have to be obnoxious, but don't be silenced. If you do not shine for Christ, who's going to? Look on television.

Look at the stadiums and auditoriums full of people. Who's going to shine brightly, effectively, and accurately for Christ if not us? Do you really want to wait for somebody else to do that? It is a time to stand up and be counted. We say, well, but there's social consequences.

There's relationship consequences. Yes, and there are also eternal consequences, and there are greater issues at stake. And it is something to think about.

There is a time to rebuild the altar and name the stones and remind people of what the origins and the foundations are. He put the wood in order. He put the wood in order.

There is a proper way to do a sacrifice. We'll get to observe it in the millennial kingdom. Animal sacrifice will be restored.

And I don't know where PETA is going to be. They'll probably all be waiting for that judgment a thousand years hence. But God ordained animal sacrifice, and it's shocking.

It's shocking to see. And I'm here to tell you, it's supposed to be shocking. It ought to be shocking.

Remember, we've talked at times when we observe the Lord's table. And Jesus took the bread and broke it and handed it to his disciples, and he said, take, eat, this is my body. That's shocking.

Remember all the people that turned back from following him when he said, you've got to eat my flesh and drink my blood? And they said, what? That's horrific. We're not cannibals. And many turned back.

They couldn't figure it out. It is necessary that the body of the Lord Jesus be broken. And that Lord's table ritual, if you observe it and you know what you're doing, ought to be shocking.

You are required to take the body of the Lord and crush it between your own teeth. You are required to take that which represents the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and drink it. Who is it that has his body available to be eaten? Who is it that has his blood available to be drunk?

Someone who has lost his life so that you can live.

And we hear stories of cannibalism. We say, wow, that's just gross. I'd rather die.

I would never, you know, chew on somebody's leg, you know, to stay alive. Well, A, you don't know what you would do when you get that hungry and that desperate, and B, it's protein. But the idea here is animal sacrifice is shocking.

It's supposed to be shocking. You take the animal, healthy, it's one of the best animals in the flock. This is not, well, you know, we're eliminating the weak and the genetically flawed and the five-legged calf and, you know, these that we, let's make a sacrifice out of that.

God said you take the best, the healthiest, the ones that are most full of life and strength and vigor that the world would depend upon for the future of their flock and their herd. You take that one, you tie it down, and you take a sharp knife, and in full view you slit its throat and watch that artery gush blood all over everything. You're going to collect that blood in a bowl, and the priest is going to splash it on the north side of the altar.

It's gory, and it's supposed to be. Why? Because the animals, those sacrificial animals, are here for a purpose. They were there in Israel to teach the seriousness of the problem of sin and the great cost of solving it.

It's costly. We live here on this earth, and we mangle plants and we slaughter animals because our existence is costly. Why is it costly? Because we're not living on manna and living on milk and honey.

We're not in the Edenic age where it's just fruit from the trees. We are supposed to slaughter. We are supposed to cause suffering and pain, not wantonly, not unnecessarily, but we recognize as we kill, as we eat, as we go through this life causing trouble that this is the price of sin.

This is what it means that the whole world groans under the curse, waiting for the redemption, the adoption of the sons of God. Creation groans. It's supposed to groan.

We're supposed to recognize how serious this is. Elijah is making this point. Here is an animal sacrifice.

You can't cut yourself and please God. You can dance around all day as a priest of Baal and slash yourself all you want. It is insufficient.

You can't cause yourself enough pain. What's even worse? In the movies, when the hero, they beat him to a bloody pulp, and he won't divulge where the girl is hidden or who's got the papers or whatever the conceit is. He's manfully taking everything they throw at him, and he won't give up the information.

But then they take the girl, and they say, well, we'll shoot her, we'll harm her. Well, then he

drops his gun and totally turns to a marshmallow because, well, I don't want them to suffer. Why? Why is that? Because the hardest thing for us is to be the cause of someone else's suffering.

Everybody recognizes you don't want somebody else to suffer on your behalf. Oh, no, let them live, take me. But the criminal says, no, I know how to get maximum leverage on you, is threaten someone else's suffering because of you.

And it melts the resolve of steel. Why? Because we hate that. And yet that is exactly what is necessary for our salvation, and we have to recognize it, we have to be humbled by it, and we have to accept that the God of the universe made that sacrifice on our behalf.

And the reason animal sacrifice was given in the Old Testament, the reason we eat animals, and the reason we have to subsist by killing them is because God intends for us to recognize this is not a mechanical life. If we're not just here to subsist and get by and hope everything floats along, we're here to recognize sin, righteousness, and judgment. And yes, you are going to be a cause of suffering.

And ultimately and most fully, we are the cause of the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when we recognize that and acknowledge it, and the Israelites were commanded to do it, the sacrifices weren't an option, they were a command on behalf of the nation. The priests offered sacrifices to cleanse and to purify.

Sacrifices were required. So Elijah is reminding the people this isn't only a contest, this isn't only a proof that Baal doesn't exist and God does. It is a reminder to the people because couldn't God have demonstrated, well, let's stand Jezebel here and I'll stand over here, you tell Baal to strike me and I'll tell God to strike Jezebel, and whichever one of us disappears in a big puff of smoke, then you'll know who is God, right? No, it's a sacrifice because who is placated, whose justice is satisfied by vicarious suffering? Vicarious suffering, it's God in heaven and there's a reason for it because it impresses on us like nothing else can.

It's my fault that that animal has to die. It's my fault that the very best of my flock and my herd has to be sacrificed. And that's just a pale intimation of what it was for the Lord Jesus Christ to suffer on our behalf.

We're supposed to be humbled. We're supposed to be shocked. We're supposed to feel guilty about that.

That's the intent. That's why it's done. You don't think God could make us all live on fruit just like they did in the garden? Of course He could.

Why does He say, Arise Peter, kill and eat? Why does He tell Noah when he gets out of the ark, kill these animals, drain their blood and eat them? Why does He tell him that? Because it is a daily reminder of who we are and why we're here. So, it's a sacrifice. He put the wood in, filled the water pots, drenched it, second time, third time, water ran all around the altar, filled the

trench with water, came to pass at the time of the evening sacrifice that Elijah the prophet came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel.

Again, teaching point, reminder. Could He have prayed silently? Of course. He's praying out loud.

Why? All Israel is assembled at the mountain. It's a huge stadium-like venue. Just sort of in reverse.

The people are on the slopes of the mountain and He's up at the top. Everybody can see Him. Everybody can hear Him.

As He prays out loud and reminds these people of their spiritual heritage. Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel and I am your servant. This is one of the first things Elijah ever said back in chapter 17.

The Lord God of Israel before whom I stand has decreed that there will be no rain except at my word. Let this people may know that you are the Lord God and that you have turned their hearts back again. That you are turning their hearts back again.

That you desire to turn their hearts. You are appealing. You are making this demonstration not just as a proof of who's right and who's wrong about God.

It is a change of heart that is required. You look around at this nation. What is required? Change of heart.

God makes the appeal. How does He make the appeal? Those who stand before God. Those who serve God.

Those who know the heritage and the founding principles from God have to stand up and declare them. Have to live in their life. I'm not saying you've got to get a bull horn and drive up and down the streets.

But we live them out. We're not ashamed to identify ourselves. We're not ashamed to give an answer when we're asked to reason for why we don't join in with corrupt practice.

Why we don't tolerate evil. Why we are against certain things. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust and it licked up the water that was in the trench.

When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, the Lord, He is God. The Lord, He is God. Now, there was a very famous banner that hung on a ship behind President George Bush, Bush 43, after the attack on Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

You remember what it said? Mission accomplished. He took all kind of flack for that. But you could imagine such a banner, maybe in Hebrew, going up on a couple of poles at the crater of

what's left of that altar.

Mission accomplished. Because at this point, when the fire of God descends, what did Elijah pray? What is the point and the purpose of this demonstration? To change their hearts. What do you see as everybody, at least in this moment, kneels and bows? What are they declaring? What are they confessing? The Lord is God.

The Lord is God. That was the intent, was it not? Well, what does Elijah do at this point? Elijah said to them, seize the prophets of Baal. Do not let one of them escape.

So they seized them and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and executed them there. Now, do you remember that the man of God is going to be an odor and a stench in the nostrils of the king, and the king is going to send troops? What's our chapter for that, Ken, where the captains of 50 come? When you go to 2 Kings 1, Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, the angel of the Lord, after Ahaziah has fallen through his, what I think was probably his upstairs commode and has injured himself, and he sends, we saw this a couple of weeks ago, go inquire of Beelzebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury. This is the god of his mother.

This is Baal Melkart, and he's decided that this is where truth will come from. Elijah hears about it, and the angel of the Lord says to Elijah, go meet those messengers and say to them, because there is no god in Israel, this point that was made so clearly on Mount Carmel isn't clear to this son. So, God sends Elijah to make it.

Therefore, thus says the Lord, you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, you shall surely die. So Elijah departed. The messengers come and deliver this message to the king, and by the way, this is a point for future reference.

A man came up to meet us in verse 6, said, go return to the king and say to him, thus says the Lord God, etc. Then he said to them in verse 7, what kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words? So they answered him, a hairy man, wearing a leather belt around his waist. They don't say he's wearing a hairy garment, they say he's a hairy man, right? Now, this could be a reference to his coat.

This seems to be sort of the prophetic uniform. You know, even John the Baptist is going to wear something like this. But that's not what it says.

It says he was a hairy man. So, Elijah is forever enshrined in Scripture as a hairy man. Why did the children get attacked by bears in the days of Elijah's successor, Elisha? What were they calling him? Old baldy, old hairless.

Just a little point of comparison and contrast. Elijah is the hairy man, Elisha is the bald man. So they answered him, a hairy man wearing a leather belt.

The king sent to him, he said, it's Elijah the Tishbite. So the king sent him a captain of 50 with

his 50 men. He went up to him and there he was sitting at the top of the hill.

He said to a man of God, the king has said, come down. Elijah answered and said to the captain of 50, if I am a man of God, what is the issue here? Is there a God and is Elijah his prophet? There's a saying that is repeated probably hundreds of times a second somewhere in the world. You remember what it is? The little saying, you know, Catholics say, Hail Mary, full of grace.

What do Muslims say? There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet. Direct, direct conflict and confrontation. There is no God but Yahweh and Elijah is his prophet in this day.

That's the point. That was the point on Mount Carmel. That's the point here.

Why do these guys lose their lives? These poor guys are in uniform, they're suited up, they're in platoon formation, they march behind their captain under orders and Elijah says, if I am a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your 50 men. And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his 50. So the king sends him another captain of 50 with his 50 men.

He answered and said to him, man of God, thus has the king said, come down quickly. Now this is the same thing the first guy said, come down. And what is this? This is the king trying to demonstrate that his authority controls the man of God.

I tell the man of God to come and he comes. He'll be telling me what's going to happen. I'm going to tell you what's going to happen.

I'm sending 50 guys and you're going to come. And Elijah says, look, if there's a God in heaven, if I'm his prophet, then your authority means nothing. Fire from heaven comes down and the guys are incinerated.

This is another one for the highlight reel. Don't you want to see, you know, like a rerun of this? I mean, not to be gruesome, but 50 guys instantly vaporized by fire from heaven. 50 guys.

You think how much space it takes to stack up 50 guys? I mean, this is not like a little skinny lightning bolt. This is some kind of massive fireball, laser beam. I don't know what it was, but I would sure love to see how God did this because these guys are just instantly gone, incinerated, vaporized.

And the second group, same thing happens to them. Come down quickly, says the captain. Elijah answers and says, if I'm a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your 50 men.

The fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his 50. Now, if you think God's policies are harsh on animals, what about these hapless enlisted guys? How many people have now died? Count them. 102.

Again, he sent, in verse 13, a third captain of 50 with his 50 men. And the third captain of 50

went up and came and fell on his knees before Elijah. What is the difference in this case versus the first two? This is not a guy with his fists on his hips saying, the king says, come down.

This guy is on his face before the prophet of God, acknowledging through the prophet the authority of God in heaven, the God of Israel. And that's why this guy and his men do not get incinerated, the blessings of having good leadership. These 50 guys get to go home to their families that night.

And if you throw those in, with the first two groups, how many people do you have? 153. Now, you've got 2 Kings 1. You've got 1 Kings chapter 18. In both cases, fire comes down from heaven and consumes stuff, making the point that God is in fact the God of Israel and Elijah is in fact his prophet, right? Where did God send the fire in chapter 18? What did God consume? The altar, the sacrifice, the water, and all the ground underneath it.

What did God not consume in chapter 18 that he does consume in chapter 1 of 2 Kings? People. Who do you think is better qualified to decide who's going to live and die? Elijah or God? In other words, what do you think of Elijah's decision to seize and slay the 450 prophets of Baal in chapter 18? If God wants somebody dead, and he is on that day sending fire from heaven, can he not eliminate them? The slaughter by force of these prophets is after Mission Accomplished banner goes up, right? The people have seen the fire of God. That's what impresses them.

That's what puts them on their face saying, the Lord, he is God. The Lord, he is God. What career are these prophets going to have after that? They've been discredited.

They've spent a day demonstrating the complete futility. Their continued circulation in existence is going to be nothing but a reminder of the emptiness and falseness of their religion. Instead, they are now instant martyrs.

To all people who worship Baal and they say, this prophet senselessly murdered these guys, and now they are heroes. Their faces are going to be on banners. People are going to be making that la-la-la noise and carrying around boxes and saying, oh, look at this cruel, why would you worship this God? If God wants somebody off the scene, let God take them out.

Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord. I feel, and there's no commentary in scripture, and you see people go both ways on this.

I think if God wanted the 450 prophets gone, they would have left with the altar, the sacrifice, the water, and the dirt. And I think Elijah oversteps. I think this is similar to Moses swinging the stick and striking the rock, exceeding his authority.

Yes, he is God's representative on earth, but he goes beyond his commission. He goes beyond his instructions, and it's going to cost. This is behind his great failure in the next chapter.

He is instantly in the grip of fear. He is instantly on the run. And he cannot accurately assess his situation.

When God confronts him and starts asking him questions, when he goes to Sinai, goes to the very same mountain Moses went to, God reveals his glory to Elijah just like he did to Moses. Moses intercedes on behalf of the people and says, spare them. Elijah says the very same thing after he witnesses the glory of God as he did before.

And because of that, God gives him a new set of instructions and says, commission your replacement, anoint the next king in Syria, and anoint the next king here in the northern kingdom, because you're basically done. And very interesting, we are going to see in 2 Kings, it is Elisha who is going to actually fulfill these instructions, not Elijah. The instructions are given to Elijah, but it is his successor who fulfills them in much the same way that Joshua fulfills and completes Moses' mission to take the people not just out of Egypt, but into the promised land.

Why is his career cut short? Why does he not finish the work? For the same reason, Moses' career, in a sense, was cut short and he didn't finish the work. And it is a reminder to us, and the point of application for us is, yes, we are representatives of God on this earth. Yes, we have the opportunity and indeed the obligation to shine His lights in a crooked and perverse generation.

And we have authority to state what is right and what is wrong. At the same time, we have to be careful not to overstep. This takes discernment, it takes prayer, it takes humility to be an effective witness for God without overstepping, without taking it as a commission to do anything we want in God's name.

We follow God's specific instructions and we are careful and we are balanced and we don't overdo and overstep. If God wants somebody out of the picture, we don't have to character assassinate them, we don't have to undermine them with gossip, we don't have to attack them in ways overt or covert. Commit them to God.

We have our hands full, keeping our feet on solid ground, staying on the narrow road, heading for the straight gate. If other people fail, if others fall short, pray for them, especially if they spitefully use us. Great opportunity for prayer, great opportunity to intercede as Moses does for the people on a different occasion over in Exodus.

But we've got to be careful. Even the greatest of God's representatives in the Old Testament, their nature got the better of them. And it is a disqualifier and we want to be careful.

We want to be wise as we represent the Lord Jesus Christ on this earth. As we communicate biblical values, it is a dangerous thing to get a little too full of ourselves and overstep. And it requires, all I can say is prayer and humility.

To constantly ask God to lead us and to guide us, to show us where we should speak and where we should remain silent, where we should stand up, where we should sit down. Jesus told the disciples, when you face kings and others, it will be given to you in that hour what you should say. If nothing is given to you, don't speak.

We'll know if we're in the will of God, if we're actively cultivating the ministry of God's Holy Spirit, we'll know what we should do, what we should say, how much to say, and when to be quiet. I'm ten minutes over, this is a good time for me to be quiet. So we'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for how powerfully and effectively it illustrates for us, not just historical events and your dealings with your people in ages gone by, but its active, pertinent meaning and purpose for us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will give us insight and perception as we seek to live in the light of these things.

Be with us and dispense to us your enabling grace so that we can be useful and fit servants and brothers and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ, representing him on this earth until he returns. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.