

Kings and Prophets 14-09-05b

We pick up our study now and we're concentrating on the pattern and there is a pattern. There's beautiful, elegant symmetries in the succession of kings in the Northern Kingdom. So we came down, we saw the first four, two and two, and then Omri comes in and he's going to have his four-generation dynasty, but his reign is 12 years.

Red flag waving, 12 years, six plus six, right? Twelve, six in one place, six in another. Then his son Ahab comes to the throne. Ahab is going to reign 22 years, just like Jeroboam did.

And you remember the focus really moves in, it zooms in during the reign of Ahab. We have quite a bit more material. You'll remember that it tells us when Ahab came to the throne that he married Jezebel and she brought in the worship of Baal.

And another real interesting note, soon after Ahab comes to the throne, we have this peculiar little prophecy fulfillment going all the way back to the days of Joshua. It says Jericho was rebuilt. Jericho was rebuilt and the guy that rebuilt it, it cost him two sons.

One when he laid the foundation and another when he put up the gates. One when he started and one when he finished, right? Cost him two sons according to the word of the Lord from Joshua, the curse on Jericho. Then of course you have the famous stories about Elijah, the drought, Mount Carmel, the anointment.

Is that a word? Ointment's a word. Anoint is a word. I don't know if anointment is a word or not.

The anointing instructions that Elijah receives, I'm going to make it a word. New word, anointment. Instructions that are given to Elijah for three people, right? Hazeal, Jehu, and Elisha.

We went through that and we've got a little bit of that left to cover. You remember I gave you a little chart. Elizabeth was reminding me that I didn't quite finish out the threefold symmetry there.

I'll do that before we leave this. But that takes place. Then the three things I mentioned and so many things are happening in threes here.

You had the three anointings that need to take place. You have the three encounters with the Syrians. Defeat, defeat, and then when it ought to have been annihilation instead it's treaty.

And because of that the son of the prophet comes. Ahab, you're going to give your life for his life, the Syrian king. And of course this is where you're going to get Ben-Hadad and all the rest of it coming out.

Hazeal, his general, which all of those guys would have been wiped out if Ahab had done his job. Then Naboth and then you have the threefold curse on Ahab and one by the son of the

prophets, one by Elijah, one by Micaiah. The Elijah curse itself is a threefold curse because you're going to get the curse of Jeroboam, you're going to get the curse of Baasha, and you're going to get your own personal dogs, dogs, dogs, and birds.

If you read it, it's dogs, dogs, dogs, and birds. The dogs I mentioned three times. Dogs are going to lick up your blood.

Dogs are going to lick up Jezebel's blood. Dogs and birds are going to get your whole house as a result of the Naboth incident. Then you have Micaiah delivering the third curse and because he speaks the truth he is sent back to drink the water of affliction and eat the bread of affliction with the king's son Joash back in Samaria.

Well here's what's interesting. Ahab gets killed and this is one of our really important years, 853. This is 12 years before Jehu.

Ahab is killed. All of these triple curses are fulfilled and the beginning of the fulfillment on his whole house starts. The next guy to reign is Ahab's son Ahaziah.

Ahaziah is the third out of these four Amorite dynasty kings. Like the son of Jeroboam, like the son of Baasha, he's going to reign two years, but in that little short time a lot of stuff is going to happen. He's going to fall through the lattice and he's going to appeal to Baalzebub.

Am I going to get better or not? Elijah is the guy that knows the true answer, so the king is going to send 50 guys and a captain to go fetch Elijah. Elijah says, if fire doesn't come down from heaven and burn you guys up I'm not a prophet of God. Well sure enough fire comes down, 51 guys are toast.

The king says, we'll have none of that, send another 50 guys and another captain. I'm not a prophet of God if fire doesn't come down from heaven and take you guys out. Away they go, 102 guys toast.

King sends a third group of 50 with a captain. This captain, having two neurons to look at, says from a safe distance, yo, sir, Elijah, please have mercy on us, don't kill us, we're just doing our job. And God tells Elijah, go with this guy, you're safe now.

They're not going to manhandle you, they're going to respect your person, and he goes with the third. And of course that third group of 50 with their captain, if you add up all of the troops and all of the you get 153, which coincidentally is the number of fish that Peter pulls out of the drink just before the Lord ascends. But that's a set of three things, those three groups that come.

Then Elijah goes and says, sorry you're going to die. Went to all that trouble for nothing, you're going to die anyway, and he does. And he's really only been in office about a year, but they counted as two.

Right after that, you have the retirement of Elijah via fiery retirement home bus. The bus to the retirement home comes, chariots, fire, horsemen of fire, horses of fire, the whole thing is fiery. And interestingly, there are 50 sons of the prophets who watch this take place.

And then after he disappears, 50 guys look for him for three days. We saw all of that the first time through. But all of this is in the interim between sort of Ahaziah and Joram.

Then Elijah is, the Jordan is going to get struck with the mantle three times in that day. Elijah struck it once so that they could go across. Elisha comes back and strikes it and nothing happens.

He says, where's the God of Elijah? The 50 guys are saying, where's the Elijah of God? But Elisha says, where's the God of Elijah? And he strikes it the first time, nothing happens. He asks the question, he strikes it again, it happens. So the Jordan gets struck three times with the mantle and Elisha comes back across.

After he comes across, what happens? He heals the water in the very recently restored, renovated and rebuilt city of Jericho. Remember, it's only been in the reign of Ahaziah's father that Jericho got rebuilt. And there was a guy that died with the laying of the foundations and another son that died with the installation of the gates.

As Elisha comes back through, this new city's got a water problem. One of the reasons nobody rebuilt it before that is they've got this water problem. And we think all these young men have been hauling water up from the Jordan.

Well, the bitter water has been made sweet by Elisha and these guys are all out of a job. And so they harass him. And this is where you have the two bears mauling the 42 youths.

Elisha himself struck the Jordan twice. Everything with Elisha is two. But Elisha curses the youths.

He doesn't just say, you know, shame on you. He puts a curse on them. And as a result of the curse, the two bears come and maul them.

And it tells us that there were 42 of them. But all of this is in that time space right after the death of Ahaziah. And this is in the initial time of Joram.

Joram's 12 years. Then during Joram's reign, you have the further stories of Elisha. The widow's oil, the Shunammite's son, the poisoned stew made good, the bread multiplied, the Naaman's leprosy healed, Gehazi getting leprosy, the what? I'm getting there.

Then the axehead, then the blinded Syrians, then you have the famine and the siege. And then as sort of a parallel to Naaman's leprosy, you have the four lepers who discover that the Syrians have fled because they heard a noise, got scared and ran off. And the three seers of barley twice.

Elisha prophesies and the guy mocks the prophecy. Remember this conversation through the door in the next day? Sure enough. But there's two seers or one price and a seer, two seers of fine flour and a seer.

That's three seers total. So you have three seers mentioned by Elisha the previous day. The next day, the three seers prophecy comes true.

So it's a double telling. Then Joram is killed at the end of the 12 years. This is the arrival of Jehu in 841.

Now, here's what's interesting as we come to this time in the life of the nation of Israel with its two kingdoms. I thought it was interesting, by the way, I heard somebody talking about Hong Kong and how they are under the gun from mainland China. And what they want to have is they've got a slogan for it.

It's two ways, but one people. They want to have democracy in Hong Kong and they want to let the mainland Chinese do what they want. They want to be united, but they want to have two different, they want to be all one nation, but they want to have their own government in Hong Kong.

And of course, the mainland doesn't want that. But there's a, you have to, I meant to remember that phrase and I've forgotten it, but they've got a little saying. It reminds me of Israel because they're one nation, but they've got two different paradigms.

Judah is kind of like Hong Kong and the North is like mainland China, communist China. But here's what's interesting, and I didn't see this until I was working on this for tonight. At the beginning of the 12-year period in the northern kingdom of Israel, you have Ahaziah reigning and you've got that whole fall through the lattice, Beelzebub, the three sets of guys, and he dies anyway.

And there's a little notice right after Ahaziah dies because Joram, he is in the Amrite dynasty. He is part of that family, but it says he came to the throne because Ahaziah had no son. Ahaziah had no son when he dies and therefore Joram comes to the throne.

Down in the south at the end of this 12-year period of Joram's reign in the north, you have Joram who had been the regent, co-regent with Jehoshaphat, and then he's going to spend a total of 12 years from 853. He begins his co-regency, his effective reign in 853 with Athaliah. He's co-regent with Jehoshaphat.

Jehoshaphat's going to die in seven years into this 12-year thing. So, Joram's time is broken into seven and five. He's got a seven-year co-regency with his father and then he'll have five on his own.

But at the end of that, Joram is going to be killed by Jehu and the reason Athaliah comes to the throne is that Joram has no son available to take the throne. So, you've got a guy in the north at

the beginning of the 12 years who doesn't have a son to put on the throne and somebody else takes it who's just a relative. And in the south, when Joram is killed, he apparently doesn't have a son.

He really does, but all of them have seemingly been wiped out and this is why Athaliah is going to get her chance to rule for that seven-year period. So, Athaliah, after Jehoshaphat dies and she really comes out of the shadows with her husband Joram, he's going to be killed after five years, but she's not and she's going to reign for another seven. So, the total for Athaliah is another 12 years.

These numbers just keep recurring, they keep recurring, they keep recurring. Fives and sevens making 12. And so, there's kind of a symmetry because you have somebody dying with no son at the beginning of that 12-year period just before Jehu and then when Jehu comes, you have a king who dies and seemingly has no issue.

In the north, when Joram, who comes to the throne as not the son, is going to also be killed by Jehu and that's going to end the Amorite dynasty after four generations, then you get the clean slate, you get Jehu in the north and you get Athaliah in the south. And this is 841. Well, we've talked before about how when you have two of a thing, many times in the Bible, these are two viewpoints on a single thing.

You think of the scapegoat, the Ezzazel principle. One goat dies, the other one is splashed with its blood and turned loose in the wilderness to carry away the sins. It's a dead goat but it's a living goat.

The cleansing of the leper in Leviticus 14. You have two birds. You kill one, you pour his blood into living water, you dip the other bird in that water and turn him loose.

It's dead but it's not dead. In a way, it's an identity. It's the same bird, it's the same goat, but in order to fulfill the picture in physical terms, you have to use two.

Here in Israel, we have two kingdoms showing us one people of God. Israel is Israel. It's one people under the covenant of Sinai.

It's one people who were brought out of Egypt and brought into the land with Joshua. But they are two because God needs to show us two different things about these people. You had to have two goats to show two different things, life and death.

You had to have two birds to show two different things, life and death. The double portion idea, the twins in the womb, you didn't just have Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, you had Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Esau. And that third generation is doubled so that God can show us two things about that what should have in some ways been a united truth.

And that's the reason Edom is treated differently than Moab and Ammon because Edom is your brother. Edom is your alter ego, if you will. There's an alter ego idea.

These kingdoms are alter egos, starting with Jeroboam and Rehoboam. So where you have a four generation set of Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, and Elah that are evil in the north, then you have another four generation set of Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, and Joram. You have this total of eight kings, two sets of four, if you will, in the north.

At that same time in the south, you have one set of four, which is Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, and Jehoshaphat. What is God's ideal? That single set of four that provides stability, continuity, all four of those are direct line of David. None of the ones in the north are the line of David.

And so you have, here's the people of God accepting God's assigned authority. God says, David is your king, and I promise David that he will not lack a man to sit on the throne from now on. Why did God divide the kingdom? He tells them back over in 1 Kings, when this all first takes place, he tells them why the kingdom is divided.

You had all these wonderful things in Solomon, but Solomon turns sour in the end. Solomon tolerates all of this false worship, and the upshot of this is the curse on the kingdom. And in 1 Kings chapter 11, verse 26, Solomon's servant, Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zereda, whose mother's name was Zerua, a widow, rebelled against the king.

This is what caused him to rebel against the king. Solomon had built the millow and repaired damages to the city of David, his father. The man, Jeroboam, was a mighty man of valor.

Solomon, seeing the young man was industrious, made him the officer over all the labor force of the house of Joseph. Who's the house of Joseph? Ephraim and Manasseh. He's an Ephraimite.

He's over all the Ephraimites. That's why the northern kingdom is called Ephraim. It happened at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem that the prophet Ahijah, the Shilonite, met him on the way, clothed himself with a new garment, and the two were alone in the field.

Ahijah took hold of the new garment that was on him, tore it into 12 pieces. He said to Jeroboam, take for yourself 10 pieces, for thus says the Lord, the God of Israel. Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give 10 tribes to you.

You'll have one tribe for the sake of my servant David, for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, because, why? They have forsaken me and worshiped Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, and Milcom, the god of the people of Ammon. Notice, Moabites and Ammonites are a big part of this false worship, the sons of Lot by incest. And they have not walked in my ways to do what is right in my eyes, keep my statutes and my judgments, as did his father David.

However, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, because I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of my servant David, whom I chose because he kept my commandments and my statutes. But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and give it to you, 10 tribes. To his son, I will give one tribe in addition to his own, that's going to be Judah and Benjamin, in order that my servant David may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem,

the city which I have chosen for myself to put my name there.

I will take you, you shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel. Then it shall be, and this is sort of a symmetry with King Saul. This is the same promise that was made to Saul the Benjamite.

It shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in my ways and do what is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as my servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house. As I built for David, I will give Israel to you. There could have been a Jeroboamite dynasty.

God promised it to him. All he had to do was be obedient. I will build you an enduring house as I did for David, and I will afflict the descendants of David because of this, but not forever.

I will afflict them, but not forever. Solomon, verse 40, therefore sought to kill Jeroboam. God's anointed.

God anointed Jeroboam. God assigned Jeroboam to ten northern tribes, and Solomon is so dissolute by this point that Solomon tries to kill God's designated king because he doesn't like the judgment. Why didn't he take it to God? He's dealing with effects instead of causes.

He's dealing with results instead of what initiates those. He's dealing with others instead of himself. It's his fault that the kingdom is being divided.

It wasn't divided in the days of Rehoboam. God didn't say, Rehoboam, you're such a lousy king, I'm going to divide the kingdom. Solomon was such a lousy king that it got divided.

And remember, the principle in the Bible is the king often embodies and reflects the heart of the people. It's not just Solomon. The people have gone along.

If Solomon set up an idol worshiping center for Chemosh and Milcom and nobody came, you know, I build it, nobody comes, that's because the people are faithful to the God of Israel. They came there in droves. He was meeting popular demand.

He kept himself popular and kept the peace by catering to their whims and their desires. And it was well received. It was well attended.

He embodies in himself the nature of the people. Keep in mind that the time of David foreshadows the time of the return of the Lord Jesus in defeating the enemies of God and the enemies of the people of God. Solomon foreshadows the millennial kingdom.

And what is going to happen during the course of the millennium? The same thing. As goes the nation in the Old Testament, so goes the believer in the new. What do you see here as we review God's close and careful attention? His sending of prophets with very simple messages, very graphic messages.

As I've said before, this is like a comic book. It's like a graphic novel. He can't send them Shakespeare.

He doesn't send them Ezekiel or Isaiah with perorations of doctrinal truth. He sends them floating axe heads and withered arms that are restored, tops coming off of mountains in blazes of fire, groups of 50 men being incinerated. Kings dying of a disease.

Predictions made about how long their house will endure being fulfilled. Dogs licking up the blood. You have fire coming down and consuming those who are trying to take Elijah before his time.

And then you have fire coming and taking Elijah away when it is his time. Fire of judgment. Why does God take Elijah? Why didn't God take Elijah out in a fluffy chariot? Because he failed.

Didn't do his job. God gave him three things to do. He didn't do any of them.

He collected Elijah, but he didn't anoint him. Didn't even go to Damascus to see Hazeal, nor did he anoint Jehu. He didn't do any of those things.

God said, when you leave here, go do these things. He did none of them. God says, you know what? You're done.

I've already talked to you at Sinai, showed you my glory. You're still feeling sorry for yourself. You're done.

Fading at the end. If there's one thing to take away from all of this that we have looked at tonight, one of the major things to take away, don't fade in the stretch. People who run know what this is like.

You're trying to cover a distance. In the Marine Corps, it's the three-mile run. You do your sit-ups, you do your pull-ups, you do your three-mile run.

And of course, they do the run last, when your stomach has got nothing, your arms have got nothing. It's amazing. You don't realize how much you use your arms when you run until you have no arms and you try to run.

You don't realize how much your abdomen plays a role when you're running until you have no abdominal muscles left. Your arms are noodles. Your abdominal muscles are just dead.

Okay, go run three miles. At least for those of us that are not in fantastic shape. And so you run and you think, well, I've got to pace myself because I don't want to.

And for me, every time I ever did this run, it's a mile and a half out and a mile and a half back. The guys that are doing the timing and stuff, they don't want to have to go three miles and watch you come in. They want to stand there in one spot in the shade with a cold drink and stop watching a clipboard.

Now I'll see you in about, you know, 25 minutes or so. And so they're sitting there and people go out a mile and a half, turn around and come back. At Fort Sill, they always did it in the same place.

It was downhill as you left. There's a couple of little subsequent hills and then there was a turnaround point and then you come back. And so the final sprint is uphill.

Long, like, it's like the last, I'd say third, not quite a half mile, about a third of a mile. The last of it was just this steady uphill. Well, no arms, no tummy.

Now you've got no breath, you know, no wind and it's uphill. Well, this is the stretch. You want to have saved something.

You want to have been in good enough shape that when you hit this final hill, you can sprint to the tape. You can finish strong. You can make your best possible time.

Nothing more embarrassing. And I saw it time and time and time again. You know, you finish, you turn around and look at the other guys and some of these guys might have passed you as you're on the way out, but somewhere along the way, you know, you pass them and now they hit.

And when they get to the bottom of that hill and start up, it's, there's just nothing left. Nothing left. Some of them are walking.

Marines walking up the hill to finish the thing. And I'm thinking, I'm ashamed. I would be ashamed.

Let me put it this way. I would be ashamed if I had to walk the last part of my run. If I was so out of breath and so poor planning and so insufficient that I had to walk, listen, spiritual life, spiritual life.

We've got to be strong to the finish. You have need of patience. Paul says, I have run with patience, run with patience, the race that is set before you.

I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course, finished strong. These people fade in the stretch.

Solomon starts great. He's the guy that built the temple. He prayed that wonderful prayer.

The Shekinah came and glowed from the Holy of Holies. He did this great work. He started so well and he finished so abhorrently that God has to split the kingdom and give it to a guy like Jeroboam.

That's going to get the dogs and birds curse. And he's so evil. God won't even let his grandson get on the throne, that Northern kingdom, all of this symmetry that we're seeing, this is God at work.

This is God saying, look, my hands are in this and I'm showing you this for a reason. If the numbers don't make a lot of sense, if you don't see all of it, here's one thing you can see. This is all an act of God.

It is all in God's hands and God is using it as a comic strip, as a graphic. These people didn't have Bibles that there weren't manuscripts being communicated. How did people hear what's going on? Word of mouth.

Did you hear what happened in Samaria the other day? Did you hear what happened in Jezreel? Did you hear that the dogs were licking Ahab's blood out of his chariot? Did you hear that a chariot of fire collected Elijah and 50 guys looked for three days and couldn't find him? Did you hear what Elisha did? Did you know what happened to Jericho? Did you hear about the bears? Did you hear about the poisoned stew? Did you hear about the multiplied barley loaves? Did you hear about the floating ax head? Did you hear? Did you hear? Did you hear? These things are like today you get on a Twitter feed or a Facebook deal or whatever. It's the short, quick version and it communicates. Did you hear that the king was assassinated? Did you hear that there's another guy on the throne and he's not even his son? He only reigned two years and he's been replaced.

What happened? Do you remember that promise? You know, God used to say that David would never lack a man to sit on the throne. Well, you look in the southern kingdom of Judah, Rehoboam is the son of Solomon. Ahijah is the son of David, Abijah rather.

Asa is the grandson of David. Jehoshaphat is the great grandson of David. You know, greats, however many greats are in there, but they're a direct line of David.

Now you've got this weird thing coming up that we're going to look at last time. We've rehearsed all of this. We've got that weird 12-year preview.

There's a 12-year preview before the days of Jehu. The 12-year preview, I would suggest to you, is 12 is the number of Israel. It suggests that this is the whole history of the nation of Israel and then you draw a line under it.

The nation is suddenly gone. The 12 years are over. Jehu, with one stroke, resets everything.

Now we've got a new picture. We've got Jehu in the and we've got, whoa, nobody in the south. Nobody in the south.

The two are one. You've got Jehu. Jehu is the king in the north.

This is the non-Davidic king. Do we have somebody today who is the ruler of this world, who isn't God's son, who isn't from the line of David? And do we have a son who is, in fact, alive but isn't available? And instead, there is the harlot who is ruling. The two are one.

This, you think there's no church age in the Old Testament. I think there is church age. It just

wasn't revealed.

It wasn't able to be put together. I think the Lord Jesus saw it. I think when his eyes were opened on the Damascus Road, Paul the Apostle saw it.

I think the Lord Jesus may have explained this to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. But we're going to see, as we look now at this section, beginning in 841 with Jehu, you've got this strange interlude and it has parallels. And after seven years, Athaliah is going to be slain.

And the son, the true son of David, who has never been dead, God said, David will never lack a man to sit on the throne. He didn't say he'll never lack a man sitting on the throne. He said he'll never lack a man to sit on the throne.

Joash is the man to sit on the throne, but he's not going to get there for a while because there is this interlude. There is this interim where evil has to have its way. It has to be fulfilled.

And the final increment of the Ahab curse will not be fulfilled. The last of the house of Ahab will not be fulfilled until Athaliah, his daughter, is slain. And oddly enough, it's out of context.

All of these Amorite dynasty Ahab things have been taking place in the north and Athaliah shows up in the south. Why isn't she in the north? Why is she in the south? This Jehu line, this shows us the time in which we live. Jesus is not on the throne in Jerusalem, but there is a faithful remnant.

There are those who are existing under the reign of Jehu, the God of this world, under the reign of the scarlet harlot, the woman who rides the beast. But that is a measured time. I will afflict the sons of David, but not forever.

I will afflict them, but not forever. Israel is out as the people of God, but not forever. And when the sun comes back, so will the people of God.

And it's a foreshadowing of the larger arrangement of human history. Well, we'll see some of the details of this and some of the clues that God has embedded in this in terms of what is associated with these kings. Jehu begins with a bloodbath.

Athaliah ends in blood. And that's what brackets this age. There is the death of the children slain by Herod.

There's the death of the Lord Jesus Himself. There's the demise of the entire nation of Israel in 70 AD. You know, you think about Masada.

You think about all of the things that happened to end the time of Israel. And then you come to the conclusion at this age when we leave and the man of sin is revealed. And then all of the events in Revelation 4 through 19 take place.

There's blood at the beginning and there's blood at the end. So much so that many people try

to read the blood at the end back into the blood at the beginning. They're so similar.

They say Revelation was fulfilled in 70 AD. There's people who say it has no future relevance. Revelation is all, that's how similar they are.

That's how similar this chiastic structure and symmetrical arrangement is. People get them confused they're so similar. It begins and ends in blood just like this period that begins in 841.

And so what is the upshot of all of this? There really is a God in heaven and He really is intimately aware of who we are, where we are, what the times are. And we have been woven into the fabric of His plan just as these individuals were. He's the same God.

He has the same attention to detail. We are no less important. God is the God of the microscopic just as much as the macroscopic.

And we look at these large events on a national scale. God is not one iota, not one yod, not one tittle less interested or less involved in the details of your life and my life than He is in the life of national Israel. To say that He's one bit less, you're diminishing God.

You're saying He's not omnipotent. He's not omniscient. He doesn't have a perfect plan.

He's just got kind of a general plan and you just kind of kind of blow around in the middle of this great empty corral doing what you want. Not at all. As goes the nation in the Old Testament, so goes the individual believer.

How many people do you think there are on this earth right now who are genuinely, fervently asking and seeking and knocking? Very few. Do you think that God knows their names? Do you think His marking angel, as it were, has not marked them out? Do you think that there are not daily reports on God's desk about these people who God is giving the opportunity to learn and grow and serve and reflect His glory? Your name is on God's desk day by day by day. He knows us.

He is aware and He's paying very close attention and it is up to us to step up, be strong, don't fade in the stretch. Well, you know, I used to be real interested, but I think I'm just going to kind of coast, coast across the line on the narrow gate. You know, I got my momentum up in the past.

It's uphill. You don't have momentum. The momentum pulls us backward.

Our nature, the world, the flesh, the devil pulls us backward. It is by, you have need of patience. You have need of endurance.

How many times does Paul tell us, if you want the inheritance, you've got to push. What did Jesus say? Coast, enter through the narrow gate. Is that what He said? Hold on to one another, mentor each other through the narrow gate.

Is that what He said? Strive, strive to enter by the narrow gate. Well, isn't that works? Yes. Yes.

And you and I had better have works, those good works that God has foreordained that we should walk in them. It is work. It's supposed to be work.

If it's not work, you're doing something wrong. It should be a push. You don't build muscle if you don't struggle.

We don't get strong if we don't fight. Paul says, we wrestle. We wrestle against, we're not speaking words of power and sitting back and, you know, tossing out the occasional memory verse at the powers that be.

We wrestle against principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age. This is a fight. It's a battle.

You don't put on the full armor of God to pose for pictures, right? It's not a photo op. It's a battle. And there are many who fall because they don't have their armor on and they don't know how to use their weapons.

We need to be serious about this thing. God is deadly serious. Look at how seriously He takes these things in the Old Testament.

Do you think He's slacked off with Him? There is no shadow of turning. He is the same God and He has the same level of interest in what you and I are thinking and doing as He did in these personages in the Old Testament. So whatever else you get out of this, and this is a deep well, you can go way down in this thing and you can pull some treasure out of the deep, deep veins of ore down below the ground.

If it's dark down there and you don't necessarily want to try to pull everything out, the one thing to remember is what I have just said. It is incumbent. We are called according to His purpose and this is His purpose.

We may strive and err and fall short again and again. Our face may be marred with dust and sweat and blood, but we're in the arena and we get up and we keep pushing because our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ did not quit when it got tough. And we are following in His steps.

We are doing what we have seen Him do. We are imitators of God as dear children. And to be some of those many brethren that He is the firstborn among, we've got to look at these Old Testament examples and be chastened and be warned and be instructed and corrected and rebuked in some cases into recognizing our opportunity and don't make the same mistake.

Remember all through the beginning of Hebrews, look at these people that were delivered out of Egypt and then they lost their focus and dropped in the wilderness. They could not enter in because of faithlessness. They're delivered just like us, but they don't enter in because they didn't persevere in faith.

We want to be Caleb. We want to be Joshua. We don't want to be Korah, Nadab, Abihu, or name your Israelite including Moses that dropped short of the goal.

Moses himself didn't make it in, symbolically so. He'll get there, but he didn't get there the first time. We want to get there the first time.

Let's close here in a prayer. Father, thank you for these wonderful examples. Thank you for revealing to us the care and the painstaking detail that you have woven into the fabric of your plan, the privilege that we have of being included in that plan and of being a part of your purpose in this age and in the ages to come.

We pray that as we pursue our calling, as we put on the full armor, as we walk in love and walk in the light, that God the Holy Spirit will keep us ever mindful of this wonderful privilege and wonderful opportunity as we have been assigned this portion of your purpose to be body of Christ. If we qualify, if we are faithful, if we avail ourselves of your grace, we will be bride of Christ. We will be citizens of the new Jerusalem fitted for service now and in the ages to come.

We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts and keep us mindful of them and to see their application and their outworking day by day as we invest the time that remains to us in this life for your praise and for your glory. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.