

Kings and Prophets 16-05-05

This is Thursday, the 5th of May, 2016. We continue our study of Kings and Prophets. We're looking at Good King Josiah, although Good King comes to bad end, might be the general heading here.

And you find this, of course, in 2 Kings chapter 23, kind of in the middle of that chapter, and it's parallel in 2 Chronicles 35. And we'll continue looking at Josiah tonight. Let's take a moment to dedicate our time, our fellowship, and our study to the Lord in prayer, and then we'll start.

Father, what a wonderful thing it is to be saved, to have the assurance of your promise that when this life is over for us, we will be gathered to the Lord Jesus, gathered together with our fellow believers, our family, our friends, our fellow travelers in this life who have claimed Christ as Savior and are excited about the wonderful hope that you have provided for us through Him. We thank you for the truth of your Word, the presence of your Spirit, the opportunity to combine those things in our lives to lay hold of righteousness by faith and exploit the eternal life that we have in Christ. And we pray that as we study this portion of your Word tonight and those that relate to it, that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher, that each one will be encouraged and motivated and challenged to redeem the time, knowing the days are evil, and to live our lives in a way that pleases you.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. So, Josiah has this promise.

Do you remember the promise? Do you remember where it was? We saw it last time. Do you remember who delivered the promise? Huldah. I don't think I could name one of my daughters that because she would be Huldah, Hull, and it would just be to sort of a redundancy.

If you called her Hull, what would you call her for short? It would either have to be Hull or Duh. It doesn't seem like a very workable name in the modern time, but she's memorable and the promise that she communicates from God to Josiah is equally memorable. Because of his diligence and his heart for the Lord, like unto David, his father, he is told that he will not see the calamity that is coming from God on Judah because of the sins of Manasseh, because of the heart of the people in general that has superficially followed, but beneath the surface they really have not changed.

They go along to get along. You're in favor with the king if you kind of tell him what he wants to hear and do what he wants to see, but your heart's not in it. And this superficial obedience may play in the human arena, but God looks on the heart and God knows that this thing is not going to outlast Josiah.

But he honors Josiah and this is a reminder to us that God will reward or discipline us based on we ourselves. You could be in the midst of other people that may or may not care anything about God, may or may not have something on the ball, may or may not be learning and growing and seizing the potential that God has given us in Christ by faith, power of the Holy

Spirit, the Word of God. Some people get that and some people don't.

It's a choice. It's a decision. It is a complex of priorities that we set in our lives and we achieve it to varying degrees ranging from doing pretty good to, oh my goodness let me stand back because this person is about to get judged by God in time, sent unto death and I don't want to be caught in the fallout.

Hopefully that's not us. Hopefully we're talking about someone else. But we individually receive.

We do not corporately receive. You can't hold on to the shirt tails of your parents. Parents can't hold on to the coat tails of their kids.

Siblings can't hold on. Spouses can't hold on. Grandma can't drag everybody to glory as great as that would be.

A lot of the grandmas have more on the ball than the rest of us. But you stand or fall on your own decisions. This has been obscured in our modern cultural Christianity where if you belong to a big church that seems to have a lot going on, people feel like they have sort of absorbed the glory and it's just not so.

It doesn't matter what church you go to. It doesn't matter what you're involved with. It doesn't matter who you send money to.

Although any and all of those things can be good, but God looks on the hearts. We are judged on the thoughts and intents of our heart. So how do you think Josiah comes out in the heart judgment department? If we wanted to really see what the news is in the throne room of God, would we go to Kings or would we go to Chronicles? I'm going to beat this into the ground until you remember.

Which account is more likely to tell us God's view? Kings or Chronicles? Chronicles. Kings, the books of the kings. This is, hello, all you people, let me tell you how the kings are doing.

Chronicles, this is the chronicles that were kept in the palace. This is what's going on behind the scenes. You know how they're always coming out with books? Somebody that was in the cabinet, I got this just awful book one time from a guy that was a naysayer.

President George W. Bush brought this guy who was a Democrat into his cabinet, worked with him, and the guy just assassinated him by writing a book. And I have the book on tape. I just, you know how it is.

You want to hear the other side. And I couldn't even get through it. The guy was so bitter, so vindictive, so judgmental, put a negative spin on everything and everybody, and was just disappointed that he wasn't listened to or given more attention or got spanked.

I don't know what his problem was. But it was a very depressing read. His name was William something, and I'm not even going to tell you who or what it was.

But the judgment of God is going to be on the councils of the heart. And the royal councils, the royal cabinet meetings in the Old Testament correspond to your heart and my heart. What is the meeting that our brain has with our emotions, that has with our common sense, that has with our repository of the Word of God, and with the Holy Spirit in attendance reminding us of what we learned from the Word of God? It's like a cabinet meeting.

Whose voice wins out? Whose counsel is persuasive? Do we listen to the Word of God communicated to us from the Holy Spirit, or do our emotions get the better of us? Or does worldly common sense guide us, and we say, well, that just doesn't seem practical to me. I'm going to have to create my own means of escape. Well, Josiah passes this test, but the vast majority of his generation and the population of Jerusalem and Judea in his day do not and will not.

And we know this from the historical record. These people will go out in 605, in 597, and in 586. Three sweeps of the broom.

You know how this is. You're out there sweeping, and you get the dustpan. You don't get it with the first sweep.

You get a lot of it with the first sweep, but you've got to sweep again and sweep again. And by the time you've swept it three times, whatever's left, you can let the wind carry away. Well, God is going to use the Babylonian broom to sweep Judah clean, and he's going to get the best and brightest, like Daniel and his three friends, in 605.

He's going to get people like Ezekiel in 605 and 597. The remnant of the people are going to be deported and taken away no later than 587, 586 B.C. with the destruction of Solomon's temple. You think about the glorious dedication of that thing, the Shekinah coming down, the glory of God filling it, God promising Solomon, if you come to this place and humble yourselves and seek my face, I will hear from heaven.

I will heal the land. If you turn and repent, I will never leave you or forsake you. I will keep covenant with you.

I will confirm and expand all of the covenants that I gave to your fathers. But if you don't, there is almost literally hell to pay. Well, we saw last time that the upshot of this was that Josiah receives a really good report card all the way up to and through the early years of his reign, the rehabilitation of the temple and of temple worship, the observance of Passover.

He's very much in the mold of his ancestor, Joash, in that regard. But he could also have taken a lesson from Joash in the sense that things that begin well don't always end well. And it isn't how you sprint from the starting line, it is how well you've done when you cross the finish line.

But hold up. Turn to 2 Chronicles 35, where we were looking last time. We're only going to briefly revisit this, so you've got to watch closely.

The story picks up in verse 20, after all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple. Now, you remember the promise. I'm not going to go back over the promise.

It said, because of all this, I'm still going to bring destruction, but you will not see it in your days. You will be gathered to your fathers in peace. Right? You remember that.

But we saw, just at the tail end of our study last week, when Necho comes. And the reason Necho comes up from Egypt is he's colluding with Assyria. Now, who's been the dominant force in the region ever since the days of Rabshaka and all of that? It's been the Assyrians, right? The kings of Judah were worried about the coalition between Pekah.

You remember Pekah and Rezan and Isaiah in his early chapters, and a smoking wick will not go out. And before these guys have a chance to do anything, that whole coalition is going to collapse. The Syrians, just to the north, and the northern kingdom, they were going to join up and try to defeat God's scourge nation, the Assyrians.

And God said, He says, that's not going to happen. The southern kingdom, don't worry about the northern kingdom and the Syrians. There's something bigger than that coming.

The bitter and hasty Assyrian is coming down here, and they're going to be the rod of mine anger and the staff of mine indignation. So if you're sweating this small stuff up north, you need to think again. There's a bigger movement than what you're looking at and what you can see.

And sure enough, that northern coalition of Syria and the northern kingdom collapsed. They went out in 721 B.C., and Assyria has been the big bully on the block ever since. Well, now we're down to the low 600s B.C., 620-ish, right? And so that was 100 years ago.

Well, Assyria has now waned. Their power has dwindled. That's why the northern kingdom was able to, the southern kingdom rather, was able to expand into the northern kingdom territory and across the Jordan and recapture much of what they had lost.

And everybody is singing Happy Days Are Here Again. Does anybody know that song besides Dolores? Happy days are here again. It's one of those straw hat and cane songs from vaudeville days.

Happy days are here again. It was a campaign song back in the past. Well, everybody is singing that song and saying, oh boy, look at this, we're expanding.

The Assyrians have waned. And God is in a very similar way saying, look, you shouldn't be worrying about the Assyrians to begin with. It's the Babylonians that are now going to be the rod of mine anger and the staff of mine indignation to those who are not obedient.

How many times do I have to reiterate the terms of the covenant? If you will heed my voice, if you will keep my laws and my statutes, my ordinances and my commandments, I will be with

you. I will bless you. One of you will put to flight a thousand and so on.

But you remember the whole Mount Ebal, Mount Gerizim thing. If you don't, the sky is going to turn to iron and your fields are going to turn to brass and everything is going to go dark and it's going to be a post-apocalyptic dystopian future, right? Well, nobody seems to take that to the bank. They just don't seem to be paying attention.

Well, and here's what happens. Pharaoh Necho is marching up to join his pal, the king of Assyria, to try to put the squash on Babylon because Babylon is on the rise. Assyria is on the descent and Assyria says, well, in the old days we could have just squashed this like a bug, but we're not what we used to be.

Let's call on our buddy to the south, get to Pharaoh with his army. So Pharaoh is marching up there. Josiah sees him marching past.

Pharaoh has no beef with Judah. He's marching up to link up with the Assyrians and do battle further north. Well, Josiah sees an opportunity to flank.

He thinks, I can't die. Huldah has told me I'm going to go to my grave in peace. Hooray for me.

I'm going to go guts and glory and defeat. And you can imagine how he would justify this. Our old nemesis, Egypt.

They enslaved our ancestors. They're the bad guy. They're a threat to the south.

I can secure the south. I can secure the north in one fell swoop. The Assyrians will be weakened and the Babylonians may squash them.

We'll take care of the Egyptians. We can expand. He's got this grand scheme evidently.

I'm trying to think what would motivate him to leave off with the wonderful domestic program that God has blessed, that God has told him he has done a great job and is going to be richly blessed as a result. And he says, well, I available. But he didn't consult Jeremiah.

Huldah, if she hasn't died, is available. And he doesn't consult Huldah. He doesn't consult anybody.

I know Jeremiah is on the scene, as you'll see when we read this in Chronicles chapter 35. But he goes over there and decides he's going to attack Pharaoh. But he evidently begins to have qualms as he gets there because he says, well, I think I'll put myself in disguise.

If it goes well, I'll put my kingly robes on and claim victory. If it goes poorly, we'll slip away and pretend like this was just a rogue element of the army or something. I don't know what he was thinking.

Why is a disguise? He didn't want to attract attention and be targeted. But if he's taking

Huldah's promise to the king, then he ought to walk out there with neon lights. Something begins to give him pause because he goes into a disguise.

Do you remember the last time a king decided he would go into battle in disguise? Remember who that was? Southern Kingdom or Northern Kingdom? Northern Kingdom. Mr. Jezebel. King Ahab.

How did that turn out? A man drew a bow at a venture, and I shot an arrow in the air. It landed I know not where. Well, it landed in Ahab's hair, and he died.

So the disguise thing, you know, this is human thinking. It's trivial to say that God isn't going to be fooled by a disguise. God is either for us or against us.

If God be for us, who can be against us? But if God is against us, who can be for us? And Josiah exceeds his authority. Now this brings me, this is actually our subject, and I've used half my time on the introduction, so I'm going to get right to it. The promise of God stated to Josiah by Huldah is in a sense conditional.

She doesn't say if you stay home, you'll be gathered in peace. But God's promises are all conditioned on obedience, on obedience. And if you break the condition, the promise is off.

Now, pop quiz. Is there a scripture that confirms what I just said? Is there actual passage you can go to where a promise is made by God, but then somebody begins to violate the condition of the promise, and somebody says, well, if you violate the condition, the promise is off? The answer is, yes, there is. I'll save you the trouble.

Turn with me to Acts chapter 27. This, by the way, is going to be geography, current events, politics, and theology all rolled up into one. You'll really get a charge out of this, I think.

Acts chapter 27. If your Bible is like mine, chapter 27 is headlined, The Voyage to Rome Begins. If you remember the broad outline of Paul's career as an apostle, he begins doing some local things, rode to Damascus, goes to Arabia, and all the rest of it.

And then he has his first missionary journey, second missionary journey, third missionary journey, and then what they sometimes call his fourth journey, missionary is stretching it a bit, is when Festus sends him to Rome. Remember that? Agrippa, look in chapter 26, almost you persuade me to be a Christian, or by so little do you expect me to become a Christian, however you want to interpret that. And Agrippa says to Festus, this man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.

But Paul used the rights of a Roman citizen and said, I appeal to the Supreme Court. I want Caesar to judge this case and clear my name. So they're going to send him to Rome.

This is the fourth journey, and this is Acts chapter 27. Very quickly, it was decided we should sail to Italy. Who's we? Who wrote Acts? Luke.

Who is traveling with Paul and setting this down in almost journal diary fashion? Dr. Luke. So Luke says, we set sail. Now, is Luke under arrest? Does Luke have to appeal to Caesar? He's there by choice.

He's sticking with the Apostle Paul, as apparently is Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica that you find listed there in verse 2. So Luke and Aristarchus are with Paul. Paul has been sent to Rome. He's under sort of lock and key.

He's with a group of prisoners, all of whom are being shipped to Rome. So they put them in a group. Julius, the centurion of the Augustan regiment, is in charge.

But Julian is a good guy. And it says in verse 3, when they land at Sidon, you remember where Tyre and Sidon are on the far eastern shore of the Mediterranean there. It's Lebanon now.

So they start at Sidon. Very quickly, keep your finger on the ax and go to the maps in the back of your Bible. See if you haven't got one that says maybe Paul's third and fourth missionary journey or Paul's fourth journey or whatever.

And see if you find one that starts down there in the region of Sidon and starts heading west across the Mediterranean toward Cyprus and Asia Minor there. You got a map there? See how that goes? He starts at Sidon and you're going to see a line that goes south of Cyprus, actually north of Cyprus. It hooks all the way along and they're going to try to hug the coast and get as far as they can and catch a ship to Rome.

So you see in my Bible it's a blue line there that goes straight north towards Seleucia and then hooks west to Seleucia and Tracheotis and is heading over toward Lycia and the town of Myra. Everybody see that? It's important to kind of see where we're at here. So keep that map at hand and turn back to Acts 27.

So at Sidon Julius treated Paul kindly, gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care. We put to sea from there. We sailed under Cyprus because the winds were contrary so they went between Cyprus and the northern coast there to try to not get blown awry.

When we had sailed over the sea which is off Seleucia and Pamphylia we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. There a centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy and put us on board. Change of ships.

We had sailed slowly many days, arrived with difficulty off Canidas, the wind not permitting us to proceed. We sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmoni. If you flip back to your map you see Crete out there kind of in the geographic center of the Mediterranean Sea of the map there.

See that? So they've continued west and a bit south from Lycia and Myra. They hooked through Canidas which is kind of the northwest corner there. Now they've gone southwest and they're on the south side of Crete.

That's where we are when our story really picks up here. Much time had been spent. They came to Fair Havens and the city of Lycia on the south side of Crete there.

Paul says in verse 10, men I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss. Not only of the cargo and ship but also our lives. Paul says I perceive this.

Now the owner of the ship, the sailors, other passengers all argue against this, override the advice of Paul and they decide to proceed anyway. They say this is a terrible place to winter. At a minimum we should get to the west end of Crete and winter there.

So they don't want to stay at Fair Havens. Paul says if you continue this journey we'll lose the ship and there will be loss of life. Now where did he get this information? Is he just an experienced old salt? When he says I perceive this is of the Lord.

This is the Holy Spirit imparting this information to him and he shares it with others. He communicates essentially the word of God in this situation. What does God say? You're going to lose the ship and you're going to lose lives.

That is communication number one. God has said there will be loss of life on this trip. You see it? There will be loss not only of the cargo and ship but our lives.

That's Paul's word from the Lord. Nevertheless they decide to go on. Verse 13, south wind blows softly.

They thought everything was going to be great. It all looks good. Kind of like in Judah when Assyria gets busy elsewhere and you can expand.

It looks like fair winds and following seas. We told you it was going to be okay. They set off and it's a balmy day.

It's all good to go. But not long after, verse 14, a tempestuous headwind arose called Eurykleidon. This is their version of El Nino or something.

It's a well-known wind phenomenon that blows out of the north and messes up travel toward the end of the season. We could not head into the wind so we let her drive. Running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured a skiff with difficulty.

This means that they decided, well, we might have to get off this boat so they got a smaller boat that they could secure. Maybe they were trying to haul the ship with it or whatever. But they're having a lot of trouble.

When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship. This is frapping, where you wrap—naval academy types know what I'm talking about—frapping. It's an old technique on wooden ships where you wrap lines around to keep the boards that make up the hull of the ship from starting, one end coming loose and then just prying out like opening a plastic bag anymore with a little slot.

You start it and then it just rips and off she goes. Well, you wrap these cables so that the ends don't get leverage and pull the ship apart and it keeps the sides, it keeps the cargo from pressing the sides apart and making things worse under the stress. So they put this frapping on, they undergird the ship and fearing lest they should run aground on the surges sands, they struck sail and so were driven.

Now go back to your map. This is where we get politics and current events. Look at your map there.

You have a map that shows you the Mediterranean and you see Crete in the middle. They're trying to leave Crete. You can see the boot of Italy hopefully in the upper left there.

They're trying to get to Italy. They want to go to Rome. They're at Crete.

So what happens? The wind blows out of the north and if your line is like mine, it heads kind of southwest. And what are they afraid of? They're afraid that they're going to be blown into the Sirtis. Sirtis.

What the heck is Sirtis? Sands is in italics there. It's just the Sirtis. Well, here's the thing.

If you look, there's a bulge on the south shore of the Mediterranean Sea that sticks out and you might, my map has siren there. Remember Simon of Cyrene carried the cross and whatnot. So that is significant and you can see that there's a dip.

It looks kind of like very roughly like a rounded version of the southern borders of Texas. It kind of goes down and then comes up a little and goes west and comes up a little more. You see that? Well, that is the, well let me ask you this first of all.

How many have heard of the scandal with Mrs. Clinton and Benghazi? A couple of guys dying there. You remember that? Where is Benghazi? It's in Libya. Where is Libya? North Africa.

Where is it on this map? You're looking at it. Benghazi is in that bulge that sticks up there just below and slightly west of Crete. That's where Benghazi is.

Now you see how the coastline goes to the south and then goes west and then comes kind of northwest a little bit and then north and then kind of heads west again? That's Tripoli. That's where Tripoli is on that other bulge. Now, between Benghazi or Cyrene or whatever you've got on that bulge and Tripoli, that little deal that looks very roughly like the southern borders of Texas, that is the greater and the lesser Sirtis.

That's the greater and lesser Sirtis. And in these days, it was a shallow sea that had swamps and islands and sand and if you got blown into it, you could be beached and stranded and unable to, there wasn't enough of a southern wind to ever blow you back out of there. That's what they're afraid of.

They don't want to go to Benghazi and they don't want to go to Tripoli. They don't want to go

anywhere in between. But they don't have a lot of choice because the wind is driving so fiercely.

This Euroclidon is coming from the north and so they have to cut sail and just basically ride out the storm. Well, they are going to continue for a long time in a small, even in a large boat. This can be a long time.

So on the third day, we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands. We were exceedingly tempest-tossed. When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, no small tempest beat on us.

All hope that we would be saved was finally given up. They know that they are being blown south and west. Look at your map.

What is left to land on past Crete? Pretty much nothing. And if you do hit land, it is the northern edge of North Africa, which is desert, shoals, sands. It isn't any better being beached than it is being in the ocean.

At least in the ocean, you have the chance to set some sail and go somewhere. If you get beached down there, they will starve, they will die, all hope is lost. So now, what did Paul tell them initially? If you continue this voyage, what will happen? You will lose the ship, you will lose the cargo, and we will lose our lives.

That was the word of God. Now look at verse 21. After long abstinence from food, Paul stood in the midst of them and said, Men, you should have listened to me and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.

Now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God whom I serve and to whom I belong, saying, Do not be afraid, Paul, you must be brought before Caesar. And indeed God has granted you all these who sail with you.

Now, why do you think the angel was sent to tell Paul, God has granted you all these that sail with you? He asked. Paul intercedes with the Lord. Paul says, I know you said there will be loss of life, but Lord, I know that you are sending me to Rome and I ask that you give me the lives of those who are with me.

Classic blessing by association. This is a group of prisoners. There are Roman soldiers.

There's, you know, others on board the sailors. And God says, well, they didn't listen to you. They didn't listen to the word of the Lord.

They're going to die. Paul prays for them. And God says, I will spare them.

Abraham talking to the Lord before Sodom. Lord, for the sake of. Yes, I will.

I will change my plan based on your argument. And so Paul intercedes and succeeds in

securing the lives of these people. So now what has God promised? What is the second iteration here of the word of the Lord? You'll lose the ship, but nobody's life will be lost.

I have given you all those who are with you. All those who sail with you. Verse 24.

So take heart, men, for I believe that God, that it will be just as it was told me. Now, we must run aground on a certain island. Now, when the 14th night had come two weeks later.

Remember, they've already thrown a bunch of stuff overboard and thrown out a bunch of the tackle and everything else. There's a lot of guys on this ship and it's two weeks, two weeks later. As of now, this this would have been back like April the 20th.

Till now, they were driven up and down in the sea about midnight. The sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land. And believe me, you know, you spend enough time at sea.

You can smell land. You can you just you really can sense it after a long period at sea. And I've been on and some of you have been on several real long excursions at sea.

And when you get near land, there's just a change in the atmosphere, even though it's dark and overcast. It's not like they saw birds or saw coastline. They just smell land.

So they took soundings and found it to be 20 fathoms. When they got a little farther, they took soundings and found it to be 15 fathoms. So it's shoaling, they're getting closer to land.

Fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come. As the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they let down the skiff into the sea under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, Paul said to the centurion, here's our passage. Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.

Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved. Didn't God already promise that no lives would be lost? Didn't God tell Josiah, you will go to your grave and be gathered to your fathers in peace? But if you take headstrong, fleshly motivated action on your own behest, you can move yourself outside the fulfillment of God's promise. Now, we've talked about the promises of God being conditional before.

You can go to Chronicles 9, if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face, I will hear from heaven, I will heal them. If then, the Bible is replete with promises that specifically state the condition. The point tonight to observe so that we can interpret it and apply it for ourselves is all of the promises of God that have a beneficial side to the promise.

I'm not talking about promises of judgment. I'm talking about promises of preservation, promises of provision, promises of blessing, promises of reward, promises of presence, promises for the future to benefit. All are conditioned on obedience and on paying attention, heeding the word of God.

Paul tells them, if you let these guys go, you're going to die. Well, I thought nothing bad could happen. God says he's given you the lives of everybody on the ship.

Only under certain conditions is that promise going to hold. And it's undeniable here. Paul says, if you let these sailors leave on the skiff, you will not survive.

Everybody has to stay together. There is an if, there is a condition on this promise. God will give all those who sail with Paul.

Now, you could parse it and say, well, if they leave, they're not with Paul, and so they're on their own. Well, it doesn't change the point. It's a conditional promise.

If you stick with Paul, you will be saved. So they eventually are shipwrecked. Everything that God said comes to pass.

But God has promised to give us rest. God has promised to work things together for good. God has promised to strengthen us and help us and sustain us.

God has promised to preserve us. God has promised to keep us safe. Can there be exceptions in extraordinary cases? Have there been martyrs whom God wanted to use in a special and exceptional way? Of course.

We don't really expect to be exceptional cases. God typically has made those exceptions in Scripture and has held them up as examples. We will know if it is our time to be a wonderful exception, and we will have the strength.

We're never tested above what we're able to bear. But generally speaking, you and I, and this is the point tonight, we are anxious to claim the promises of God for provision, for protection, for blessing, for fruitfulness in our spiritual lives, for meaning and purpose and definition in our daily existence. We trust God for those things.

And it is a trustworthy God in whom we place that faith. However, it is important for us to remember at the same time that we cannot disregard the conditions under which those promises can be fulfilled. And if we step outside the Word of God, if we do not keep the conditions, he that endures unto the end will be saved.

Is there an if clause in there? If you endure, you'll be delivered. If you don't endure, deliverance is off. How many promises like this? Israel is a prime example.

I'll just give you one quick one, Deuteronomy 7, verse 12. Because you listen to these ordinances, these rules, these commandments in the law, because you listen to these and keep and do them, the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers. The covenant that he made with your fathers he will keep.

Deuteronomy 8, verse 19 has the flip side of that coin. If you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall

surely perish. If you are obedient, you will be blessed.

If you depart, if you are disobedient, if you're not interested, if you just cavalierly claim the promise of God and aren't really seeking his heart and seeking to be in the center of the conditions for his blessing, those promises can be withdrawn. The fulfillment can be withdrawn. The promise is always there.

But there is always an if clause. How about John 3, 16? Do you see an if in John 3, 16? Say it with me. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Right? Do you see an if in there? Whosoever believeth. If a whosoever believes, he will not perish. Well, what if he doesn't believe? That promise does not pertain.

God loves the world. God gave his son for the world. But it is only the whosoever that believe in him that will not perish and inherit eternal life.

So many of these promises have an if. So, here's my encouragement for all of us. As we move through the day and we are counting on God to come through for us, to work things together for good, that's his good, by the way, his good purpose, to allow us to bear much fruit.

By the way, in that John 15 section there, 14 and 15, when Jesus is talking about I am the vine, you are the branches, is there any condition for bearing much fruit? If you abide in me, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will and it will be done for you. You will bear much fruit. When you bear fruit, my Father will prune you so you can bear more fruit.

But there's a big if. It's contingent on, it is conditioned on abiding. Sometimes we look at things that don't seem to be going well, we're puzzled, we're confused, we're at a dead end seemingly, and we say, I don't understand why God isn't providing and communicating and coming through for me here.

Here's my suggestion. Check the conditions. If you're Josiah, trotting off to battle, thinking I'm going to whoop these Egyptians up one side and down the other, and we haven't checked to see, is this my mission? Is this what God called me to do? Did he not allow me of all of the kings of Judah in the latter days to find this book of the law? Did he not give me the wherewithal, the means, the motive, and the opportunity to build the infrastructure of the nation, to restore spiritual worship, to try to imbue and inculcate these values of worship for God? Isn't that what God has really commissioned me and called me and equipped me and provided for me to do? And I don't seem to recollect checking with any of the available prophetic oracles to see if this is God's will that I go do this.

Maybe I ought to go back and check because God's promises are conditioned on faith and obedience. There is often some momentum that can fool us and we think that we're still keeping the conditions because everything hasn't been withdrawn and we're not suddenly in a

dark, dark place. And it's just momentum.

It's afterglow. It's the fading glory of Moses' face. He's not on Sinai in God's presence, but his face glows for a while afterward.

It can also be blessing by association. Many people think, well, look, I touched the ark and I didn't die like Uzzah. I went my own way and did my own thing and nothing bad happened.

Behold, I walked into the holy... Remember, who was it? Antiochus Epiphanes walked into the Holy of Holies. Wouldn't you expect lightning and he would incinerate it and a fog of human residue would have come floating back out of the Holy of Holies? He comes walking back out and says, there's nothing there. Remember that? Or maybe it was Titus.

I could have my invading generals confused. Somebody invaded, conquered Jerusalem, went into the Holy of Holies, came back out and said, what's the big deal? And it's the grace of God that having made a point with Uzzah, having made a point with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, having made a point with those who brought strange fire before the Lord, having made a point with the guy that gathered sticks on the Sabbath. You think people haven't broken the Sabbath and fractured it and pulverized it 10,000 times worse than a guy picking up sticks on the Sabbath? But that guy died.

God made his point. It's an archetype. Don't think that because we're experiencing A, momentum, or B, what I put in my notes as BBA, blessing by association, that the consequences God has promised for failing to keep the conditions will not come to pass.

They will. Josiah probably thought everything was great all the way out until the time he donned the disguise and went rolling out in his battle chariot to take on Necho. He was probably feeling good.

All the way until the day, you know, remember what Jesus said about the days of Noah, they were eating and drinking and making merry, until the day, you know, there's water falling from the sky. And it had been too late for a week to get into the ark. You remember that.

The ark shut long before the water started rising. But people were unaware that they had missed that opportunity. We know better.

The exhortation, the encouragement, the point, as you look at Josiah is false confidence in the promises of God is a dangerous thing. You can lose your life. You can lose the fulfillment of God's wonderful promises in Christ because the promises are in Christ.

And if we step out of Christ, the promises are gone. In him we have. You remember Ephesians.

Those wonderful seven-branch candlestick blessings and statuses and conferred potentials. So in Texas, we like to say, remember the Alamo. I say, remember Armageddon.

Because Armageddon is where Josiah got it in the neck because he forgot the conditional

nature of God's promise. We can do better. We will do better.

We have a lot more going for us. We have the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. We have the full Lord revelation of God in his word.

And we've been forewarned. We have that example. We have the example of the Apostle Paul.

You've got to stick with the condition. Those with Paul will not perish. If these guys leave, that promise falls.

Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for your promises and for the faithfulness behind them. It gives us complete and supreme confidence that what you have said you will do.

We know at the same time that we have responsibility, we have free choice, and you have made an issue out of our choices in this life. We pray that as God the Holy Spirit reminds us and illuminates for us these truths, that it will change the way we think, change the way we prioritize and establish our goals, so that as we live day by day, we will conform more and more closely to the wonderful example of the Lord Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now seated at your right hand. We look forward to the day when he will come for us, and we will join him in your presence forevermore.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.