

The Kingdom Divides

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Preacher: Philip Copeland

[0 : 0 0] Good, so those are the key things. Let's turn to God's Word, shall we? And we're in 1 Kings. And if you don't have a Bible with you, we have plenty around the building, just on the sides, at the back.

Do please use one of the church Bibles if you'd like. And turn to 1 Kings. And chapter 12. 1 Kings chapter 12. And let me just read the very last verse of the previous chapter. And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father.

And Rehoboam, Solomon's son, reigned in his place. Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king.

And as soon as Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, heard of it, for he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon, then Jeroboam returned from Egypt.

[1 : 1 2] And they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam, Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us, and we will serve you.

And he said to them, Go away for three days, then come again to me. So the people went away. Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father, while he was yet alive, saying, How do you advise me to answer the people?

And they said to him, If you will be a servant to this people today, and serve them, and speak good words to them when you answer them, then they will be your servants forever.

But he abandoned the counsel that the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him. And he said to them, What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, Lighten the yoke that your father put on us?

And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, Thus shall you speak to this people who said to you, Your father made our yoke heavy, but you lighten it for us.

[2 : 3 1] Thus you shall say to them, My little finger is thicker than my father's thighs. Now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke.

My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions. So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king said, Come to me again on the third day.

And the king answered the people harshly, And forsaking the counsel that the old men had given him, he spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke.

My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions. So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs brought about by the Lord, that he might fulfill his word, which the Lord spoke by Ahijah, the Shilonite, to Jeroboam, the son of Nebat.

And when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse.

[3 : 4 7] To your tents, O Israel, look now to your own house, David. So Israel went to their tents, but Rehoboam reigned over the people of Israel, who lived in the cities of Judah.

Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was taskmaster over the forced labor. And all Israel stoned him to death with stones. And King Rehoboam hurried to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.

So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day. And when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel.

There was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only. When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen warriors to fight against the house of Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon.

But the word of God came to Shemaiah, the man of God. Say to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, thus says the Lord, you shall not go up or fight against your relatives, the people of Israel.

[5 : 13] Every man returned to his home, for this thing is from me. So they listened to the word of the Lord and went home again, according to the word of the Lord.

Amen. And may God bless his words to us this morning. Well, good morning. I'm pleased to have your Bibles open to 1 Kings 12.

We are living in a world that is full of arrogant and power-hungry rulers who are constantly making foolish decisions that are disastrous for those who are under their rule.

As God's people in Christ today, how can we safeguard our hearts from sinking into despair? Well, this chapter is going to help us in many ways and challenge us too.

We've entered into a new section of the book of Kings. If you were here last year, as we studied the book in the evenings, you will know that the first section, chapters 1 to 11, is mostly focused on King Solomon, who for the most part reigned over Israel exceptionally well by the incredible wisdom that God gave him so graciously.

[6 : 47] And as a result, the kingdom of Israel flourished under Solomon. For a time, it was glorious. It was majestic. All of God's people experienced blessing after blessing after blessing from the Lord's gracious hand.

And remember, when we looked at this breathtaking part of Israel's history under King Solomon, we saw that it gave us truly and really a glimpse of the greater glory that's to come when the Lord Jesus comes in all his power and all his might and all his glory and he brings in God's kingdom, his eternal perfect kingdom in all its fullness forever and ever.

Solomon's kingdom is a little foretaste of what's yet to come, even for us today. However, Solomon's kingdom wasn't perfect because Solomon wasn't perfect.

He failed to walk by the obedience of faith to the end of his life. And instead of walking with the Lord faithfully, he made compromise, just a little compromise, then a bigger one, then a bit more, then a bit more, then a bit more, all the way through his life.

And he started ignoring God's word more and more, doing things that the Lord had warned kings against, such as marrying foreign women who worshipped false gods.

[8 : 09] The equivalent today would be a Christian dating someone who's a non-Christian, someone who does not love and worship the Lord Jesus. And in the end, these foreign women turned Solomon's heart away from the Lord to worship their false gods.

And Solomon did not walk in the way of his father David. It's heartbreaking, heartbreaking. And in chapter 11, before Solomon died, the word of the Lord came to him and declared that there would be just and dire consequences for his unbelief and idolatry.

And by God's grace, Solomon himself wouldn't experience the worst of these dire consequences in his own life. But after he died, they would plague his family line in the years ahead.

And really, from chapter 12 onwards, now with Solomon dead and buried, we now begin to see these just and dire consequences starting to work their way out in the life of Israel.

And this morning, I'd like us to look at this chapter, chapter 12, this section of it anyway, in three scenes. Here's the first scene. Verses 1 to 15, we see a disastrous coronation.

[9 : 27] A disastrous coronation. Well, on the 6th of May, 2023 this year, people from all over the nation will flock to London, specifically to the region of Westminster, to the Abbey, for the coronation of our new king.

And that's really the scene that we read about in verse 1. All Israel are flocking to Shechem in order to meet Rehoboam, Solomon's son, in order to make him king.

I just noticed verse 2, immediately, boom, we're hit with this ominous note. That Jeroboam, this man Jeroboam, hears what's happening. And who is he?

Well, in chapter 11, we're told that he used to work for King Solomon. He was a gifted leader. Really gifted. Really capable guy. One of Solomon's leaders over one of Solomon's forced labor building teams.

But Jeroboam had rebelled against Solomon and they got into a fight and Jeroboam fled to Egypt for refuge. Now, verse 3, if you look at it carefully, it implies that Jeroboam was a very, very popular man in Israel.

[10:36] A lot of people supported him and they send word to Jeroboam to come out of Egypt and join them on the journey to Shechem. And Jeroboam does that.

He says, okay. And together, Jeroboam and all Israel, they journey to Shechem, to arrive at this coronation. And just notice, please, they do not get around to actually crowning Rehoboam just yet, Solomon's son.

Before all Israel make him king, they say, we've got conditions. We've got conditions. Please look at verse 4. They say to Rehoboam, your father made our yoke heavy.

Now, therefore, lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke on us and we will serve you. In other words, we will only submit to you as king if you promise not to lay the say heavy demands and heavy discipline upon our lives that your father Solomon did.

Here's a question. Is that true? Is verse 4 true? Is what they say true? Was life under Solomon really miserable?

[11:46] A miserable experience of heavy demands and discipline? Hmm. Now, it is true that Solomon did lay some demands on some of his people at some points during his reign because it was necessary.

If Solomon hadn't done that, the kingdom would have failed to function and grow. For example, excuse me, in chapter 4, he wisely sets up key infrastructure, almost like a massive big farming and catering team to supply his considerable household with food.

In chapter 5, he set up these, excuse me, I'm going to take a little drink here of council juice. In chapter 5, he set up these forced labor teams.

They were made up of, again, some Israelites, not all, and it was only for a brief period of time in order to build the temple of the Lord, the royal complex, and other key military stations.

Forced labor doesn't sound good because the word forced isn't a kind word. It's got bad connotations. But the text is clear. This was not slave labor. The chapter 10 is very clear on that.

[13:01] Also, the forced labor teams didn't have punishing work schedules. They worked shifts. They were on and off. They had time off. And anyway, should it not have been counted an enormous privilege, an enormous privilege to serve the Lord and his king and be involved in building up the house of the Lord and the kingdom?

What about Solomon disciplining his people? Well, if you look down just over verse 14, just run your eye over that a little bit later, Rehoboam does seem to concede that his father exercised discipline at some point in his reign.

But that is just what any decent ruler and authority has to do inevitably to restrain evil in the land. So were Solomon's demands and discipline as heavy as the people make it out to be in verse 4?

I really don't think so. Bob Fowle says the same thing. He says, there is as much spin in verse 4 as there is objective truth. Well, whether they spoke the truth or not in verse 4, the accusation is now made publicly and Rehoboam has been given an ultimatum by Jeroboam and all Israel.

Please, give us an easier time than your father gave us and if you don't, we will not serve you as king. And in verse 5, Rehoboam says, okay, let me think about it, come back in three days.

[14:29] And so they do. And in verses 6 to 11, Rehoboam seeks advice about what he should answer the people. And he does a double consultation.

Firstly, in verse 6, he goes to the older men. Men, we are told, who stood before his father Solomon. Men who you would think would be wise. And they are. They say, Rehoboam, don't be harsh with the people.

Whatever you do, don't be harsh. The essence of leadership in God's kingdom is to be a servant. Don't abuse your position of power by lording it over the people.

Rehoboam, speak good words. Winsome words to the people. Assure them that you're going to be the servant king. But immediately, verse 8, Rehoboam just disregards that.

He abandons that wise counsel. Clearly, this is not what he wanted to hear. And so he turns to another group. A group who will say exactly what he wants to hear.

[15:31] Verse 8, he took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him. And he said to them, What do you advise that we, notice, that we answer this people?

He really gives the game away about who he identifies with. He loves these young men and he loves what they've got to say. And these young mates, they believe that nothing impresses like intimidation.

Nothing deals with threats, sorry, nothing deals with rebellion like threatening the people. And so they give Rehoboam just some atrocious things to say in verses 10 to 11.

Let me just list things about their suggested reply. Firstly, excuse me, it is a crude reply. A crude reply. Verse 10, the first thing they say is, Rehoboam, go to the people and say, my little finger is thicker than my father's thighs.

Now friends, this was a really deeply crude and disgusting euphemism. Back then, this was really the way of speaking about male private parts. These young men want Rehoboam to boastfully claim that he is a much bigger man in that regard than his father.

[16:48] It was a crude and disgusting reply. Secondly, it is an arrogant reply. The message behind that disgusting line is, I am far more powerful and far greater than my father ever was.

And this is coming from a man and his friends who have not even managed to secure the throne yet. And yet he is boasting that he is greater than his father. Totally deluded. Totally arrogant. Thirdly, it is a tyrannical reply. Verse 11, they tell Rehoboam to say to the people, you find it tough under my father? Well, you have not seen nothing yet.

It is going to get even worse. My father disciplined you with whips. I am going to beat you with scorpions. And back then, the scorpion was the daddy of all whips. At the end of the striking end of the whip, it had all sorts of little lashes and at the end of these lashes, they were spiked prongs and little hooks.

And if you got struck by this, it was even worse than being struck by an actual scorpion. That is what these young men suggest to Rehoboam.

[17:57] Give the people a crude, arrogant, tyrannical reply. Crush them. And you know, Rehoboam, he shows great stupidity, royal density, for he follows their counsel.

In verse 13 and 14, with the exception of their crude one-liner, not even he can say that to the public, he relays it to all his people. And friends, the rest is history.

Well, we're not told about what the people do in reaction until verse 16, but as soon as you hear that report of the heavy-handed announcement in verse 13 and 14, you know that that's it for the kingdom.

The glue has gone out of the kingdom, as one commentator says. And it's all about to fall apart. And friends, if the scene ended there at verse 14, if that was the cut-off point, you might almost instinctively want to start moralizing from the passage.

You could do that, you know. You could launch into the folly of refusing wise counsel. Or we might be tempted to use this text to harangue young people about the dangers of peer pressure.

[19:07] But I don't think that's right. We are not free to make anything we want out of this story because the text itself tells us what we're to focus on here.

The author himself tells us what we're to focus on in this scene. Please look at verse 15. So the king did not listen to the people for it was a turn of affairs, a twist of circumstances brought about by the Lord that he might fulfill his word which was the Lord spoke by Ahijah, the Shilonite, to Jeroboam, son of Nebat.

The main thing the author wants us to focus on here is not human stupidity but divine sovereignty. Friends, what is really going on over these disastrous three days, this disastrous coronation?

Answer, the Lord is quietly, brilliantly, sovereignly working out all things to bring about what he has decreed and planned. Back in chapter 11 verse 29 to 39 the Lord spoke through the prophet Ahijah and he said that amongst other things the majority of the kingdom of Israel it would be torn away from the house of David because of Solomon's heart and the way he turned away from the Lord in his senior years.

Ten tribes will be ripped away from the house of David and they'll be given to Jeroboam and they'll be a northern kingdom. And throughout this scene this whole time as this back and forward goes between Rehoboam and his consultations the Lord has been quietly in control subtly working sovereignly bringing about the end that he has promised.

[20:56] The Lord of history is the one who's brought these circumstances about through his divine providence. And friends let's just be clear on this there is absolutely nothing mechanical here about the way that the Lord has sovereignly used Rehoboam.

Rehoboam was not some passive glove puppet who's being mechanically controlled by God alone with no control over his own functions. No, Rehoboam whilst he is fully under the Lord's sovereignty he is also at the same time fully responsible utterly responsible for his stupidity.

Listen to how one commentator puts it the Lord's sovereignty did not violate Rehoboam's free decision rather it came about through that freedom. Sovereignty in other words seems so natural. Going with the young men's advice is what Rehoboam wants to do. He wanted that and yet it was a circumstance brought about by the Lord. And the rest of scripture is utterly clear this is how actually all things run in the universe.

All things run in the universe this way especially our lives. The Lord is utterly sovereign over all and everyone but we his creatures at the same time we are still utterly responsible for all our attitudes and our actions.

[22 : 25] To deny this is to pip yourself against God's word. Now on their own verses 1 to 14 they are deeply sad and even infuriating verses but when you read them through the lines of verse 15 this passage is actually very very comforting for you and I for the Lord's people for it reminds us that big rulers and authorities especially arrogant ones power hungry ones they are simply little servants of the Lord's word.

As someone once said contrary to our fears human stupidity is not running loose rather it is on the leash of God's sovereignty.

Let me say that again. Human stupidity is not running loose especially within our world leaders it is all at the end of the day on the leash of God's sovereignty.

Now friends that would have been a massive comfort for the first receivers of this book of first kings. They were the people of Israel later in later generations who were taken off into exile.

They were the first recipients of this book taken away as captives to Babylon and I think this passage for the faithful people of Israel would have thrilled their hearts as they suffered and struggled under the stupidity of the Babylonian authorities who were holding them prisoner.

[23 : 53] The faithful remnant would have loved this reminder that ultimately history is in higher hands. Higher hands of the Lord our God. No one else.

He is utterly sovereign and he uses the stupidity of even the worst king, the worst authority to ultimately bring good for his people and to fulfill his plans and his purposes.

And as the people of Jesus Christ today living in Scotland, I think this passage should have the same impact on our hearts. I don't know about you, but these days I regularly find myself despairing.

Genuinely despairing when I read the news headlines or even as I listen to the updates from the Christian Institute that pop into my inbox at the end of the week. And you hear reports about yet another deeply foolish ungodly decision that has been proposed and put forward by our rulers.

If you're like me, you will often find yourself shuddering at what's coming next. What are they going to do next? Well, 1 Kings 12, verse 15, it should help us all as God's people to keep us sane, to keep us sane.

[25 : 13] All human leaders, even foolish ones, are on the sovereign Lord's leash. I think as well, surely this passage should also help us to see that our actions really do matter.

Yes, the main thrust of this passage is about God's sovereignty, but also there is a wonderful encouragement to show us that our responsibility, our actions, they really matter, they have real meaning.

It really does matter how we behave as individuals and as a church family. So let's keep on loving for the Lord with great boldness, and take comfort from knowing that he is quietly at work all the time in all things, even things that cause us great perplexity and great pain.

Knowing the Lord has it on a leash will keep us sane. That's the first scene this morning, a disastrous coronation. Here's the second. And we're looking at verse 16 to 20, in which we see a divided kingdom, a divided kingdom.

And this, friends, is a tragic scene in many ways. Tragic. In verse 16, having listened to Rehoboam's harsh reply, the people reject, notice, not simply Rehoboam, they reject the house of David completely.

[26 : 33] It's emphatic. Three times it's mentioned in the passage. Let me read it to you. Verse 16, And when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, what portion do we have in David?

We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel, look now to your own house, David. So Israel went to their tents.

They reject the house of David. And here we see really the beginning of the tearing of the kingdom away from David's line. It's absolutely tragic, especially when you compare it and to look back to what we've seen in the first section of the book, to what it was like under the high point of the united kingdom under Solomon, full of blessing, full of unity, full of peace, full of rest under the Davidic king who at that time feared the Lord and used his power for good.

Now, the kingdom's divided, full of tension, full of great sadness and sorrow. And let me just say, throughout the rest of the book, things will only get worse.

Things will only get worse. It's also just worth noticing, and this is true if you're reading through Kings just now, whenever you come across the term all Israel from this point on, it is only referring to these ten rebellious dissident tribes in the north.

[27 : 58] No longer does it stand for the twelve tribes together as one. God's people have been torn apart. And in verse 18, when Rehoboam realizes this division has happened, he shows yet more stupidity by sending a man called Adoram to these ten tribes in the north.

Now, Adoram, who was he? Well, he was mentioned by slightly different names back in chapter 4 and chapter 5, but his job was to draft up the forced labor under Solomon.

And here in chapter 12, I think he sent to the north in order to send the ten tribes a clear message. As I said earlier in the sermon, in the past, only some of the Israelites were called up to do some of the king's forced labor.

But in sending Adoram to all Israel in the north, the message being communicated is, now all Israel are going to be under forced labor of the king. Do you see how intimidating this is?

See how provocative it is to send this man? He's sent by the king to go and draft these tribes and say to them, you are still under my authority. Who do you think you are? And when Adoram arrives, these ten tribes seem to get the message loud and clear and they send a message back.

[29 : 18] Verse 18, they stone Adoram to death and they go and make Jeroboam king just as the Lord had promised he would back in chapter 11.

And in response, Rehoboam flees down to Jerusalem. his foolish plan to unite the kingdom by force has massively backfired. And just look at the wee summary statements the author has put in for us, again to emphasize the point.

Verse 19, so Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day, that is to the day that first kings was written. Verse 20, there was none, none that followed the house of David but the tribe of Judah only.

What a mess. What a mess. And friends, the root cause is the human heart. The human heart of Solomon and his sinfulness and the human heart of Rehoboam and all his folly.

Now friends, is this the end for the house of David? What about God's great promises to David? Are they all over? Well, mercifully, no. We know from 2 Samuel 7 that the Lord's covenant promises with David were glorious.

[30 : 32] Back then, the Lord said to David, amongst other things, you will always have descendants. I will make your kingdom last forever. Your dynasty will never end.

So ultimately, there is nothing that can ever overthrow the promises with David, the Davidic covenant. Nothing can prevent the sure and certain coming of the greater Messiah, the messianic David.

So the good news is that Rehoboam cannot nullify what God has promised, but the bad news is he can besmirch it. You get that?

He cannot destroy the covenant, but he can derail it, at least for a temporary while anyway, and that is exactly what he's done here. And friends, as the covenant people of God today, I think this should really actually deeply challenge us, again, as individuals and as a corporate church family.

Listen to Dale Ralph Davis on this. This is from his commentary. He says, Rehoboam can no way dissolve the Lord's big David plan, but he certainly demeans it, and that is a tragedy, it's sad.

[31 : 46] Neither can any of us today prevent God's kingdom from coming in power and in great glory, but we can tarnish its luster today by our folly and our faithlessness, and that's a tragedy.

That's sad. Apparently, one of the things that William still used to say frequently throughout his ministry at Gilcompton in Aberdeen was this, the biggest hindrance to God's work today in the world is not the ferocity of his enemies, but the sins of his people, the sins of his sins.

Now, friends, ultimately, we must remember these two things. God's promises are unstoppable, unfaithful, he's totally faithful, unbreakable, and ultimately, the destiny of the kingdom lies in his higher hands.

However, how we behave really, really matters. We must take sin seriously. We must take walking in folly seriously. This is a sobering word for the church today.

Well, that's the second scene, the divided kingdom. Here's the final scene, verse 21 to 24, in which we see divine kindness. Divine kindness.

[33 : 06] In verse 21, as soon as Rehoboam arrives back in Jerusalem, furious about what has happened with the stoning of Adoram, he kicks off yet another, another plan to take the kingdom back and bring it into unity by force and intimidation.

And he assembles the two southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin. And from these two tribes, he gathers up an army of 180,000 chosen warriors, massive group of squad of guys, to come and fight against the house of Israel in the hope that they will subdue these rebellious tribes in the north and bring them back into submission to the house of David.

I want to suggest, I think Rehoboam has completely lost the plot. I wonder when the last time you lost the plot was. Last time you completely lost it. And did you notice that throughout this chapter, when Rehoboam loses the point here, he's not once turned to the Lord.

He has not once sought the word of the Lord for help. He's not once prayed to the Lord for wisdom. Like his father Solomon did. That's very telling, isn't it?

He's so consumed with saving his own status and position of power. He doesn't once stop and think to himself, do you know what? Maybe, just maybe, this is all the Lord's doing, and I should stop, and I should turn to him and repent immediately.

[34 : 38] I should humbly ask him for guidance on what's going on. And if he is disciplining us, I should accept that. Rehoboam never does that once.

So the troops are about to set off to go north, to go into battle with their own Israelite brothers. That is no little thing, that is a big deal. God's people were not to fight amongst each other.

It was true back then, and it's true today in the church. They're about to go and wage war on other members of God's covenant people. But then the Lord graciously and mercifully sends his word to them via the prophet Shemaiah.

Please look at verse 22. But the word of the Lord came to Shemaiah, the man of God, say to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, thus says the Lord, you shall not go up or fight against your relatives, the people of Israel.

Every man returned to his home for this thing, this division, this carnage, is from me. And here is actually divine kindness of the Lord.

[35 : 58] Rehoboam and all his army were about to go and inflict even more harm and devastation upon the kingdom. And humanly speaking, this could have had even worse backfire upon the house of David than anything else Rehoboam has done.

And so the Lord sweeps in and shows immense kindness, sending his word to stop them. And the Lord spells out explicitly to Rehoboam and all other people that this kingdom division is from me.

It's my righteous discipline upon the house of David. And really, in sending his word to Rehoboam, the Lord is protecting him, restraining it from, restraining the house of David from carrying out more stupidity and more damage that's already been done.

And please notice the end of verse 24. Friends, this shines out of this dark, dark passage like a ray of light. Compared to the rest of the chapter, this is beautiful.

Listen to this. So they listened to the word of the Lord and they went home, according to the word of the Lord. Friends, that should delight your heart. That should delight my heart.

[37 : 08] For at last we see King Rehoboam and God's people doing what they should be doing. Humbly submitting to the word of the Lord, walking by the obedience of faith.

And in verse 24, notice Rehoboam, he doesn't kick up a protest. He doesn't grumble against the Lord's hard providences. He's not bitter. Rather, he is humbled.

He gives up his desperate attempt to regain power and he accepts the Lord's discipline over his life. To put it bluntly, Rehoboam and the people of Israel, the people of Judah, are finally walking wisely. This is what wisdom looks like. You want to know what it is to look wise? What it is to look wise is to hear the Lord's word and to do it. They obey.

Finally, they've learned this. Finally, they've given up fighting. Listen to this. I think this is a real word for us for the church of Jesus Christ today. Listen to James Philip.

[38 : 12] This is taken from his Bible reading notes on 1 Kings. He says this, For all his weakness and waywardness, Rehoboam has imparted an important lesson to us, and one that we generally are unwilling to learn today.

The truth is that we often rebel furiously and stubbornly against adverse circumstances that buffet our lives. But in so doing, we may well be rebelling against God's purposes.

It is a dangerous thing to attempt to twist events to suit our own will when God has decreed otherwise. Now listen to this. I've been thinking about this all week.

It is possible to spend most of our days kicking against circumstances which if we accepted them as gracious limitations imposed by God would be the making of us.

In other words, there may be times in the Christian life when we find ourselves in circumstances that are so hard and we find them painful and we grumble and we try our hardest to repair or fix the situation.

[39 : 24] It may be that we are stuck actually as a result facing consequences, painful consequences because of our sin or our folly and we cannot fix them.

We cannot repair them no matter how hard we try. Well friends, the only thing that we can do in that situation, excuse me, is to get on doing with what we should actually be doing all the time in our lives, listening to the word of the Lord and going on living in his kingdom as his grace enables us. Friends, doing that is not a sign of mere weakness. That is actually what it looks like to be wise. Yes? Well, the kingdom is divided.

Rehoboam and Judah have finally submitted to the Lord. But what about Jeroboam? What about those in the north? How will that go? Come back next Sunday morning when God willing we will look at that and how Jeroboam begins his reign.

But as I close, let me just summarize what we've said. Let's remember as the church of Jesus Christ the comfort and the challenge of 1 Kings 12. Let's remember that our God is sovereign.

[40 : 40] Let's remember what that actually means. We hear that all the time and just a throwaway line. God is on the throne. God is sovereign. But let's remember what that means practically. All of the world's leaders, especially the foolish ones, are simply little servants of the Lord and his word.

Even the stupidity of man is on the Lord's leash. And whilst living in this world might be painful and perplexing, ultimately as the people of faith we need not fear.

Let's also remember the seriousness of sin. and the seriousness of walking in folly. When a church leaves these things unchecked, they really can derail and hinder Christ's purposes, humanly speaking, in the world today.

So brothers and sisters, let's repent. When was the last time you repented of something? When was the last time you consciously prayed to the Lord? When was the last time I did that as a sinner today?

Was it days ago? Hours ago? Was it weeks ago? Was it months ago? Was it years ago? When was the last time you repented of something?

[41 : 56] Let's also pray that the Lord would give us great discernment. Great discernment. It's not easy to read our circumstances. Let's pray the Lord will give us great discernment so that we'll not try to kick against his hard providences.

But rather, let's ask the Lord to help us do what we should be doing at all times, whatever our circumstances, good or bad. That is by the power of the Holy Spirit to walk by the obedience of faith.

Well, amen. Let's bow our heads and we'll pray. our gracious God and heavenly Father, we praise you for your word.

It doesn't leave us to play desperate guessing games about who you are and how this world works and how you rule the world. We praise you for the great comfort it brings to our hearts and to our minds to know that you sit on the throne of the universe.

The history is in higher hands than the hands of the rulers and authorities that we see in the world today. You tower over all things and you use all things to work out your eternal and immutable will for your glory and ultimately for the good of those who love you.

[43 : 19] Help us too, Lord, to take repentance seriously, to walk by the obedience of faith seriously. Father, we cannot do this in our own strength.

And Father, you know this. And so, Father, I pray that you will help us. Give us the strength to do this. For without you, we can do nothing.

We don't want to be a church that hinders your work in the world today. We want to be a wise church that you use for your purposes. So please help us by the power of your Holy Spirit.

And Lord, give us the ability to discern the times when you have placed gracious limitations upon our lives. Help us to be humble people so that we will not try to kick against your purposes.

But instead, give us hearts that always want to love you and to live for you in whatever we face, whatever circumstance we find ourselves. And we pray this in Jesus' precious name and for his sake.

[44 : 30] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. God. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.