

The Downward Slide Continues: Six Evil Kings of Israel

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[0 : 00] Well, we are about understanding and proclaiming the message of the Bible, and we're going to turn to our Bibles now. If you have a Bible with you, please turn to 1 Kings chapter 15.

If you don't have a Bible, there's some at the sides, there's some at the fronts here, and some at the back. Go and grab one, and you'll be able to follow along. We're reading in the history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, after the books of Samuel, the books of Kings continue the story, and Phil Copeland has been preaching through this in recent weeks.

And we come to this evening a whole list of different kings and their reigns. In the northern kingdom of Israel, after the time of Solomon, the kingdom was divided into two, north and south.

And the book of Kings takes us back and forward between these two, telling us what was going on. Last week, we were reading about Abijah's reign in Judah. And in chapter 15, verse 25, we're back up north, and we're going to read about some of these northern kings.

And we're going to read right down to the end of chapter 16. So try and stay awake. Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa, king of Judah.

[1 : 21] And he reigned over Israel two years. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin, which he made Israel to sin.

And Basha, the son of Ahijah, of the house of Isaac, conspired against him. And Basha struck him down at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. For Nahab and all Israel were laying siege to Gibbethon.

So Basha killed him in the third year of Asa, king of Judah, and reigned in his place. As soon as he was king, he killed all the house of Jeroboam. He left in the house of Jeroboam not one that breathed until he destroyed it, according to the word of the Lord that he spoke by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite.

It was for the sins of Jeroboam that he sinned, and that he made Israel to sin, because of the anger to which he provoked the Lord, the God of Israel. And the rest of the acts of Nadab and all that he did, are they not written in the book of Chronicles of the kings of Israel?

And there was war between Asa and Basha, king of Israel, all their days. In the third year of Asa, king of Judah, Basha, the son of Ahijah, began to reign over all Israel at Tirzah.

[2 : 34] And he reigned twenty-four years. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. And he walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin, which he made Israel to sin. And the word of the Lord came to Jehu, the son of Hanani, against Basha, saying, Since I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have made my people Israel to sin, provoking me to anger with their sins, behold, I will utterly sweep away Basha and his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat.

And anyone belonging to Basha who dies in the city, the dog shall eat. And anyone of his who dies in the field, the birds of the heaven shall eat.

Now the rest of the acts of Basha and what he did and his might, are they not written in the books of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? And Basha slept with his fathers and was buried at Tirzah.

And Eli, his son, reigned in his place. Moreover, the word of the Lord came by the prophet Jehu, son of Hanani, against Basha and his house, both because of all the evil that he did in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger with the work of his hands in being like the house of Jeroboam, and also because he destroyed it.

In the 26th year of Esau, king of Judah, Elah, the son of Basha, began to reign over Israel in Tirzah, and he reigned two years. But his servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him.

[4 : 11] When he was at Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arzah, who was over the household in Tirzah, Zimri came in and struck him down and killed him in the 27th year of Esau, king of Judah, and reigned in his place.

And when he began to reign, as soon as he had seated himself on the throne, he struck down all the house of Basha. He did not leave him a single male of his relatives or his friends. Thus Zimri destroyed all the house of Basha according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke against Basha by Jehu the prophet.

For all the sins of Basha and the sins of Elah, his son, which they had sinned, and which they made Israel to sin, provoking the Lord God of Israel to anger with their idols.

Now the rest of the acts of Elah and all that he did, are they not written in the books of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? In the 27th year of Esau, king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah.

Now the troops were encamped against Gibbathom, which belonged to the Philistines. And the troops who were encamped heard it said, Zimri has conspired and he has killed the king. Therefore all Israel made Omri the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp.

[5 : 26] So Omri went up from Gibbathom and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah. And when Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house over him with fire and died because of the sins that he committed, doing evil in the sight of the Lord, walking in the way of Jeroboam.

And for his sin, which he committed, making Israel to sin. Now the rest of the acts of Zimri and the conspiracy that he made, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? Then the people of Israel were divided in two parts. Half of the people followed Tibni, the son of Ginnath, to make him king. And half followed Omri. But the people who followed Omri overcame the people who followed Tibni, the son of Ginnath.

So Tibni died and Omri became king. In the 31st year of Esa, king of Judah, Omri began to reign over Israel. And he reigned for 12 years. Six years he reigned in Tirzah.

He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemar for two talents of silver. And he fortified the hill. And called the name of the city he built, Samaria, after the name of Shemar, the owner of the hill.

[6 : 43] Omri did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. And did more evil than all who were before him. For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat.

And in the sins that he made Israel to sin, provoking the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols. Now the rest of the acts of Omri that he did, and the might that he showed, are they not written in the books of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

And Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria. And Ahab, his son, reigned in his place. In the thirty-eighth year of Asa, king of Judah, Ahab, the son of Omri, began to reign over Israel.

And Ahab, the son of Omri, reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. And Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him.

And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbal, king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.

[7 : 57] He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

In his days, Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of Abiram, his firstborn. And he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son, Seguv.

According to the word of the Lord, which he spoke by Joshua, the son of Nun. Amen. And may God bless to us his word.

Well, it's terrible, isn't it? Reading a litany of the monumental wickedness and horrors of mankind. Indeed, even of the people called after the name of the Lord.

But the Lord is sovereign, and none of these things can go unpunished. He shows himself right, and true, and good. And we should be thankful, shouldn't we, that that's true.

[9 : 10] Well, good evening, and please do turn in your Bibles to 1 Kings 15 and 16. Amen. Amen. We live in a world which so often seems to be rambling and raging on in chaos.

At times, it really does look like evil is thriving round about us. And increasingly, it seems that those who've been set in positions of authority, positions of government, don't seem to be governing with the good of their people in mind.

Well, as God's people today, how are we to live in such times? And where are we to turn to find comfort and strength? 1 Kings will help us here, this section that we look at this evening.

Remember, at this stage in history, history of God's people, they are torn in two. You've got Israel up in the north, and Judah in the south. And this division, remember, came about because of the unfaithfulness of Solomon at the end of his life.

His many pagan wives had turned his heart away from the Lord to instead love false gods. And as a result, the Lord in his sovereignty tore the kingdom apart.

[10 : 35] And you have this split. And really, from this point in the book, as Willie said earlier, the author, what he does is he jumps about. That can be a bit confusing, but hopefully it will be clear tonight what's going on.

He jumps about between the two kingdoms. And last Sunday, if you were here, chapter 14 to 15, we focused on three kings of Judah. And tonight, the focus is back on the north, up north.

And what we have here is actually a gallery of horrors, really, showing six kings of Israel, all of whom were evil.

And what I want to do is briefly skim over the whole section. And obviously, we won't touch down on every detail with that. It's a quick skim, just to get a flavor of each of the kings so we're familiar about what's going on.

And then I want us, at the end, to think about four clear lessons from this section, lessons about evil. So, let's have a quick skim through these six kings of Israel.

[11 : 39] First up, chapter 15, verse 25 to 32, we meet King Nadab. And what we're told about Nadab is he's the son of Jeroboam. And that's the king that we've been hearing about so much lately, from chapters 12 to 14.

The first king of the north was Jeroboam. And remember, he utterly despised the Lord. And he set up his own bullcalf religion in Israel, totally rejecting the word of the Lord and his grace.

And he also caused all of the people under his reign to follow him in that. Well, now his son, Nadab, he's a chip off the old block. He's just like his dad.

He repeats all the sins of his father. And he makes the rest of the nation sin too. But unlike his father, Nadab's reign is like that. It's over in the grand scheme of things.

It's only two years. And our next king, Basha, conspires against him. Basha by name, Basha by nature. In 15, verse 27, whilst Nadab and the army are focused on conducting the military operation that they're laying siege against this part of the country that's been taken by the Philistines, Basha seizes his opportunity.

[12 : 53] And he strikes down Nadab, killing him. And he also wipes out Nadab's whole household. It is a bloodbath. A bloodbath.

And with all potential rivals dead, Basha takes to the throne. That's really the main subject of 15, verse 33 to 16, verse 7.

They're all about Basha's reign. Well, I say they're about Basha's reign. The trouble is we're not actually told about anything that he did as king except the fact that he too was evil.

He too repeated the sins of Jeroboam, causing the whole nation to sin with him. And his reign lasts a bit longer, 24 years, until he dies.

And then his son, who's called Ella, takes the throne. And the account of his reign runs from verse 8 to 14 of chapter 16.

[13 : 52] And how long does he last on the throne? Well, again, it's over like that in the grand scheme of things. Two years. Now, the text doesn't say this explicitly, but if you look at the detail, it is heavily implied that Ella loves a bit of self-indulgence as a king.

He loves to party. He loves to get hammered. And on one such occasion, whilst he was blind drunk, one of his servants, Zimri, comes and conspires against him and kills him.

Strikes him down dead. And Zimri doesn't waste any time. Like Basha, he then proceeds to take out any potential future rivals. And he kills all of Ella's household as well.

Another bloodbath. And in verse 13, before the author closes his account of Ella's reign, we are told, yet again, just in case we've forgotten, Ella was a king who did evil like Basha, his father, who was just like Jeroboam.

We are seeing a pattern here again and again, aren't we? So, King Zimri takes the throne. And the account of his reign runs from verse 15 to verse 20 of chapter 16.

[15:08] And if you thought two years were short, this king was only on the throne for seven days. He is literally a weak king. W-E-E-K. Of a king.

I thought that was quite funny myself. But anyway, I have to put in some laughs on a passage like this. Goodness me. And before he conspired against King Ella, Zimri had obviously given no thought to, what will the king's army think of this?

What will the king's army, King Ella, whom I've just killed, what will the king's soldiers think of this? They hated it. And in verse 16 and 17, they all come to hunt for Zimri in this place called Terza, the place where the throne of Israel was situated at that time.

And they lay siege to it. And in verse 18, once Zimri, it's almost like he comes out and he looks down upon all of the soldiers who've laid siege against the city that he's in, he is full of despair. And what he does is he runs into a section of his house, he shuts the door, and he torches the place. He sets it on fire, killing himself in the process.

[16:20] Yet again, verse 19, the author tells us that same really monotonous refrain. He did evil in the sight of the Lord, even though he was king for just four days, seven days.

He too walked in the ways of Jeroboam and led Israel to sin with him. And so in verse 21, with Zimri dead, the northern kingdom of Israel actually splits again.

The divided kingdom is divided even more. There's a sort of civil war that happens in Israel here. Some people appoint this commander of the army called Omri as king, but the rest appoint this other man called Tibni as king.

This mess goes on for about four years until Tibni dies and eventually the next king rises up and it's Omri. He is the undisputed king of Israel.

And the account of his reign runs from verse 21 to 28. And we're told that actually in a shifting and turbulent passage under Omri there was a bit of stability but not much and it's not a good stability.

[17:31] We're told that, for example, he is the king who moved the throne of Israel away from its current position in Terzah to a new location, Samaria. The new capital city.

A stronghold of Israel. But again, the author repeats that same refrain. Omri did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord.

In fact, look at verse 25. It says that Omri excelled in evil. He did so much evil he outstripped Jeroboam in behaving like Jeroboam and committing evil.

And after Omri dies, his son comes to the throne. King Ahab is the final king mentioned here. Again, he's a carbon copy of his old man. Chip off the old block. In verse 30 to 33, we are told emphatically that he too did evil in the sight of the Lord.

He too walked in all the sin of Jeroboam and King Ahab even managed to outperform his old man by committing even more evil. Verse 30 says, Ahab was the most evil king that there had ever been up to that point in history.

[18:44] Imagine having that achievement forever attached to your name. You may ask yourself, well, what did Ahab do that was so bad? Well, friends, we will find out because Ahab's reign is really the main focus of the book from here up to 1 Kings chapter 22.

This section here about him is really a little intro section, bit of a summary of what to expect. Come back next Sunday and we will look at that together. But with the rest of our time this evening, let's notice four big lessons about evil that we need to learn from the accounts of these evil kings.

Firstly, let's notice the instability of evil, the instability of evil. Friends, when a kingdom is run by evil, that is, when a kingdom or nation is run by those who reject the Lord, despise his grace, it will be a kingdom that's shaky.

It will be a kingdom marked by instability, chaos, turmoil, upheaval, disorder, murder, and bloodshed. You see, as Israel drifts further and further away from the Lord, as it becomes increasingly evil, it also becomes increasingly insecure.

But friends, just be clear on this. None of the stuff that we are reading here in this chapter happens by chance. actually, this is all the Lord's doing. In chapter 14, verse 15, no need to turn to it, but the Lord announced that he would bring just judgment upon Israel as a whole for following Jeroboam.

[20 : 28] And back then, this is what the Lord said, listen to this, he said, he would strike Israel as a reed is shaken in the water. And friends, that's what we're starting to see here.

Israel's become like a reed in the water, beaten about and shaken, tossed to and fro by the wind. Israel has become frail with no decent roots.

Is my mic cut out there? Guys, can you all hear me? It is so fragile. And this shouldn't surprise us though, friends, it's not a surprise this.

For under the rule of the Lord, to be under him, to show covenant faithfulness to him, that is the place of life, true life, of flourishing, blessing, and security, and stability.

But this is what we're starting to see because Israel are wandering away from him and that is why they're in a mess. And just notice please, I wonder if you noticed something that was repeated all the way through.

[21 : 31] There's a thing the author wants us to see and that he wants us here to see the contrast between what Israel is currently like compared to what Judah is currently like.

Look at what's repeated in these verses. Look at 15 verse 22. Nadab, the son of Jeroboam, began to reign over Israel in when? In the second year of King Asa, king of Judah.

Look on to 15:33. In the third year of Asa, king of Judah, Basha, began to reign over all Israel at Terzah.

Look on to 16 verse 8. In the 26th year of Asa, king of Judah, Ella, son of Basha, began to reign over Israel in Terzah. The same phrase talking about the fact that all of these kings come to the throne under the one reign of Asa comes up in 16 verse 10, 15, 23, and verse 29.

Reminders again and again of the fact that whilst each of these Israelite kings come and go, the situation in Judah in the south is wonderfully different.

[22 : 45] Beautiful. A stable kingdom, a faithful king, by God's grace, a king whose heart is wholly true to the Lord, just like David, his forefather.

Asa walked by the obedience of faith. And so Judah, it is a different picture from what's going on up north. Listen to James Philip here on this point.

He says, the lesson here is surely obvious. It is as if God were saying to us and laying out Judah and Israel, I have set before you the way of life in Judah and the way of death in the north.

Blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life that you may live. There are always just two possibilities set before each man and each nation.

The choice is ours. When we choose wrongly to despise the Lord and spurn his grace, then the consequences are inevitable and inescapable. May God help us to learn lessons that sacred history teaches us.

[23 : 52] May God help us to be wise. So friends, as both individuals and as a church, let's choose life. let's go the way of Judah, the way of King Asa that we looked at last week.

Let's choose the way of human flourishing, the way of joy, of stability, of peace in this broken world, which is to walk obediently before the Lord our God who is our Redeemer and King, loving him and his word wholeheartedly by the power of his spirit, trusting in his grace.

For friends, that is also the way to eternal stability. To reject the Lord, to choose to go the way of Israel and in the north, that is the way to instability in this life now and also instability and the horrors of an exile that will last forever, friends.

So that's the first thing that we see in this passage, the instability of evil. Here's the second thing. Let's notice the one who is sovereign over evil. As we might think that the dominant theme of this section of the book is evil, rampant evil and it is a major theme but it is actually not the dominant theme.

The fact is that the dominant theme here is that the Lord is the one, the Lord God is the one who is actually in control of all of this, of what's happening. He is the real king of Israel.

[25 : 21] Three times we're reminded of that fact. Look at these later on. 15 verse 30, 16 verse 13, 16 verse 30, all state plainly the Lord is the God of Israel.

There is a higher throne that is calling the shots here. These human evil kings, they are all on the Lord's leash. Even the most evil actions that they carry out, even the most evil actions that these men are fully responsible for, they're all under the sovereign control of the Lord God.

And it is his powerful word that is responsible for the rising up and for the cutting down of thrones.

Now there are many instances in the text where we could turn to see this truth but let's just look back please to the first king to chapter 15 and let's look at verse 28 and 29.

to the reign of king Nadab. 15, 28, so Basha killed him, that's Nadab, in the third year of Asa, king of Judah, and reigned in his place.

And as soon as he was king, he killed all the house of Jeroboam. He left to the house of Jeroboam not one that breathed until he had destroyed it. According to chance?

[26 : 44] No. According to the word of the Lord that he spoke by his servant Ahijah, the Shilonite. It was for the sins of Jeroboam that he'd sinned and that he made Israel to sin and because of the anger to which he provoked the Lord, the God of Israel.

As it may have looked like Basha the butcher was the most powerful ruler when he completed his massacre. But really, at the end of the day, he was simply a servant of the word of God.

Not a believing servant, probably not a joyful servant, but a servant of the word of the Lord nonetheless. Back in chapter 14, the Lord had promised to wipe out Jeroboam's line because of his evil.

And in chapter 15, the Lord uses this wickedness of Basha to see that his word is fulfilled. And again, friends, that's just basic theology, isn't it?

The Lord will often use evil, real evil, to punish other evil in the world. It's what we will see later on in 2 Kings, which Willie was talking about this morning, at the exile on a much larger scheme and scale.

[27 : 57] When the Lord will raise up the Babylonians, that nation of idolaters, the nation of murderers, thieves, that evil nation, they will become the great superpower war machine of the ancient world and they will be used by the Lord as his divine instrument of wrath and they will sweep over rebellious Judah and take them off as captives to their land.

But when the Lord does this, does he let those whom he has used off scot-free with the evil they've committed? What about Basha here? The butcher. Will the Lord turn a blind eye to his murdering and say, no, it's okay Basha, I used you sovereignly, you're not responsible for it.

Well no, no, not at all. Our Lord is just. Please look at 16 verse 1. Chapter 16 verse 1, sorry. And the word of the Lord came to Jehu, the son of Hanani against Basha, saying, since I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people, remember this, the Lord is the true king, my people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and I've made my people Israel to sin, provoking me to anger with their sins.

Behold, I will utterly sweep away Basha and his house and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. So yes, Basha fulfilled the Lord's word in destroying the house of Jeroboam for good, but Basha was still carrying out his own evil conspiracy and so he was fully responsible for it and that's why the word of the Lord comes here and convicts him.

He's actually, the Lord's been really gracious here. He's given him the chance to repent. The same point is repeated in verse 7 where the author tells us that the prophet came to him and he gave Basha and his household time to turn, but tragically, they refused.

[29 : 57] They refused to heed the loving warning and so the word of the Lord comes to pass on his household and the Lord uses yet even more evil to wipe out evil in the form of the next king of Zimri who wipes out Basha's line.

But friends, none of this should surprise us really if we know our Bibles for this truth that God uses evil and punishes evil is constant throughout the scriptures. Just think of the sobering lament of the Lord Jesus in Mark chapter 14.

Listen to what the Lord Jesus says. He says this, For the Son of Man, that's himself, the Son of Man goes to the cross as it is written of him. But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born. So this is the Lord Jesus. He's talking about his death. He says, Clearly, his death was a matter of God's sovereignty.

He went to the cross according to what was written in the Old Testament in God's eternal rescue plan. But key to this plan being worked out was the Lord using real human evil.

[31 : 08] The Lord used men like Judas who betrayed Jesus but didn't repent to make sure that he went to the cross to die for our sins. Did the fact that God sovereignly used Judas excuse him?

No. As Jesus says, woe to that man. By whom the Son of God the Son of Man is betrayed. So friends, in conclusion of this point, the evil that we see in this world, the evil that we find so intimidating, so difficult to stomach sometimes, the evil that fills us with fear, it is not chaotically thrashing about autonomously.

Rather, the Lord our God, he has it on his leash. And knowing that this is how our God operates, it should keep us as God's people from sinking into despair whenever we hear of or even experience evil from the world.

The Lord our God is sovereign over the fiercest enemy of the gospel. The Lord our God is sovereign over the fiercest demon. And he can and he does use such things ultimately to bring about his own good purposes.

But in the end, the Lord our God will always see that justice is done. So friends, remember that. Cling on to that, especially the next time you're blasted by the world around us.

[32 : 31] Knowing God's sovereignty keeps us sane in an insane world. Thirdly, let's notice the dullness of evil.

The dullness of evil. Now earlier on, friends, I'm going to ask you a question. You've got to be honest. Don't answer it out loud. Just think about it. Answer it honestly. Lastly, whilst we read the passage out earlier, I wonder how you felt as you listened to it.

Or even a moment ago when I was given the summary of the main bits of the king's reigns. Did you find it dull? Did you find it rather tedious?

Can I just say, if you felt that way about the passage, did I say it? If you found the passage just a little bit boring when it was read out, can I just say, actually, I think that is how the author wants you to feel about this passage.

I think this section is deliberately tedious. Why? Because the author wants us to grasp that this is the nature of evil. Evil is not attractive. Evil is not something to be glamorized.

[33 : 37] Evil is actually deeply dull at the end of the day. There is no joy to be found in reading about evil kings, and all that they do is simply copy the repeated failings of all those who have gone before.

You just think that annoying phrase, that annoying phrase that comes up again and again and again. This next king walked in the ways of Jeroboam and this next king walked in the ways of Jeroboam and here is another king and he walked in the ways of Jeroboam too.

Here is another one walked in the ways of Jeroboam. You become so sick of it. It is boring. And that is actually how we should feel about evil.

Listen to Ralph Davis on this point. He says this, Have you ever wondered why parts of the Bible are boring like this text? Well they are boring because they are records of sinful men who simply repeat the sins of the evil that has gone before them.

Sin is never creative but merely imitative and repetitious. Maybe you can sin with flair but you can never sin with freshness.

[34 : 45] You can only ape what's already gone before. Goodness and godliness has originality inerrant in it which evil does not. Evil can only distort and ruin and corrupt and do reruns but it can't be original nor even scintillating.

Evil carries a built-in yawn. He goes on to say what tedious stuff we read here in the text. If it is boring blame these evil kings.

It is their fault. Monotony is a trademark of evil. Friends, when you think about it and when you think about your own life for a second when I think about my own life when we think about ourselves doesn't this ring true for the times when we find ourselves sinking into sinful patterns of behavior? Is that not true? When we slip into doing the things that we know we shouldn't do things that don't please our Lord and Savior things that we find ourselves doing again and again and again and again messing up again and again and again isn't it the case that sin becomes so tedious and boring?

Never delivering the lasting joy and the excitement that is what we expect it to deliver it never delivers. It is dull. Isn't it the case that sin and evil in our lives actually always in the end leaves us phenomenally empty?

[36 : 18] It is only again when we follow the Lord's ways that we find beauty joy creativity satisfaction and delight Here's a question for us all and I include myself in this The question is this Why do we so often doubt that the Lord's ways are not good for us?

The Lord's ways aren't a delight for our souls Why do we think like that? Well that's the third point this evening the dullness of evil Fourthly let's notice the seriousness of evil So yes evil and sin and idolatry they're incredibly dull and boring They never deliver what we think they will deliver but sin evil idolatry they're also friends they're also really serious Why?

Because they provoke the Lord God to anger Did you see that repeated all the way through? Pops up in verse 30 of chapter 15 verse 2 of chapter 16 verse 7 verse 13 verse 26 and verse 33 Sin provokes the Lord God to anger The Hebrew word for provoke it could also be translated as exasperate It means to constantly harass constantly goad someone until you go well beyond the limits of their patience and you move that person to righteous anger And friends this is why we must take sin seriously evil and idolatry seriously and as Christians by the power of the spirit of Christ in us we must wage war on them because our Lord God it angers them Well this passage tells us that the word of God not only rules and controls history but the word of God also defines sin and condemns those who flagrantly persist in such things

And you know in the end friends it will not matter if we've carried out great acts of success in our lives if we have persistently hardened our hearts to the Lord and if we've persistently given worship our worship and our love to things that are lesser than him then we will not stand in the judgment to come and I think that's clear from the account of Omri the fifth king that's mentioned there in chapter 16 during his reign Omri remember he carried out a really shrewd and significant act of leadership and as I said earlier he moved the throne of Israel away from its former location in that place called Tirzah to a better location please look at chapter 16 verse 24 this is what it says Omri bought the hill of Samaria from Shemar for two talents of silver and he fortified the hill and called the name of the city that he built

Samaria after the name of Shemar the owner of the hill so Omri moves the throne the royal house and it's away from being based at Tirzah which was a vulnerable position because that is where Zimri was taken and captured well not taken sorry that's where he was laid under siege and so Omri thinks I'm not having that and he moves the throne to this new secure location Samaria was a hill about 300 feet high and it had a sweeping view of the plain that surrounded it and he turns it into this mega fortified stronghold city a beast of a city it would have been invulnerable except possibly to some extreme siege also having the capital city in this new location it would have been great economically it would have been brilliant economically for the people the main trade routes loads of main trade routes ran through that region and Omri would now have better control of them and if you controlled the trade routes it meant a lot of money for your country so Omri completes a very shrewd bit of leadership here this is a successful move and also do you know from outside of the bible and some of the ancient sources that we have and ancient artifacts we know that Omri was actually a very very very successful warlord he was so successful in battle throughout his reign for example the Moabites hated Omri they feared him because Omri consistently gave them a massive kick in so much so that even years after his reign years later people referred pagan nations referred to Israel as the house of Omri even though he'd been dead for decades that's how big of a king he was and historians tell us about all sorts of other things that he did however that doesn't mean anything to the author of kings the author of kings does not care about any of that stuff in fact here when he mentions the move to Samaria he just seems to be covering the plot for us readers so that we see that it was him who moved the throne he is not celebrating

[41 : 31] Omri here at all why because at the end of the day all the success of him as a king it is worthless because he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord he did more evil than anyone before him he out Jeroboam Jeroboam and all the sins that he made Israel to sin provoking the Lord God and at the end of the day look friends if we have lived our lives with that without repenting none of the rest of our life matter really on the grand scheme of things who cares if Omri was a successful king says the author of kings you want to read about that read about it in other resources that are out there I want you to see that the only thing that really mattered in his life was the thing he didn't take care of which is to see the seriousness of his sin and to turn from it to repent and to come in faith and submission to the Lord God friends in the end it really will not matter at all if we have lived what appears to be a successful life in the eyes of the world around us friends the only thing that ever really matters to you and me is how we've lived our lives before the sight of God can I just say if you're here this evening if you're not yet a Christian it is wonderful to have you with us the first kings 15 and 16 it pleads with you do not go the way of these kings please note the seriousness of evil turn away from it come to your God your maker the Lord come to him through his great king the Lord

Jesus Christ and you will know stability that will last forever as if you are a Christian already then actually this passage what it does is it pleads the same thing exactly the same thing it's the same message for us all let's note the seriousness of our evil friends if we go on flagrantly presuming

upon God's grace flagrantly goading the Lord beyond the limits of his patience friends it will not go well for us so let's make it our prayer to the Lord our God to help us to shun the ways of these evil kings and to instead walk all the more closer to him and pray that he will help us pray that he will give us the power to tear away any idols that have become dear to us in our hearts to instead worship him as our loving God alone we can't do that on our own we need his help so let's pray let's bow our heads our gracious heavenly father we praise you the sovereign lord over all things and because you're sovereign we bring our prayer to you now we thank you that these things that we've been looking at have been written for us for our instruction and so lord we pray that you will help us not to be mere hearers of what we've just heard but doers of it and we pray this in Jesus precious name amen well we continue in prayer in response to the word of God by singing our final hymn oh for a closer walk with God a constant heavenly come together to our song and song sing for music anth ■■■■ country ang like and so too can and let zug on this■■ quite vig in som