

Solomon's Wives

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[0 : 0 0] Let's pray together. Father God, we are so grateful that one greater than Solomon has come. And so, Lord, as we look at his failings, Father, as we look at this incident with his wives in mass idolatry, Father, would it not serve to make us smug, but may it serve to cling to your son even more.

Father, bless us and help us. Teach us and change us. Father, be glorified in this time, we pray. Amen. This is the last part of our series in Solomon's life.

I found it fascinating to spend these four weeks together exploring Solomon's character. And I think it is a definite warning when giftedness doesn't match godliness.

And we've seen all the way through that perhaps there are some difficulties brewing. There are some awkward situations where God's gifts are not necessarily employed in the right way.

And so today is the day when the wheels will finally fall off. Where Solomon's sin finally comes to the surface. And I think it's important as we begin to think of a word, schadenfreude.

[1 : 2 6] It's a German word, but we don't have an English equivalent. So we use the German word. And schadenfreude means harm joy.

It is endemic in our world that we take great delight when we see famous people, celebrity people, fall a long way. Schadenfreude.

And as we study Solomon and his wives, this is our biggest danger. That we'll sit here and we'll almost laugh and poke fun and feel better about ourselves on account of Solomon's fall.

But that would be to totally miss all that we're to learn from this eerie chapter. I remember being at school about 13, just as that point that, you know, boys start to grow at different rates.

And you get some boys who are 13, who are 6'2". They've got hairy shoulders and kind of Barry White voices. And my rugby team was quite spindly. And our coach would always say, the bigger they are, the harder they fall.

[2 : 3 9] It was a complete lie on the rugby field. The bigger they were, the more they hurt us. But I think when it comes to Solomon, we can say the bigger he is, the harder he fell.

And so we're going to read in 1 Kings 11, the fall is catastrophic. It is so enormous. We're very familiar with people falling from grace.

It seems that the sports arena is particularly prone. We all remember OJ Simpson, this highly paid NFL star moving into a really lucrative movie career.

And then the wheels fell off. Or Lance Armstrong, this person who was the epitome of fighting clean and fighting hard and persevering and bouncing back, is then found to have taken EPO for all of his Tour de France career.

A massive fall from grace. Who doesn't remember Tiger Woods? The most prolific golfer ever to have lived, whose royalties and sponsorships were bringing him 100 million pounds a year without even hitting a golf ball.

[3 : 55] And that day that he appeared in the newspaper, having wrapped his car around the tree, and his marital infidelity comes to the surface.

Since then, he's not been able to hit a golf ball straight. Or just recently, Maria Sharapova, the highest paid female athlete ever. And all this drug scandal that's seen her career stalled, if not ended.

And even this week, Oscar Pistori is the most famous para-athlete ever. Now a man who is going to prison and whose life is utterly broken.

The bigger they are, the harder they fall. And we're going to see that in Solomon's case, the fall is gigantic. The downfall, catastrophic.

And it's into a decline of deep, dark, and slipperiness. That the nation never recovered from. Solomon's sin spirals out and ripples out into the whole nation.

[5 : 04] With terrifying consequences. That it will never really bounce back from. We must learn from Solomon's mistakes.

If Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, could be so foolish, surely that means this can happen to any of us. We must, unlike Solomon, resist the drift and cling to Christ.

We must resist the drift and cling to Christ. So if you've got a Bible, turn with me. To 1 Kings chapter 11, and we'll read the first 13 verses. The chronicler writes, King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh's daughter.

Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites. They were from the nations about which the Lord had told the Israelites, you must not intermarry with them.

Because they will surely turn your hearts after other gods. Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines.

[6 : 18] And his wives led his heart astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods. And his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord, his God, as the heart of David, his father, had been.

He followed Ashtaroath, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord. He did not follow the Lord completely, as David, his father, had done.

On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.

The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.

Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command. So the Lord said to Solomon, Since this is your attitude, and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you, and give it to one of your subordinates.

[7 : 40] Nevertheless, for the sake of David, your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe, for the sake of David, my servant, and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.

We've seen over this four-week series that Solomon is not so much good guy gone bad as complex guy turned catastrophe.

And this evening, the wheels finally fall off, but there have been warning signs all the way through. We saw in week one that wisdom is graciously given, but perhaps inappropriately employed.

We then see worship exuberantly offered, but with an air of hypocritical exhibitionism, that he's doing it on such a grandiose scale.

It is to draw attention to himself. And then we saw his wealth last week, wonderfully gifted, but increasingly idolized. There have been the breadcrumbs that something's not been quite right all the way through our series.

[8 : 59] And tonight, the wheels finally fall off. This evening, with Solomon's wives, the dam finally bursts, and everything is laid bare, what's gone on in Solomon's life for many years.

So let's look at it together. The first thing I want us to see is the first four verses. Solomon's sin surfaces. Solomon's sin surfaces.

I wonder, have you ever had an ice cream headache? Probably don't get them in Scotland, because ice cream is probably only edible for about two weeks of the year.

But the strange phenomenon about an ice cream headache is the pain caused by the coldness in your mouth presents as a splitting headache in your head.

It is what clinicians refer to as referred pain. Similarly, if you've ever had gallstones, it can quite often present as pain in your shoulder blade, which is quite a long way from your gallbladder where the stones are situated.

[10 : 02] It's called referred pain, where the symptoms are a long way from the problem. And when it comes to Solomon's wives, this could also be referred pain.

The symptoms appear as 700 wives and 300 concubines, but the problem is in Solomon's heart. The heart of Solomon's problem is Solomon's heart.

It presents as polygamy, but it's really down to half-heartedness. Heart is mentioned six times in these 13 verses.

Look at verse 3. He had 700 wives of royal births and 300 concubines, and his wives turned his heart away.

Look at verse 4. His heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God. A little bit earlier on in verse 4. His wives turned his heart after other gods.

[11 : 07] Verse 9. The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. The heart of Solomon's problem is Solomon's problematic heart.

Solomon falls into sin, his half-heartedness, long before he falls into disgrace. We know that to be true. These big scandals that have hit these mega church pastors in America.

Once the scandal finally breaks, they roll back the years and isolate the many different times that there's been failings and faults. A heart that should have been devoted to the Lord starts to drift.

Whole-heartedness becomes half-heartedness over a period of time. And as his heart drifts away from the Lord, it drifts towards foreign wives.

He has 700 wives. That means he has pretty much two wedding anniversaries to remember every day. Over a 40-year reign, that means he's getting married 18 times a year.

[12 : 16] I have just about recovered from the trauma of getting married once, nearly eight years ago. Although the text says 700 wives, there's 700 wives of royal birth.

So he may have a few more dotted around. He went from such high class. Alongside, he has 300 concubines. 300 plus 700, a thousand women in his life.

He would need to be the wisest man. In the world to cope with that. This is a scary accumulation. It's scary on a number of reasons, not just the numbers, but it stems from disobedience.

So many times in the law of God, God has forbidden the king particularly to marry foreign wives. Exodus 34 explicitly forbids Israelites taking foreign wives because they will lead them astray after their own gods.

Exodus 20 verse 14, one of the 10 commandments, if you shall not commit adultery. 300 concubines probably suggest you haven't taken that law that seriously.

[13 : 28] Deuteronomy 17, 17, particularly about the king, and he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.

And the passage quoted here in chapter 11 of 1 Kings, Deuteronomy 7, 3 and 4, you shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons.

For they would turn away your sons from following me to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.

Real warnings. And this is the law that Solomon, the king is supposed to have written out and meditated on all the time to keep with them.

And yet he thinks, 700, that's fine. That's not what I would consider to be excessive number of wives. Or he just didn't believe it would happen.

[14 : 29] He thought so great was his gifting that he wouldn't fall, as God said, that anyone would. It's direct disobedience, but it's also distrusting. There's been a warning sign of this in 1 Kings chapter 3, in verse 1, where we read, Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt and married his daughter.

So this military alliance is finalized and forged and ratified by Solomon marrying Pharaoh's daughter. And it would seem from context that many of these other royal weddings have happened about shoring up Israel's borders.

So Israel's great enemies are the Moabites and the Ammonites and the Edomites and the Sidonians and the Hittites. So what does Solomon do? He gathers all their princesses together and makes them Mrs. Solomons.

And why? Because he trusted more in his diplomacy than he did in his God to keep them safe. He thought, I know what? Solomon's will get us through.

Rather than my trust in the God who has brought us safely thus far. Solomon relying on his own diplomacy more than he is on the God of the universe.

[15 : 47] And then there's real duplicity. Because not only does he let his, not only does he marry many foreign wives, he lets them continue to worship their own gods. There's a real pluralism going on here.

He lets his wives worship their gods in the very city that God had chosen to bear his own name. The city out of all the cities of the world, God said, that is where I'm going to place my name.

And suddenly we find hymns of worship raising to many foreign gods. The wisest man has played the fool and has drifted into difficulty and opened the door to calamity.

Chapter 11, verse 2. The end of it. Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. Literally, Solomon clung to them in love.

This language of clinging usually refers to one's relationship with God. How we cling to God in love. How we lean on him and cleave to him.

[16 : 55] It's in fact the very words that have been used to describe Solomon's relationship with God. Solomon 3, 1 Kings 3, verse 3. Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the instructions given him by his father.

It's exactly the same phrase. Solomon clung. He held fast to his gods. What a scary contrast that has happened over eight chapters.

The beginning of Solomon's reign. He clung to his gods. Solomon, 1 Kings 11, verse 2. Solomon clung to his wives.

There's been a complete switch, a total swap. The last time we heard Solomon speak was at the end of his benediction in chapter 8.

Chapter 8, verse 61. This is what he prays for all his people. And may your hearts be fully committed to the Lord our God to live by his decrees and obey his commands as at this time.

[18 : 08] Well, he was the first person to disobey. Well, he was praying for others. Someone whose heart was not fully obedient. Who didn't fully laugh.

And then look at verse 4. What a warning this is for all of us. As Solomon grew old. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart off to other gods.

It is a stark warning. Aileen and I have friends who are trying to sell their flat in Aberdeen. And it's a tenement flat and all the toilet blocks are on top of each other in a stack.

And they can't sell it because for many, many years there has been water ingress into the toilet stack. And actually, the toilet stack is coming away from the rest of the tenement and is actually only braced on and held by these huge metal clips.

Undetected. Year after year, drip, drip, drip, drip, drip. You get the sense that's exactly what's happened in Solomon's life with all of these wives.

[19 : 25] That over time, they've just worn him down. That when he was old, his heart turned from the Lord. Worn down by this swarm of foreign wives.

You could see how it happened. Oh, Solomon, love, will you not come to the festival for my God this week? Will you not come to this celebration? You wanted me to come and be your wife.

Come and celebrate like we used to in Sidon. Come and do this ritual that we used to do in Moab. Come on. You're always dragging me off to the temple.

Now it's your turn to come to one of my things. Oh, Solomon, can't we sacrifice some goats on this high place today as well as in the temple? You could see her when he was old.

His heart turned away. He just gradually drifts away. Gradually. But over time, he's pointing in a totally different direction.

[20 : 29] I think it's right that we spend a lot of time praying for young people at Brunsfield. I think it's right that they would build their lives on the rock of Jesus Christ over and against the tide of popular culture that comes running against them at school and in the media.

But I think on the back of tonight, we must also pray for our older people. We should pray for all our people. But particularly our older people that they wouldn't drift.

So we wouldn't be saying about people, but when they were old, their hearts turned away. The daily discipline of devotion to Jesus.

Jesus. We must pray that it won't be diluted down through the decades. I thought Ian was brilliant this morning. He's talking about familiarity and the danger that is with how we see Jesus.

Well, that becomes more and more dangerous the longer we're on this road that we just build a familiarity and almost immunity to his grace and his wonder and his glory and his goodness.

[21 : 36] Is your attitude like the elderly Caleb who says, give me this mountain or has it become like Victor Meldrew passed me the slippers?

It's a serious question because Solomon, the wisest man who had ever lived, who knew gifts unlike anybody who's ever lived and even he drifts away.

Even he drifts to half-hearted idolatry. In orienteering, another sport we were made to play at school, you had to have a compass and a map and you were chasing these flags that were never where they were supposed to be, so bad is my map reading.

But if you got the compass direction a little bit out after you run in 10 minutes that direction, you are miles away. So easy, isn't it, to drift?

So easy that today I'm going to line my life up with Jesus. Tomorrow I may be a degree out and I go a bit further down the road and then I'm another degree out and before we know it the distance between us and Jesus is miles apart.

[22 : 45] It's what happens to Solomon when he's old. His wives turned his heart away, he drifted. We've got to resist the drift, we've got to cling to Christ.

Not taking a, not letting it slip away but clinging to him to daily get up and say, today Jesus I love you and I want to follow you that I want you to be the number one priority in my life that we do sing I am so glad that Jesus loves me because the danger is we just drift away.

It's never, nobody ever sins like Solomon in one great big leap. It's just by little steps closer and closer to a line before we're miles away and miles away.

The Puritans have this lovely image that they use over and over again. They describe sin like baby snakes. And they appear in our lives.

But we're so bad at just stamping on them that these little snakes that look so innocuous end up growing and becoming poisonous death vipers in our lives.

[24 : 01] Solomon is married to 700 baby snakes and over time they've turned into an enormous wriggling mass of poisonous death vipers.

Instead of killing sin and fleeing temptation Solomon caught sin and cohabits with temptation on a ginormous 700 scale.

Hebrews 2 verse 1 is something we must come back to. Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it.

Lest we drift away. Solomon is a case and point of what it means to drift away. Solomon got lax and then he got lost.

there's nothing sadder is there than to see somebody drift away. I think of some people that I was on CU committee with so passionate and ardent for the Lord and at least two of their cases it was when unbelieving females came into their lives that the drift catastrophically happened.

[25 : 11] If there's nothing sadder than seeing somebody drift away there is nothing more heart warming than to see people still going strong for the Lord. Even in later life.

I had the joy last week of being at the faith mission minister's breakfast and there was John Shearer talking about 50 years of pastoral ministry and at the age of 75 he said I love Jesus more today than I did when I started.

Isn't that a great thing that we should all be pursuing? Now I dare say none of us are drifting away into polygamy at least I hope not.

however we can drift away through many things not just wrong things but good things wrongly prioritized where we prioritize job and pursue that or possessions or reputation or friendships or family or spouses or hobbies or leisure activities all of them can upset the course of our lives and orientate our lives away from the Lord Jesus.

None of them are bad but if our hearts let go of Jesus and start clinging to these more we'll be in desperate danger of drifting away.

[26 : 32] Solomon's sin surfaces and that needs to be a real warning for us. Think where will you be in your relationship with Jesus if you continue on your current trajectory?

trajectory? Where will you be in a year's time? Five years time? Ten years time? If you carry on on your current trajectory where will you be? Will you be more in love with him or less in love with him?

Will you be walking closer to him or will you be miles away? If you continue on your current trajectory because the way to resist the drift is to keep check on yourself. what in your heart is competing with Jesus?

What is in danger of you clinging onto more than the Lord Jesus? What baby snakes are you stroking now that might bite you then instead of stamping on their head right now?

Solomon's issue when he was old the sin that he'd been storing up for ages surfaced and manifested as gross idolatry.

[27 : 38] Solomon's sin surfaces but it's been bubbling away for ages drip, drip, drip. Then we see Solomon's worship wavers verses 4 to 8.

The true extent of Solomon's half-heartedness his duplicity starts to become apparent as he sets up shrines and pursues the false gods of his foreign wives and the three that are mentioned are an unholy trinity of foreign gods to start worshipping.

We get Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites, Ashtaroath, the fertility god of the Sidonians, Chemosh, the abominable god of the Moabites.

This is not just flirting with idolatry, this is jumping in with both feet. Ashtaroath is the goddess of the Sidonians, whom you worship with your glands for whom sex is the way you worship particularly involving temple prostitutes and rituals.

Chemosh and Molech are described as detestable gods or abominations. We have loads of evidence saying that their worship involved child sacrifice.

[28 : 59] Leviticus 18, 21, you shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God, I am the Lord. We have extra biblical evidence of what worship of Molech looked like.

One historian comments, worship of Molech included people burning their own children to death in fire, often by placing them in the arms of a hollow metal idol of Molech that had been heated very hot with a fire and they're burnt inside.

Terrifying. You have to say that on the back of Solomon's prayer, in 1 Kings 8, verse 59, let me read that for you. And may these words of mine which I have prayed before the Lord, be near the Lord our God day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day's need, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God and that there is no other.

Terrifying. That is his declaration and here we see the Lord Molech, Lord Chemosh and Lady Ashtaroath have moved into town. Notice as well that he erects a high place east of Jerusalem, on the mountain east of Jerusalem on the hill.

This would be known later in the Bible as the Mount of Olives. That this high place is within sight of the temple mound that Solomon has spent seven years building as a majestic representation of where God dwells on earth.

[30 : 42] And later in life what's he doing? He's building a high place to Chemosh the detestable God of Moab and for Molech the detestable God of the Amorites.

Within the very few of God's dwelling place. Terrifying how far Solomon has fallen. Notice as well that these three are just the tip of the iceberg.

Verse 8 he did the same for all his foreign wives. Potentially another 697 shrines going up around the place.

Terrifying how deep in idolatry Solomon is falling. Jerusalem turns into a smorgasbord of cult deities and idols. The wheels have fallen off and they've rolled down the hill.

Solomon's poisoned pluralistic heart now flows into polytheistic paganism. And you have to say Solomon would do quite well in the 21st century. Pluralism is the spirit of the age.

[31 : 46] A place where anything goes as long as everything goes. A place where the only thing you cannot claim is that your God is the only God's. Your way is the only way. Your worship is the only acceptable worship.

That Solomon's Jerusalem is like 21st century Britain, a place where tolerance, acceptance and inclusivism are treasured above truth, holiness and devotion. A place where Solomon's actions would be reported as broadening his horizons, exploring other realms of spirituality.

See though what the chronicler calls it in verse 6. This is not open mindedness, this is not inclusivism. Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord. His drifting from God turns into evil against God.

Resist the drift. Don't accommodate. Cling to Christ. Resist the drift. Our culture says don't be so narrow-minded.

[33 : 08] Don't be so arrogant as to think that Jesus is the only way and you can see how we just start to drift. resist the drift. Don't accommodate.

Cling to Christ. Well that won't happen to me we say. I'm not like Solomon. That's not how Nehemiah sees it in the end of his writing.

He writes this to the Israelites who were also courting foreign ladies. Solomon king of Israel sin on account of such women. Among the many nations there was no king like him and he was beloved by his God and God made him king over all Israel.

Nevertheless foreign women made even him to sin. Nehemiah very much sees it that if Solomon is susceptible to it then we must be very careful.

that if Solomon can fall so drastically be careful if you think you can stand lest you fall. A daily devotion to the Lord getting up each and every day Jesus I love you Jesus I want to walk with you Jesus I want to cling to you.

[34 : 24] And tomorrow just repeat Jesus I love you Jesus I want to walk with you Jesus I want to cling. Tie up tightly to Christ.

Pay close attention lest we drift away. We finish with this Yahweh's fury fueled. Verse 9 The Lord became angry with Solomon.

The Lord became angry with Solomon as the nauseating smell of idolatry enters the nostrils of God. It evokes a visceral reaction.

Solomon so gifted by God. Solomon to whom God appeared twice. He has loads of evidence. He's not doing this in ignorance he's doing it in arrogance.

Solomon's drifted away. He's turned his back on God. He's turned his heart away from God. And judgment falls. And his sin has consequences.

[35 : 29] Jesus. This is going to do major damage to his people. Solomon's kingdom had been a place of peace.

And it says at least three times that Solomon's subjects were happy. And now Solomon's kingdom is going to be divided and split. It's not going to be a place of peace.

It's going to be a place of division. It's not going to be a place of good kings. it's going to be a place of bad kings with the odd exception. Look at verse 11.

So the Lord said to Solomon, since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates.

Solomon clings to his wives. What does God do? He tears the kingdom out of his hands. Nevertheless, for the sake of David, your father, I will not do it in your lifetime.

- [36 : 34] I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David, my servant, and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.

A divided kingdom will be the penalty for Solomon's blatant disobedience. The rest of chapter 11 is going to be all about these seeds of division being sown.

As Hadad and Rezon and Jeroboam are raised up as adversaries, Solomon's know nothing but peace and now adversaries are raised up.

Solomon's reign that had been plain sailing now has tumultuous storm clouds brewing in the distance. Yet see, and with this we finish, there's hope even amidst judgment.

that even when God is angry because of this evil that Solomon has perpetrated, see that there's grace in the midst of it.

- [37 : 38] I will not tear the whole kingdom away, but on account of my covenant, God, despite his anger, will remain utterly faithful to the covenant that he made.

that even though Solomon has broken the covenant, God will keep the covenant. He will have one tribe.

He will keep Judah as it turns out. This is the great hope of the gospel, that our salvation is not dependent on how much we love God, but on how much he loves us.

that even though we break covenant with him, he will keep it forever. That his unfailing love will never fail.

One tribe is ultimately preserved, the tribe of Judah, from which would come the one, the lion of Judah, great David's greater son, greater than Solomon, whose undivided heart would be the ultimate remedy of our fickle faith.

- [38 : 45] One whom on the mountain east of Jerusalem didn't flirt with other faiths, whose half-hearted heart didn't build high places for other gods, but this one who lay prostrate, sweating drops of blood from a wholehearted heart, praying in obedience, not my will, but yours be done.

The ultimate expression of what it means to be a wholehearted, obedient, worshipper of God. So there are lessons to be learned from Solomon, important lessons that cause us to take seriously the command to resist the drift and cling each and every day to Christ.

We are to do exactly what Joshua commanded God's people as they enter at the end of the conquest of the promised land. Be very careful therefore to love the Lord your God.

Be very careful. what Jesus says on that night in Gethsemane at the Mount of Olives, watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.

Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. 1 Kings 11, 36, I will give one tribe to his son so that David, my servant, may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put my name.

- [40 : 06] that lamp that God preserves down the line would grow up into the light of the world. He would be snuffed out so his light could shine for all eternity on our lives.

Let's pray. Father God, we pray for ourselves and we pray for each other.

Father, we want to be wholehearted worshippers. Father, we don't want to treat faith in you as a hobby or something we just do on a Sunday.

Father, we want to love you and cling to you. We don't want to drift from you or turn from you or walk away from you. Father, we want to be yours and wholly yours.

So, Father, whether we're young, may we resist the drift. May we, whether we're middle-aged, Lord, keep us clinging to Christ. And, Father, may those who are old have this testimony that they love Jesus more today than they ever have in their lives.

[41 : 16] Father, we pray the same for our church that we would not drift away. But as your body of people in this place, we would cling to Christ together. And, Father, we would encourage each other in our walk that we might walk closely to your son Jesus, who is the very epitome of what a wholehearted worshipper is.

And, Lord, because of his wholeheartedness, thank you that there's forgiveness for when we're half-hearted. But, Lord, kindle in us such a faith and a love for your son that we will worship and follow and adore him all the days of our lives.

We pray this not for our safety. Lord, we don't pray this for our own fame, but we pray it so that Jesus might be glorified in our lives and that people might see that we love him most.

Father, bless us and help us in his glorious, all-conquering name. Amen.