

Sermon 13: Solomon's Apostasy, 1 Kings 11:1-13

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Proposition: Within the covenant of grace, God chastises the disobedient!

Our text tonight shows us a very simple, very intuitive truth: God chastises the disobedient! We all know this. It's built into our consciences. But right up front, it needs to be balanced with another truth. That truth is simply this: God chastises the obedient too. I want you all to get that straight. The error of Job's friends was believing that God chastises only the disobedient. That's not true. Adam never asked for a serpent. Job had no sin on his conscience. Jesus did many good works; for which of them was He crucified?

In other words, bad things really do happen to good people--at least, bad things happened to the only two good people who have ever walked this earth. But that's not the point of tonight's sermon. Tonight you need to see that bad things happen to bad people — that idolatry has consequences, and those consequences are not pleasant.

I. Apostasy (vv. 1-13)

So what was Solomon's sin? What did he do? Remember that three weeks ago, we saw from Solomon's career what blessedness looks like. And now, we see how he departed from God.

A. Solomon's Wives (vv. 1-3)

The first thing he did was love foreign women. In Exodus 34 and Deuteronomy 7, God strictly warns against marrying the people of the land precisely because they will turn your heart away from worshipping the true God. Now, many of you know by experience how true this is. But for those who don't, let me tell you about Hank. I don't remember his real name, but a few years ago, Hank belonged to a church that one of my seminary professors pastored down South. Hank was a South Carolina state trooper, and an upright, moral man who belonged to the local PCUSA congregation that his wife's family had been in for two hundred years. In God's providence, he heard the gospel, was converted, started reading his Bible, and recognized that he needed to go to a church that actually preached these things. He began attending my professor's church, and there he was discipled. He began leading his family in family worship, and that's when the bottom fell out. His wife threw a fit. It was bad enough that he had left the respectable family church; this was the last straw. She would literally scream and yell as he tried to read the Bible to the children, just to drown out the sound. She made herself annoying and disruptive in every possible way. Hank's life became such a long train of misery that he finally gave in to her manipulations. He stopped reading the Bible. He stopped trying to have family worship. He completely cut off my professor, even changing his phone number and blocking him and other church people on Facebook. To all apparent appearances, he has forsaken the faith he once embraced.

Now, there is more than one person in this church with an unbelieving spouse. I don't pretend to know what that's like. But to all those who are single, those married to unbelievers will join with me in saying to that you must not marry an unbeliever! If in God's providence you're already there, that's a different story. But if you're dating a non-Christian, courting a non-Christian, engaged to a non-Christian, shacking up with a non-Christian — I don't care what kind of romantic relationship you have: if you're not married, break it off *at any price*. I mean that. Whatever the cost, it is worth it. The word of God could not be more clear: a deliberately chosen romantic relationship with an unbeliever *will* turn away your heart. If you think it won't, then it already has, because you wouldn't dare disobey God's express commands if your heart were truly clinging to Him in love. Solomon loved women more than He loved God.

B. Solomon's Idolatry (vv. 4-8)

That love of women first turned Solomon's heart away from God. I don't think the text intends us to understand that Solomon totally and finally fell away, but his heart was far from perfect. It was not wholly with Yahweh his God, like the heart of David his father. So what did he do? Well, the text tells us he went after other gods. Now, by God's grace he did not formally worship them; I think the text would tell us if he did. No, it was a lot more subtle than that. It was simply in the inclination of his heart. You see, in the Old Testament too God demanded that His people have a perfect heart toward Him. But Solomon secretly inclined, in his heart, to the less demanding worship of other gods. This heart inclination showed itself in building temples for these idols. He did not go personally and worship the idols. But he made provision for their worship.

Now, say that one of the presidential candidates in next year's election had personally financed, out of his own pocket, the building of a mosque. Would it be fair to say that that candidate had certain sympathies with Islam? Certainly. But Solomon didn't build just one temple. He built temples to all kinds of deities; all of his wives had one. Now, to our culture, what could be wrong with that? But God regards it as an extreme form of wickedness. God is not a pluralist. He does not believe that there are many paths, or that every religious tradition has much good which we can glean. Where does it say, "Take care not to despise the religious customs of the Canaanites, for they are noble and beautiful"? Yeah. Nowhere.

C. God's Response: Merciful Chastisement (vv. 9-13)

So how did God respond to Solomon's marrying unbelievers, and turning his heart away? He was angry, especially since this was the very thing He had warned him about! What mother says, "I told you not to go bed early, eat healthy food, get plenty of hydrating fluids, and take moderate exercise!" Right. Those aren't the things you mother warns you against. God hadn't warned Solomon against reigning, or writing Psalms, or discoursing about wisdom. He had warned him about marrying unbelievers and turning his heart away. And so, when Solomon ended up doing exactly what God had told him not to do, God was angry. He tells Solomon that there will be chastisement, but that it will be merciful. This fits with the nature of God: when we sin, He chastises us--but He tempers that chastisement with mercy.

The chastisement is that the kingdom will be torn away. This verb "tear" is exactly what God used with Saul, too. Come with me back to 1 Samuel 15:28: "So Samuel said to him, 'The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to your neighbor who is better than you.'" Now, the kingdom goes this time to Solomon's servant, and we will quickly discover that Jeroboam is no better than Solomon. Still, the parallel is clear: just as Saul was punished by the destruction of his dynasty, so David's dynasty is about to take a major hit. But in that judgment, God promises two merciful things. First, he will do it after Solomon is dead. Second, he will only tear away most of the kingdom. Part of it will remain with the house of David, because of God's promise to David and because Jerusalem is the place where God has chosen to place His special presence.

In other words, the promise of an enduring dynasty is going to endure, even in the face of Solomon's wickedness. Is not this exactly what God promised? Come back to 2 Samuel 7: 14: "I

will be his father, and he shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; 15 but my lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.” (2Sa 7:14-15 ASV)

Do you see that? Even in the midst of heinous apostasy, God is faithful to His promise. The chastisement of Solomon is not like the punishment of Saul. That’s why I’ve headed this next point “chastisement.” Punishment is retributive justice. Punishment is what unbelievers receive. But believers receive chastisement, the chastening of the Lord. Chastening may look the same, but its motive is different. Punishment has to do with justice; chastening has to do with growth and restoration. If you are not a believer, you will someday be punished for your sins. If you are a believer, you will be chastened, whether you sin or not. But you will definitely be chastened if you sin.