

Sermon 14: Solomon Chastised

For the believer, sin brings chastisement--but not forever!

- I. Chastisement (vv. 14-40)
 - A. Hadad (vv. 14-22)
 1. The Secret Machinations of Providence (vv. 14-18)
 2. The Vanity of Political Alliances (vv. 19-22)
 - B. Rezon (vv. 23-25)
 - C. Jeroboam (vv. 26-40)
 1. His Background (vv. 26-28)
 2. His Interview with the Prophet Ahijah (vv. 29-39)
 - a) The Judgment: Ten Tribes will Leave (vv. 29-32)
 - b) The Reason for the Judgment: Idolatry (v. 33)
 - c) The Promise: A Lamp for David (vv. 34-39)
 3. His Flight into Egypt (v. 40)
- II. The Death of Solomon (vv. 41-43)

Did Solomon Die as a Believer?

The most memorable chastisement of my life took place when I was nine years old. My pastor's son, my best friend at the time, was staying with us for the week while his father candidated at a church in Florida. My grandparents were visiting too. Naturally, I was on cloud 9. To have David for a whole week and Grandma and Grandpa too was too good. Well, one morning Mom and Grandma decided that they were going to clean out the pantry. On the pantry floor were a large number of spilled strike-anywhere matches. Surreptitiously, under the guise of looking for snacks, David and I entered the pantry and stuffed our pockets with matches. We then hastened outside to light a fire. We tried a number of outdoor locations, but all of them had a problem: it was a very windy day, and the matches blew out before we could get anything lit. I racked my brain. Where could we go to get out of the infernal wind?

Suddenly, I had the bright idea of kindling the fire in the garage. My father does nothing on a small scale, and our garage is no exception. At 60 x 40 feet in size, and 16 feet high to the horizontal member of the ceiling truss, our garage can hold five cars and a significant amount of miscellaneous junk.

Dad was at work and mom had parked outside, so we had the place to ourselves. Sure enough, the fire caught well. David began piling out the cardboard and paper from a nearby trash can, and I danced around the flames, jubilant at the success of my enterprise. It only takes a moderate amount of brains, I thought, to outsmart the weather!

Well, it wasn't long before Mom came out to get something. She wasn't too happy. Dad was summoned, and he spanked me nice and hard on the pink couch in the nursery/schoolroom. I

could get over it, though not quickly. But then he spanked David too. That I couldn't believe. The temerity! To spank someone else's son. Suddenly, it penetrated my smoky brain that lighting fires inside enclosed structures could have extremely deleterious consequences.

That chastisement did its work, and I have never since burned trash in the garage. The point is that: God chastises His true children, but not forever!

God chastised Solomon at the hands of men. And just as Solomon lived and sinned on a bigger scale than I have yet had opportunity to do, so the chastisement was much bigger as well. Nonetheless, it was not forever.

A very ambitious young intern began looking at this chapter last week, and we made it through verse 14. We saw the extreme danger of marrying an unbeliever, and we further saw that the overall point of the chapter is that apostasy brings chastisement. This week we will look more closely at the form this chastisement took. In Solomon's case, it was human adversaries--people who were literally out to get him. As we began to see, this was a direct fulfillment of God's promise to chastise David's son with the rod of men.

I. Chastisement (vv. 14-40)

And it is real chastisement. Brothers and sisters, if your heart turns away from God, you can expect real chastisement too. God doesn't play around, even — especially — with His own children. Precisely because Solomon was a son to Him, God chastened him with the rod of men. Let's see what form that took. Three adversaries — Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam. How many adversaries did Christ have? Countless. And did his heart turn away? No. He was chastened by His Father even though He was perfectly righteous already. God was merciful to Solomon. He only sent him three adversaries. But since the text gives plenty of attention to these three, let's look at them.

A. Hadad (vv. 14-22)

This guy was a high-ranking Edomite with a chip on his shoulder against Israel.

1. The Secret Machinations of Providence (vv. 14-18)

Notice how far back this grudge went — probably forty-some years, to David's time. Yet it just so happened that Hadad survived to become a virulent enemy of Israel. The message of the text is clear: you may think you have no enemies. But God can easily dredge up someone your grandfather deeply offended. Do not think that you are safe from chastisement simply because your job is good, your bank account is well-padded, people think well of you, or anything else. God is able of these stones to raise up adversaries. You know what the Hebrew word for "adversary" is? Satan. Hadad was like a mini-Satan to Solomon. And God made him that every step of the way. God arranged his escape. God arranged that he would be rich and powerful and coddled in Egypt. And God can arrange whatever circumstances He desires for your life too. In fact, He already has. If you have someone who is out to get you, God put that person in your life. If you are facing an unjust lawsuit or a client who refuses to pay you for your work, well, God put that person in your life. And your call is to respond in a mature way. If, like Solomon, you

can draw a straight line between your own sin and the presence of that adversary in your life, *repent*.

2. The Vanity of Political Alliances (vv. 19-22)

Speaking of Egypt, I thought Solomon was friends with Egypt. Right? He was married to Pharaoh's daughter. He got horses at what was apparently a steep discount from guess where — Egypt. And yet the same king who gave his daughter to Solomon now gives his sister-in-law to Solomon's biggest enemy.

Do you think the narrator might be suggesting the folly of trusting in worldly alliances? Never say, "God, I have connections at the White House. You can't touch me." Listen: you're never going to be the only one who has connections at the White House. God chastises His children when they sin against Him. And there is nothing you can do to protect yourself. Rather, you must simply submit, knowing that in following God's will lies your true peace. Again, when chastisement comes the appropriate response is repentance for all known sin and crying out to God to take the chastisement away. But in the meantime, submit!

B. Rezon (vv. 23-25)

Rezon was another mini-Satan, another one of the sons of men who were dispensing stripes to Solomon. He was an adversary to Solomon for Solomon's entire reign. Now, presumably he only gained enough power to be a real threat later in Solomon's reign. Regardless, he had power in Syria and hated Israel at the same time. Not a good combination, right?

C. Jeroboam (vv. 26-40)

But now we come to the biggest adversary. He's not called an adversary. The Hebrew literally says that he lifted up his hand against Solomon.

1. His Background (vv. 26-28)

As you see from the text there, Jeroboam was a hard worker who showed real promise. He ran Ephraim and Manasseh's forced labor for Solomon.

2. His Interview with the Prophet Ahijah (vv. 29-39)

As he was headed out of town one day, a prophet appears out of nowhere with a message for him.

a) The Judgment: Ten Tribes will Leave (vv. 29-32)

The message is a bit cryptic. The prophet grabs his robe and starts to tear it up. What does it mean? Is the fabric industry headed for destruction? But the prophetic word explains the prophetic sign. The kingdom will be divided, and ten of the tribes will go with Jeroboam. Now, Solomon will keep a tribe — Judah, because God is faithful to His promise to David and faithful to His place of worship. In the same way, God is faithful to His promise to Christ. He will not let any of Christ's sheep perish! But He will chasten them severely when they sin. Remember, this is how we find the relevance of Biblical narrative. We discern what it has to say about the character of God. And what is God like? He chastens sin, then and now. But He is also always faithful. For David's sake, He does not entirely cut off Solomon and Rehoboam.

b) The Reason for the Judgment: Idolatry (v. 33)

It wasn't just Solomon who was worshipping other gods. The whole nation was following his example. Do you think idolatry characterizes our culture? Do you think idolatry characterizes your life? Do you prioritize private worship over email and TV? Do you prioritize Saturday night fun over Sunday morning worship? Do you have a little piece of your heart attached to your house/car/boat/bank account/Netflix subscription? If you do, look out. That's what brought God's chastening on Solomon and on the Old Covenant church, and it is for these same reasons that the chastening of the Lord often falls on us today.

c) The Promise: A Lamp for David (vv. 34-39)

But once again, in the midst of judgment, God remembers to show mercy. God does not cast Solomon off entirely. This is for the sake of David--but ultimately for the sake of Christ. Why does God not cast you off every time you sin? Because of His promise to Christ.

This is not a hybrid between grace and law, with some law and some grace. Rather, it is all of grace. God makes the promise, establishes the dynasty, and keeps the promise. In response to God's promise, David and Solomon and you are required to keep the law. But when they failed, God kept His promise to them, ultimately by sending His Son as the Son of David. When you fail, God keeps His promise to you by keeping His promise to His Son.

Now, this promise to Jeroboam was not unilateral. It was purely a works-principle promise. And we will soon see that Jeroboam's dynasty lasted two generations, if that. His son reigned for two years, and then the dynasty ended. So — do you want live under the covenant of works, where if your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds God will accept you? Jeroboam chose that option, and it didn't get him very far. I have talked to many people who want to put their trust in having more good deeds than bad deeds. They don't seem to understand the weightiness of sin, and that one bad deed outweighs all the good deeds you can ever do. But Christ's good deed of dying in your place outweighs all your bad deeds. The atoning work of Jesus would have been enough for Jeroboam, too, had he simply trusted God. But he preferred to trust to his own goodness. Apparently he also made an attempt on the kingdom, because he soon had to take off for Egypt.

3. His Flight into Egypt (v. 40)

There he hid until the death of Solomon. But he will reenter the story with a vengeance in chapter 12.

Jeroboam was punished. Solomon was chastened. See the difference? The Davidic line was afflicted, *but not forever*. Jeroboam's line was afflicted and cut off forever. Both suffered. Both lost a kingdom. But the Davidic line did not lose permanently, because God keeps His promises. He has promised to chasten you for your sin, but not to cut you off. If you are a Christian, God promises that you will be afflicted, *but not forever*. That was His way of treating Christ, and it will be His way of treating you. Christ was afflicted for a time, *but not forever*. Remember, chastisement has the goal of restoration, while punishment has the goal of justice. Christ took God's justice so that you can experience God's restoration.

II. The Death of Solomon (vv. 41-43)

When you sin, God chastens you, but He does not destroy you, for the sake of His promises to Christ. He promised Christ that Christ would save all of His seed. You will be chastened, but not even your sin can pluck you out of the hand of God. This is not a motive for carnal security; God has ordained the end, eternal life — but He has also ordained the means to that end. No one will get to heaven without repentance, faith, and obedience, as we heard this morning on Jude 20-23. But no one can manifest repentance, faith, and obedience unless God gives him those things as a gift. Solomon's apostasy proves that the wisest, most gifted of us, left to himself, can and will turn away from God. So pray for the grace of perseverance — and don't think it strange when you experience the chastening of the Lord. The homo-crusaders are very active and powerful, and they have given us every reason to believe that they mean business. If you'll murder a baby, who's off-limits to your bloodthirsty rampage? So when you experience tribulation and chastening in this life, take heart: it is from God's hand, and it is for your good, not for your destruction. Repent, and ask God to remove His chastening hand. But above all, keep seeking Him. Keep clinging to Him with your whole heart. Then, and only then, will you be sure of benefiting fully from the chastening of the Lord.

Did Solomon Die as a Believer?

I think we can be sure that he did. Ecclesiastes sounds like the words of one who repented. And though Adam's repentance is not recorded either, it seems clear that he will be in heaven. Finally, 2 Chronicles 11:17 "They strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and for three years they made Rehoboam the son of Solomon secure, for they walked for three years in the way of David and Solomon." Clearly this way was the way of righteousness and holiness.

Do not fall away. Do not mistake the gifts of the Spirit for the graces of the Spirit. Trust that God can and will preserve His own, for the sake of His Son and His Church. Amen.