

May 27

1 Kings 11

Today you read 1 Kings chapter 11 and came to the sad conclusion of the life of King Solomon. Solomon did not finish well.

We will discover that Solomon's son Rehoboam was no great shakes either, and with 700 wives (all of royal birth) -- think about that -- royal children tend to be spoiled! And 300 concubines...it's a fair bet that apart from writing a lot of wise advice in the Book of Proverbs, Solomon didn't do too much active parenting.

What went wrong? He was the wisest man in the world, and by the end of his life he is horribly off track!! What happened? In the Book of Deuteronomy, future kings of Israel were warned not to multiply wealth, horses, or wives. Well Solomon didn't pay much attention to that -- in this he greatly sinned.

His wisdom was a marvelous gift from God, but he relied on it too much. He relied so much on the gift, that he forgot the Giver. His wealth created the very same problem. Instead of remembering that God was the source of his wealth, he came too much to believe that his wealth could purchase anything he needed. Though he put a great deal of wealth into the Temple, he clearly believed that he had the right to keep most of it for himself. That too was a very big mistake, a mistake for which his son paid in full. He should have shared his wealth with his people. Rehoboam, following his father's example, felt no compulsion to do that either. His wives were the biggest mistake of all, for they led King Solomon into idolatry.

Solomon's kingdom was given to him and to his descendants permanently, but conditionally. "If you walk before me with integrity of heart and uprightness as David your Father did and observe my decrees and laws, then I will establish your throne over Israel forever. But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees that I have given, then I will cut Israel off from the land I have given it. I will reject this Temple I have consecrated for my Name and Israel then will become a byword and an object of ridicule among the nations." Chilling words, because they all came true.

All through Scripture God makes promises. Some of them, like the one he made to Noah after the flood, are unconditional. God said to Noah, "I will never again destroy the earth with a flood." There are no 'ifs' or 'thens' in that promise -- it is totally unconditional. Many of the promises of God in Scripture, however, come with conditions attached. We had better learn to pay careful attention to those conditions.

Let me ask you a question designed to make you think a bit. What about your salvation? Is it conditional or unconditional? You need to know there are a good many Bible-believing Christians lined up on both sides of that issue. On the one hand, there are those who say, 'Our salvation is totally unconditional. Once I ask for forgiveness, there are no strings and no conditions attached. I am saved. "Whoever comes to me I will never cast away.'" On the other hand, there are a good many

Christians who believe that our salvation is conditional. They point to verses like the one that says, "He who endures to the end will be saved." They point to passages of Scripture like the one in Hebrews chapter 6 that suggests that Christians can indeed lose their salvation. On the one hand, if it is all of grace, "For by grace you are saved through faith, not of works," then it is unconditional. On the other hand, if the Scripture says, "He who endures to the end will be saved," what about the one who doesn't endure to the end? Good questions. And ones about which you and I should think rather seriously.

For you see, at bottom, that was the great sin of the wise King Solomon. God gave him so many, many precious gifts. They were his to use, his to keep, but always there was to be the understanding that they were on loan from the One who is the giver of all gifts. Honor and worship was to be given to that One. Each of the gifts was to be used with the understanding that ultimately, though they were Solomon's on loan, they were to be used for the glory of the One who had given them. That is what Solomon forgot. At some point along the way, he began to think that the gifts were his and his alone. The gifts had been given to him, and he had no obligation to use them for the glory of the Giver. When Solomon began to think that way, he sealed his fate. Solomon fell victim to the sin of presumption. It is my great prayer that you and I will be wiser than the wisest man who ever lived. That is the challenge.