

SOLOMON, THE FAILED KING

+ **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

Sin begins in the heart, but its consequences affect others.

+ **BACKGROUND PASSAGES:**

1 Kings 10–12

+ **SETTING:**

It's a dark time in the kingdom, but you wouldn't know it. The prosperity and fame of King Solomon had put him on the map in more ways than one. Foreign royalty had come to see for themselves both the lavish wealth and wisdom of Solomon. You'd think that with every blessing and provision Solomon would have been living with a wholehearted devotion to God. You'd think that, but you'd be wrong. Dark days lay ahead for the king and his kingdom. It's too bad Solomon couldn't see that.

DAY 1

READ:

1 Kings 11:1-8

FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Kings 11:4

NOTES

How quick are we to assign blame to others? We will look at Solomon's tragic fall this week, and we could be sympathetic to Solomon's problem. "It wasn't his fault," we might tell ourselves. "The women he married were so influential." Maybe you know the humorous line from the film *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*: "The man is the head, but the woman is the neck. And she can turn the head any way she wants." So, we feel bad for Solomon, thinking it really wasn't his fault.

However, Scripture is clear that Solomon's failure didn't arise from the women in his house turning his neck whichever way they desired. Solomon's problem first and foremost was a heart problem, his heart problem. The writer of 1 Kings tells us that Solomon was not wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord (1 Kings 11:4). Catch that? The issue was Solomon's heart. Solomon's heart wasn't whole; it was divided, or torn. To put it another way, Solomon's heart was disordered. He had given his "loves" in the wrong order to the wrong things. Instead of loving God with all his heart, he loved his wives more. Instead of pursuing the kingdom of God first, he gave himself to pleasure and people first. His being swayed by his wives was only because he failed to keep a wholehearted, focused devotion and love for the Lord primary in his heart.

Could that be the state of your heart today? Are there people, pleasures, and/or possessions that you love more than Christ? Would losing those things be a nightmare for you? Solomon's sick, divided heart is a warning for us to check our hearts and discern the state of our love for Christ. Is He our first love? Or have we lost our first love in favor of a disordered heart loving the things of this world more than the Lord Himself?

What are the symptoms in your life that you have a disordered heart, loving the things of this world more than Christ? Will you repent?

DAY 2

READ:

1 Kings 11:9-10

FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Kings 11:9-10

NOTES

It's sad to see people toss away advantages. If you've ever followed the CBS hit series *Survivor*, you've seen such instances. Twenty individuals competing for a million dollars find themselves on an island, enduring the elements, navigating both physical and social challenges to be the last person in the game as the "sole survivor." Often in a season, a character will earn an advantage that helps him or her in a challenge or keeps that individual from being voted out at the next tribal council. However, there are moments when foolish players squander their advantages and end up losing the entire game. It's tragic.

How much more devastating is it to watch someone throw away God-given advantages! And yet, here's Solomon tossing it all away. These two verses emphasize something very important. The writer's focus isn't so much God's anger (although God is angry). Nor is he telling us how foolish Solomon was (although he was very foolish). The writer refers to God as "LORD," or Yahweh, the name emphasizing the covenantal nature of the God of Israel, yet Solomon turned to worship false gods. The writer also notes Solomon had two personal visitations from God, but Solomon acted as if God didn't exist. We're told Solomon was commanded explicitly to walk with integrity, obeying God's commands, so he wouldn't stray (1 Kings 9:4), but Solomon plugged his ears and did his own thing.

You may believe you'd do better if you had the advantages Solomon did. The fact is, though, you do have far greater spiritual advantages. We have the very Son of God, Jesus, who died to save us. We have the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer. We have the entire Word of God showing us what to believe and how to live. We have the community of the church to spur us on toward love and good deeds. We have far greater advantages than Solomon. Are we ignoring and throwing away the spiritual resources we have? That would be tragic.

How are you ignoring or utilizing the spiritual advantages and resources you have today?

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Let us admire grace, that any stand; let the strongest fear, lest he fearfully fall; and let no man but Jesus Christ himself be the absolute platform and pattern of faith and holiness."¹

-John Bunyan (c. 1628-1688)

DAY 3

READ:

1 Kings 11:11-43

FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Kings 11:11-13

NOTES

It's tempting to focus only on the judgment and punishment. We're quick to see God drop the hammer on Solomon and affirm his punishment. Bad people should pay for their bad actions. We see Solomon's wayward heart, his rebellion and disobedience to God's commands, and we affirm the truth that his actions deserved the consequences he received. He did the crime, now he was going to pay the time.

But then we hear grace. God declared the punishment but then softened the blow on Solomon by deferring the main sentence until the next generation. It feels almost like a cop-out. God was pulling His punches. Why didn't He just hammer Solomon into the ground? Grace frustrates us. It spoils our definition and determination of justice. It keeps us up at night bothered as we think about God forgiving great sinners. How could He? We feel indignant that God is kind to wicked, rebellious, and violent people. We're mad that God delays His justice and shows grace—that is, until we need it.

Yet this is who God is: slow to anger, abounding in faithful love and truth, maintaining love to many, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin (see Ex. 34:6-7). It should not surprise us that God is gracious and kind, even to the least deserving of sinners and the most hardened rebels. That's always been His character!

Perhaps our hearts are much like Jonah's, frustrated that God doesn't level and destroy the wicked sinners we see around us (see Jonah 4:1-2). Maybe we need to be attuned more to God's mercy and grace for all sinners. Yes, we want justice. But do we see that justice has been served to Christ in our place on the cross? Do we believe that Christ came to satisfy the wrath of God against us so that we might receive the righteousness of God? If we do, then perhaps we should be more eager to see God's grace given to sinners. Why should we be the only ones to receive His grace?

Is your heart more eager to see sinners judged or shown grace? How will you pray in light of your response?

DAY 4

READ:

1 Kings 12:1-24

FOCAL PASSAGE:

1 Kings 12:12-17

NOTES

It was a hard act to follow. His father had been known as the wisest, wealthiest, perhaps most famous king ever on the throne of Israel. Even his grandfather was the greatest king. The expectations for Rehoboam had to be staggering. How would you follow those two incredible, famous men? For Rehoboam it would be with a show of power, a display of authority. There had to be no question who was king and who was in charge. Yet it was that kind of pride that led to the fall and the division of the entire nation. What his father and grandfather had spent their lives building, Rehoboam undid in one generation.

Pride has a way of blinding us and destroying all that we have accomplished and built. The moment that we believe we must impress others or inflate ourselves is the moment pride begins to divide our lives. Rehoboam was the king. He had position and power. He had the identity as the son of Solomon and grandson of David. No one could take those things from him. Yet the fear of losing that identity and position pushed him to act foolishly. Rehoboam's pride caused him to act like a tyrant to secure his identity when he should have acted like a servant, already having a secure identity.

We may believe that we need to perform good deeds so we can secure a position or identity for ourselves. We, in our pride, can belittle and look down upon others so that we feel more confident. We can neglect wisdom, love, and kindness in favor of displaying our own strength and power. But every time we do so, we cause division and we lose.

Christ died to give us His identity forever. His grace extends to secure righteousness for us as a gift so that we never have to work to earn God's love. Those who are in Christ already have the affirmation and acceptance of God forever. We can humble ourselves, live as servants, and be secure in the position Jesus has given to us.

How can you gain a better understanding of your identity in Christ as a beloved child of God?

DAY 5

READ:

Matthew 4:1-11

FOCAL PASSAGE:

Matthew 4:8-11

NOTES



ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #51: SINLESSNESS OF JESUS

While the Bible affirms the full humanity of Jesus, it also affirms that Jesus was completely sinless throughout His earthly life (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22). Nevertheless, because Jesus was fully human, He experienced real temptation of sin, as seen during His trials in the wilderness (Matt. 4). Yet even though His trials and temptations were real and similar to the rest of humanity's, Hebrews 4:15 confirms that Jesus did not sin.

Satan doesn't have any new tactics. His schemes and strategies are always the same. You can't teach the old devil new tricks. Right at the center of his plans is an attack on the heart. He comes right for the core of our affections. He wants our hearts turned away, divided, and disloyal. He's aiming to divert our worship.

While we don't get a peek behind the curtain to see Satan at work directly in diverting the heart of Solomon, we can see evidence of his work. His fingerprints are all over Solomon's story: distort the word of God, get Solomon distracted by the good things of this world, deny that God would punish him. All the same old strategies. And Solomon's heart was divided; he worshiped false gods. He turned his affections away from the Lord.

It's no surprise, then, that Satan showed up to tempt Jesus using the same strategies. All the kingdoms of the world appear. All the pleasures and glories and delights of this earth are offered. All Jesus needs to do is turn His heart for just a moment. Except Jesus is sinless, wholly devoted to His Father. Temptation is no match for the person who knows God's Word and whose heart is rightly ordered in its affections.

Jesus conquered Satan's temptations because His heart was wholly devoted to the Lord. He knew God's commands, and He knew God's greatness and was able to shut down the old liar's stupid attacks. Loving and trusting God was everything.

Satan still has his playbook open to the page titled "disordered hearts" and is laboring to get us to worship the things of this world, trying to distract us from God. Thankfully, Jesus Christ has won the victory for us in His active obedience and wholehearted devotion to the Father. He gifts His righteousness and His Spirit to all who believe so that we can be wholehearted in our love for Him. He has overcome the devil on our behalf!

Where might your heart and affections be disordered? How will you reorder your loves and worship God only?

GROUP

NOTES

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"There are critical times of danger. After great services, honours, and consolations, we should stand upon our guard. Noah, Lot, David, and Solomon, fell in these circumstances. Satan is a footpad; a footpad will not attack a man in going to the bank, but in returning with his pocket full of money."²

-John Newton (1725-1807)

POINT 1: A divided heart leads to sin
(1 Kings 11:4-8).

Solomon's downward trajectory began at _____, directly _____ God's word and having foreign wives, demonstrating a heart that was not _____ devoted to the Lord.

? Why is it important that God's people obey His command not to marry unbelievers?

Not only did Solomon _____ allow his many wives to turn his heart from the Lord, but he also enabled, provided for, and participated in the worship of false gods, taking _____ steps in doing _____.

? What steps can we take to help us avoid passive and active works of evil in our lives?

POINT 2: A rebellious heart receives judgment (1 Kings 11:9-13).

ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE #51: SINLESSNESS OF JESUS

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God would _____ Solomon, but because of His _____ promises to David, God's judgment on Solomon was also governed by His _____ .



Why does the Lord's discipline of believers in Christ resemble that of Solomon and not Saul?

POINT 3: An arrogant heart results in division and strife (1 Kings 12:3-5,12-17).

Solomon's son Rehoboam became king. Immediately, the Israelites requested better treatment for their loyalty. The king's _____ would make or break the kingdom. God's _____ was in motion.

Rehoboam's _____ refusal to _____ to the wise words of the elders and the people of Israel was all that was needed to _____ the kingdom. And God's judgment was fulfilled.



Why might division be considered a natural consequence of sin?

MY RESPONSE

Because we have been forgiven of all our sin through Christ, we proclaim the foolishness of relying on our own wisdom for salvation and lift up Jesus as the only hope.

- **HEAD:** What are some reasons you disregard the Word of God and fail to obey God's commands?
- **HEART:** How will you seek to cultivate a wholehearted devotion to the Lord?
- **HANDS:** What will you do this week because of your faith in Jesus, the better Solomon?

VOICES from THE CHURCH

"We need a king—one who is perfectly righteous, who cannot be corrupted, who is entirely good, in whom there is never any taint of evil. He powerfully saves and transforms his people, who come to him and gladly acknowledge his Lordship. Hail, King Jesus."³

—D. A. Carson