

From the Pulpit of Keith Miller  
Meadowbrooke Church  
June 30, 2019

## **The Shattered Hope of Godly Expectations**

### **1 Kings 1:1-11:43**

#### **Introduction**

Five, ten, twenty, or forty years from this day... what do you envision your life looking like? If your life was recorded on film, what will the ending be like? Life is like a Three Act Play: (1) the first act is adolescence where our dreams and hopes are forged into what we hope would be; (2) the second act is the part that includes college, singleness for some and marriage for others, a mortgage, and perhaps children; (3) the third act comes after we have lived most of our lives.

The story of Solomon is one that starts out great, but then ends tragically. David groomed his son for his throne, not just to be his successor, but to be one who would serve in the line of Judah whose successes would eventually pave the way for the Messianic King. The hope of Solomon was to leave a legacy that was even greater than David's.

If you were to ask a teenage Solomon how his life would turn out, I am willing to bet that he would have given a much different "Act 3" version of his life from the one in which he lived. Solomon's life is one of the most amazing stories in the Bible, and the legacy he left for Israel and the Christian is threefold: (1) his wisdom, (2) his writings in the book of proverbs, (3) and his works, one of which is the building of the Temple. The first part of this sermon is discussing Solomon's life, and then the second part is reflecting on our lives and how to protect us from spending the last act of life depressed over past failures.

#### **The Hope of Solomon**

Solomon grew up under the shadow of his father, King David. We do not know what kind of relationship Solomon had with his father, but we do know that Bathsheba was his mother. So let me try to paint some kind of picture of Solomon's life based on what we learn from the Bible. Solomon had an older brother who died as an infant. That child was the product of David and Bathsheba's affair. After David and Bathsheba's first child died, David tried to comfort her. They made love that night and Solomon was conceived not out of some lustful encounter, but out of love. I believe that Solomon was deeply loved by both his father and mother; and although David was extremely busy as the King of Israel, I think he gave special attention to his son.

I think Solomon grew up hearing the songs his father wrote, and maybe he sang some of them as a child like the one we find in Psalm 127: "***Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stays awake in vain. It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep***" (vv. 1-2). I don't know what growing up was like for Solomon, but I do know that he grew up learning about God. Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs, and I am confident that Proverbs and everything else he wrote about God came as a result of his father's

concern that his son grow up knowing the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I think the proverbs came about because Solomon grew up reading and learning his Bible.

As Solomon grew up, he was most likely groomed to be the son to succeed his father on the throne. As he got older, Solomon most likely had hopes, aspirations, and dreams for the kind of life he would live as king of Israel. One thing that was important to Solomon was that he rule and reign as a good king, for after he was anointed as king, he had a dream where God asked him to request whatever he wanted. All that Solomon requested was wisdom to lead God's people (see 1 Kings 3:6-9); he could have asked for a long life, wealth, fame, friends, etc., but instead Solomon prayed for wisdom so that he could be a good king. Because his request was motivated by his love for God and His people, God not only granted Solomon wisdom like no other man before or after him, but also promised him some of the things he didn't ask for (wealth, honor, and long life should he keep God's commandments).

So, Solomon started his role as Israel's king with a bang; soon after his succession to the throne he developed a reputation for being extremely wise... so wise, that people would come just to hear his wisdom. We don't have to go to Jerusalem to hear his wisdom, because we have some of it in our Bibles; consider Proverbs 3 for example:

*My son, do not forget my teaching,  
but let your heart keep my commandments,  
for length of days and years of life  
and peace they will add to you.*

*Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you;  
bind them around your neck;  
write them on the tablet of your heart.  
So you will find favor and good success  
in the sight of God and man.*

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart,  
and do not lean on your own understanding.  
In all your ways acknowledge him,  
and he will make straight your paths.  
Be not wise in your own eyes;  
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.  
It will be healing to your flesh  
and refreshment to your bones.*

*Honor the LORD with your wealth  
and with the first fruits of all your produce;  
then your barns will be filled with plenty,  
and your vats will be bursting with wine.*

*My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline  
or be weary of his reproof,*

*for the LORD reproves him whom he loves,  
as a father the son in whom he delights. (vv. 1-12)*

Pretty wise counsel don't you think? "***Trust in the LORD with all your heart... Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.***" But wisdom is not the only legacy Solomon left behind; he also was known for his building projects. Solomon's first project that he is also remembered for is the building of the Temple. King David wanted to build the temple, but couldn't because God wouldn't allow it. Solomon started and finished what David only dreamed about. For the first time in Israel's history a Temple matching the description of the Tabernacle Moses received on Mt. Sinai was built in Jerusalem. The Temple would become the center of Israel's worship where the atonement of sin would occur, and all of Israel would come to worship and celebrate Yahweh. The Temple was so elaborate that it took seven years to build.

After the temple was completed, Solomon offered a very elaborate prayer that you can read for yourself in 2 Chronicles 6:12-42; Solomon closed his prayer with these words:

***"And now arise, O LORD God, and go to your resting place,  
you and the ark of your might.  
Let your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation,  
and let your saints rejoice in your goodness.  
O LORD God, do not turn away the face of your anointed one!  
Remember your steadfast love for David your servant."***

As soon as Solomon finished praying, fire came out of the sky consumed the sacrifices that were made in worship to God, and the Bible says that the glory of God filled the temple. When that happened, everybody went face down on the pavement and worshiped with these words: "***For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever***" (v. 3). The completion of the Temple was the most celebrated event in Israel's history as a nation.

That night Solomon had a dream in which God spoke to him; in that dream God said some things to Solomon. The first thing God told Solomon was that He would accept the Temple as a house of worship. The second thing He told Solomon was that if/when the time came, He needed to discipline Israel for Her sin, they could come to the Temple and humble themselves by seeking His face in repentance and know that He would hear their prayers, forgive their sin, and heal their land (2 Chron. 7:14). The third thing He told Solomon was to obey Him by keeping and obeying His commandments. It is believed that Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes when he was in the last "Act" of his life; in Ecclesiastes, he states that he tried everything under the sun and realized at the end of his life that what he should have done was, "***Fear God and keep his commandments... For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil***" (12:13-14).

### **Solomon's Failures**

Solomon's life did not end well. In 1 Kings 11, we learn that Solomon, who had been known for his god

ly wisdom and the building of the Temple, "***loved many foreign women.***" We learn that he had 700 wives and 300 concubines... he was the Hugh Hefner of his day. The thing is, Solomon

knew his Bible well. Solomon knew what Exodus 34:16 said, “*You shall not enter into marriage with foreign women, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.*” The Bible says that Solomon clung to foreign women in love. So what happened? Listen to what the Bible says about Solomon ending legacy:

*So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD.... Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.* (1 Kings 11:6-8)

These idols Solomon set up involved orgies and child sacrifice. The arms of the image of Molech would be heated up, a child would be killed, and then placed in the red hot harms of a demonic idol. That is Solomon’s legacy. Solomon set the stage for Israel as a kingdom to be divided and eventually leveled by the foreign nations of Assyria and Babylon.

How did Solomon’s life end so tragically? It started with what seemed to be a simple compromise. At the beginning of Solomon’s reign as king we read something very subtle: “*Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father, only he sacrificed and made offerings at the high places.*” Only one place was God to be worshiped in, and that was the tabernacle; Solomon tolerated the worship of God in the high places, which eventually results in the worship of other gods.

As you read further about Solomon’s life, you discover another subtle thing. Solomon spent 7 long years building the Temple, but he spent 13 years building his own house, which was almost double the size of the Temple. Then you discover that he crossed another line: Kings were not to collect great amounts of wealth, but Solomon hoarded his wealth. When you read about Solomon’s life, you read is a story about a man who began with a love for God, but after one compromise after another, became an idol worshiper. If you read Solomon’s life closely, you discover that the voice of the prophets become silent. It is almost as if Solomon removed himself from all accountability. Solomon will forever be remembered for his love of idols: women, wealth, and other gods; Solomon violated everything Deuteronomy commands a king not to do.

### **How Do We Finish Well?**

How about you? How will the drama of your life conclude? I think it is safe to say you most likely will not end your life as a billionaire, having attained 700 wives and 300 concubines, and guilty of having sexual orgies and condoning child sacrifice in the name of Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Molech. Sure we are far removed from the place and time Solomon lived, but will you become slave to and idol(s) of our culture? Solomon’s story is really not that far removed from our own reality – the problem of the human heart is still the same. Every single person is born with a natural inclination towards sin, and because of this, every human heart is an idol factory. Tim Keller, in his new book, *Counterfeit Gods*, wrote the following about idols:

When most people think of “idols” they have in mind literal statues—or the next pop star anointed by Simon Cowell. Yet while traditional idol worship still occurs in many places of the world, internal idol worship, within the heart, is universal. In Ezekiel 14:3, God says about elders of Israel, “These men have set up their idols in their *hearts.*” Like us,

the elders must have responded to this charge, “Idols? What idols? I don’t see any idols.” God was saying that the human heart takes good things like a successful career, love, material possessions, even family, and turns them into ultimate things. Our hearts deify them as the center of our lives, because, we think, they can give us significance and security, safety and fulfillment, if we attain them.<sup>1</sup>

Do you know what I think motivated Solomon to do the things he did? I think it was his concern about his image. The great kings of the other nations had lots of wives, lots of money, and built lots of things; I think Solomon only wanted to be a great king like his dad. Maybe Solomon’s rationale went something like this:

“People needed a place to worship, so I will leave the high places up and then when we get a Temple built we can obey God’s Word about worshiping in one place.”

“We have been at war with different people groups for the 40 years my dad was king, I will marry the daughters of the other nations to promote peace; I know what God’s Word says about marrying foreign women, but if we have peace we will have more time for Yahweh.”

“I know God’s Word says I should not get lots of horses and chariots, but if we are going to have peace I have got to have a strong army.”

“My wives grew up worshiping other gods, it’s only fair that they have a place to worship.” “It’s only a small sacrifice to her god, I built the Temple... I am sure Yahweh won’t mind.”

It all starts with something subtle, something we consider little. A high place in our heart we allow to stand. An image we know could become our idol, but we tolerate it until you discover in the third act of the story of your life it has become the idol you love, trust, and obey; the idol everything in your life is sacrificed for. When things become idols, they are only cheap imitations of the real thing God offers you through a relationship with Him. Solomon’s sins led to rampant idolatry in Israel where the worship of idols became the norm, out of this experience the prophet Jeremiah wrote: ***“Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water”*** (Jer. 2:12-13).

What are the high places in your heart? What have been the small compromises in your life regarding what God has said versus what you want? What is it that you have left unchecked? What good thing have you made ultimate in your life, and by making it ultimate... have made it into an idol? What idol has enslaved and trapped you?

There is hope! There is freedom. And the way to that freedom is, to first discern what the idols of our hearts and culture are, and then turn to the true and living God. The God who revealed Himself on Mt. Sinai to Moses and Israel, and the God who revealed Himself in the person of

---

<sup>1</sup> Timothy Keller. *Counterfeit Gods* (New York, NY: Penguin Group; 2009) p. xix.

Jesus Christ who appeals to any and all: ***“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed”*** (John 8:31-32, 36).

Solomon started out as a Yahweh worshiper while tolerating the high places in his heart; don't do what Solomon did. Solomon should have torn down the high places right away, but he didn't. Some of you are Yahweh worshipers tolerating the high places in your hearts; it will not be long before the idols of your heart rob you of the life God created you for. Tear down the high places of your heart by replacing them with the only One who can satisfy.

Here are three practical ways you can begin to tear down the high places of your heart; these are lessons we learn from Solomon's life:

- 1) Solomon was the wisest fool on earth, because he knew about God, but didn't really know God. The last thing that is written about Solomon states that he did not keep what the LORD commanded. This is why, over and over again, God's appeal to His people is to know Him by obeying His commandments and listening to His voice. Reading your Bible is how you know God and hear His voice.
- 2) Solomon wanted a good thing, he wanted to be a good king; this desire is why he asked God for wisdom to lead God's people. The bad thing is that Solomon's desire to become a good king became ultimate; the good kings of the nations around him had lots of horses and chariots, lots of wives and concubines, lots of gold and silver, and lot of idols.

We can do the same thing; our desire to have a house, wife, husband, kids, job, or to be good a good parent, grandparent, employee, etc. can become so ultimate in our hearts that they become idols.

- 3) Solomon stopped listening to the voice of God at some point in his life, find a person who is walking with God, and give that person permission to speak into your life like a prophet. Solomon did not have someone to speak truth into his life; we all need someone to hold us accountable and to speak God's Word into our lives.
- 4) Keep your eyes on Jesus by removing those things that distract you from Him. Turn down the volume of your life so that you can hear the voice of the savior: ***“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I cam that they may have life and have it abundantly”*** (John 10:10). Follow Jesus knowing that He is the only One who can give what He offers: life.
- 5) Strive to finish life well. If Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes, then he most likely wrote in his old age: ***“Fear God and keep his commandments... For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil”*** (12:13-14). Solomon did not finish well, but if He gave God the high place of his heart and listened to His voice and obeyed His commandment, the last act of his life would have been much different.