



Today we're finishing our series on the life of King Solomon. We've called this series "The Wisest Fool" because that describes Solomon to a tee. He was given great wisdom from God, but he squandered it on foolish living. We saw last week how Solomon had been on a gradual trajectory away from God for some time. It started when he was a young man and chose to make a political alliance with the king of Egypt by marrying his daughter. No big deal, right? But then over time he made more and greater compromises. By the time we get to chapter 11, his heart was seriously divided.

Yet we haven't reached the end of Solomon's story. The way Solomon has been living begs the question, Where's God in all of this? We've seen God show up in Solomon's life twice. The first time he offered to grant any request he asked for. Solomon asked for a wise and discerning heart, and God was pleased and promised to give him not only that but wealth and honor as well. The second time was more ominous. God presented him with a choice: "If you walk before me faithfully, I'll bless you, but if you turn away from me, there'll be consequences for both you, your family and your kingdom."

The question is, now that Solomon has turned away from God, what will God do? I mean, what kind of God is he? Do you ever wonder that? Is he a God who passively stands by and watches as we destroy ourselves and others? Let's face it, at times God seems rather passive, standing off to the side like a casual observer who doesn't want to butt in. We wonder if he's a God who involves himself in our lives. If so, where is he? How do we know when it's him? How do we identify his fingerprints?

The last section of 1 Kings 11 addresses these questions. From this story we're going to learn four things about God and how he responds to us in our sin and rebellion.

God's Anger

The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the Lord's command (verses 9–10).

The first thing we learn is found in verses 9–10. Notice it wasn't just the sin God was angry at. He was angry at the sinner himself—Solomon. He was the object of God's anger, or what's sometimes called his wrath. This confronts us with a biblical

truth most of us would rather not talk about, even if we believe it.

These are days when people want the freedom to do whatever they want to do whenever they want to do it. This is especially true in the Western world, where we like to think what we do is nobody's business but our own. We take offense when anyone challenges our morality. "You can't do that! What's your problem? You have no right to judge me." The unwritten code says nobody has the right to say what I do is wrong because if it works for me it must be right. Don't try to bring God into the discussion. God is basically seen as a kind and harmless old grandpa who is there to do nice things for people.

But the God who put Solomon on the throne is a God who gets angry. The anger of God isn't an irrational emotion. It isn't an irate and reckless rage. It isn't a character flaw or a blemish on God's good reputation we should be embarrassed about. The anger of God is simply an outgrowth of his holiness. It's his absolute opposition to ungodliness. John Stott defined it as his "righteous reaction to evil, his implacable hostility to it, his refusal to condone it, and his judgment upon it." If God is pristinely holy, how could he respond to sin with anything but anger?

God has good reason to be angry at Solomon. It says "**his heart had turned away from the Lord.**" God looks beneath the surface at the heart. God is worthy of all our affection. He deserves all of our love. Solomon started out loving God with all his heart, but he'd forsaken his first love. He loved his foreign wives and then he went on to follow after their gods. There's a kind of holy jealousy that God has towards us. Like a passionate husband, he's possessive; he has exclusive claim on his lover's affections. It says Solomon had forsaken God despite the fact God had "**appeared to him twice.**" Very few people ever have a direct encounter with God, but Solomon experienced that twice, which made his sin even worse. As it says, "**he did not keep the Lord's command.**" He broke the first commandment by having other gods before Yahweh. He broke the second commandment by making idols. He broke the fifth commandment because his sin dishonored his father David. And he broke the seventh commandment by committing adultery. So even from a human standpoint, God's anger is entirely justified.

I've been asking myself all week, if we're his children, how is it possible for God to be angry with us? We've been forgiven, right? Haven't we been given the righteousness of Christ? How could he be angry with us? I have lunch twice a month with one of our

former elders. Ralph is one of the wisest men I know. I respect him like few others. This past week we had lunch and I had this text on my mind and I asked him, "Ralph, is it possible for God to be angry with us?" I can't recall his exact words, but he said something like this: "Yes it is, but not forever."

I think he meant that like a loving father can become angry at his disobedient child, he can get angry with us, but it's not a vindictive anger; it's a fatherly anger. Even as his children we often fall into sin. Our affections for him grow cold. We go through seasons when we ignore his word. We become absorbed in selfish and foolish pleasures of the world. Like a row of dominoes, we break one commandment and others tumble as well. And anger is still his righteous reaction to sin, but it's not forever.

God's Sovereignty

The second thing we see in this text is God's sovereignty. There are three verses I want you to see that provide kind of an outline for what happens to Solomon next.

Then the Lord raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom (v. 14).

And God raised up against Solomon another adversary, Rezon son of Eliada, who had fled from his master, Hadadezer king of Zobah (v. 23).

Also, Jeroboam son of Nebat rebelled against the king (v. 26a).

The last example is worded differently than the first two, but it's clear that God also raised up Jeroboam. So three times the writer tells us God raised up an "adversary"—literally satan—against Solomon.

You can see how the inspired writers of Scripture had insight we don't have. Newspapers and historians don't report events that way, do they? They just tell us what happened and look for cause and effect relationships. Imagine reading a news story about Osama bin Laden that said God had raised him up to fly those planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. We'd read that and say, "How do you know that? How do you know God raised him up?" But the biblical writers are inspired and they **do** know. They know that there's an invisible hand behind what looks like ordinary, random human events.

Take the story of Hadad in verses 14–22. Hadad was an Edomite. Israel was constantly fighting with Edom on her southern border. King David had won a decisive victory over Edom and almost wiped out their entire male population. But as a young boy, Hadad, who was from Edom's royal family, escaped and found refuge in Egypt. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, liked Hadad so much he brought him into his royal court and gave him food and a place to live. He even let him marry his wife's sister and raise their son in the palace right along with his own. When David died, Hadad figured it was safe to go back to Edom. He went to Pharaoh and twice said, "Let me go back to my own country."

Eventually, he did go back. And having nursed a grudge for years he never forgot what the house of David had done to his people. He took every opportunity to be a pain in Solomon's backside! He didn't know it, but he was God's instrument.

There was also Jeroboam. While Hadad was a foreigner, he was an Israelite. Early on he showed excellent leadership skills and Solomon put him in charge of the Jewish labor force from the house of Joseph. But one day a prophet named Ahijah appeared out of nowhere with a message for him. Ahijah was sporting a new cloak and he whipped it off and tore it into twelve pieces. Jeroboam is scratching his head wondering why the prophet is counting the pieces. Then Ahijah holds out ten of the pieces and says to Jeroboam.

Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes. But for the sake of my servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe'" (verses 31–32).

This message stirred Jeroboam to rebel against Solomon. We know that because down in v. 40 the writer tell us that Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam but he fled to Egypt.

But in each case God raised someone up to oppose and afflict Solomon. These three men weren't accidental blobs that just happened to come along and bring Solomon trouble, they were raised up by God. We worship a God who is sovereign over history. That means God possesses supreme power and authority and is in complete control and can accomplish whatever he pleases. As we've said before, history is His-Story. We may not always understand exactly what he's up to like the writers of Scripture do, but we know God is sovereign over the events of our lives and our world. Listen to these verses: Ps 103:19 says, **"The LORD has established His throne in the heavens; and His sovereignty rules over all."** Ps 115:3 says, **"But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases."** This applies to rulers. Ps 75:7 says, **"It is God who judges: He brings one down, he exalts another."**

God's Discipline

Now all of this sounds good to us until God chooses to do something we don't like. And certainly that was the case with Solomon when God raised up these three adversaries against him. God, who had blessed Solomon with wisdom, wealth and honor, is now opposing him. Back in chapter 5:4 Solomon said, **"...the Lord my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster."** But now, after his heart has gone astray, he has adversaries and God is the One who has raised them up!

This brings us to the third thing we see in this text—God's discipline. This is exactly what God said he'd do. Way back when God

first promised David that he'd always have a son on the throne, listen to what God said, *"I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. But my love will never be taken away from him..."* (2 Sam 7:14, 15a). Do you see what God is saying? "Like a father disciplines his son out of love, I will discipline your descendants."

But this isn't just the way God works with kings. This is how God operates with **all** his children. Turn to Hebrews 12. Let's read verses 4–12. *"In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, 'My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.' Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees."*

This is meant to be an encouraging word for those who are undergoing hardships. He's saying, the hardships you're going through are proof that you belong to God; that he's your Father. It's like the father who came up to two boys fighting in the park. He took one aside and disciplined him for his behavior. Someone was watching and approached the man and asked, Hey, why didn't you do the same thing to the other boy?" The man said, "Because this one is my son and the other is not."

The writer of Hebrews is saying, "Listen, all this suffering and pain just shows that you indeed belong to God; that he's your Father; that he loves you." He wants us to know God uses these hardships to change us; to make us more righteous and holy. Of course, no one likes this. God's discipline isn't fun; it's painful. But if you let it, it will produce something in your life that's good.

There are really two kinds of discipline and I believe Hebrews 12 is speaking about both. First, there's the kind of discipline that a father uses on his children that's simply meant as training. I call this God's *instructive* discipline. It's like the child has done nothing wrong, but they still need to be trained. So perhaps you have chores for them to do, or you restrict the amount of time they watch TV, or you require they write thank you notes after a birthday. Most likely, they won't **want** to do any of those things.

In a way, they're all painful. But they're essential if your child is ever going to grow up and become a human being.

Some of the hardship we experience in our lives is this kind of disciplinary training. For example, I'd probably never learn to really pray with any kind of fervency without pain. I wish I could learn it in some other way, but the fact is, without suffering my prayer life would be pretty weak. This means not all trials and hardships that come into our life are because of our sin. Remember Job? While Job's suffering certainly refined him and matured him and drew him closer to God, it didn't come because he was doing anything wrong. Quite the contrary, at the start of the book God said of him, *"There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil"* (Job 1:8). Job's suffering was instructive discipline.

But there's another kind of discipline. It's the kind of discipline that **is** the direct result of our sin and disobedience. I call this God's *corrective* discipline. We all know how important it is for parents to correct and discipline their children when they disobey. It's fundamental to parenthood. If you don't do this your kids will never learn, but it's also true in our relationship with God. The psalmist once wrote, *"Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word"* (Ps 119:67).

One of the things I love about being a grandfather is I don't really have to do this kind of discipline with my granddaughter. Of course, she never sins so why would I? But we have this swivel chair in our family room that she thinks is pretty cool. She loves to spin as fast as she can and I get a little concerned she might break it or get hurt. So one night I had to tell her to stop. Now, I've never told her to do anything she didn't want to do, so she immediately started crying. But now I'm in a tough spot because if she does it again I'll somehow have to enforce the rule. If I did that would be corrective discipline. But I'll probably just defer to my wife because I don't want to do any of that with my grandchildren!

Corrective discipline can work in a couple of ways. Sometimes this discipline comes as the natural result of our sin. For example, the Bible says a lot about the dangers of debt. But if we choose to ignore that, we're going to quite literally pay the price. How many of our financial problems are the result of just ignoring God's word about our finances? But sometimes the discipline isn't the natural result of our sin but it comes more directly from God. That's what was happening with Solomon.

God raised up an adversary against Solomon. Has he ever done that with you? Have you ever wondered if that person you've been trying to pray out of your life was sent by God to humble you and get you back on track with him? Have you ever wondered if the reason you can't ever get ahead financially is because you're not being faithful with what you do have? Have you ever wondered if an illness is God's way of getting your attention about an area of your life that's been out of control?

Maybe you're wondering how you can know if some hardship or trial in your life is corrective discipline or his instructive discipline? That's a tough question. We all struggle with sin. We're all aware God would be entirely justified to wipe us off the map. But I believe corrective discipline happens when we're especially hard-hearted and defiant in some area in which we know better. Solomon wasn't just struggling with sinful desires; he was committed to a lifestyle of unabashed sin even after God's clear warning. So in most cases deep down we'll know when God is correcting us because we know we've been completely ignoring his word.

The wonderful thing about all of this is it comes from the hand of a loving Father: "the Lord disciplines the one he loves." My son plays football at Wheaton College and every once in a while he'll get on the phone with me after a practice and complain about how much the coach is riding him and won't let up. I always tell him the same thing: As soon as he stops riding you, as soon as he stops yelling at you, he's given up on you. This is what we call tough love. God hasn't given up on you. He loves you enough to afflict you. No, your happiness isn't his highest priority. He's more committed to your holiness than your happiness.

God's Faithfulness

The great thing about God's discipline is it doesn't last forever. Look down at what God says in v. 39, "*I will humble David's descendants because of this, but not forever.*" Those three words, "*but not forever*" are some of the greatest words in all the Bible. You see, God may afflict us, but he will never abandon us.

The final thing I want you to see is God's faithfulness. You see God's faithfulness even in the discipline he used. In verses 11–13 God spoke to Solomon.

So the Lord said to Solomon, "Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him, but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen."

So there were consequences but there were also concessions. He'll tear the kingdom away but he won't do it during Solomon's lifetime. He'll tear the kingdom away but he'll leave one tribe

for David's line. The prophet Ahijah had even said the same to Jeroboam.

I will give one tribe to his son so that David my servant may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put my Name (v. 36).

You see, even in God's anger he remembered mercy, as he always does. He remembered the promises he'd made to David and to the people of Jerusalem. God had promised them an everlasting kingdom, ruled by David's son. So because of his faithfulness he says he'll protect the royal tribe of Judah. And in the fullness of time, a savior-king from the house of David would rise to God's eternal throne. So if God hadn't made this concession regarding the tribe of Judah, the promise of salvation we hold fast to today would be null and void. Jesus is the fulfillment of this promise. Read the royal genealogy in the gospel of Matthew that says he's from the tribe of Judah.

My friend Ralph was right: God may get angry with us, but not forever. The reason for that is because he sent his Son Jesus to take upon himself the full wrath of God for our sin. The One who had never sinned, the One who never strayed from his Father's will, absorbed the full punishment that we deserved. So today we too have a promise to hold onto even when we're being chastised, maybe especially when we're being chastised: "*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*" (2 Cor 5:21).

You might wonder what ever happened to Solomon. Down in v. 43 it just says after 40 years as King, "*he rested with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David his father.*" Did Solomon ever repent? Will we see him in heaven? I guess we don't know for sure, but I think we will. Many believe Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes where Solomon as an old man reflects on his life. At the very end of that book he says,

**Now all has been heard;
here is the conclusion of the matter:
Fear God and keep his commandments,
for this is the duty of all mankind.
For God will bring every deed into judgment,
including every hidden thing,
whether it is good or evil. (Ecc. 12:13-14)**

That sounds to me like a man who finally got it. Maybe God's corrective discipline worked in his life. Maybe God's anger at Solomon was real... but not forever.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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