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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes

INTRODUCTION

Today we’re going to talk about Solomon, the wise King who didn’t follow his own advice. Solomon would be classified as the second wisest man who ever walked on the planet, second only to Jesus, who was God in the flesh. He was a wise man but he expressed and experienced some real failures in his life and we’re going to be talking about that today.

We’re in a series on the Old Testament called “Big Events of the Old Testament.” To review a little, God created Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. We don’t know how many centuries or millions of years before they sinned, but they did. The next thing you know they were cast out of the Garden. Sin had entered the human race. Then it got so bad during Noah’s time that God said, “Well, I’m just going to have to take a mulligan and start all over again because these people have made a mess of what I did!” So, he sent a flood, delivering Noah and his family and the animals and he started over again. It wasn’t too long after that God decided he would enter into a covenant relationship with a certain family that would become a nation. That was Abraham, his son Isaac and then Jacob. Jacob had a lot of sons, one of whom was Joseph. Joseph, of course, was sent as a slave to Egypt, but ended up being the Prime Minister. Jacob and all of his family ended up moving to Egypt. They became very wealthy, very well cared for and respected people in Egypt.

Then a Pharaoh was put on the throne who did not remember Joseph nor his family so the Hebrews became slaves in Egypt. God raised up a deliverer named Moses. As a baby, Moses was placed in a basket, found by a princess and grew up for the first forty years in the palace of the Pharaoh. Perhaps, he could have been in line to become the next Pharaoh. Moses decided at age 40 “God, I’m going to help you out. You’re so lucky, God. Here I am!” He killed one Egyptian and was exposed as a murderer so he escaped to the far side of the desert where he spent the next forty years. When he was 80 God finally got him small enough so He could use him. God sent Moses back to deliver the people from Egypt. After the Exodus, when they were traveling toward the Promised Land, they saw many miracles. Moses leading the children of Israel from Israel had to be one of those pinnacles of blessing—just as Abraham was a pinnacle. Then, of course, you remember they came to Kadesh Barnea. God said, “Go in and take the land! It’s yours! It’s a land flowing with milk and honey!” They said, “No way! There are giants in that land and we look like grasshoppers in their sight.” They were afraid and did not go in and take the land. God said, “Okay, take another lap around Mt. Sinai.” For forty years they wandered in the desert until a certain generation of people died and were buried in the desert.

Then Joshua takes over for Moses and leads a new generation of the children of God in to conquer the Promised Land. They start by conquering Jericho and gradually take control of the entire area promised to them. That was the time of the Judges, when they didn’t have kings. Different leaders came to the forefront and provided leadership—some bad, some worse than that. The Bible says the problem with the time during the Judges was the people did what was right in their own eyes. They started looking around and when their economy and culture stabilized a little bit they said, “We want a king! Everybody else has a king! Come on, God. Give us a king!” God said, “I want to be your king. I don’t want you to have a king. Let me be your king!” They said, “Please, God. Give us a king!” He said, “Okay. I’m going to give you what you asked for,” so Saul was the first King.

Saul stood head and shoulders above everybody else in Israel but he failed the Lord, because he didn’t obey the Lord completely. God said, “I’m through with you! I have another one!” David was anointed king. David waited until God’s timing was complete, perfected for him to take over the throne. David and Solomon has to be another one of those pinnacles in the history of Israel, because during this time, about a thousand years before the birth of Christ or a little bit beyond this, is the time the nation of Israel was the most powerful, wealthiest, most respected nation in the civilized world at the time. This was the time when Israel was a blessed nation and that’s why for generations afterward, even to this day, the Jews were looking for a Messiah who will be a Son of David, because David and his son, Solomon, were the very pinnacle of blessing in their nation.

Well that’s where we have come to today. Solomon became King around 1000 B.C. He reigned for about 40 years, and made a mess of things, which we are going to see. His son was worse than he was. The nation divided into two kingdoms, the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom in 922 B.C. They did not want to have anything to do with each other. A couple of hundred years later in 722 B.C., the northern kingdom fell to the Assyrians. The Assyrians intermarried with the people in the northern kingdom. That’s where the Samaritans came from. But Judah, which became the southern kingdom around Jerusalem, hung on for another couple of hundred years. In 587 B.C. the Babylonians, led by Nebuchadnezzar, came in and conquered the southern kingdom. That’s where we are going. I wanted you to see the very height of blessing, prosperity and prominence occurred during the time of David and Solomon.

1. SOLOMON’S WISDOM

There are five lessons about Solomon’s life that I call “How to Avoid the Solomon Syndrome.” First of all let’s talk about Solomon’s wisdom. Solomon was the tenth son of David and the second child of Bathsheba—and he was the wisest of all men.

1 Kings 3:5, 7-9. “At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, ‘Ask for whatever you want me to give you.’ ... ‘Now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?’”

Wouldn’t it be amazing if God came to you in a dream tonight, called you by name and said, “You get one wish! Anything you ask of me I will give you! One thing! What is it?” What would you ask for? You had better be prepared and know what you are going to ask for. Solomon asked for wisdom but when I read that verse, I think Solomon should have also added to his request, “God give me wisdom to govern my own life and my own appetites!” But he said, “Give me wisdom to govern your people.” So God said granted him wisdom. In the New Testament there is a spiritual gift: The gift of wisdom. God is still giving the gift of wisdom. Knowledge is the ability to take things apart, to analyze. Wisdom is the ability to put things together, to synthesize. Solomon had that ability. That’s what wisdom is.

Of course what we see here following in chapter 3 is an example of Solomon’s wisdom. Two women come to Solomon one morning with a live baby and a dead baby. The two women argued and one mother says, “The living baby is mine! The dead baby is yours!” The other one said, “No. The living baby is mine the dead baby is yours!” One of them said, “Last night while I was asleep this woman took my living baby away from me and she put her dead baby next to me! I recognized my baby!” They were arguing back and forth. Solomon said, “Quiet! We will take the baby and cut it in two. I’ll give one mother half of the baby and the other mother the other half of the baby.” One of the women said, “No. Don’t kill the baby! She can have it!” Solomon, of course, immediately realized she was the true mother of the child so he gave it to the mother who said, “Don’t kill the baby!”

That’s just one example of Solomon’s wisdom. Solomon started out wonderfully. He asked for the right thing. In verse 13, God is telling Solomon what he is going to do.

1 Kings 3:13-14. “Moreover I will give you what you have not asked for—both riches and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in my ways and obey my statutes and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.”

This is a beautiful Old Testament illustration of Matthew 6:33, when Jesus said, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” God says if you make seeking him and knowing him and serving him number one in your life he will make sure all the other things you need in life will be there but if you go through life trying to seek those other things, you probably won’t find them—but if you go through life seeking God, all those other things will be added.

Look back verse 3. It says Solomon started out well. “Solomon showed his love for the Lord by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.” He started out loving the Lord but there was compromise even at the beginning of his life by making these pagan sacrifices at high places.

Do you want to know how wise Solomon was?

1 Kings 4:29-34. “God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all of the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man...He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.”

2. SOLOMON’S WORK

Notice Solomon’s work. He was the greatest builder in the history of Israel, until Herod the

Great came along almost a thousand years later. Chapter 6:37 is the culmination of many years of work.

1 Kings 6:37-37. “The foundation of the temple of the Lord was laid in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv. In the eleventh year in the month of Bul, the eighth month, the temple was finished in all its details according to its specifications. He had spent seven years building it.”

It gives me hope that it’s only going to take our new building about two and a half years to be completed and. It took seven years to build Solomon’s temple and he had thirty thousand men working on it. The Bible says none of the stones were quarried in Jerusalem. They were quarried elsewhere and brought into Jerusalem so even while it was being built, there was not even the sound of a hammer on stone. If you care to take the time, read the chapter surrounding this; read about all the gold and the cedar and all the beauty of Solomon’s temple. It was a beautiful sight, but don’t miss what chapter 7:1, says. It took him seven years to build the house of the Lord, but “It took Solomon thirteen years, however, to complete the construction of his palace.” Do you see the implications? He spent seven years building a house for the Lord, and thirteen years building a house for himself—and that was not his only house. Solomon had palaces everywhere. When you go to Megiddo in Israel, go to the palace of Solomon, where he had hundreds of stables. It was the most lavish kind of palace you can imagine and that’s just *one* of the palaces he vacationed in. He had incredible wealth and built many things. Solomon’s temple was the most beautiful temple ever built in Jerusalem but it was destroyed in 587 B.C. Zerubbabel started the second temple, which was renovated by Herod the Great a few years before Jesus was born. But even that renovated temple could not compare to the majesty of Solomon’s temple.

When I go to Jerusalem, I always try to check in with a place called The Temple Institute. There is a large group Orthodox Jews who are zealously rebuilding what they call the “third temple.” Solomon’s temple was the first. Zerubbabel/Herod the Great’s temple was the second and the next temple is the “third temple,” They have re-manufactured all of the implements and the instruments that go into the temple. But where did they get the directions to know how to build them? The instructions are right here in these verses in 1 Kings. They have replicated every single instrument that was in Solomon’s temple. They have meticulously copied all of the specifications. However, there is one thing they cannot replicate, because there is only one and there can never be a duplicate: The Ark of the Covenant. What a beautiful piece of furniture it was! The Ark was an oblong box containing two of the tablets of the Ten Commandments and later Aaron’s rod and a bowl of manna but we learn that when it was moved into Solomon’s temple, the only thing recorded as being in there were the two tablets. The question people are trying to answer today is, “Where is the Ark of the Covenant?”

Have you seen the movie “Raiders of the Lost Ark?” The Germans don’t have it. Trust me. Popular history says the Babylonians took it when they destroyed the temple, but there is no record in any of the Babylonian history books of them having the Ark of the Covenant. I have suspected for several years that the Ark of the Covenant is still in Jerusalem and has been there for centuries underground. Those of you who were on this last trip with me can verify what I am saying is absolutely true. In the Temple Institute they interviewed an Orthodox Rabbi who said, “Yes. We have material that tells us that Solomon, because he was so wise and he had so much

preparation from the very building of the first temple he had a secret underground hideaway place to safe-keep the Ark in the event that they were ever attacked.” This Orthodox Rabbi, who is living in Jerusalem today said, “We believe the Ark of the Covenant is there under the Temple Mount in Jerusalem today.” That’s amazing! It made chills run up and down my spine to hear an Orthodox Jewish Rabbi say what I had suspected for several years. Solomon made sure everything was perfect. It was beautiful. There was gold everywhere and the work of Solomon was without comparison in all the world. He was a great builder. He built for God, but he also built for himself.

3. SOLOMON’S WARNING

Number three notice Solomon’s warning. “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” (1 Corinthians 10:12) The Bible says, “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.” (Proverbs 16:18) After the temple to the Lord was dedicated and the glory of the Lord had filled the Holy of Holies, God warns Solomon.

1 Kings 9:6-9. “But if you or your sons turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword [a joke] and an object of ridicule among all peoples. And though this temple is now imposing, all who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, ‘Why has the Lord done such a thing to his land and to this temple? People will answer, ‘Because they have forsaken the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshiping and serving them—that is why the Lord brought all this disaster on them.’”

The mistake the Jews made in a later generations about the temple was they honestly thought God lived in that temple. They thought God resided in the Holy of Holies, dwelling somewhere between the cherubim, because at times he did manifest his presence there. They got so arrogant and cocky they thought, “As long as we have God in our temple, Jerusalem nor the temple will ever be destroyed!” How wrong they were! God had warned, “Solomon, if your people ever turn from my word and my statutes, this temple you are dedicating today that is brand spanking new, I will move out of it, forsake it and it will be torn down!” and it happened. God always warns before he sends judgement.

4. SOLOMON’S WEALTH

Number four notice Solomon’s wealth. It is mind-boggling to comprehend just how much wealth Solomon possessed. All of chapter 10 is about the Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon, because she had heard he was a wealthy, wise man. In verse 7 she says, “Indeed, not even half was told me.” Chapter 10:14 is the balance sheet of Solomon’s personal finances. It says, “The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents.” In today’s economy, it is equivalent to \$320 million a year! And that’s just from one source. Everybody brought him gifts. The Queen of Sheba gave Solomon 120 talents of gold, that’s \$58 million. That’s a pretty good housewarming gift, isn’t it? The wealth was astounding.

1 Kings 10:21, 23, 26-27. “All King Solomon’s goblets were gold, and all the household articles in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Nothing was made of silver, because silver was considered of little value in Solomon’s days...King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth...Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities [meaning he built cities just to house the chariots] and also with him in Jerusalem. The King made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills.”

I wish I could end the message there! I wish I could just say Solomon and all of Israel lived happily after. He died wealthy and wise and committed to God—but that’s not the truth. That’s why I know without a doubt the Bible is written by God and not by man, because man has a tendency to cover up; man has a tendency to try to change the story to make people look good. If you ever wanted to make anybody to look good, it would be David, but we hear all about David and his adultery and murder. Solomon, let’s make him look good! Let’s write him up. Let’s give him good press. No, the Bible does not do that, because it is not written by man, it is written by God.

5. SOLOMON’S WEAKNESS

So we come to the last thing about Solomon’s life: It’s Solomon’s weakness. You can just write the word “women” there if you want to, because women were his weakness.

1 Kings 11:3-6. “He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, the Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done.”

If you have ever studied ancient fertility religions, Ashtoreth was also Astarte, who was also Ishtar, from whom we actually get the name “Easter.” This was a pagan fertility goddess whose worship included very pagan, sexual practices. So here is a man of God, a king of the nation of God, who is involved in all kinds of immoral worship as well. The worst thing about having a thousand wives is having a thousand mothers-in-law.

A man asked me one time “You know, Brother David, I read in the Bible about all these people who had more than one wife. Does the Bible talk about how a man should only have one wife?” I said, “Absolutely! There is a verse in the Bible that says a man can only have one wife.” He said, “Show it to me!” I turned to the New Testament where Jesus said, “No man can serve two masters.” Seriously, I told him, “No. God’s perfect plan from the very beginning was always one woman for one man for all time. That was God’s perfect plan.” Where do we see it? We see it in the Garden of Eden because the Bible says, “God saw that Adam was all alone and he created for him Eve.” not Eve and Janet; not Eve, and Janet and Laura: Eve and Eve alone. That was God’s perfect plan and it wasn’t until later in the earlier chapters of Genesis that these men started taking more than one wife. God didn’t bless them for it. It was just a diversion of God’s perfect

plan. NEVER in God’s perfect plan did he ever intend a man to have more than one wife. God’s standard is always sexual purity before marriage and sexual fidelity after marriage. That has always been God’s perfect plan: One man for one woman for ALL time. The difference between one sexual partner and two is a *giant* step of all giant steps! The step from two to one thousand is a tiny step compared to the step from one to two. When a married man or a married woman gives themselves over to sexual sin, that first sin is the big step that leads to despair to doom to heartache and destruction.

Solomon would have been so blessed in his life if he had taken one wife and been faithful to her all of his life but the Bible says his wives turned his heart to other gods. We believe Solomon wrote, “The Song of Solomon” when he was a young man full of vim and vigor and if you read, “The Song of Solomon” you have to admit Solomon was a very sensual, romantic kind of guy. The problem is he divided his affection among a lot of women. We believe Solomon wrote many of the Proverbs in the Bible when he was perhaps approaching middle age and had learned enough to have some more experience and wisdom. So he wrote many of those wonderful proverbs where, for instance, he said things like, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”(Proverbs 3:5-6) Then when you come to the book of Ecclesiastes, we see a bitter, old, vain man who is all confused about truth. By the way, you have to read the book of Ecclesiastes very carefully, because much of what Solomon says in Ecclesiastes is life from man’s perspective—not from God’s perspective. What you see in Ecclesiastes is a man who has been married to a thousand wives! In fact, when you come to Ecclesiastes 12, you find an old man who is hurting, whose equipment doesn’t work anymore, who can’t see well, who doesn’t have teeth to chew, who can’t sleep at night, who can’t hear, and a man who is lonely even though he is surrounded by women who have his name.

Well that’s Solomon. You may be wondering what good is it to study the Bible if it does not apply to you? Let’s make an application as we finish. I want to give you three principles to help you avoid the Solomon Syndrome, because no one is immune.

(1) A good finish is better than a glorious start

Number one, a good finish is better than a glorious start. What I want to say to you, especially those of you who are 50 and above, never make the mistake of thinking you have arrived spiritually, that you can spiritually retire. You can’t coast from here on out. It’s so easy to look back and say, “Oh, I remember back then when I was really busy for the Lord and how God was blessing me back then.” The greatest spiritual adventure of your life ought to be the days in your future still remaining. Solomon made a great start asking for wisdom, blessed of God, but he dragged across the finish line as a beaten, defeated, bitter old man. I hope every person in this room listening to my voice makes this commitment, “When I cross the finish line, I’m going to be **SPRINTING** across the finish line. I pray that the most faithful days of my life will be the last days of my life!” In the Christian life it’s not how high you jump when you get saved it’s how straight you walk when you come down: The Christian life is not a hundred yard dash, it’s a marathon. You may start out lickety-split, a lot of Christians are what I call “Alka-seltzer Christians,” they get so excited, they fizzle and buzz and whiz for a while and the next thing you know they have settled down and there’s nothing but blandness there. Stay faithful to the finish!

(2) Never lose a sense of challenge

Number two: Never lose a sense of challenge. Without a doubt the greatest challenge of Solomon’s life was building the Temple. After you build the Temple what else is there? What other mountains are there to climb once you have climbed Everest? What other great things are there to do after you have done all the great things there are? He had no more challenges. It’s a terrible place to be when you lose challenges, goals and direction in your life. As Pastor I just have to keep reminding you if you think the greatest thing this church is ever going to do is build a new worship center you are so wrong! The challenges we face don’t have to deal with steel and bricks and money. The challenges we face and we will always face are lost people without Jesus Christ. That’s our challenge and we can’t lose it!

(3) Little compromises lead to great ruin

Number three: Little compromises lead to great ruin! I’m not even going to ask you to go back and look at it. But do you know when Solomon made the first mistake in marrying somebody he should not have married? It was actually *before* he asked God for wisdom! In 1 Kings 3:1, he goes down to Egypt and marries Pharaoh’s daughter for a political alliance. Then, later he says, “God, give me wisdom!” Early on he starts making little compromises. Before he built the Temple we read he was already making sacrifices on the high places. When you start making little compromises, they grow into great ruin before long. It’s God’s law of the harvest. “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. (Galatians 6:7) The decisions and choices we make are just like planting a seed. Have you ever noticed when you plant one seed a hundred seeds come back? The Old Testament says, “They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.” (Hosea 8:7a) The consequences for the little things we do are always worse than the deeds themselves. There is just a growth of consequences that are like seeds that grow! Whatever you sow that’s what you are going to reap!

Solomon sowed disobedience; he sowed compromise; he sowed little sins of setting up those little altars and before long the Bible says, “His heart had been turned from God.” How different from his father, because although David was a man who sinned and fell, to the very end he still was a man after God’s own heart. Maybe there are some of you here who have made some mistakes and terrible goof-ups but the question God is asking you is, “Do you have a heart that’s after me or has your heart been turned from me by something or somebody else?”

OUTLINE

The Solomon Syndrome:

1. WISDOM: He was the wisest of all men
2. WORK: He was the greatest builder in the history of Israel
3. WARNING: Observe my commands and decrees
4. WEALTH: He was the wealthiest man
5. WEAKNESS: Women

How to avoid the Solomon Syndrome:

1. A good finish is better than a glorious start
2. Never lose a sense of challenge
3. Little compromises lead to great ruin