

God's Grace in Solomon's Sin
Sermon on 1 Kings 11:9-13
December 12, 2007
Saint Mark's, Watertown, WI
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Scripture says: *When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.* Amen.

God's Word for our special consideration today is First Kings, chapter eleven, verses nine through thirteen:

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.

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."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Introduction: Old Testament Has God Promising a Savior

Dear fellow Christians—for whom God preserved the family line of our Savior:

You learned it well back in school or in Sunday School. One of the key themes in the Old Testament – maybe even *the* key theme – is the matter of maintaining the family line of our Savior. The Old Testament Scriptures carefully trace the “red line”, the blood line, of the Savior: from Adam and Eve, through Noah and his wife, through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah, and through the royal family line of King David.

Often during Old Testament times, Jesus' family line was threatened with extinction. But the dear Lord never let it come to an end.

Theme: God's Grace in Solomon's Sin

And really, that's the main message in God's Word to us today. This Word of the Lord has us considering * GOD'S GRACE IN SOLOMON'S SIN. It will tell us: although (1) THE LORD IS FURIOUS WITH OUR IDOLATRY, nevertheless (2) THE LORD FAITHFULLY SENT OUR SAVIOR, and finally we can say that (3) THE LORD RICHLY REWARDS OUR SERVICE TO HIM, as well.

Part One: The Lord Is Furious With Idolatry

It was quite a promise we considered in worship last Wednesday, wasn't it? A thousand years before the time that Jesus walked the earth, God spoke to King David. He said, “David, I am going to give your name enduring importance. I am going to make your family line into a whole dynasty. A descendant of yours is going to build my permanent dwelling place. In fact, your family line of kings is going to last forever and ever.”

Well, years passed. David died. But his son Solomon became king, just as God had promised. And David's son Solomon built the Lord a temple: the Lord's first permanent residence. David's son Solomon was the wealthiest person in the world. He was the wisest individual in the world. And he was the most influential.

And then Solomon absolutely blew it all. That's what we read in the first part of the sermon text: ***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.*** Twice Solomon saw God himself. Besides giving Solomon some really precious promises, God warned Solomon twice – face to face! – to follow the Word of the Lord and specifically not to worship foreign gods.

But then we read: ***Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command.*** And you remember the story there. The seven hundred wives Solomon had taken to firm up his alliance with other nations, rather than trusting the Lord to protect Israel, and the three hundred slave-wife concubines that Solomon had taken for the sake of his fame, rather than trusting the Lord to maintain his reputation for him—all those wives persuaded Solomon that there was something to their gods also. And so, Solomon worshipped Ashtoreth, Molech, Chemosh, and others.

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." “Solomon, all this wealth I've given you—it will soon be gone. The good reputation you had for wisdom—I'll reveal your folly to everyone. The glorious earthly kingdom I promised to your father and to you—it will be decimated. Furthermore, it will go to one of your servants, Solomon: not to royalty like you, but to someone you hired on. So, watch your back, Solomon; watch your back.”

What a tragedy, eh? Solomon had everything he could ever have wanted, and he sneezed it all away because of his stupid idolatry!—just like us....

...Well, okay, not exactly like us. I know: we don't worship Buddha or Allah or the falsely-named Jehovah of the Jehovah's Witnesses or the falsely named Heavenly Father of the Mormons. You and I worship the true and only God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And thank God for that grace of his to us!

But the same sinful nature that dwells in others and leads them to worship false gods dwells also in us—only our idolatry is more subtle, isn't it? We worship the true God, but we compartmentalize him. We keep God in his own little cubby-hole. We limit him to one small part of our life. Yes, we need God for forgiveness and eternal life – and thank God we believe that! – but we don't want him having jurisdiction over the other parts of our life.

And so, we avoid bad language in church—but not at work, or at school, or at home. Neither the government, nor the boss, nor my parents are going to tell me what to do—never mind that God wants us serving him by obeying them. I'll abuse my body if I want to abuse my body—with too much alcohol or tobacco or with drugs. My sexuality is mine – not God's – and I'll use it as I want: a) if I'm a guy, for my pleasure, b) if I'm a gal, to get the interest of guys. And don't let God tell me how to use my money! And don't tell me that God is upset when I'm critical with others behind their back—because God is, too.

Well, God was furious with Solomon's sin—furious enough to rip Solomon's kingdom out of his hands. And God is furious with us, too—furious enough to rip his kingdom out of our hands.

Part Two: The Lord Still Faithfully Sent Our Savior

Nevertheless—God mixes mercy with his fury over against Solomon. ***“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. And furthermore: 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.”***

What an undeserved favor God did for Solomon! “You’ll still rule to the end of your life,” he said. “And your dynasty will still continue—albeit on a limited basis.”

What an undeserved favor to Solomon. What an undeserved favor for us! I mean: What if God’s fury over Solomon’s sin had led him to strike down and kill Solomon, right then and there? What if God had put an end to this dynasty, right then and there? – You’d have gone to hell! I’d have gone to hell. Solomon would not have had kids who would have kids who would have kids who would have ... Jesus!

But God loved you – I mean: he loved *you*, personally! – to such a degree that he said to himself, “No. My poor misguided subjects, whom I love, still need a King. I still have in mind for him to build a permanent invisible Temple, within which I will dwell.”

“He – Jesus! – will be the cornerstone of my Temple: to which every line points. Do you need forgiveness from your guilt? – That line points to him! Do you need eternal life in glory? – That line points to him! Do you need somebody to walk alongside you every day of your life? – That line also points to him!”

“And the foundation of this glorious invisible Temple, within which I will dwell—that foundation is Christ’s sure Word, the Holy Scriptures. Resting on them, no one can crumble. And the bricks in the wall of this Temple”—that’s you and I; we who trust in Jesus are the Temple, the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints, within which God himself dwells.

God had all of that in mind already at the time of Solomon, and long before. So, God wouldn’t end Jesus’ family line. He couldn’t conclude it—because he loves *you*.

Part Three: The Lord Richly Rewards Service To Him

Now, isn’t that a God and King that you want to serve with your life? And there’s an example of that in the sermon text—not in Solomon’s life, but rather in David’s life.

“Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father” – God says – ***“I will not tear the kingdom out of your hand 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.”***

God was so pleased with David’s faithfulness to him that he honored David, even after David’s own lifetime, by maintaining the dynasty he promised to him. And finally, it meant the world’s salvation.

Make David’s aim your aim also. Faithfully serve Christ for your entire lifetime—from this day forward. If you study, study so as to serve him. If you work, work finally for him. And pass on your zeal for his Word to others, and to the next generations—especially if you are parents or grandparents.

And don’t let your past sins haunt you. Don’t let Satan intimidate you out of serving Christ by leading you to say, “I can’t serve Christ very well now. I sinned badly in the past. And everybody knows it.” Well, David did that, too—with adultery and murder and cover-up. But he confessed it, and God forgave it, and God made use of him. God will make use of you, too.

Conclusion: Old Testament Has God Faithfully Loving You

After all, if God could deliver his Son, our Savior, through sinful human flesh like that of Solomon, he can – and he will! – get his work done through you and me also! Amen.

Scripture says: *Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.* Amen.