

Solomon's Folly

By Pastor Greg
November 1, 2009

1 Kings 12:1-24

Bunkertown COB

About 15 years ago I began building a garage at our house in Shippensburg. As I was building, I used pressure treated lumber wherever the wood was close to the ground. I used ring-shank nails to build the walls and attach the roof trusses. This kind of nail grips the wood much more securely than a regular framing nail. The siding was hung using button-head nails. It secures across a broader area, and allows for expansion and contraction when the siding warms or cools.

Not long ago I built a little lean-to out back to keep my fire wood out of the weather. I used what ever materials I could find and what nails I had laying around.

I put the extra time and expense into the garage because I had longevity in mind. I built it to last, so I was thinking 25 or 30 years ahead. I knew that the decisions I made then would have an affect for the years to come. I'd be content if the lean-to makes it through the winter.

In the building trade, this concept of thinking ahead is not new. Neither is it a strange concept for high school seniors. They too are thinking about their future. A man & a woman do the same when they talk of marriage (well, okay. The woman does). But I'm not sure why we don't do this when it comes to matters of the spirit; when it comes to our relationship with others. *Read 1 Kings 12:1-24*

As I read through this account, I kind of got stuck on two verses; verse 15 and verse 24. I'm looking at this whole catastrophe and thinking this was God's doing? He permitted this? And I can't help but wonder why. Why would God allow His nation to divide like this? Why would He permit the Northern Tribes to be led by a king like Jeroboam? I think we can find our answers in what God said to Solomon back in chapter 11.

¹¹ So now the Lord said to him, "Since you have not kept my covenant and have disobeyed my decrees, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants. ¹² But for the sake of your father, David, I will not do this while you are still alive. I will take the kingdom away from your son. ¹³ And even so, I will not take away the entire kingdom; I will let him be king of one tribe, for the sake of

*my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, my chosen city.”*¹ (1 Kings 11:11-13). So this whole mess is actually the result of Solomon’s disobedience. Because he turned his back to God; because he allowed his heart to be led astray, the nation of Israel becomes divided. This unified nation is now split apart. In your Bible, from this point forward, you will read about the Kings of Israel and about the Kings of Judah. The tribes to the north become known as Israel, and the tribe to the south becomes known as Judah.

Have you ever stood beneath a street lamp at night? Have you ever walked the paths at Camp Eder at night with nothing more than a little flashlight? You know how little the light truly penetrates the darkness. You can see only the small space that is around you, and anything beyond remains a mystery. I think most of us live our lives this way; thinking only of the small space around us that we know and that we see. Our choices and decisions are made based upon what will affect us, but not what will affect those outside our field of vision. So when Solomon turned his heart away from God, I don’t think he was thinking with others in mind. I think he was only concerned about his own little world and with what was happening to him.

When I read that the entire nation of Israel became divided because of Solomon’s Folly, I realize that all of us must be constantly aware that our words or our actions today quite possibly will have an affect upon the generations to come as well. My relationship with God today will have an affect on all who come after me; my children, my grandchildren, and even my grandchildren’s grandchildren. Knowing this causes me to consider the weight of my words and my deeds. What I do today may bring good to the generation to come, or it may bring destruction. I think this is a trustworthy statement, but so few of us think with eternity in mind.

So few of us even think with others in mind. This was a warning the Apostle Paul gave the church in Corinth. The issue he was dealing with here was food offered to idols. Apparently the actions of some “enlightened” Christians had caused others to stumble in their faith. (*Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13*).

The real lesson Paul is trying to teach is that the Corinthian Christian’s must be other focused. They must keep in mind what affect the words of their mouth and

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

the deeds of their hands will have on others. And the lesson *here* is one we need to keep in mind *here*. I actually sin against Christ if my words or my deeds cause someone to disregard what they believe is wrong.

So what advice does the Word give to us? How can you and I keep eternity in mind, and how do we stay focused on the faith of others? Paul gives us the answer right in the beginning. *“But while knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church.”*² (1 Corinthians 8:1b). When I make decisions with future generations in mind, I am thinking of them in love. When I guard the deeds of my hands and the words of my tongue for the benefit of others, I am thinking of them in love. No longer am I merely concerned about myself. And it is this type of love, says Paul, which catches God’s attention.

This sense of community, this other-focus, is what it means to be Christian, which is something the Church of the Brethren holds in high regard (even our name speaks of the importance of relationships). We have been called to *“speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.”*³ (Ephesians 4:15). We have been told to *“Let our speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that we will know how we should respond to each person.”*⁴ (Colossians 4:6). We’ve been warned to *“Let no unwholesome word proceed from our mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”*⁵ (Ephesians 4:29) Paul warns us of these things because we, as Christians, are called to have a love not only for God, but for others as well. It is the selfless Christian who best honors God. And God is most pleased with the Christian who considers the ramifications of today’s actions and deeds upon those not yet here.

Solomon’s Folly was that he did neither of these things. May it not be ours.

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

³Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

⁴*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (Col 4:6). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

⁵*New American Standard Bible : 1995 update*. 1995 (Eph 4:29). LaHabra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.