

01-01-07a Ecclesiastes

Let's continue our Sunday morning worship by turning for our scripture reading to Psalm 144. We had the chance to sing some great hymns this morning that remind us that we're in a conflict, but we are under great leadership. And because of our position in Christ, because of what God has done for us, we can have confidence.

And Psalm 144 is a song of confidence. It's a Psalm of David, and David begins this song by saying, Blessed be the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle, my loving kindness and my fortress, my high tower and my deliverer, my shield and the one in whom I take refuge, who subdues my people under me. Lord, what is man that you take knowledge of him or the son of man that you're mindful of him? Man is like a breath.

His days are like a passing shadow. Bow down your heavens, O Lord, and come down. Touch the mountains and they shall smoke.

Flash forth lightning and scatter them. Shoot out your arrows and destroy them. Stretch out your hand from above.

Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of foreigners whose mouth speaks lying words and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. I will sing a new song for you, O God. On a harp of 10 strings, I will sing praises to you.

The one who gives salvation to kings, who delivers David, his servant, from the deadly sword. Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners whose mouth speaks lying words and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood, so that our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, that our daughters may be as pillars sculptured in palace style, that our barns may be full supplying all kinds of produce, that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields, that our oxen may be well laden, that there be no breaking in or going out, that there be no outcry in our streets. Happy are the people who are in such a state.

Happy are the people whose God is the Lord. I thought this was a particularly appropriate psalm for us this morning, not only because we got to sing Sound the Battle Cry and lead on, O King Eternal, but also because there are two or three different concepts in this psalm that are directly applicable to the study that we're about to begin, which is the Book of Ecclesiastes. This is also our first worship service in the new year, and it's a great time to contemplate what God has done for us and what our opportunities are, the confidence and the security that we can have in Him.

When David says, Blessed be the Lord my rock, who trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle, a lot of people are not too keen on the fact that warfare is necessary, that battles take place, that killing and destruction are a part of our lives, but they are. And Paul reminds us that we are in a spiritual conflict, and the daily application of what we see in Psalm 144 is that we are in that conflict, but we are not ill-equipped. We have the full armor of God, and God teaches us.

No military service, unless they are in very dire straits, would simply grab individuals, stick a uniform on them, and shove them into battle. The last time I can remember that happening is when the Germans in World War II were so far gone that they had to take young men who were 14, 15, and 16 years old and fit them with uniforms and send them directly with no training into battle just to be cannon fodder. But God doesn't do that with us.

He is our rock. He trains us. He fits us for the conflict in which we are engaged.

He trains hands for war and fingers for battle. And hands and fingers are important. You remember David's army at one point became very concerned about him as he got older and was still going out and coming in with the army and out there fighting, and he became weary, and they had to remove him from the... They said, we don't want you coming out here anymore.

You're getting too old for this. And there were times one of the brothers of Goliath, when he was killed, the men who were hacking and slashing there couldn't even pry their hand off of the handle of their sword by the time they were finished with the battle. And hands and fingers were very important for those who wielded swords, spears, who used the sling, who used the bow and arrow.

Hands and fingers were everything in that time in terms of battle. Those were your means of offense. Defense, you could strap a shield to your forearm, but your hands and your fingers, those were the tools of offense.

And sometimes the best defense is a good offense. So God trains, David says, He trains my hands for war and my fingers for battle. And then in a very striking juxtaposition, in verse 2 He says, my loving kindness and my fortress.

I have the training to go out and use my hands and my fingers to fight, but I also have my fallback position. I have my place of safety, my place of restoration. And to see war and battle in the two preceding lines and then to see loving kindness and fortress reminds us that we have times when we're on the offense and we have times when we fall back for recuperation and rest and restoration.

God is, David says, my high tower and my deliverer, my shield and the one in whom I take refuge, who subdues my people under me. And recognizing that David was the king and the commander-in-chief of the armies of Israel, not only in times of war and even in times of peace do you have situations on the outside, but you also have responsibility for your own men. Are they going to be loyal? Remember Saul was trying to fight the Philistines and his armies kept deserting and going over the hill and he was waiting on Samuel.

He couldn't start the battle until Samuel came and offered the sacrifices. And over in 1 Samuel, along about chapter 10 and 11 and along in there when Saul was first king of Israel, they have to go out and fight and the armies are all rallied together. And then they begin to leave.

They think they're going to get defeated. And Saul says, if we don't hurry up and have the sacrifice and fight the battle, I'm not going to have any soldiers left. And when Samuel continued to delay, Saul went up and offered the sacrifice himself.

And he's not from the tribe of Aaron. He's not a priest or a prophet. He's from the tribe of Benjamin and was a king.

And it was highly improper for him to do so. And because of that, Samuel pronounces great judgment from God on him. So you have the responsibility for leadership and keeping your people together.

All of us not only have responsibility to those to whom we are accountable, but many times we have children or we have employees or we have family, wherever we fit in the structure that God has created. It's been called the divine establishment, which is marriage and family and the order that we have in the workplace and so on. There are some who are accountable to us and we are accountable to others.

And when David says that God is the one who subdues my people under me, it's God who maintains the order and discipline and the loyalty of the army to David in these times of stress. Then he says in verse 3, Lord, what is man that you take knowledge of him or the son of man that you are mindful of him? Man is like a breath. His days are like a passing shadow.

And this is, in fact, one of the major themes in Ecclesiastes. You remember vanity, vanity, all is vanity, saith the preacher in the Old King James. Well, we're going to find that this couplet here, verse 3 and 4, what is man, the insignificance of man that God should even pay any attention at all.

This is part of the viewpoint that underlies what is said in Ecclesiastes. When it seems like, well, everything is pointless, you just do your work under the sun and what is the point? It's akin to this idea. What is man? What's the point? Man can strut and fret his hour upon the stage, but it's all, as Shakespeare said, sound and fury signifying nothing.

And he goes on to talk about the temporary nature of man. Man is like a breath. This is some of the vocabulary we're going to see in Ecclesiastes.

His days are like a passing shadow. Why does God concern himself with the affairs of men? David goes on to say, bow down your heavens, O Lord, and come down. Touch the mountains and they will smoke.

Flash forth lightning and scatter them. Shoot out your arrows and destroy them. Stretch out your hand from above.

Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters. We talked Friday night about the symbolism of

the sea, the Phoenicians who were sea people, and the people who dwelt in Tyre and Sidon and thought that they were masters of the briny seas there, the troubled seas. And throughout Scripture, it's symbolic of the chaotic forces of evil and darkness.

And often you find David and Jonah and others asking for deliverance out of the waters. That picture carries forward even to the episode where Jesus is walking on the water and Peter jumps out and he walks on the water also, but then he starts to sink. And Jesus reaches out and grabs him by the hand and they walk together on top of the water back to the boat.

Stretch out your hand from above. Rescue me and deliver me out of great waters. The reason that's such a great picture of evil is the waters are uncontrollable.

We saw this movie not long ago called *The Perfect Storm*, which is probably one of the soggiest movies I've ever seen. It's just water everywhere and it's the uncontrollable force of nature and it's man pitting himself against it. And ultimately suffering at the hands of the seas.

And this reminds us of the fact that there are things in our lives that are beyond our control. There are things that we can't fix. We can't change.

We can't get away from. It's just like those fishermen out on that boat in the middle of these great forces that produce this perfect storm. You run out of options.

There's nowhere to go except up. There's nowhere to go except to the Lord. And the Lord can stretch out his hand from above.

And he pictured that earlier by saying, bow down the heavens. God can actually warp the fabric of the universe to accomplish this deliverance. He says, rescue me and deliver me out of the great waters from the hand of foreigners.

These are strangers from the outside, enemies who come in who may be greater in number or greater in force, greater in skill. And not only are they uncontrollable and chaotic and unpredictable, but they also are characterized by deceit. And a lot of times the thing that really hits us hardest is when we find out that we thought things were a certain way and come to find out they're not.

We had confidence. We trusted. We assumed.

We made a plan based on certain givens and it turned out those givens weren't there. And it turned out that we are the victims of deceit or the victims of falsehood. And here the mouths speak lying words.

These people come in peace. You remember one of the later kings in Israel, Pashur could probably name the one, is real proud of all of the riches in Jerusalem and this invading army comes in. And do you remember which one that was where he, the emissaries come and they say, you know,

we're rolling up the landscape around here.

And I don't remember which one it was. But anyway, he takes them in and shows them around and he's trying to impress them with what a great king he is. So he shows them all the gold in the temple and all of the goblets and the shields on the wall and everything.

Well, they take a look around sort of a recon inventory and then come back and carry it all away. And their mouth, they were speaking peace and speaking, you know, calm words like, oh, everything's going to be all right. But in fact, they were getting ready to wreak havoc.

Their right hand is a right hand of falsehood. The right hand, you know, we have this in churches, the right hand of fellowship. It's a sign of friendship and of greeting when you shake someone's hand.

But this is the right hand of falsehood. So you think, well, if they're militarily superior, I'll make a treaty. I'll make a deal.

We'll pay tribute or something and get them to leave us alone. And when you look at the history of Israel, foreigners coming from the outside as the scourge of God, you don't have any options. You're in the midst of the troubled sea.

If you try to fight, you're going to lose. If you try to deal, you're going to lose because their words are false. Their right hand is false.

There is only one place of confidence. There's only one place of refuge. And this was the message that Isaiah delivered to Hezekiah during the great invasion of the Assyrians down there in Judah.

He said, don't go to Egypt and try to find allies. You're going to find false words and it's going to be a reed that's going to bend and break and stab you in the hand if you lean on it. Don't believe the words of the Rabshakeh.

Don't believe the words of the Assyrians when they're coming in saying that they're going to roll you up. Put your confidence in God. Don't cave in.

Don't buckle under. Don't give up. You just have to know where your confidence is.

You have to know where your place of refuge is. And David spent a lifetime learning these lessons and then places them into these songs for Israel. He says in verse 9, I will sing a new song to you, O God, on a harp of ten strings.

I will sing praises to you, the one who gives deliverance to kings. A lot of people think, well, he's the king. You know, Mel Brooks, it's good to be the king.

The king gets to do all these things. The king has all kinds of power. People think, well, if you're

the king, you don't need refuge.

You don't need recourse. You don't need deliverance. But David is a king and David knows that kings probably need deliverance more than anyone because they have all of these forces from without and within that are potential for disaster.

God is the one who gives salvation to kings, who delivers David, his servant, from the deadly sword. There are lots of places in our lives where the deadly sword can appear. And it is, of course, in our New Testament imagery, it's the shield of faith that quenches the fiery darts of the wicked one.

It's the shield of faith that defends us from the threat of the deadly sword. Rescue me and deliver me from the hand of foreigners whose mouth speaks lying words and whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood. You can see here, and if you map this out, if we had time to really do justice to Psalm 144, you would find the chiasmic structure that we have seen so often that is such a favorite of the authors, particularly in the Old Testament scriptures.

And you can see here that verse 11 corresponds with verse 8. And just noting those two brackets, if you go back to the middle, what's in the center, verses 9 and 10? It's the deliverance of God, praising God for his deliverance, praising God for his salvation. So our sons will be as plants grown up in their youth. Our daughters will be as pillars.

This, of course, contrasts with the waters and the enemies that are surrounding instead of uncertainty and potential for disaster. Here you have settled, established conditions. Your sons have the time to grow and mature.

Your daughters are like pillars sculptured in the palace. They're immovable. They're unshakable.

And then you see the prosperity. And a lot of times when we contemplate the end of an old year and the beginning of a new, and we think, boy, you know, there's so much potential. I've got a year stretching out before me.

Lord willing, I'll live all the way to the end of it, get all 12 months. And we hope, this is what we wish each other when we say, you know, Happy New Year, peace and prosperity. May God give you a blessed new year and so forth.

What does it mean to have a blessed new year? Well, these are some of the things that your barns will be full, supplying all kinds of produce. So you're not going to be worried in terms of provision. That your sheep will bring forth thousands and ten thousands in your field and bringing forth young.

This is the future. Not only are you sustained in the present, but here's the potential for the following season and the season after that. Not only do they produce for food and for wool, but

also for sacrifice.

That our oxen may be well laden, that there be no breaking in or going out. And these were like the vehicles of the ancient world. How could you plow without oxen? How could you draw a cart or do any of the heavier labor? These were the cranes and the bulldozers and the heavy trucks of the ancient world were the oxen.

And you don't lose them because they take off on their own, nor do you lose them because someone broke in and stole them or slaughtered them. And that there be no outcry in our streets. What is the outcry? We saw this again Friday night looking at Tyre, looking at Sodom.

God said, I've come down to see what the outcry is all about in Sodom. I'm going to see this for myself if it's true or not. Outcry in the streets, violence, evil, deterioration in culture and society.

Verse 15, happy are the people who are in such a state. This is where happiness comes from. It is not just the circumstances, but it's the conditions that preceded those circumstances and made them possible.

And that's confidence in God, trust in God, relying on Him for deliverance, relying on Him for refuge. Happy are the people who are in such a state. Happy are the people whose God is the Lord.

Well, this is a great introduction to our new study. And if you'll turn with me now a little bit to the right in your Old Testament past Proverbs to Ecclesiastes, we begin this morning a study of one of the most unique books you will ever come across. It is certainly unique in the pages of scripture.

It has puzzled scholars ever since it was written. It is famous for several things. Most people, if you mention Ecclesiastes, they think of two things.

They think of vanity, vanity, all is vanity, saith the preacher. And they think of there is a time for everything, there is a season for everything. Everything there's a season, there's a time for every purpose under heaven.

And then you get the little rock song from the 70s, there's a time to be born and a time to die and so forth. And those are the two things. And then for the rest of Ecclesiastes, we think, boy, you know, there's some, if you know a little bit more about it, you think about, well, the silver cord is, something happens to the silver cord and the golden bowl.

And I always think about the skull and the spinal cord. You know, it's talking about the old age toward the end of the book, before your grinders become few and your knees are shaky and all that. And it talks about old age.

We know that it talks, has a lot of what seems to be very pessimistic language. It says, well, it

doesn't really matter if you're righteous or unrighteous. It doesn't matter if you're rich or you're poor, everything's going to end up in the same trash heap of history at the end.

So you might as well eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. And there are verses that seem to suggest that. And we find them a little bit worrisome and uncomfortable.

And we say, well, this was Solomon when he was out of fellowship. This is human viewpoint. This is the hopeless view of life when you don't know about God.

And that's been sort of a convenient rationalization to explain away these passages. But Ecclesiastes is in fact a very concise repository of truth. We know that it purports to have been written by Solomon.

And we know a little bit about Solomon. In fact, you might turn with me back to 1 Kings chapter 3. This is after the death of David. And if you go through the sequence of events, you find that there was some unfinished business from the reign of David.

There were some unresolved issues of justice. There were people whose loyalties were questionable. There were those who had been ambitious and wanted the throne.

In chapter 2 of 1 Kings, the days of David drew near that he should die. He charged Solomon, his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man.

And keep the charge of the Lord your God to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, his commandments, his judgments, and his testimonies, all that is written in the law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn, so that the Lord may fulfill his word, which he spoke concerning me, saying, if your sons take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, he said, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel. And that's you, David. You that I see in the Old Testament is a conditional covenant.

And by conditional, I mean that there is an attitude that has to be adopted by those who are recipients of the covenant. We've seen this before. They always say, well, the Abrahamic covenant was an unconditional covenant.

God promised and that's it. It doesn't really matter. But we've seen time and again in our study of faith, those who refused to be circumcised, who didn't think it was important, didn't think following God's instructions were important, were cut off and were outside the covenant.

And it didn't matter if they were a son of Abraham or not. In the same way, God made a covenant with David. And you find it in 2 Samuel chapter 7, where, and this is what he refers to here.

If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you will not lack a man on the throne of Israel. We know that right now there's not a son of David on the throne of Israel, don't we? Why is that? Because it was a conditional covenant and

that covenant was broken. The ultimate expression of that was in the final days of the kingdom, the southern kingdom of Judah, when after repeated warnings, read the prophets, read the major and minor prophets, all of the warnings that took place, Israel never could heed the call.

They couldn't latch on to the importance of what God had called them to. And because of that apathy and lack of faith, the throne of David went away and the tent of David fell. It will be restored ultimately in the Lord Jesus Christ when He returns.

But as you can see right now, there is no throne in Israel and there will not be one until the Lord Jesus returns. But look at verse 5. Moreover, you know also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me and what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and to Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed. He shed the blood of war in peacetime.

He put the blood of war on his belt that was around his waist. You wonder why people have so much trouble with the Ten Commandments and thou shalt not kill and not being able to distinguish between killing in battle and killing as a part of capital punishment and cold-blooded murder. It's very plain in the Scriptures.

David makes that distinction right here. He said it's one thing to shed blood in war. It's something else to do the same thing in peacetime.

And this is Joab's blood guilt. He shed the blood of war in peacetime. He put the blood of war on his belt that was around his waist and on the sandals that were on his feet.

This is 1 Kings chapter 2 verse 5. So David is speaking and this is unfinished business. David had trouble with discipline on those who were close to him. That's why his sons got in so much trouble.

And Joab was his general but Joab was also his cousin and he had a very hard time, or his nephew, actually his nephew. Joab and his brothers were the sons of David's sister Zeruiah. So he couldn't bring himself to execute Joab for this murder.

So he has Solomon do it, which is still to me something of a cop-out. But he says, therefore do according to your wisdom and do not let his gray hair go down to the grave in peace. What he's basically saying is keep an eye on him because this is probably going to come out again, this disloyalty and disobedience.

Show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite. Let them be among those who eat at your table. For they came to me when I fled from Absalom your brother.

You remember when we studied the life of David what a tremendous man Barzillai was. And he sent his servant to David to be apprenticed. And it was a wonderful picture of loyalty, of grace, and of the way God can provide for believers through the faithfulness and through the generosity of other believers.

And it is remembered, it is not forgotten. Verse 8, See you have with you Shimei the son of Gerah the Benjamite from Bahurim who cursed me with a malicious curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me at the Jordan and I swore to him saying I will not put you to death with the sword.

Therefore do not hold him guiltless for you are a wise man and know what you ought to do to him. But bring his gray hair down to the grave with blood. So he got a reprieve or a probation period, but apparently David has already seen signs of disloyalty from Shimei who came down and sort of pled for his life and was granted it on the day of David's triumphant return.

But David says it doesn't excuse his guilt and apparently he has exhibited signs of this disloyalty again. David says watch out for him, do not hold him guiltless, you are wise, you know what you ought to do to him. Then David died, he rested with his fathers, was buried in the city of David.

The period that David reigned over Israel was 40 years, seven years in Hebron, in Jerusalem he reigned 33 years. Then Solomon sat on the throne of his kingdom and was firmly established. Then you have the Adonijah attempt at a coup d'etat.

Adonijah is an older brother of Solomon, he is an older son of David. He thinks because of that that the throne should come to him. He resents the fact that it has not come to him.

He says in verse 15, he is talking to Bathsheba, you know the kingdom was mine and all Israel had set their expectations on me that I should reign but the kingdom has been turned over and has become my brother's for it was his from the Lord. You get the idea that he doesn't think much of that excuse. So I ask one petition of you and he wants possession of the lady who took care of David at the end.

He wants Abishag the Shunammite and this is not just because he thinks she's a good-looking gal and would make a great wife. This is a political ploy in the same way that when Absalom ran David out of Jerusalem and took the palace, he took David's wives and concubines and he had relations with them on the roof of the palace in full view of the entire population who were present at that time. Why? Because this is saying what was my father's is now mine and if Adonijah can take David's closest personal assistant and make her his, this is a political statement.

It's a power ploy or a power play, a play for power and Bathsheba says well I'll ask the king about this. So she went to King Solomon to speak for Adonijah and as soon as Solomon hears this, he recognizes exactly what it is. In verse 22, King Solomon answered and said to his mother, why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Why don't you ask for him the kingdom also for he's my older brother, for him and for Abiathar the priest and for Joab the son of Zeruiah because this was a conspiracy that Solomon had already detected and already been warned about by his father before his death.

He said watch out for Joab and so because he's the older brother, because he's got Abiathar the priest and Joab the general of the armies, if he gets Abishag, this is going to be enough stacked on his side to take the kingdom. So King Solomon swore by the Lord saying may God do so to me and more also if Adonijah has not spoken this word against his own life. Therefore as the Lord lives who has confirmed me and set me on the throne of David my father, who has established a house for me as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death today.

King Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada and he struck him down and he died. So then Abiathar the priest, the king said go to Anathoth through your own fields for you are deserving of death but I will not put you to death at this time because you carry the ark of the Lord God before my father David and because you were afflicted every time my father was afflicted. So he gets some credit for his past loyalty and faithfulness before he slid down the path of ambition and pride and so he gets a reprieve.

So he removed him from being priest to the Lord so that it might fulfill the word of the Lord which he spoke concerning the house of Eli at Shiloh because if you'll remember Abiathar the priest is a descendant of Eli. So then news came to Joab for Joab had defected to Adonijah though he had not defected to Absalom. Joab fled to the tabernacle took hold of the horns of the altar.

There's some messages that get sent back and forth but basically it's all up for Joab and in verse 34 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and struck and killed him and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness. The king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his place over the army and the king put Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar. Then the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him build yourself a house in Jerusalem dwell there do not go out from there anywhere.

His reprieve is going to be conditional as long as he obeys this injunction to stay in Jerusalem and not leave he will live but if he gets heady and decides that he can do what he wants to do and he crosses the city limits the death sentence will be reinstated. We have this kind of probation all the time in our justice system. So you can read through the rest of that chapter but ultimately Shimei has a couple of servants who take off and he hears that they're over in Gath and so he goes to Gath to get his servants and bring them back and he finds them and he brings them back.

But then in verse 41 Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and had come back. The king sent and called for Shimei and said did I not make you swear by the Lord and warn you saying no for certain. This by the way is a great model for parenting.

This is what I attempt to do with my own children is you set a policy you set a condition you say this is the way it has to be I'm telling you now I'm emphasizing it I want it to be clear in your mind so that there's no misunderstanding. If anything comes up about this in the future don't be coming and saying I didn't know you didn't tell me it wasn't clear. Solomon made it abundantly clear to

Shimei what the condition of his continued life on this earth would be.

He had to stay in Jerusalem and he reminds him of that before he disciplines him. He said this is a good thing to do with subordinates if you're in the military it's a good thing to do with people who are accountable to you in a place of employment you set out a policy you give instructions you make sure they understand it if they fail you call them in and you say now let's talk about this because one of the worst things that can happen is if an employee or a subordinate or a child thinks that they're being disciplined because you are angry. If they think that you have been personally affronted and you're getting some sort of personal revenge you're going to get some satisfaction out of making them pay for crossing you in some way.

Rather than making an issue out of standards you either meet the standard or you transgress the standard. If you transgress the standard you need to understand that it is your transgression that has brought this punishment on your head not someone's anger not someone's vindictiveness not someone's personal vendetta. You had a standard given to you you stated that you understood it you have willfully violated that standard you knew what would happen if you violated the standard now here it is this is exactly what Solomon does did I not make you swear by the Lord did I not warn you saying no for certain on the day that you go out and travel anywhere you shall surely die you said to me the word I have heard is good why then have you not kept the oath of the Lord and the commandment that I gave you the king said to Shimei you know as your heart acknowledges all the wickedness that you did to my father David therefore the Lord will return your wickedness on your own head.

What I find interesting about this is this is a pattern that recurs both in the Old Testament and in the New and it's something I need to study a little further because you remember Jesus told a parable about the hard-hearted servant who owed his master some a large sum of money and his master forgave the debt but then he had a servant who was subordinate to him who owed him a fraction a very small amount and the subordinate servant was unable to pay and he got all vindictive and climbed all over him and when the master found out that he had not forgiven the servant his forgiveness was revoked and he became accountable for the debt that had been forgiven and we have this teaching in the scripture Jesus said when he gave the model prayer to the disciples pray this way forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are our debtors forgive us our transgressions as we forgive those who transgress against us he said in another place if you do not forgive then you yourself are not forgiven and it the scripture appears to teach that we can in effect lose our forgiveness when we fail to forgive others and it's a very powerful illustration of that that we find here in the life of Solomon Shimei was given a reprieve by David Shimei was given a reprieve by Solomon but when Shimei violated the terms of the agreement his original transgression came back and he paid the penalty he said you know in your heart the wickedness you did to David my father therefore the Lord will return your wickedness on your own head why is this forgiveness provisional instead of permanent we like to think that our forgiveness is permanent that we've been forgiven for past wrongs and they don't ever come back well what is

the condition for that to be true it's faith it's obedience here not keeping faith with David not keeping faith with Solomon not being obedient results in a loss of that forgiveness and that's something that bears study when we come to the subject of soteriology the theological category of sin the king commanded benaiiah the son of jehoiada he went and struck him down and he died thus the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon now remember all of this is taking place after the death of David time is going by all of these things this wasn't like the next day or within two days this is weeks and months that are passing you find in chapter 3 Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt married Pharaoh's daughter that of course all takes time you have courtship you have exchange of retinues and caravans and camels and the daughter comes up and presents go down the dowry is exchanged treaties are made and so forth he brought her to the city of David until he had finished building his own house and the house of the Lord and the wall all around Jerusalem meanwhile people sacrificed in the high places there was no house built for the name of the Lord Solomon loved the Lord walking in the statutes of his father David except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there for that was the great high place now God never designated Gibeon to be any kind of a high place did he Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar so you will notice Solomon is not being strictly obedient here he's gone to Gibeon and he's sacrificing he's doing a great big sacrifice but it's in the wrong place it's in the wrong way and so you would think well God's not going to accept that God's not going to look upon it but notice Solomon loved the Lord Solomon walked in all the statutes of his father David except in this area so as he is engaged in this faulty worship what happens at Gibeon verse 5 of 1st Kings 3 at Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night and God said ask what shall I give you this really strikes me because God didn't say Solomon did you know you're not supposed to be here at Gibeon and all these sacrifices are a waste of time did God come down and say you know the first thing I want to talk to you about is your disobedience your faulty worship how come you're not down at the tabernacle that your father the ark of the covenant that your father brought into Jerusalem what are you doing up here in Gibeon on a high place you're setting a bad example you're the king of the people and you know God could just start chewing all over him but interestingly while he's engaged in this faulty behavior his heart is right but his actions are wrong he's either in ignorance or it's impossible for some reason or another God appears to him and God doesn't correct him God just says you ask and I'll give it to you well you think is this God just being generous and benevolent and sort of approving could Solomon say well I must be doing the right thing because look at this generous blessing that God is giving me this isn't really so much a blessing as a test right because God is going to listen to what Solomon asks for and is going to make a judgment about Solomon's heart based on what he says so this looks like the biggest windfall in the world the God of the universe has said I'm like the genie of the lamp you ask what shall I give to you what an opportunity this is going to bring out the kind of heart that Solomon has Solomon said you have shown great mercy to your servant David my father because he walked before you in truth in righteousness and in uprightness of heart with you you have continued this great kindness for him and you have given him a son to sit on his throne as it is this day what great

viewpoint on the part of Solomon so Solomon ultimately is going to ask for wisdom and God is going to be pleased so there's a lesson here for us and looking at the early days of Solomon as far as leadership as far as discipline and also as far as the way God will treat us even if we make mistakes you have on the one side an example of unforgiveness because of disobedience and lack of faith but here is God overlooking Solomon's error in worshiping in Gibeon because of his heart and God is going to give him the means to correct this because he's going to build a temple and he's not going to go to Gibeon anymore because the temple will be there so you can see the positive encouragement that God is giving Solomon and you can see the strict retribution for those who don't have a heart for the Lord who don't heed the words of God well we're going to stop here and pause and take our break when we come back we're going to going to bring Solomon up to the time when the book of Ecclesiastes is written and we'll see from that part of the purpose of that book let's pause here and take our break