



... Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins...

IN Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. ⁶ And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. ⁷ And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. ⁸ And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. ⁹ Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? ¹⁰ And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. ¹¹ And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; ¹² Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. ¹³ And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. (1 Kings 3:5-13)

Many years ago I was invited to speak in a very rural church in the lowlands of south Alabama. Arriving early in order to sit in on the Bible class before the worship service, I took a seat in a pew to the left of the sanctuary. The minister's wife was teaching a Bible study on Solomon. She made reference to his great wisdom and particularly noted the fact that Solomon had one thousand wives and concubines. When she asked if there were any questions, a rough-featured young man wearing overalls in the back asked, "If Solomon was so wise, how come he had a thousand wives?" to which the instructor responded, "That is precisely why he was so wise - he had a multitude of counselors." Naturally, it was never God's will for a man, or woman, to have more than one mate; but Solomon's youthful innocence did not survive his lustful desires; however, any search for good counsel should begin with the LORD.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments. (Psalms 111:10) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Prov 1:7) Solomon had a youthful fear of the Lord that led to the Lord blessing him with great wisdom. Wealth and riches followed that grant of wisdom. Fear of the Lord was the beginning of the wisdom of Solomon, but fear is not the ends of our search for wisdom. In fact, wisdom disperses inordinate fear gives an assurance of our standing in God and of Heaven. The great tragedy in the lives of many is that the yearning for wisdom born of fear of the Lord is often forgotten once wisdom is gained. The wise will often begin to fear the Lord not at all, and that, too, will lead to ruin.

The greatest victory in Solomon's life was that he did not linger in the superstitions and false worship of the world, but sought the Kingdom of God as a priority. ***But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*** (Matt 6:33) Though the legacy of the Temple-Builder is most glorious, how far greater it could have been had Solomon sought the Kingdom of God at last as well as at first. So far as I can learn, Solomon was a rather passive sinner compared to the outrageous sins of his father, David. IN examining the lives of great men of God, we often look for meticulous righteousness forgetting that they are human, too. Though our sinful records were wiped clean at the moment we accepted the call of Christ to come into His Kingdom, we have not been all that successful in keeping those records free of smudges and the fingerprints of sinful desire.

An important doctrine of the faith is the sanctifying grace of the Lord Jesus Christ on and in our lives. We truly are the Temple of God if we truly and conscientiously believe; however, we are a Temple in the building just as Solomon was the agent whereby God would build His Temple at Jerusalem. God is not finished with us the moment we are baptized and confirmed in the Church. We have just laid, at that point, the foundation for a life that will become the completed Temple of God. *19What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* (1 Cor 6:19-20)

We may look at two entirely different structures and believe them to be the same while they may be completely opposite. When we observe a prison with its stone walls, parapets, and watchtowers, we may mistake it for a fortress or a Temple that may also have stone walls, parapets and watchtowers. One is designed, like sin and Satan, to deprive her inhabitants of freedom. The other is designed to insure freedom and protection. Our lives are like that, aren't they?

We may observe two men – one is a temple of the Lord, and the other is a prison of the devil because the man is in bondage to sin. *24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. 25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.* (Gal 4:24-26) Unfortunately, I have heard men preach the opposite of the meaning of this last verse. They take an antinomian approach believe that the Ten Commandments given at Sinai by God are done away for they had placed us in bondage. Just the opposite is true. God expects absolute perfection in righteousness of each of us. We are more bound to obey His Law in love than ever could have been true when trying to keep that which was written on Tables of Stone.

But, were we able to keep God's Law in perfection, we would have no need of a Savior. Listen to the Words of Christ to the rich young ruler: *16 And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? 17 And*

he said unto him, *Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* (Matt 19:16-17) Well that certainly simplifies the issue – if we would receive eternal life, simply keep the Commandments. Impossible! We cannot, and that is why Christ had to die in our stead so that we might be accounted righteous before God – not OUR righteousness, but His IMPUTED righteousness. Those who depend upon their own righteousness are those who conduct their lives as if they, like the Pharisees, can keep the Law of God and live. But the fires of Hell will doubtless be lit with many tassels and ornate boxes that were bound to the garments of the Pharisees. Not only could they not keep the Law, they KNEW they could not and, as hypocrites, pretended they could.

So Solomon was building two temples – the one was the Temple of God that foreshadowed his making His tabernacle with men; the other was the real and Holy Temple of God that was Solomon's heart. Just as Rome was not built in a day, neither can the Temple of God be erected and finished in one day in the heart of man.

The only measurement by which our obedience of God can be truly measured is in the magnitude of our love for Him. It is love, and not force, that binds us to God. God knows our frail frames, and He knows, as children, we often stumble and falter, but He is faithful to reach down a loving hand to raise us up and to lift the unbecoming yoke we have hewn for ourselves. Love is the answer to the world's travails. Love covers all sin, and love keeps us obedient children in the Temple of our God. *Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.*¹ (Prov 10:12) This saving love is a love for God and His kingdom, and not of the world.

¹ This is probably the most important line in the Old Testament. Reflect: God is Love, Jesus is God, Jesus is Love. Jesus died to cover your sins, ALL of them!