

Salvation of Children is in God's Hands

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[0:00] Please turn with me in your Bibles this afternoon to 1 Kings chapter 12. I have a question for parents this afternoon.

! Is the salvation of your children in your own hands?! Is their eternal well-being something that you control?

Maybe the answer seems obvious to some. Well, of course not. Only God can save sinners, so the salvation of our children is not in our hands. Others may be saying that's true, but God uses means. And certainly parents are to be a means of teaching and living the gospel before their children and praying for their children. And so to a certain extent, the salvation of our children is in our own hands.

And others may have something else to add to the conversation. But to answer the question today, we want to turn again to a study of the Proverbs, as we've done on other Fellowship Lunch Sundays.

[1:01] But today we're going to do it a bit differently. Obviously, we've turned to 1 Kings. But I was inspired to think about some of these things by listening to a message by Pastor Jim Sebastio.

He's one of the pastors at the Reformed Baptist Church in Louisville. And I want to give credit to him. The thoughts originated there, though any shortcomings are my own.

One of the Sundays that we were snowed out, when we had to cancel services here, I went to church in Louisville via the Internet. And it's an excellent resource if you ever are snowed in at home.

There are live broadcasts of various services on the Internet. You can participate. You can hear their singing and the whole thing right there. And so I went to church in Louisville that day and heard a very helpful message on this subject.

And was stirred to think on it on my own. Now, we often view the Proverbs as bits of wisdom to help us in our daily lives. They show us how to live.

[2:02] They warn us of dangers that we will face. They instruct us in how to raise our children and how to manage our finances. And with regards to temptation, deceit, truth, pride, lust, the temper, the tongue, leadership, listening to parents, staying away from foolish company that will corrupt us.

All sorts of things the Proverbs instruct us in. And we are right to view them that way. It is God's Word. It is His wisdom. Preserve for us. And I've encouraged before the regular reading of Proverbs.

31 chapters in 31 days in most months. A chapter a day is a beneficial practice. And it is. And for four out of the last five years, on Fellowship Lunch Sunday afternoons, I've preached on various Proverbs convinced of their usefulness in our lives.

The book of Proverbs is part of God's Word. And it has been preserved for us and should be put to use by us, as should every part of God's Word.

But before the Proverbs came to us, there was another audience. A very particular audience. A primary audience that they came to before they were ever recorded for us.

[3:18] Who was the audience? Who were the Proverbs for at the very beginning? Somebody tell me. Solomon's children. Exactly.

And having been put onto this again by Pastor Sebastio and then searching the Scriptures, there's only three of Solomon's children that are mentioned in the Scriptures that I found.

There could be more. I quite easily could have missed them. He has two daughters. And they're mentioned sort of in passing. Basemath and Tephath. But then, there is only one son named for Solomon.

We only know of one son that he had. Now, other kings, we find they had many children, many sons. But Solomon, we only ever learn about one son. And somebody tell me who the one son is. Okay, you got your chance already. Rehoboam. Thank you. Was the other son, or the only son that we know of, of Solomon.

[4:18] And Proverbs was for Solomon's children, and it was especially for his son. How many times when you read through the book of Proverbs do you find the words, my son? My son.

My son. In every way, Rehoboam was the son of the Proverbs. Solomon's wisdom, specifically directed toward a son he assumed would one day take his throne.

And so, knowing that his son would need great wisdom to rule well, he sought to pass on some of his wealth and his wisdom to that son. His son, Rehoboam. And since we're convinced that the Proverbs are useful for us, today we want to take a look and see just how effective and useful they were in the life of their first target, the first audience, Rehoboam.

And in thinking about Rehoboam and his life, we'll be helped in finding an answer to the question, is the salvation of children in the hands of their parents. And so we want to see, first of all, Solomon and Rehoboam.

And then we'll draw two conclusions or two warnings that we want to see as we think about their lives from this perspective of the usefulness of the Proverbs in their lives. You know that Solomon, for the most part, was a good king.

[5:33] God blessed him with extraordinary wisdom and wealth and power. Early in his reign, after God had appeared to him and said, Ask of me anything you want. And Solomon, of course, we know the story, asks for wisdom.

And God grants him that. And then power and riches to go with it. Not long after that, we read in 1 Kings that Solomon spoke 3,000 Proverbs.

This is early in his reign that this is recorded. And if you find some dates and you do a little bit of math, you'll find that his son, Rehoboam, was born right about the time that Solomon became king. Might have been a year before. Might have been a couple years after. Right around the time he became king, his son Rehoboam is born. And with Solomon's repeated, my sons, we can bet that he didn't just have those Proverbs written down, but that he spoke them to his son, my son, in hopes that they would take root in his heart and implant wisdom in his heart so that they might know, so that he might know how to rule wisely in the kingdom, so that he might follow the Lord. Now much of the early part of Solomon's reign was given to building projects. Big ones. Long ones. We had a big building project, but this is nothing. And it didn't take very long.

[6:45] Six months or a little more, and there's still a few things that need to be done. But when Solomon took about a building project, the first one started in the fourth year of his reign, and it was the temple. And it took him seven years to complete.

And then after that, he started on his own palace, and that took another 13 years to complete. So much of that early time in Rehoboam's life was occupied with building projects that his dad was undertaking.

And when the temple was started, Rehoboam was probably about my son's age. Ryan's four and a half. He might have been five, six, maybe. But you picture somebody Ryan's age.

And my son is capable of memorizing Scripture. He's capable of learning wisdom. And we're working on seeing that wisdom applied and lived out in life. And it's not always. But he's capable of processing some of that at that age.

And so must have been Rehoboam at a young age hearing some of his father's wisdom. And when the temple was completed, Rehoboam would have been somewhere between 10 and 13 years old.

[7:48] Are there any 12-year-old boys here today? Give me a boy that's 12 years old. Raise your hand up for me. How about 11? 11. 11. Alright. Jacob, right?

Okay. I always get Austin and Jacob confused, right? Jacob is 11 years old. Okay, so when the temple was completed, Rehoboam was about Jacob's age. Give or take a few years.

Very capable of receiving wisdom and instruction and learning the fear of the Lord. And what a thing for a young man to see. Seven years building the house of God.

And surely something of the centrality of God and his worship must have been impressed. Dad, you haven't even built our house yet. And you've taken seven years to build this temple.

And surely he must have learned something of the significance of this Yahweh, the God of Israel. From the time and care and energy and effort his father put into building the temple of the Lord.

[8:46] He must have learned as he heard his father pray, read 1 Kings 8 and read that prayer of dedication. A glorious prayer where Solomon longs not just for Israel, but people from other lands to be able to pray to the God of Israel.

And to come to know him, even as the Israelites knew him. And that God would be present with his people and meet with his people. This seems really in some ways to be the height of Solomon's reign and his godliness.

And so he must have been impressed by these things. Young Rehoboam. Surely those words didn't ring hollow to Rehoboam.

Because here, very central in Solomon's life is the building of this temple for God. And you can imagine life in the Solomon household. Well, maybe we can't because it's a lot different than ours. But surrounded by wealth and opulence in every way. And maybe to keep little Rehoboam grounded, Solomon would remind him at the dinner table. You know, this may be hard for you to believe, son.

[9:59] Surrounded by all this wealth and you've never wanted for anything a day in your life. But Rehoboam, it is better to have a little with the fear of the Lord than to have great wealth with turmoil. And maybe that was hard for Rehoboam to buy.

Because he's surrounded by wealth and peace. He's gotten the best of both worlds. But Solomon still, seeking to impress that on his son, cast but a glance at riches. And they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.

And so these and many other truths press upon the young Rehoboam. Hearing wisdom from his father. Now by the time Rehoboam is in his mid-twenties, maybe about twenty-five, Solomon is done building his own house.

And maybe Rehoboam's got a little bit different perspective. It took dad almost twice as long to build his house. As it took him to build God's house. I don't know that we should make too much of that. But maybe Rehoboam thought of those things.

We don't know. But about the age of twenty-five, his father is done building the temple. And by the age of twenty-five, I was out of the house. I was in...

[11:04] Here. Here. I hadn't thought of that until just now. When I was twenty-five, I was being considered to be a pastor of the church.

Here. And so you can just remember me five years ago. And that's what Solomon would have been when his father finished building his own house.

And by this time, he's had every opportunity to learn from his father about the God of Israel and what a wise king who wants to lead God's people has learned. He's had a solid upbringing to this point.

Maybe some inconsistencies. And we begin to wonder how things could go so wrong. Because you know the story. You know that Rehoboam doesn't turn out well. The story doesn't end well.

And so what went wrong? Well, maybe in the midst of the wise teaching, there could have been some questions in Rehoboam's mind. We know that Solomon had many wives and concubines. And they would have been accumulating during these years of building.

[12:09] Although it's not until Solomon's later years, we're told, that he began to turn aside to the gods of his wives and concubines. His later years would have been after.

The temple was complete, after the house was complete, and after Rehoboam was at least 25 years of age. Sometime between Rehoboam's 25th year and his 41st year, he became king when he was 41.

Sometime during that time, Solomon began to turn his heart away to follow after other gods and to fall into sin. And so the point I'm trying to make is that there was a solid foundation by the time he was 25, before he could say, well, dad's a hypocrite.

That came later. And so Rehoboam takes the throne at 41. And he rules for 17 years. And sadly, it seems that all of Solomon's teaching had little lasting effect on his son.

We've turned to 1 Kings 12 just to read a portion and give you an idea. I mean, remember, this is Rehoboam that has heard to avoid foolish company and to be a companion of the wise.

[13:16] This is Rehoboam. And in some senses, he does apply the wisdom that he's heard from his dad. And plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors, they succeed.

Okay, well, he surrounds himself with many advisors. But he doesn't listen to the wise ones. Notice what happens here. After Solomon dies, the people come to Rehoboam and said, your father put a

heavy yoke on us.

Will you please lighten it for us and show us favor in this way? And Rehoboam says, go away for three days and come back and I'll give you my answer. And then we pick it up in verse 6. Notice verses 6 through 11.

Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. How would you advise me to answer these people, he asked. They replied, if today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants.

But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. He asked them, what is your advice? How should we answer these people who say to me, lighten the yoke your father put on us?

[14 : 25] The young men who had grown up with him replied, tell these people who have said to you, your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter. Tell them, my little finger is thicker than my father's waist.

My father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips, I will scourge you with scorpions. And then it goes on to say, this is what he did.

The people come back and he rejects the counsel of the older, wiser men that had counseled his father. And he receives the counsel of these foolish young men that were likely his age-ish, 40s, and so young is relative, of course.

But he listens to the foolish counsel. He forgets that gray hair is a crown of splendor attained by a righteous life. Again, forgetting that he who walks with a wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.

And so he says, I am going to increase your yoke. My dad had whips, I've got scorpions for you.

And so began the end of the kingdom of Israel.

[15 : 29] The result was eventually that the tribe split. Rehoboam 10 follow after Jeroboam, who becomes a new standard for wickedness in Israel, and Israelite kings, and false worship.

And Jeroboam takes the 10 tribes, and then just Judah and Benjamin remain loyal to the house of David. And Rehoboam is effectively split the kingdom by his foolishness. For all of the advantages he had, for all of the good parenting he had, he didn't turn out so well.

We are told of some wise moments in his rule where he did exercise wisdom, some of what his father said took, and even of a time when he humbled himself with the overall tenor of his reign in life is negative and foolish and wicked.

2 Chronicles 12, 5 says a prophet came to him, to Rehoboam, and said, This is what the Lord says. You have abandoned me, therefore I now abandon you to Shishak, who is a ruler coming against him from Egypt.

But the summary about Rehoboam is that he abandoned the Lord. And so the Lord abandons him.

Or 2 Chronicles 12, 14, he did evil, because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord.

[16 : 39] And this was the one I was told, Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. He pursues his own understanding and abandons the Lord. And we're told that he is evil and did not seek the Lord.

The son of the Proverbs didn't turn out to be so wise. The son of a great and godly king abandoned God. How could that happen?

Well, that question brings us back to our first question. Is the salvation of your children in your own hands? And a couple of warnings come to us then this afternoon from considering these truths from the lives of Solomon and Rehoboam.

And the first warning is this. Beware of trusting in means in and of themselves. You cannot expect, whether it's with parenting or with pastoring or with any other part of your life, to be able to follow a certain formula and expect that all will be well.

Now, there are certain means that God has made available to us, and we're going to speak more about that in a moment, using them. But you can't expect to follow a set pattern of parenting and be guaranteed the salvation of your children.

[17 : 49] Beware of trusting in means in and of themselves is the lesson to learn. The best of parenting does not guarantee a saved child. Christian school or home school does not guarantee a saved child.

The one thing Solomon could not give his son was a new heart. Because God alone is sovereign in salvation. You can give your children every spiritual advantage, but you cannot give them a new heart.

That is the work of God. Now, God does use means. Like parents and their influence in the life of their children, but He is free to work with those means, without them or even contrary to them, if He sees fit.

So not even being raised in the home of Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, the man we point our children to so that they might find wisdom, not even that guarantees salvation, and neither does the best upbringing you can provide.

God may see fit to not save your child. And that has implications for us. And one is to not look down your nose or silently condemn parents whose children have not come to faith in Christ.

[19:01] When you look around the church, here or elsewhere, don't assume that the kids who don't know the Lord are that way because they have lousy parents. Often, if we're honest, we form silent opinions in our hearts and minds, casting judgment on parents who do not necessarily deserve it.

He must not pray for his kids like he should. And they must not be doing very much to raise their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord because their kids certainly don't fear the Lord or any other authority figures.

They must never discipline their children. That's apparent. They probably don't have family worship very consistently. You don't know that. And those things, in and of themselves, do not make for righteous, God-fearing children.

When you see friends of your children, or other children, other places, outside the church who are not as nice and good as your children, don't automatically assume that the parents must be real slackers.

There could be Rehoboam's who had many spiritual blessings in the home, but God has not yet seen fit to change their hearts. And there is great comfort here, I think, for faithful, not perfect, but for faithful parents with unbelieving children.

[20:22] Even Rehoboam and God's providence did not turn out so well. And how often do you see that in the book of Kings? It's not just with Rehoboam. What about the great king Hezekiah? When you think of a righteous king, Hezekiah usually is right at the top of your list.

What about him? Surely he had a godly son. His son was Manassas, just as wicked as the other kings. Or what about Josiah? There was a righteous king from a young age, a righteous man. What about his sons? Two of his sons became king, both of them wicked in the eyes of the Lord. God is free to work with or without means.

And so, faithful parents need not carry undue guilt because their children are not converted. And one other observation, when we consider this not trusting means in and of themselves.

And we're going to balance this out in just a second, so hold on. But Timothy and Titus, Paul in those letters gives us qualifications for the ministry. Things that must mark a man.

[21:27] And there are things about his family in those lists. And in Titus 1, our translations read that one who is to be an elder in the church must be a man whose children believe.

A man whose children believe. That's better translated, a man whose children are faithful. A man whose children are respectable, honorable, faithful, instead of whose children believe.

Because as we've noted, it is God who is sovereign in salvation. And it would be foolish and even unbiblical to require that all of a man's children be believers in order to be in the ministry.

It would be to assign a God-like status to the minister, as though he has some special ability to change his children's heart and make them believe. Which is not what the requirement is.

It is for faithful children. A well-ordered family. Children that are respectable in that well-ordered family. And so, just a note, when you read that in Titus, it's a man whose children believe.

[22:28] Better translated, a man whose children are faithful. And so, the use of means does not guarantee the result we might desire. Beware of trusting in means in and of themselves.

But the second lesson to learn from Solomon and Rehoboam is to be called to diligence. And to make every use of those means. What I'm telling you today is not to quit.

Alright, I'm going to quit raising my children according to the fear and admonition of the Lord.

You've just told me it doesn't necessarily work, so I'm going to stop. I'm not going to pray for them anymore. I'm not going to discipline them. No, that is not the point.

It doesn't mean to stop teaching them, disciplining them, pointing them to Christ and praying for them. You must do these things and do them faithfully. Make sure that you worship with your family. Make sure that you raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Use the means that God has given. Use the book of Proverbs. Teach them wisdom. That word is profitable. And so, continue to use it. And we're going to continue to preach it here. Until God takes us home.

[23:27] Or Christ comes again because God's word is profitable. It is the means He has given unto the salvation of sinners. And so, we must be diligent and vigilant in raising our children, praying for them, and seeking to bring them to Christ.

God has ordained the means. Use them. And use them faithfully. And also, as you use them, be careful to make sure your life matches your words.

Your life can undo what you seek to do with your words. And surely, although Rehoboam's most formative years had passed when Solomon turned away to false gods.

Again, somewhere between 25 and 41. That certainly was not lost on Rehoboam. Wow, Dad. Some example you've set with all of your wisdom.

And now, here you are turning aside to false gods. What should I make of all your wisdom now? Now, maybe even when he was younger in his father's house, another new wife, another concubine.

[24:28] Dad. I know that he who finds a wife finds a good thing. But, you're getting a little carried away here. You know, a son can start to catch on to those things. And maybe there were inconsistencies early on.

Besides the glaring inconsistency later when his heart turned away. That could have helped in turning Rehoboam's heart against the Lord. And so, we must be diligent to avoid the hypocrisy that could undermine our effectiveness in our children's lives.

We must not undo with our lives what we say with our lips. Because God does use these means.

And so, when the day of judgment comes, and we answer for the stewardship of our children, which would you rather be?

A parent who said, Well, there's no guarantee that means will work in and of themselves. And so, I'm not going to use them. And I'm just going to leave it in the Lord's hands and sit back and wait and see what He does.

And know that you've lost your children. Or would you rather be a parent that said, These are the means that God has given. And I will use them to the best of my ability, regardless of the outcome.

[25:41] Trusting God to do what is best in His eyes. Far better to be the latter parent. To have been faithful with the stewardship He entrusts to us. Faithful in using the means.

And so, may we be parents who are faithful. And aren't we blessed that God often and frequently does use the means that He's given to us.

At least five good kings in Israel had five good righteous sons. And there were at least 13 wicked kings that had wicked sons. God does often use the means to bless them to the salvation of our children.

May that be the case for our children. May God make us diligent to raise our children and to trust God with the outcome. Let's take our hymnals and turn this afternoon to hymn 627.

May our homes be happy homes because Christ is present there. Loved by each member. Trusted early in the lives of each child.

[26:46] That ought to be our prayer. That God would do our work and save our children. Let's pray together. Our Father, we pray that You would save our children. We pray that Your love would fill each heart here.

And that You would draw them to Yourself. We pray that You would open their darkened eyes. And give them eyes to see. We pray that You would give them faith.

That they might run and cast themselves upon the Savior. We pray that You would forgive our shortcomings as parents. For the times when our lives have undone. When our words have said.

We pray that You would make us faithful to take and make use of the means that You have given.

We thank You that You haven't left us without recourse. We thank You that You've given us Your Word. That You've commanded us to pray. We thank You that You've instructed us in how to raise our children.

Give us grace to do these things. And so to follow in Your footsteps. And we pray that You would raise up our children. That they might come to know and love and trust You.

[27 : 45] To keep any here from undue guilt. We pray that You would guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. And give us grace to honor You in all that we say and do.

Bless us as we go from here we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.