

## Restoring Intro

Columnist Bob Green of the Chicago Tribune has a theory about what's wrong with the world. He blames it on what he calls the "Death of The Permanent Record."

He recalls that grade-school children once lived in fear of having their bad behavior noted on The Permanent Record. Because of this, people learned in their youth to stop before they did something deceitful or unethical. They didn't stop because they were so good but for fear of having their actions written down.

Today, according to Bob Green, people have come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a permanent record. In fact, they believe no one has a right to keep track. Green says that with today's emphasis on our rights of privacy, if a school child were ever threatened with something going on his permanent record, he would probably file suit under the Freedom of Information Act and gain possession of his files before recess.

Where there is no fear of a lasting record, people tend to do what they think they can get away with. The problem for mankind, however, is that a permanent record does exist--and it is kept by God.

- The world knows us one way, but God knows us truly
  - He knows what we think and what we do
    - For unbelievers, the errors of life, found in the book of deeds, will stand against them in judgment for their sin
    - But what about believers?
  - What does God do when His people are unfaithful and disobey?
    - Well, God's word tells us

[2Tim. 2:13](#) If we are faithless, He remains **faithful**, for He cannot deny Himself.

- But does it mean that God remains faithful?
  - Does He stand idly by while we live a disobedient life?
  - Does He look the other way?
  - Like the parents who welcomed their pastor home for dinner one Sunday

They had one of the cutest little toddlers the pastor had ever seen. Suddenly, the child got his fork and started shooting peas at the pastor. And they came very close--- closer and closer. The pastor was dodging. . . looking for a fox hole.

"Don't say a

word," his mother said under her breath. "We don't want to suppress him." "If one of those peas hits me," the pastor said, "I'm going to suppress him."

- Or does God go so far as to reward our disobedience?
  - To bless us despite our unfaithfulness?
- How would we know?
  - Well, we could begin with a simple verses of scripture

[Heb. 12:6](#) FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,  
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."

[Heb. 12:7](#) It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline?

[Heb. 12:8](#) But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

- So though God is faithful even when we aren't, we need to understand that faithfulness doesn't look like some people assume it looks
  - Faithfulness doesn't mean looking the other way
  - It doesn't mean rewarding the wrong behavior
- Faithfulness means God disciplines those who are His children, as a father would discipline his sons
  - Discipline is God's way of showing faithfulness in the face of our disobedience
  - And more than that, it proves our sonship
    - We can only discipline our own children
    - You can't discipline another's child
- So how does God's discipline manifest itself in our lives?
  - Can we recognize it? Does it follow a pattern?
    - I believe the answer is yes, though not without a few caveats

- The series we are beginning today will examine God's pattern of discipline in the lives of His people
- Obviously, before we can recognize God's pattern in our own lives and learn to respond to it, we must understand how God approaches the matter of discipline in general
  - And I believe that pattern is best understood by studying God at work across several centuries of the history in the nation of Israel
    - Specifically, in the history of their captivity and restoration back to their land
  - So our study begins with a bit of a history lesson
    - There is a handout I've provided which gives an overview of the various periods of kingship in the history of Israel beginning with Saul
      - We won't study the information on that sheet this morning
      - It's more of a reference for you as we go along
    - But I do want to highlight a couple of items
- Israel existed as a united nation under its first three kings
  - Saul, David and Solomon reigned over all twelve tribes
    - And of course each had his strengths and weakness, though all saw some measure of success
  - But in 926 BC, Israel splits in a civil war following the death of Solomon

[1Kings 11:1](#) ¶ Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, [1Kings 11:2](#) from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, *for* they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love. [1Kings 11:3](#) He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away.

[1Kings 11:4](#) For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*.

[1Kings 11:5](#) For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites.

[1Kings 11:6](#) Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father *had done*.

[1Kings 11:7](#) Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon.

[1Kings 11:8](#) Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

[1Kings 11:9](#) ¶ Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice,

[1Kings 11:10](#) and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded.

[1Kings 11:11](#) So the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.

[1Kings 11:12](#) "Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, *but* I will tear it out of the hand of your son.

[1Kings 11:13](#) "However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, *but* I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

- Israel is about to be divided because of Solomon's disobedience and unfaithfulness
  - The 10 tribes is a reference to the Northern Tribes of Israel, which break off to form a separate kingdom after the death of Solomon
    - The remain tribe God holds back is the remnant in the South, Judah

- By this time, Judah had grown to incorporate the tribe of Benjamin, so geographically they were thought of as one tribe by this time
      - Leaving 10 in the north and one in the south
- This was the beginning of a long decline for the nation of Israel
  - It's important for us to note as begin this trek through Israel's history that the kingdom of Israel didn't split simply because of a geopolitical struggle
    - There was a geopolitical struggle Solomon's son and his father's enemies
  - It's didn't divide because Solomon's son, Rehoboam, was a poor ruler who couldn't hold the nation together
    - Though Rehoboam WAS a poor ruler who couldn't hold the nation together
  - The reason the nation of Israel split was because God split it
    - And the reason God split the nation of Israel was to discipline Solomon and Solomon's descendents as a result of Solomon's sinful practices
  - To put it simply, our sin has consequences
- Look at the pattern in 1Kings 11
  - Solomon's heart turned away from God in verse 9
    - The central problem in Solomon's life was a turning away from God
    - That turning away results in specific acts of disobedience
      - In Solomon's case, scripture tells us he allowed his many pagan wife's to influence him into worshipping foreign gods rather than to one true living God
      - 1Kings says he did not keep the covenant or God's commandments
  - Solomon allowed his heart to be drawn away by false worship

- And false worship led a putting aside of God's commandments, his instructions, his teaching
  - And without the foundation of undivided worship
  - And the absent the godliness that comes from an obedient walk in God's commandments and instructions
  - Then what will naturally follow?
- The product of our life will be corruption, dissipation
  - Our lives will lack any direction and eternal purpose
  - We will live in our flesh and according to the principles of this world
    - And our sinful choices will be bring consequences, both upon ourselves and upon others
- Consider the punishment God brought upon Solomon
  - The kingdom was to be split, but only after his death
    - And not because he deserved the reprieve, but because out of recognition of David's faithfulness and to honor promises God gave to David
  - And even before this time, Solomon's sin lay the seeds for the kingdom's future destruction
    - He raised a future king in his son who was petulant and disobedient himself
    - He burdened the nation with taxes to support his lavish lifestyle that helped fuel the rebellion after his death
  - Solomon's descent into a life of self-gratification brought about the ruin of the kingdom
    - And yet it was merely the beginning of trials the nation would endure as a result of disobedience
- I want to propose to you that Solomon's life – and in fact history of the nation of Israel after him – provide an important pattern for observing disobedience and discipline in our lives

- Consider how it began in Solomon
  - His heart turned away from God
    - He allowed something other than his love and devotion to God rule in his heart
    - I believe it's fair to say that in Solomon's life it began with his lust and desire for wives
    - And as he searched farther and farther for additional wives, he began to bring ungodly pagan women into his family
    - And the result was these women began to exert influence on Solomon to believe as they believed
  - And eventually, Solomon found these foreign gods competing the allegiance of his heart
- I believe the pattern of our own disobedience begins with a similar erosion in our heart of worship toward God
  - We allow something into our lives that competes for our devotion and praise
    - We allow something to gain a foothold in our lives, and it begins to dominate our attention and feed our desires
      - And it begins to push everything else out of our heart
    - Maybe it's the usual things
      - Career, money, kids, materialism
      - Maybe it's an addiction, or relationship
    - Maybe it's a bit less conventional
      - Even a pursuit of ministry can itself become a competitor for faithfulness and worship
      - Our participation in ministry becomes a goal in itself
        - And we no longer follow God's leading but become a slave to our own ambitions
    - Maybe it's more insidious forms of unfaithfulness

- Like a growing fascination with the occult,
  - Or new age wisdom and humanistic teaching
  - Eastern mysticism, witchcraft, sorcery
- Whatever it is, it almost always starts small

[1Kings 3:3](#) ¶ Now Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.

- Solomon was devoted to the Lord, except for one small flaw
  - He had married his second wife, Pharaoh's daughter
  - And under her influence, Solomon began to burn incense
    - Not a big deal
    - Light a candle, some incense
    - Inhale the aroma, may chant a few words
    - What harm could it do?
- Maybe a yoga class gives way to a transcendental meditation class
  - Which then leads to deeper association with eastern mysticism and paganism
- Now you may be saying to yourself that you would never repeat the sin of Solomon
  - First of all, you have no interest in multiple wives
  - Secondly, you may feel secure in assuming you will never bow before a foreign god as Solomon did
  - Take a second look at verse 9
    - God had appeared to Solomon twice
      - 1Kings 3 God appeared to Solomon and rewarded his desire for wisdom with both wisdom and riches
      - Later God appears during the consecration of the Temple



- Solomon had personal visitation for the almighty God
  - Have you received that?
  - In other words, if a man like Solomon, the wisest man to ever live
    - A man who personally spoke with the Lord
    - A man who had every reward and blessing imaginable from God
  - If this man could forsake the living God, are you and I to suppose we're too good to do the same?
- You see, our ability to stand in the face of a temptation to be unfaithful isn't based on our pedigree
  - It isn't based on our wisdom
  - It isn't based on our financial security
  - It isn't based on our sincerity nor even our desire to please God
    - Solomon exceeded all of us in every one of these categories
- No, sincere, lifelong faithfulness to God comes from something altogether different
  - Something Solomon never knew
  - Something we'll learn as we study how God brought the lesson to the nation of Israel many centuries later
- So step one in our descent into God's discipline is a wandering heart
- The second step is an erosion of our understanding and obedience to truth God's truth
  - Because Solomon's heart had turned away to idols, we're told he didn't keep God's commandments
    - He didn't keep the covenant
    - For all his wisdom, he thoughts weren't counseled by the truth of scripture

- Consider God's words to Solomon during the dedication of the temple

[1Kings 9:3](#) The LORD said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your supplication, which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built by putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.

[1Kings 9:4](#) "As for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you *and* will keep My statutes and My ordinances,

[1Kings 9:5](#) then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'

[1Kings 9:6](#) ¶ "But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them,

[1Kings 9:7](#) then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight. So Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples.

- There's a principle of scripture that's found from Genesis to Revelation and on virtually every page in between
  - Worshipping God is evidenced by obedience
    - We can't claim to worship God and then not seek to obey Him
  - And obedience is according to God's word
    - It's not an obedience of our own making
      - We don't get to decide what it means to obey God and then feel good about ourselves when we keep to our own plan
      - The expectations are set in God's word and ultimately made real in our hearts by the Holy Spirit

[Col. 1:28](#) We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ.

- Biblical illiteracy is probably the single most dangerous trend in the church today, because it undermines our ability to know and thus obey God
  - How does the universal church expect to worship in spirit and truth when we are so ignorant of the truth provided in God's word?
- Fortunately God is not limited in His ability to still His people to worship and obedience despite our ignorance
  - But His power to do so does not excuse nor mitigate our ignorance
- Solomon, for all his wisdom, failed in obedience to God's word and the commandments of the covenant
  - And as a result, he brought upon his nation the penalties of disobedience and the discipline of the Lord

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- Solomon's descent into idol worship influenced the nation under him, and eventually the nation paid the price
  - God left it to the prophet Jeremiah to declare the coming judgment

[Jer. 25:8](#) ¶ "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Because you have not obeyed My words,

[Jer. 25:9](#) behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' declares the LORD, 'and *I will send* to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation.

[Jer. 25:10](#) 'Moreover, I will take from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones and the light of the lamp.

[Jer. 25:11](#) 'This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

- You see the final step in the pattern of our disobedience is the failure of leadership in our lives
  - Our wandering heart begets an ignorant and disobedient mind
  - And a disobedient mind begets a legacy of sin and corruption
    - And that influence corrupts other and spreads and magnifies our sin
    - And while the degree of our influence will vary with our sphere of influence, the pattern remains the same
      - Solomon's reign was one of the mightiest in all history
        - His wisdom and wealth and power was unrivaled in his time
        - And therefore his responsibility brought tremendous opportunity for influence
      - So when he fell into disobedience and unfaithfulness, he corrupted an entire nation, and generations for centuries to follow
    - In our lives, perhaps the failure of godly leadership will corrupt a spouse
      - Or a family
      - Or a friend

- Or a business
  - Or a church
  - Or a even nation
- You seen the circumstances and the impact of our disobedience may vary
  - But the pattern doesn't
    - We allow our hearts to wander away from true worship
    - We allow our minds to decay and neglect God's truth
    - We allow our corruption to bring down others
      - And so the pattern repeats itself in others
  - But even when we are faithless, God remains faithful
    - And He disciplines those He loves
  - And when God acts to discipline and later restore His people, He likewise address the problem in three steps
    - We'll study the nation's judgment at the hands of the Babylonians as predicted by Jeremiah
    - And then we'll watch as God begins the restoration of Israel in a series of steps that address each of the three areas of disobedience
- But more importantly, we'll stop along the way to consider how God may be working in our own lives
  - To ask the question, are these patterns of disobedience and unfaithfulness evident in our own choices and decisions
  - And if so, do we also recognize the discipline of the Lord at work in our lives?