

Ecclesiastes 4: 13-16; "An Old and Foolish King", A Bible Study
prepared for the evening of March 3rd, 2010,
and delivered at the Rendall Home.

The last time that we were together we were able to see how these verses can, and I believe they do, apply to Solomon himself. The principles of these verses obviously apply to kings in general, but in this case, I believe that Solomon was speaking of his own experience in a hypothetical and proverbial way so that many other people could be helped by what he had gone through. He is saying that "a poor but wise youth is better than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more." The key to understanding these verses is the word, "admonished." We saw, the last time that we were together that Solomon's father, king David, was a man who did receive the admonition of what he needed to do in order to see his son Solomon established on the throne, even though Solomon was young and inexperienced. David was an old, but wise king in relation to Solomon's case; but it was not always so with him. We saw how he had previously failed to admonish his son Adonijah, when Adonijah was young; how he had "failed to rebuke him" at any time in the decisions that he made. He had failed to ask him, "Why are you doing what you are doing?" "Are you goals really godly?" He had failed to teach him that there is a right way to go about things and a wrong way. Sometimes, if a young man is not checked, there is a way that he will assert himself to do what he thinks is best, without asking any questions of his father; and that can get him into a lot of trouble. In this case, it cost Adonijah his life, eventually, when Solomon came into power. He presumed too much; he was too full of himself and his own ambitions. And as a result he lost his life, because he would not deal with his sin of selfish ambition. And because he did not repent, he lost his soul as well, if I am not mistaken. So crossing your young man; not letting him get his way in everything; teaching and correcting him to bring him to the right perspective on how to think and how to live, and how to receive correction when he is wrong; is a very important part of good parenting.

So by way of review; to admonish is when you are instructing someone, trying to tell them the right thing to do, with a view to their actually changing. It may involve warning, or rebuking, or teaching, or pleading. Admonitions should be given by a person who has the authority or the right, or the responsibility to do so, in accordance with the directives of the Word of God. A parent admonishes their child because of the responsibility given to them by God to do so. But, generally, a child does not have the right to admonish a parent until they are an adult and living outside of their parent's house, and have learned the lessons of truth from the Bible which have been given to them. They might respectfully disagree with something sinful that see their parent doing, and utter their protest against it, and

thus admonish their parent in a holy way; but in a Christian household this would be the rare exception rather than the rule. Another example; a wife is to submit to her husband as unto the Lord. But a husband and a wife may admonish one another in a loving sense, doing no violence to the concept of the man being the head of the woman; even as we saw Bathsheba admonish David about Solomon's becoming king. And all Christians are to admonish each other because they are taught by the Lord and commanded to do so in a careful and loving way. Romans Chapter 15, and verse 14 says, "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another." Christians are to submit to one another in the fear of God in this regard. Indeed, we saw last time that it was because Solomon received the admonition of his father in regard to following the Lord; that the Lord established him in his kingdom and gave him not only the wisdom which he had asked for; but also riches and long life as well. He was a poor but wise king. He was poor in the sense that he could not establish himself in his own kingdom; he did not have the resources or ability to do. He was "born poor" in this sense. And he was in a prison, locked up under these awkward and difficult circumstances, until he received the admonition of his father, and prayed to God to become wise. God gave him what he asked for. But tonight, we first of all want to see how Solomon went from being a poor but wise youth to an old and foolish king. And then we want to see how by God's grace he came back to wisdom.

First of all – Let's look at how Solomon went from being wise to being an old and foolish king.

Turn with me once again to 1 Chronicles chapter 28, and verse 4. David is in the midst of giving a final charge to the leaders of Israel: the officers of the tribes and the captains of the divisions who served the king; his mighty men of valor. He tells them how it had been in his heart to build a house for the Lord. In verse 2 he calls it "a house of rest for the ark of the covenant", a footstool for God; and he had made preparations to build it. "However," he says, "the Lord God of Israel chose me above all the house of my father to be king over Israel forever, for He has chosen Judah to be the ruler." "And of the house of Judah, the house of my father, and among the sons of my father, He was pleased with me to make me king over all Israel." "And of all my sons (for the Lord has given me many sons) He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom over Israel." "Now He said to me, 'It is your son Solomon who shall build My house and My courts; for I have chosen him to be My son, and I will be his Father.'" "Moreover I will establish his kingdom forever, if he is steadfast to observe My commandments and My judgments, as it is this day." "Now therefore, in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of our God, be careful to seek out all the commandments of the Lord your God, that you may possess this good land, and leave it as an inheritance for your children after you forever." "As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts." "If you seek

Him He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever." "Consider now, for the Lord has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it."

This is one of the most wonderful admonitions in all of the Word of God. And for a time, Solomon did keep this admonition and he did serve God with a loyal heart and a willing mind. Having been given such wisdom, and such riches, and such promises, you would think that he would never have ever become an old and foolish king who would not be admonished. But let us turn to 1 Kings Chapter 9, and we will find the second great admonition which was given to him; this time not by his father; but by his God. Verse 1 says, "And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished building the house of the Lord and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he wanted to do, that the Lord appeared to Solomon the second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon." "And the Lord said to him: I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; (that is, his prayer at the dedication of the temple) I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually." "Now, (here comes the admonition) if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of the your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father." "But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, the I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight." "Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples."

Now you can see, here, that all Solomon's desire which he wanted to do, came to pass in the works that he built. He built the temple and dedicated it to the Lord and the Lord promised to bless him even more yet. Now look at verse 10 of chapter 9. "Now it happened at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the Lord and the king's house...." Here is the continuation of the building of all the works that Solomon mentioned in Chapter 2, verses 4-11 of Ecclesiastes. His wisdom was still with him, and he was doing great things for the nation and for himself, but one wonders if what he was really doing was for God's glory or not? Well, zeal for the Lord was still there, but the right motivation was beginning to wane. In Chapter 10, the Queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon and hear his wisdom. In verse 6 it says, "Then she said to the king: 'It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom.'" "However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me." "Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard." "Happy are your men, and happy are these your servants, who stand continually before you and hear your wisdom!" "Blessed be the Lord your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel!"

"Because the Lord has loved Israel forever, therefore he made you king, to do justice and righteousness." What glorious statements we find here, and all is true. But we find nothing of Solomon himself giving glory to God for what God had given to him, or what He had allowed him to build, to do and to accomplish. I think that this was a turning point for him. He still goes on to do great and mighty things for a short time yet. In verse 23 it says, "So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom." "Now all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart."

It reminds me of verses 15 and 16 of our text. "I saw all the living who walk under the sun; they were with the second youth who stands in his place." In terms of Solomon's experience and his living his life, he was in this second stage; he was "the second youth", the middle aged man who had grown up to become a mighty king, and everyone was seeking his wisdom and his favor. But he had become a different man than he was before. There was no end of all the people over whom he was made king, and he was no longer the poor and wise youth that he once was. Rather, he was old and rich and he was not praying for wisdom as he did when he was a youth. And although there were so many people who sought Solomon for the right reasons at this stage; "yet those who came afterward would not rejoice in him." And the reason for this was; that the wisdom that had been given to him by God was being applied to the things of this earth rather than to eternal things; spiritual things, at this stage in his life. Solomon knew tremendous popularity, had everyone seeking his wisdom; and yet he still fell into doing things which were foolish and sinful. Look at Chapter 11. "But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you.' "Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." "Solomon clung to these in love." (He did not heed the admonition of the Lord to him.) "And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart." "For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David." Look at verse 9 – "So the Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded." That is how Solomon became an old and foolish king. He had not received the admonition of the Lord to heed it. He had been better off as a poor youth in his prison of not being able to establish himself as king. At that time he was seeking to do the right thing.

Now 2ndly – We want to see how Solomon came back from this.

There is one sense, the sense of his earthly kingdom, in which Solomon never came back from this. Look at verse 9 of Chapter 11 of 1st Kings. "Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, 'Because you have done this, and have not kept My

covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant." "Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son." "However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; 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." God would chasten Solomon through adversaries that He would raise up against Solomon." But He would not remove His lovingkindness from Solomon because of the greatness of the promises that He had given to David. It is even so with us. God will not remove His lovingkindness from us when we sin, as a believer in Christ, because He remembers what Christ has done to satisfy His justice, as the man after His own heart. Christ died and so we are shown mercy and live forever. Christ lives forever, so that His prayers and desires for us will all be fulfilled, to all eternity in relation to each of us who believes in Him.

Solomon came back from his departure from God, I believe, by seeing the vanity of living life apart from God and the keeping of His commandments. He came back in repentance by writing this book. He was enabled by God to write this very book, where at the end of it he says, "And further, my son, be admonished by these." "Of making many books there is not end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh." "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this man's all." And so we find that God was faithful to His promise to David which is found in Psalm 89, verse 30 – "If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments, if they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." "Nevertheless My lovingkindness I will not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail." "My covenant I will not break...." Are you not glad for the faithfulness of our God to us as believers; that God will not remove His lovingkindness from us who believe in Christ. Because of Christ, His faithfulness will not fail, nor will it ever come to an end.