

Ecclesiastes 7: 26-28; “One Man among a Thousand”, a Bible Study prepared for March 16th, 2011, and conducted at the Rendall home.

Now we come to a passage in which it is very hard to determine what Solomon is speaking about. But he does give us some clues in the way that he words it. It appears from the last verses that we studied that Solomon was proving certain things by wisdom. His aim was to search and seek out the reason of things, he says in verse 25, and to know the wickedness of folly. This was one of his main conclusions. He says, “And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters.” Now, at first glance it might be supposed that Solomon is referring to the strange woman of the book of Proverbs; the harlot or the seductress. And no doubt these verses can encompass that idea. But I cannot believe that Solomon deliberately went to the harlots for his pleasures. He warned all men against this many times in the book of Proverbs, and the Bible does not record that he fell into that sin. But Solomon unfortunately was a man who thought that he could legitimately have and find pleasure and satisfaction in life by collecting many wives and many concubines. He fell into a more refined form of sinful pleasure, a culturally acceptable form of pursuing sexual pleasures, and he barely escaped from the eternal condemnation of being a sinner himself, when he engaged in these things. I believe that He is saying here that his marrying all these women was an experience that he had to repent of. I do not mean to say that he put all his wives away except one. I am saying that the hearts of his many wives and concubines were “snares and nets” to his knowing God and doing what pleases God. In the end he truly saw that this pursuit of his was sinful folly. So this evening we want, first, to talk about the “woman whose heart is snares and nets and whose hands are fetters. And then 2ndly – we want to look at the “one man among a thousand”.

1st – Let’s look at the woman whose heart is snares and nets and whose hands are fetters. (verse 26)

I think to understand what Solomon is getting at we need to begin by turning to 1 Kings Chapter 3, verse 1. “Now Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and married Pharaoh’s daughter; then he brought her to the City of David until he had finished building his own , and the house of the Lord, and the wall all around Jerusalem.” “Meanwhile the people sacrificed at the high places, because there was no house built for the name of the Lord until those days.” “And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.” We see here Solomon’s first and foremost wife, according to the Scriptures. He married her; her name is not even mentioned, and then he brought her to live in the city of David until he had finished building his own house. She does not appear to have attempted to get him to worship the false gods of Egypt. There is no condemnation of her in the Scriptures. If he would have been satisfied to have had her alone as wife, he would

have done well. John Gill says that he had already married a woman before this, Naamah the Ammonitess, and that she was the woman who bore him Rehoboam, who was born in about the 3rd year of his reign. It was right after he married Pharaoh's daughter a year or two later, that he made his speech to the Lord asking him for wisdom that he might be a good ruler over the nation of Israel. The Lord, in response to his prayer was pleased to give him great breadth of wisdom in governing the nation. But Solomon did not have great wisdom in regard to the marital state. You will see this if you turn over to Chapter 11, verse 1.

“But 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.” “And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines.” (Concubines were secondary wives; wives taken without any formal commitment being made to them; they were used to help the man to be able to have children as in the case of Abraham and Jacob; or they were taken as recognized mistresses) But it says here, “and his wives turned away his heart.” “For it was so, when Solomon was old, that this 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.” Solomon evidently thought that what he was doing was wise in a worldly sense, to build up this impressive harem as many kings of that time did for themselves. But eventually Solomon grew to realize that his having done this had brought upon himself great problems and difficulties; not to mention the guilt he incurred in the sight of his God. This is what Solomon is referring to, I believe, in verse 26 of our text. This taking of many wives, he says, “I find more bitter than death, the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters.” “He who pleases God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be trapped by her. Now, he did not understand this at the time in which he first took these wives, but he understood the truth of it later when his heart was turned away from God. I hope that you can see that Solomon was guilty of being ruled with his lust for more. He wanted more wives, more gold, more possessions, and to build a great kingdom for himself. He thought that he could have this impressive harem of wives and concubines and that he was wise enough to not allow this to affect his relationship with God.

But these women knew how to get what they wanted from their wealthy husband. They knew how to make it seem unfair and unloving of him, not to allow them to worship other gods; the gods of their land and their people. They would make their gods to seem legitimate and real, and their false worship real. And so, Solomon unwisely allowed himself to fall in love with women who did not know the Lord. He thought that it would be wonderful thing to have all of these wives who had other gods besides the true god. And yet, at the same time, we know that Solomon knew God. He built the temple for the glory of God, offered up this prayer before the altar to the Lord which is recorded in 1 Kings 8: 56 and

following. “Blessed be the Lord, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised.” “There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses.” “May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers.” “May he not leave us nor forsake us, that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers.” “And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the Lord, be near the Lord our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each may require, that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other.” “Let your heart therefore be loyal to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day.” What a great prayer this was.

Now I find it very interesting that Solomon was able to pray this way both for himself, and also as the one who was acting as the representative of all the people; that he would have a loyal heart. For some years, he was loyal to the Lord, in worshipping Him. But then, his heart departed from one major set of the commandments of God which were given to kings in particular. It was plainly written in God’s law. We should turn to it to remind ourselves of it. It is Deuteronomy 17: 14 and following. “When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,’ ‘you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.’ “But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, ‘You shall not return that way again.’ “Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.” “Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites.” “And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes.” This is where Solomon failed, and this is where we need to make an application to ourselves as Christians. The reason that Solomon failed so badly as an Old Testament believer was because he was not careful to observe all the words of God’s law. Evidently, if he did write it down and keep a copy of God’s law with him, he did not read it. Or, he deliberately ignored it. One of the two. At any rate, he did not take heed to his own soul in the particulars I have just read to you. He did allow himself to have many wives, and he did think that he was wise enough to maintain them and the true worship of God. But he was not. I think that he thought that he could convert these wives to the worship of the true God. But exactly the opposite happened.

Even so, Christians sometimes think that they can disregard some particular law or commandment of God given to them in the New Testament, or in regard to

the moral law of found in the Old Testament. And they think that their soul will continue to prosper, or that their heart will not be ensnared. Solomon found out differently after awhile. The Lord had to teach him the bitterness of it. Solomon sought to maintain the worship of the only true and living God, but after a few years, he increasingly found himself in fetters; bound to try to please all these wives. And after awhile, in terms of being able to prevent this false worship, he found that his hands were tied.” There were snares and nets that came upon his soul when more and more requests for false worship and altars to foreign gods came to him from these women. And the Lord, who revealed himself twice to Solomon, was grieved and had to bring him under His discipline. He raised up adversaries for Solomon, and He tore the kingdom away from Solomon and gave 10 of the 12 tribes to Jeroboam, in the days of Solomon’s son Rehoboam. The application is this. When you want to be loyal to the Lord your God, do not neglect the commands of His word. Do not try to rationalize your disobedience to any one of His commands. If you do so, if you are a true Christian, you will greatly regret that you did. The older that you get; the closer that your time comes to die; when you know that you shall have to give an account of yourself to God; the more that you will feel like Solomon did. Why did I not repent sooner? But, better late than never. Come back and keep whatever commandment you have broken. Make sure that you get for yourself a copy of the Scriptures and that you read it and abide in it; even if you are not given to reading by nature. You need to abide in the truth, or you will hurt yourself and others, and dishonor God whom you profess to love and want to be loyal to.

Now 2ndly – Let us think about the conclusion that Solomon came to, and the One in a thousand that he found. (verse 27 and 28)

“Here is what I have found, says the Preacher, adding one things to the other to find out the reason, which my soul still seeks but I cannot find: One man among a thousand I have found, but a woman among all these I have not found.” You can see now, can’t you, what Solomon is talking about? He is not saying that he never had met a godly woman. He is not saying that. You will remember the Queen of Sheba was a godly woman who came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon and see the great things that he had made. She said when she saw them, “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.” This was true of Solomon when he was younger. But when he was old, his heart departed in this matter of the wives and concubines. It is them that he is talking about; his “thousand”. He could not find one in the whole thousand that he was married to, who was a godly woman. It was his own fault. He had gone about things in an unbiblical way, and he suffered the consequences of it.

But who was the one man among a thousand that he had found? Remember that Solomon has already said in verses 19 and 20 of this same chapter – “Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city.” “For there is not a just man

on earth who does good and does not sin. So Solomon is not condemning the character of all women, and exalting certain men who had been faithful to God and to himself. I believe that he had found the "One among a thousand" who was perfectly faithful and true. He had found salvation in Jesus Christ; in the Lord who revealed Himself to him twice. He believed in the promise of the Messiah who was coming, and he as a prophet had it revealed to Him, what true marriage should be like in his being given the ability to write the book of Song of Solomon. That book is a picture of the true love between Christ and the church. This great Savior, King, and Lord would have 1 Bride who He would be perfectly faithful to; but this bride would be composed of many members; each united to Him by faith. He knew that this Christ was yet to come, but he had come to know forgiveness and restoration to wisdom and a right mind spiritually, by praying and confessing his sins to God, and repenting of them. As far as he was able to make things right, I believe that he sincerely tried to do so, and this is the proof of it in this text. The Lord Jesus Christ was the one among a thousand to Solomon's soul. If you turn to Proverbs Chapter 30 and verse 1 you will find the words of Agur the son of Jakeh, his utterance. I think that Solomon had these words included here because they came from one of his "1,000" male friends, a man who had prophetic utterance, and who thought as he did, about himself. "Surely I am more stupid than any man, and do not have the understanding of a man." "I neither learned wisdom nor have knowledge of the Holy One." "Who has ascended into heaven or descended?" "Who has gathered the wind in His fists?" "Who has bound the waters in a garment?" "Who has established all the ends of the earth?" "What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if you know?" The NAS says, "Surely you know." Surely this is a description of Christ, and surely this is the Son of God who had revealed Himself to Solomon. He was the One of a thousand who brought sinful Solomon back from his sin, and also who forgave His sins and brought Him to heaven. Jesus died for Solomon's great sins. I am sure that Solomon will be able to relate this to you personally, in the day of the resurrection. He admits it now, here.