

Day 56 – Apr. 17

[These are put out early because I'll be unavailable to post them on Mon. and Tues.]

Last week we talked about the dangerous word, “if”. Today, Solomon suffers its fate. “If you will follow me with integrity and godliness...” Well, Solomon did and God blessed him, for a time. But as he aged, Solomon turned to other gods, splitting his allegiance and losing his integrity. And these weren't just any gods. They were the gods of the land from before God brought His people there – Ashtoreth, Molech, and Chemosh. Ashtoreth was the goddess consort of Baal, the primary deity of this area. She was the goddess of war and sex and the shrines Solomon built to her would stand until Joash's day. Molech and Chemosh were also local deities who required child sacrifice, hence the added “detestable” in this text. Yet it is not these particular gods that show the depth of Solomon's betrayal. It is simply the fact that Solomon refused to stay pure, “clean”, and was as expected led to worship other gods. God had warned of this back when the people called for a king, and Solomon proved Him true again.

To what gods have we turned and in so doing turned away from God? While our gods may not require child sacrifice, they have distracted us and drawn us away from God. The obvious ones in American culture are Comfort, Wealth, Power, and Self-worship. But this pantheon of gods is vast and includes things ingrained in us like Consumerism, Sports, and even Social Media. Any of these can be useful and used by God to accomplish His will. But I would argue that all are too attractive to us to be safe. A good gauge of your own level of love for any of these things is the amount of excuses you just came up with to justify any of them in your own life. “But Pastor Steve, I give a tithe of my money, so it must be ok.” “But Pastor Steve, I use Social Media to witness, so the other 3 hours/day I spend surfing Facebook, the relationships I've burned in arguments over posts, and the things I've forwarded that go directly against God's will are all ok, right?” We tend to defend our gods, rather than bringing them to God to see what He might have to say about their place in our lives. A few interesting tools to use to get a better handle on which gods you might be worshiping are (1) fasting from it for a week and see how your life changes and how you feel about it, (2) spending time openly and honestly asking God about each individual one and then listening without filters for His answer with an agreement that you will do whatever it is God calls you to, or (3) ask a loved one – especially a son or daughter - to honestly share what they see about your relationship with it.