

Communion Saturday

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Preacher: Fergus MacDonald

[0 : 0 0] where Solomon says in his letter to Hiram the king of Tyre I intend therefore to build a temple for the name of the Lord my God I intend therefore to build a temple for the name of the Lord my God now this chapter deals almost exclusively with the preparations for the task of building the temple in fact the title that is given by the editors of the NIV the chapter title reads preparations for building a temple now someone has said that this is a chapter of which often we want to get through as quickly as possible we want to come to the actual temple rather than to trouble about the details of the preparation someone has said that it's like driving in the motorway and there's a lot of reconstruction going on and you've got to grin and bear it and the suggestion is that sometimes we think that this is a chapter which we grin and bear until we come to more interesting material on the other hand this chapter has been included in Holy Scripture for a purpose and it reminds us of the importance of preparation that spirituality

Christian spirit, biblical spirituality is concerned not only with events as such but with preparing for them and this chapter reminds us of the importance or illustrates the importance of preparing to celebrate the Lord's Supper indeed to celebrate any key event but especially the sacraments which the Lord has given to us as signs as visible words that confirm and strengthen the message of the gospel and we of course were reminded in the reading from the New Testament that the temple is no longer a physical building the temple has been spiritualized the temple is today the body of Christ it is not located in one place as it was then in Jerusalem it is located wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of Jesus and Paul wrote to the Corinthians who lived far away from Jerusalem and said you are

God's temple you he is speaking in the plural there he is speaking of the people of God you are the temple of God again writing to the Corinthians in the second letter in the sixth chapter he reminds them that we are the temple of the living God now when Paul mentioned in chapter 3 that the church in Corinth was the temple of the living God he was dealing with a situation where the church was being torn apart where there were factions and where there were rivalries and partisanship and he said this is the temple of God it is not yours it is not belong to Paul it is not belong to Paulus it is not belong to Peter it is God's temple and he is urging us about the warning us of the danger of destroying the temple of God and dividing the temple of God and the Lord's

Supper of course is a sacrament where there is one bread one loaf one cup symbolizing the unity of the people of God and as we prepare once again to celebrate this supper Paul is reminding us here that we are together are the temple of God but he also says that we are the temple of the living God and when Paul says that to the Corinthians in his second letter he is not thinking of factions and divisions in the church he is thinking of idolatry he is thinking of the multiplicity the multitude of idols that existed outside the church and he said in contrast to them you are the temple of the living God the God who is alive and the God who gives life and of course the Lord's Supper reminds us that he that Jesus is a living Christ he is the one who feeds us spiritually that is symbolized in the bread and in the wine we cannot live without him he is our life as Paul says in another place and we receive that life from him and one of the means through which he communicates that life to us is the Lord's

Supper so the Lord's Supper symbolizes the unity of the church and it also symbolizes that the head of the church is a life giving Christ someone upon whom we are utterly and totally dependent now God is at work today in and through his church although in Europe and parts of Australia and New Zealand and countries like that largely countries of British origin the churches are declining but in many other countries the churches are growing last week I met with a couple of leaders from Africa churches in Africa one from Ghana another from Zimbabwe and they told us at the meeting I was attending how God is blessing his church in Africa and the churches are multiplying there they confess that all too often there was not death but there was certainly bread it is reckoned that the net increase in the

[6 : 31] Christian community in Africa is at the order of 25,000 a day it is mind boggling the statistics but as the church grows statistically quantitatively the church is challenged to deepen its life it is challenged through the ministry of the word and the ministry of the sacrament to grow not only in quantity in numbers but also grow in depth to grow in quality and the Lord's Supper has been given to us not as a converting ordinance to bring us to trust the Lord's Supper has been given to us to deepen our commitment the Lord's Supper is not a justifying ordinance but a sanctifying ordinance been given to us as a means of deepening our love for Christ and our allegiance to him our service tonight is a service of preparation a service in which we seek to prepare ourselves to celebrate the Lord's

Supper in a worthy manner Paul was concerned that in Corinth they were not doing that and so he reminded them of what the Lord had said concerning the Lord's Supper and in the light of that he said we must prepare we must examine ourselves we must prepare ourselves we must seek to participate worthily at the Lord's table and I want to suggest to you tonight that there are some lessons that we can learn as we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Supper from Solomon's preparation for the building of the temple and ultimately for the celebration of its opening in chapter 8 I think there are four lessons that we might learn first of all that Solomon's preparation was motivated by God's promise we see that especially in verse 6 where he reminds

Hyrum that he intended to build the temple for the name of the Lord his God as the Lord told my father David when he said your son whom I put on the throne in your place will build the temple in my name now Solomon here is alluding back to the passage in 2 Samuel where there was this promise given to David that he that his son would build a temple we see this particularly in 2 Samuel chapter 7 at verse 13 the Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you when your days are over and you rest with your fathers I will raise up your offspring to succeed you who will come from your own body and I will establish his kingdom he is the one who will build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever

I will be his father and he shall be my son and Solomon is here alluding to that promise and he is aware of the fact that this enterprise in which he engaged was an enterprise which had a divine initiative it was not his idea it was something that came from God to his father David and there is a very real sense in which that promise was the foundation of the temple we read in chapter 5 of how stones were cut from all over the country and brought to Jerusalem for building the temple that the real foundation of the temple was the promise of God the promise to meet with his people the promise to provide a place where they might worship him and praise his name and still today the promise of God is the basis of all our worship the promise of God is the foundation of the spiritualized temple of the

New Testament church God said to his ancient people when he brought them out of Egypt God said that he was making them his people and that he would be their God let me quote to you exactly what he said in Exodus chapter 6 verse 7 I will take you as my own people and I will be your God then you will know that I am the Lord your God who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians I will take you he says as my own people and I will be your God and that is the basis that is the foundation of the church it wasn't that the apostles had the idea of building a church the church was founded on the promise of God and the Lord Jesus Christ tells us that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church the church has got this divine foundation the church is built upon the promise and the purpose of God now the

[12:12] Lord's Supper is a seal of that promise the Lord's Supper is not simply a sacrament a sign it is also a seal it is a confirmation it ratifies the promise of God and each time we celebrate the Lord's Supper the promise of God to be the God of his people is ratified it is confirmed it is underlined and we will have the privilege tomorrow God willing to receive that ratification to receive that confirmation of the promise of God the whole basis of salvation the whole basis of the church is built on the promise of God that's the first lesson I think that we need to learn to recognize as we seek to prepare to celebrate the Lord's Supper that the temple of which we are a part is built on the promises of God the promises of God are the foundation and this is God's initiative it's a divine enterprise it is his church not ours but secondly

Solomon's preparation was not only motivated by the promise of God it was also expressed in the treaty that he made with Hiram we see this in verse 12 of 1 Kings chapter 5 let me read it to that verse to you the Lord gave Solomon wisdom just as he had promised him there were peaceful relations between Hiram and Solomon and the two of them made a treaty now the word treaty can be translated covenant and perhaps covenant might be a more traditional translation but a covenant is a treaty and a treaty is a covenant as I mentioned last night the model of the covenant that God made with his people was based upon international treaties between a sovereign great king an emperor and a vassal king and kingdom now this covenant that Solomon made with

Hiram appears at first sight to be a bilateral covenant between two equals but natural fact Hiram was one of Solomon's vassals he was one of the kings that came and sent people to the court of Solomon to learn from his wisdom he was one of those who were a subject to Solomon we read in chapter four how Solomon ruled from the Euphrates in the north down to Gaza to the border of Egypt in the south and Hiram was right there in the center of that territory Hiram was a vassal and it's interesting that although Hiram made his request that his men would do most of the work and the way it worked out was Solomon's men in fact did the work and it's quite clear that Solomon is the dominant party but we see here that although this is a treaty between a great king and a vassal

Solomon executes and institutes this treaty this covenant in a very wise way he does so treating Hiram as a real person Solomon's not a dictator Solomon has a friendly relationship with Hiram and it's important for us to remember that although we are God's vassals God does not treat us as dirt in fact God regards us as those made in his image he regards us as the apple of his eye but nevertheless he is the sovereign lord but within this sovereignty within this relationship our relationship to him in his sovereignty we have we have the privilege of interacting with

God we have the privilege of drawing near to him and speaking to him as a friend just as Hiram was the friend of David and the friend of Solomon although he was the subject of both these great kings of Israel so we also are the subjects but we're also the friends of God it's interesting that in the Hebrew Bible the last part of chapter 4 really is tied up with chapter 5 in the same unit and we see that the building of the temple the preparation for the building of the temple was one of the ways in which other kings paid tribute to Solomon Hiram was a vassal but he had his wish and Solomon respected his wish so he did not meet its terms exactly he was one of those subjects who was one of those kings who was the subject of

[17 : 52] Solomon all his life and as I've already said this treaty this covenant is an example of Solomon's wisdom he was skilled he was friendly and although it was a treaty between an emperor and a vassal it was not a dictatorship and so Hiram is not simply a slave he's a volunteer he is a person he's someone whom Solomon respects and there is a sense in which this relationship this treaty this covenant between Solomon and Hiram is if you like an illustration of the new covenant which is marked by the Lord's Supper which is symbolized by the Lord's Supper the Lord Jesus Christ is the sovereign Lord he is the king of kings we bow down before him we fall prostrate at his feet and yet he treats us as his friends he invites us to volunteer he invites us to cooperate with him he wants us to work with him he wants us to enter into a close intimate friendship and fellowship with him and so we are like the slave in the old testament who decided that he loved his master and he did not want to go out free he was still a slave he was still a servant but he loved his master we are challenged each time we celebrate the lord's supper as to whether we love our master as we are reminded of his love for us we are challenged concerning our love for him and tomorrow as we come to his table he will be asking us do we love him are we willing to say with a slave in the old testament

I love my master I won't accept my personal freedom I want to be your servant I want to live for you I don't want to live for myself the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me said Paul is the one whom he sought to serve throughout all his Christian life Solomon is here putting the temple first in this sense he was ahead of David because David built his palace first and he wasn't able to build the temple and God only wanted to because he said I've got a house I've got a palace and God does not have a house he was convicted by this sense of personal priority that he had it was then that

God gave him the promise that Solomon would build the temple that he had in mind and so Solomon at this point in his life had his priorities right he had his priorities right at the beginning although Solomon made many mistakes many many very serious mistakes later as we well know yet right at the beginning he had this wisdom that God had given to him and he had his priorities right but that's the second lesson I think that we learn here that our preparation must be is tied to the covenant and the Lord's Supper reminds us of the covenant relationship that God has made with us in which he gives himself to us and invites us to give ourselves to him but the third lesson that we learn here is that

Solomon's preparation was threatened by the enemy for all his good intentions to build the temple first we find that in fact he spent more time almost twice as long building his own palace the temple was built in seven years took 13 years to build the palace and so we see there's an enemy at work in his own heart as there is an enemy at work in all our hearts there is an enemy within that we need to take into account and as we prepare for the Lord's Supper we need to recognize this to recognize that we are sinners to recognize that there is a sinful self that there is what the old versions call the flesh within us and we need to recognize that because that threatens our relationship with God it threatens our relationship with him and it threatens our preparation in fact there is a hint in this passage that Solomon may already have been beginning to backslide when he says when we're told in verse 13 that his workers spent one month in Lebanon and two months at home it is possible to translate the phrase at home in Solomon's house and perhaps he took them they were spending one month in the temple and two months on his palace that is possible we can't be sure of that we do know later on just in a very short period of time in chapter 7 that he took 13 years to build his palace and it's important for us to recognize our enemies the Psalms speak a lot about enemies and some

Christians have physical enemies today that are our real enemies are spiritual enemies the real enemy is within and of course there is the devil who goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom we may devour and destroy and we need to take into account the enemy and remember and remind ourselves that Christ conquered the principalities and powers that the cross was a victory over the forces of evil and of darkness and so we need to be aware of this danger of losing our vision of blotting our vision and the Lord suffered as an opportunity to remind us and this service of preparation is a reminder of the need to sharpen our vision by the grace of God to recognize that there is an enemy there is an enemy within the heart is deceitful above all things says Jeremiah and desperately wicked and we live today in an age in which a lot of interest in contemporary spirituality it's not

[25 : 25] Christian spirituality but it's spirituality and people are looking for a spiritual answer but a lot of contemporary spirituality is focused on the self it's focused within transcendence is found not above in a living relationship with God but in an internal reflection with oneself now some people interested in spirituality today say that it is the ego that is bad the self is good but the scriptures tell us that if there is a distinction between the self and the ego both are fallen both are sinful and we need to beware of this danger the enemy within there is a Trojan horse and we need to recognize that and ask the Lord to make us alert to the spiritual realities in which we have to face and finally there is a fourth lesson I think that we can learn here

Solomon's preparation for the building of the temple was fulfilled not only when the temple was built and dedicated in chapter 8 that it was fulfilled it is not yet fulfilled ultimately it will be fulfilled in the new Jerusalem it will be fulfilled in the future order it will be fulfilled when there will be a new heavens and a new earth and where there will be no temple and in heaven there will be no temple because the Lord is there we don't need symbols the Lord himself is present it's a reference in chapter 4 verse 27 to people coming to Solomon's table from all over the world what we see in the book of Revelation is people from every nation every tribe a great multitude that no one can number coming to the new

Jerusalem and there we see not simply the kings who were the subjects who were Solomon's subjects that all the kings of the earth bringing their riches into the new Jerusalem that vision that Micah had of the people coming to Jerusalem is fulfilled in the new Jerusalem it is fulfilled not in the present but in the future Jesus himself speaks of the messianic banquet and the people will come from the east and from the west and sit down at the great feast at the table of the messiah when we come to the lord's table we are anticipating that great day Jesus spoke about drinking the wine drinking wine anew in the kingdom of god he was anticipating that day when the kingdom of god will have fully come and that is the day to which we look forward we who are christians live not only in a physical world we live in a spiritual universe as well there is a parallel universe and it's very important for us to recognize that there's a lot of talk in science fiction about parallel universes but there's a real parallel universe and that is the spiritual universe eternity which interacts and interlocks with time and in with and under time that is eternity and we who are called to be followers of the lord jesus christ are reminded of that but we come to the lord's table we do this until he come we do this as a staging post as a point of pilgrimage as an oasis in the desert until he come that is his focus in the future and so solomon in the building the temple was pointing forward to that great event so also we and tomorrow we come to the lord's table we'll be pointing forward to that event and we will be telling the world we will be telling all those who are present that we believe in that each time we do this

Paul said we proclaim the lord's death we proclaim that he is lord we proclaim that he is the savior of the world we point forward to that day when he will come again and so as we seek to be prepared by the holy spirit let's just reflect on how solomon prepared for the building of the temple that was a great event in the history of Israel but it is no greater than a celebration of the lord's supper we have the privilege of celebrating the lord's supper once again and we're being reminded tonight of the importance of preparing for that and asking the lord to prepare us to come with a spiritual frame of mind to come and participate in the lord's supper in a worthy manner which will honor him and which may be a means of blessing to ourselves the lord's supper reminds us of the promises of god the promise of his covenant the promise that he is the savior of his people but the lord's supper also reminds us that there is an enemy an enemy who was overcome on the cross of calvary but an enemy who attacks us an enemy who besieges our souls an enemy who would seek to destroy the work of god seek to undo what god is doing in our souls and in the world we need to be alert and ask god to grant us the victory over that enemy that we may be enabled to resist the devil and to know that he will flee and see him fleeing from us when we come to the lord's table we come anticipating the new heavens and the new earth anticipating the new order anticipating that day when jesus christ will return anticipating that day when at the heart of god's universe all will know there is the new jerusalem and all the nations of the world will be there represented and he will be honored there will be no temple there because the lord is the temple and we will see him as he is at the moment god is transcendent in such a way that we cannot see him moises had availed his face he had the privilege of seeing the lord but only saw his back and the lord is hidden he reveals him to us through signs through bread and wine he reveals himself to us through words not not not not not visually but then we will see him face to face and so this supper the lord's supper is given to us as as as an oasis on the way time it's it's it's it's a point where we stop and where we're renewed where we're fed where we take stock and where we thank the lord and we praise the lord and we worship the lord because it is an act of thanksgiving it is a eucharist the greek word for thanksgiving is eucharist we thank the Lord, we praise the Lord we bless the Lord and it is an event in which we have the privilege of thanking and praising the Lord for what he has done for us now if the Lord has done this for you and you have not yet done what he is asking you to do for him and he is asking you to come to his table he is asking you to profess him he is asking you to just

nail your colours to his mast and if you have not yet done that then I invite you to come to the session tonight come and tell us come and profess your faith come and express your allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ come and declare that you are on his side no longer be a secret disciple give yourself utterly holy and holy to him remember Hiram was a vassal but Solomon gave him a choice Solomon invited him to give himself invited him to volunteer and God is inviting you tonight to come as a volunteer to offer yourself to him by coming to his table may God grant that if you do believe in him and if you do trust him and you do not yet profess your faith in him that tonight the Holy Spirit may speak to you and bring you not only to Christ but bring you to his table let us bow our heads in prayer our heavenly fathers we come before you this evening we come to thank you for the privilege of remembering the death of the Lord and we pray that you will enable us to regard this as a great privilege and therefore to come prepared grant oh Lord that you by your spirit will work in us and through us so that we might be spiritually prepared to remember the Lord's death spiritually prepared to say thanks spiritually prepared to say I love my master

[35 : 51] I will not go out free grant oh Lord that you will speak especially to those who do trust in you but who have not yet come to the Lord's table we pray that you will bring home to them tonight their duty their responsibility and grant oh God that whatever may be holding them back that they may be released from that and that they may give themselves utterly and wholly to you we ask this in the name of Jesus and for his sake Amen we close our service singing in Psalm 31 in the sing Psalms on page 36 Psalm 31 in you I've taken refuge

Lord you are my shelter in distress oh let me never be ashamed but save me in your
righteousness in this