

MAY THE LORD OPEN YOUR HEART

Pastor Matthew Ude
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Confirmation Sunday

1 Chronicles 28:9 NKJ ⁹ "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.

1 Chronicles 28:20 NKJ ²⁰ And David said to his son Solomon, "Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God-- my God-- *will be* with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.

When I was eight or nine, I had the perfect plan. Across the road from our house was a park and in that park was a glorious machine that dispensed soda. Although we had some of our own money we weren't allowed to spend it on soda. But this day was Father's Day, and I reasoned that if I got caught I could just pretend that it was a gift for Dad. We were caught and we did pretend that the soda was a gift for Dad. Whether he really believed us or not, I don't know, but we didn't get in trouble. The point is that we can sometimes deceive our parents.

Despite what my mother always claimed. She did not always know everything. We can sometimes fool our parents. We can deceive our teachers, our friends, our spouse. We can even lie to ourselves. We often convince ourselves that what we are doing, we are doing for good and noble reasons, not for selfish ones. But in the end, it does us no good. However much we may try to convince ourselves that our hearts and intentions are pure, David reminds us, the Lord, "understands all the intent of the thoughts." We can deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive Him.

Therefore, King David's says to his son Solomon, "serve the Lord with a loyal heart." Deceiving the Lord does not work. Hiding things from him, blaming others, making excuses, insisting that your intentions were pure, none of these strategies are going to be successful.

David witnessed the failure of such strategies firsthand. As a young man in Saul's court David had seen what happens when you attempt to make excuses before God. God sent King Saul to destroy Agag King of Amalek. The Lord specifically warned Saul that he must "utterly destroy" the Amalekites, all the people and all their animals. Saul did not do as the Lord commanded. He spared Agag, King of Amalek and all the best animals. When God confronted Saul, Saul pretended that he meant them as a sacrifice to God. But God who knew Saul's heart rebuked him, and foretold that because his heart was not loyal to God, God would remove him as king of Israel.

1 Samuel 15:22 Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams.

When David himself sinned and was confronted by Nathan, the prophet of the Lord, David did not make the same mistake. He did not make excuses or try to blame others. He did not try to hide his guilt but

instead confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord." To which the Lord responded, "I have put away your sin."

Therefore, David tells his son Solomon and reminds us today. **"Serve the Lord with a willing and open heart."** When you are tempted to make excuses, stop and consider why you should not have done what you did, instead of looking for justification. When you are tempted to blame others, stop and consider what you did wrong. When you are tempted to hide your guilt, stop and open your heart, confessing your sins to the Lord.

When we do this David reminds us, when we "seek him" instead of trying to hide from him. "He will be found."

1 John 1:9-10 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

"The LORD searches all hearts," we cannot hide anything from him, but he is quick to forgive, and for this reason we do not need to be afraid.

Psalm 130:3-4 3 If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? 4 But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.

As kids we sometimes get away with lying and hiding things. We sometimes convince our parents that the soda was a present for them. We think therefore that these are winning strategies, but they do not work before the Lord. Our hope comes alone from Jesus, who died for our sins and rose again.

David had another message for his son Solomon. Do the task the Lord has given you trusting in his strength.

Before Solomon was even born, God had a task and a purpose chosen for him. King David wanted to build a temple for the Lord, but the Lord told him not to. God had already chosen Solomon as the one who would build his temple. David encourages Solomon to be strong and courageous, to fulfill this task that the Lord had given to him, knowing that the Lord would bless this work. **"Be strong and of good courage, for the LORD God will be with you."**

What task does God have chosen for you?

I doubt any of your confirmands will be asked to build a temple, certainly nothing as grand as that which Solomon built. But there are many kinds of temples and many ways in which we may serve the Lord. Perhaps you will preach or teach the word and in so doing help build the true temple of God, which is His church, the gathering together of his people. Perhaps you will seek out the knowledge of the cosmos or uncover the secrets of bosons. In so doing you may bring praises to God as you uncover the mysteries of his creation. Or you will teach your children to know the stories of the bible and the wonderful love of our Savior.

Just like Solomon he has a task chosen for each of you, all though unlike Solomon you do not yet know it. Whatever task he has chosen, whatever paths you walk - you have this promise from the Lord, **"Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God will be with you."**

Once you have put away the childish impulse to hide from the Lord and opened your heart to God, there is nothing that you cannot do. Slay giants, walk through the flames untouched, sit among the lions, survive in the belly of the fish, speak in tongues. These are just some of the deeds that men and women of faith accomplished by the strength of the Lord.

Such things may seem daunting and terrifying, and beyond your capabilities, but the strength is not from you but from the Lord.

Isaiah 40:30-31 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, 31 But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

Go therefore in the strength of the Lord. Do not hide your sin from God, but open your heart to the LORD, and he will forgive your sins. He will bless your life, and He will strengthen you to accomplish all things that he has given you to do.

Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God-- my God-- will be with you.