

“Satisfied?”

...the state of the church address 2026

1 Kings 11:1-13

Pastor Tim Dodson at Jesus
Fellowship of Believers,
Menomonie, Wisconsin
- January 18, 2026

*1 But King Solomon loved many
foreign women, as well as the
daughter of Pharaoh: women of the
Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites,*

Sidonians, [and] Hittites—2 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. 3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. 4 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. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as [did] his father David. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that [is] east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. 8 And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. 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, 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded. 11 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. 12 "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. 13 "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."

The gifted British expositor Alexander Maclaren once remarked that “*Scripture never blinks the defects of its heroes...Its portraits do not smooth out wrinkles, but, with absolute fidelity, give all faults.*” Few scriptural accounts reflect this truth as much as that of Solomon. God blessed Solomon with incredible wisdom, incredible wealth, and incredible opportunities, but eventually, in his older years, he *still* drifted from the Lord. He began to make multiple foolish decisions, each like dominoes cascading against the next, and indeed, things did not end well. “*A man’s own folly ruins his life*” (Prov. 19:3 niv). Solomon wrote those words, and he no doubt believed them. However, he certainly failed to heed them. So often there is a great...and ultimately catastrophic, chasm between what we know in our heads and what we actually live out in our lives.

Yes, King Solomon's story in the Bible (especially 1 Kings 11) serves as a prime example of what both Solomon...as well as most of us today...would consider an absolute impossibility: the spiritual decline from great wisdom and devotion to compromise and idolatry. Most of us are seemingly incapable of entertaining the possibility of our spiritually “walking it back.” We, like the apostle Peter, are quick to throw back our shoulders



in declaration... *"I would never deny you, Master...I would die first!"* And yet the field of battle is in truth riddled with the bodies of those who have said the same...in their foolish pride, they fell in epic collapse. Joshua Harris, Ravi Zacharis, Jimmy Swaggert, Bill Hybels (Willow Creek), Tullian Tchividjian's (TUHL-ee-uhn CHAH-vi-jin), James MacDonald, as well as many much closer to us.

In Solomon's case, it appears at least publicly, that he went down in flames primarily due to his many foreign wives who turned his heart to worship other gods. While it indeed was *Solomon's* undoing, such was not and is not the definitive sin of our undoing. No...there are so many, and to be sure, Satan is aware of yours and mine. However, Solomon's compromise was a classic fall; one that Satan has used countless times. His, of course, went on to have a detrimental impact on his rule and his kingdom. It highlighted the dangers of the company we keep and the easy slide into spiritual apathy. It has been said that *"we will be remembered by the last worst thing we did."* And sadly, Solomon proves the rule.

Scripture...1 Kings 3:12; 4:29–31, tells us that Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, but the end of his life would be very different than when he was at his peak. When he walked in God's ways and kept His commands (3:14), King Solomon saw some incredible things come to pass. Rulers from around the world took notice ...many traveled great distances to see the wisdom of Solomon at work and the resulting glory of his kingdom (4:34).

But despite Solomon's early victories, it seems that Satan merely bided his time. Clearly, Solomon did not heed his own counsel, and his wisdom was not sufficiently internalized. He failed to keep his own heart (Proverbs 4:23). He eventually lost his way, and at the end of his reign, Solomon's attention became fixed on many things that were not of Jehovah God nor the furtherance of God's kingdom.

Amongst many other wonderful acts, Solomon built the Temple. Such should have been the memorial too his life, but he also later built the 'high places' for idols. He lived to be the quintessential example of a divided heart...one that didn't fully follow God, unlike his father David. I have no doubt that just like in Peter's case, there was a time that such a fall would have been unthinkable to Solomon...it always seems to be thus until we are standing in the middle of it. Solomon didn't give up on God or totally turn his back on God. He was apparently just *satisfied* with his level of pursuit of God. He wanted a little of both now... the world **and** God, and you just can't have both. But how we will try...

Even after he was expressly warned against these dangers, Solomon still went down in flames. Again, just like Peter was so warned many years later! I mean...Jesus literally told him what was going to happen, and yet he still brazenly charged ahead. I always thought that if I had been Peter I would have stayed locked in my house the next day! But nooooo...we brashly go out there with "not me...not ever" on our lips. Despite the warnings against such, Solomon went on to marry 700 wives...many of them foreign...many therefor with foreign gods. Just for good measure, he also had the JV team of 300 concubines. Most of this was for political alliances, thus disobeying God's command not to intermarry with idolaters.

As he aged, his wives eventually led him to worship their gods (Ashtoreth, Milcom, Chemosh), and he moreover went on to build shrines for their worship. His heart was no longer fully devoted to the LORD, no longer was he singular in heart. This, of course, resulted in God's anger, and the promise to tear the kingdom from his son, and the proclamation that he would now have a less diligent spiritual leadership.

Naturally, this affected Solomon's relationship with God: "*The Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. He had commanded him about this, so that he would not follow other gods, but Solomon did not do what the Lord had commanded*" (vv.9–10).

Like Solomon before us, most of us still want some God in our lives, but how often we have become...well, *satisfied*. Satisfied with how much of Him we have, how much of us He has, how much we are doing for Him, how much we are giving to him. We are ok right here. We're good. We are ...for all effective purposes, *done*.

Certainly we tend to cry fowl at any insinuation here of comparison with our own personal lives, for few if any of us know such wealth and fame as Solomon...as many toys and distractions as Solomon, nor such an overt focus upon such. Because we don't measure ourselves with that scale, we inevitably declare ourselves "not guilty." And yet the sins of Solomon are lived out continuously in many of us, and in time, our living too will end in the same demise and the same regrets.

Perhaps you are this morning wondering what this passage...this story, has to do with this church...this state of the church review. Well, each year about this time...for so many years...I have been asked as your pastor to stop and view the state of things. To stop and ...with as much discernment as I can muster, seek God and my heart... through the Holy Spirit...and then speak concerning the "State of (this) Church."

I am struck today by so many positives here in this church. God has been so very good to us. We have buildings, outreach ministry, many amenities and "bells and whistles." Furthermore, there are some of you who indeed literally live for the furthering of the Kingdom of God and the ministerial pursuits of this church. Your vacations are mission trips, and your joy is your service...you can't get enough. We are also blessed with great staff and hold missional outreaches near and far. We have been participants in a lot of Gods victories. We have seen the mountain tops of God's miraculous. We have survived the "valleys of the shadow of death." So now I stand and look back in great thanks, and yet ...I can't help but wonder...are we now... "*satisfied?*"

In Early Christianity, between the 6th century BC until 325 AD, there was a common religious term that translates into "Was Satisfied." *WAS SATISFIED* referred to a state of contentment that arises after eating...one resulting in a profound sense of fullness. That physical satisfaction was depicted as leading to a spiritual consequence: the rejection of the divine presence. Such a concept emphasized the tension between earthly fulfillment and spiritual awareness, wherein material satisfaction diverts our attention and energies away from seeking a connection with the divine.

As we step into 2026, I wonder if we are *walking in* boldly... or are we...with *trepidation*... effectively feeling our way forward as if crossing thin ice? Can we...as I said at this point last year...able to individually look over our shoulders and see that we...individually and corporately as a church... are indeed "leaner, meaner, smarter, faster...than we were a year ago? Or have we...like Solomon before us, become simply "satisfied" with our standing before God? Are we guilty of taking the position that we are giving enough...serving enough...attending enough...reading enough...learning enough? We want God for sure! But you know...we're good...you know...right *here*.

The dangers of this premature satisfaction are many...to both the church corporately as well as the individual believer who makes it up.

1. Stagnation: Believing you've developed enough ...gone far enough. Such stops spiritual growth; it is ignoring the reality wherein you are either getting better or getting worse, but you are definitely not staying the same.
2. Misplaced Focus: A natural vacuum is created in the absence of Godly advancement...pulling in earthly goods, public approval, worldly comforts and temporary thrills.
3. False Contentment: after years of service and sacrifice, we want to believe we have come to that “sweet spot” where we can...like earthly retirement, kick back and enjoy the fruits of our long and many labors. We have “met the bar.” We have achieved some spiritual success, so we have earned the right to indulge a little. We will of course attempt to hold onto the religious standing we have, while now...like Solomon, we turn to aspects of comfort, fun, and ease.
4. Underutilizing Gifts: Now we begin to find righteous permission in saying “no.” We have reached the thresh-hold wherein we have come far enough to feel good about our eternity, so now we begin to serve God, the church, and others less and less because we're content with minimal effort or occasional talent usage.

The Christian ideal...one found on the pages of scripture, paints a very different finish to this “race.” It paints a life that is content, yet unsatisfied. A lifelong...maybe one could even say *eternal*, journey of “desire”: one wherein your heart always longs for more of Him, making one perpetually unsatisfied with anything less than all He has for you...all you can do for Him, all you can be in Him...all you can experience in His presence. It is a life lived that is forever hungry for *more*.

It would seem that to live a life of satisfaction is effectively burning through one’s inheritance. For all that we will have on the other side is that which we have “sent ahead.” How many of us have merely constructed lives of hay and straw that will burn away in the fires of judgment?

Some might even think that whatever Christ died to obtain for them is already theirs in total perfection. It’s now just a matter of resting in what is already true. The idea of pressing forward and relentlessly pursuing the knowledge and enjoyment of Christ strikes them as inconsistent with God’s grace. It feels as if they are introducing works into their relationship with Jesus. So, the result is that they “coast.” They now drift aimlessly through the Christian life.

Jesus once said, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst” (John 4:14). One might then enthusiastically jump to the conclusion that once you come to Jesus all your longings are satisfied...or *will be* satisfied...that we will at some point arrive at that spiritual plateau where we can finally kick back and enjoy the world and life here.

But consider the following biblical indications that some dissatisfaction ought to still be part of our Christian experience.

I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. (Philippians 3:12 NLT)

Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep... (Romans 12:15 NLT)

Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? (Romans 12:24 NLT)

When we are invited to come to Christ—to come to the fountain of living water—we are indeed offered satisfaction. For Christ is the source of *all* satisfaction and *total* satisfaction. But the depth of this satisfaction is not drunk all at once.

In this life our bodies will decay and give us pain and eventually die. We are warned in scripture that time is short. Jesus...seemingly speaking out of his humanity...said in John 9, "*I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; [the] night is coming when no one can work. (but) As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*"

Some Christians, for a variety of reasons, have become spiritually satisfied and therefore spiritually stagnant. They aren't overtly regressing...at least not currently... but there is a sense in which they are stuck in neutral. Or perhaps they're actually moving forward to some degree, but only because they've set their souls on cruise control. They don't pay much attention to the speed and progress of their Christian life, but are attentive only to the degree that it is necessary to keep from swerving off the road of following Christ. They don't think it's necessary to accelerate. They are content with where they are on this road to eternal life. They've settled for the status quo. "Things as they are" is just fine with them. No need to rock the boat or increase the pace at which they pursue Christ in all his fullness. Again, they are spiritually stagnant.

In C.S. Lewis's "The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses" he said, "*It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.*"

Feeling satisfied can so easily lead to feeling self-sufficient, believing our hope is in the things we own, the people we love, or our own selves. All of that of course leads us to become King Solomon. Our "satisfaction" causes us to disconnect with the longings we still experience, which God uses to motivate us to draw nearer to him and to engage in his work. When we feel unsatisfied, we will remember that we don't have all the answers we need and we must forever lift our eyes to our wise and loving Creator. Embracing unsatisfaction as a permanent condition causes us to maintain a more consistent focus on God.

I recently turned 65 years old. No one would argue that it has been a long strange trip over the last nearly 40 years in this church. I am ...certainly ...*content*. But it is still a restless contentment. For I find that I am still not satisfied. I am still not done. I passionately believe *WE* are still not done. Some of you will step out of the race and will do your best to spiritually "retire." I do trust you will not be offended if we go on without you. For some of us, we see "fields ripe for harvest." We don't want to stop. We don't want to retire. We want to see what's over the next hill... what's around the next bend. We want to see what God is going to do next. We are not yet filled. We are not yet satisfied. We are not yet "home...."

What will 2026 and beyond look like for us? For *you*?