

1 Kings 11:1-13 • The Fall of Solomon

Introduction

The fall of once strong and mighty believers does not often take place overnight or in one single instance. More often it's the result of choices and inaction over a very long period of time that one day results in a complete turn.

Read and compare the following sections of Scripture:

Deuteronomy 17:14-17

"When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman. Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.' He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself."

1 Kings 10:23-29

So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. All the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart. They brought every man his gift, articles of silver and gold, garments, weapons, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year. Now Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; and he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. The king made silver as common as stones in Jerusalem, and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamore trees that are in the lowland. Also Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's merchants procured them from Kue for a price. A chariot was imported from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver, and a horse for 150; and by the same means they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of the Arameans.

1 Samuel 8:10-18

So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who had asked of him a king. He said, "This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place them for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots. He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and some to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will also take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants. He will also take your male servants and your

1 Kings 5:13-18

Now King Solomon levied forced laborers from all Israel; and the forced laborers numbered 30,000 men. He sent them to Lebanon, 10,000 a month in relays; they were in Lebanon a month and two months at home. And Adoniram was over the forced laborers. Now Solomon had 70,000 transporters, and 80,000 hewers of stone in the mountains, besides Solomon's 3,300 chief deputies who were over the project and who ruled over the people who were doing the work. Then the king commanded, and they quarried great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation of the house with cut stones. So Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders and the Gebalites cut them, and prepared the timbers and the stones to build the house.

female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use them for his work. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants. Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day.”

1 Kings 8:59-61 (Solomon is speaking)

“And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the LORD, be near to 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 day requires, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no one else. Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day.”

1 Kings 9:1-9 (God is speaking)

Now it came about when Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all that Solomon desired to do, that the LORD appeared to Solomon a second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. The LORD said to him, “I have heard your prayer and your supplication, which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built by putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. As for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’ But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight. So Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house will become a heap of ruins; everyone who passes by will be astonished and hiss and say, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?’ And they will say, ‘Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and adopted other gods and worshiped them and served them, therefore the LORD has brought all this adversity on them.”

¹Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ²from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love. ³He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. ⁴For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. ⁵For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. ⁶Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done. ⁷Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. ⁸Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

[Read v.1-8]

Q: The beginnings of Solomon’s fall have just been reviewed above. What is the ultimate misjudgment?

A: He not only accumulated many wives (in violation of Deut. 17:17), but he “loved” them.

Q: What is the difference between David’s polygamy and Solomon’s?

A: All of David’s wives were Israelites. Solomon loved “foreign” women.

Q: What is the relationship between the sins of the father here (see Exod. 20:5)?

A: David sinned by committing polygamy. Solomon committed this same sin to a much greater degree.

Q: Was Solomon a sincere believer in the LORD?

A: Absolutely. [See 8:22-61, Solomon’s great prayer.]

Application: *Can a believer who is truly sincere about his or her faith fall? Why?*

Q: From what countries were these foreign wives from?

A: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite were Transjordanian (east side of the Jordan). Sidonian (from Sidon near Tyre) was northeastern coast along the Mediterranean. Hittite was north, and also indigenous to the land. Egyptian was from the country God rescued the Israelites out of.

Q: Why did God warn the Israelites not to associate with them?

A: Because the people of these lands would influence the spiritual life of the Israelites in the direction of idolatry. “Ashtoreh” is a deliberate distortion of the Canaanite “Ashtarta,” (a goddess of love and fertility, associated with orgiastic religious practices and prostitution) re-vocalizing based on the Hebrew word for “shame.” This was a goddess whose worship had been all but wiped out as the Israelites took the land away from the Canaanite but was still worshipped in Tyre and Sidon. “Milcom” was another name for Molech, the national god of the Ammonites. The worship of Molech was associated with the sacrifice of children in the fire (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5). “Chemosh” was the god of the Moabites, to whom the sacrifice of children as a burnt offering was customary (2 Kings 3:27).

Q: What was Solomon’s response?

A: He couldn’t give them up because of his love for the women.

Q: Where are the prophets during this time?

A: No where to be found. This is the problem associated with prosperity.

Q: As a result, what influence did all those foreign women have on Solomon’s spiritual life?

A: They eventually got to his heart. “For when Solomon was old...” The particular evil of Solomon was his tolerance for, and personal practice of, idolatry. Solomon became an open idolater, worshiping images of wood and stone in the sight of the temple which, in his earlier years, he had erected to the one true God. In verse 7, this high place was probably the Mount of Olives. This area is called the Mt. of Corruption in 2 Kings 23:13.

⁹Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, ¹⁰and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded. ¹¹So the LORD said to Solomon, “Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. ¹²Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. ¹³However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but 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.”

Q: To whom is Solomon's dedication to the LORD compared?

A: To David who, even though he committed many grave sins, never committed idolatry.

[Read v.9-13]

Q: Did Solomon have sufficient warning?

A: The LORD had appeared to him twice, once at Gibeon (3:5), the next at Jerusalem (9:2). On both occasions God warned Solomon so he was without excuse.

Q: What is God's response to Solomon, and what does He say He'll do?

A: Solomon's kingdom as he knows it will end, and it will be taken from his son. One tribe will be left in honor of David (Judah). The LORD's tearing of the kingdom from Solomon was announced in Ahijah's symbolic action of tearing his garment in v.29-39. The tearing of the robe, picturing the loss of the kingdom, recalls the interaction between Samuel and Saul (1 Sam. 15:27-28), when the LORD took the kingdom away from Saul because of his disobedience. The great gifts to Solomon followed by his great abuse warranted such a judgment.

Q: David had committed numerous sins, such as polygamy, adultery, murder, census taking. Solomon had committed many sins as well. But why did God come down so hard on Solomon and not on David, who very well may have committed more sins? And why is Solomon compared with his father David in terms of being "wholly devoted" to the LORD.

A: The answer is simple. The critical issue is whether or not you stay in a personal relationship with God. As long as you keep going back to Him and Him alone, there is always hope for forgiveness in spite of the consequences for the sin. But once you turn away from God and begin seeking help from some another source, no longer trusting in Him and Him alone, He can no longer help you. That is why Solomon experienced greater judgment than David. David never left the LORD; Solomon left the LORD, and therefore all hope of restoration. That is why the First Commandment is the First Commandment, and why idolatry is the greatest sin of all.

The following is an excerpt from *Expositor's Bible Commentary*:

"When one considers the grand heights of Solomon's spiritual fervor and the great wisdom granted him by God, it seems impossible that he could have been so foolish as to succumb to idolatry. Yet it did happen, not overnight, but by slow degrees. First it was tolerated in his household. Once he became accustomed to it and comfortable with it, he also began to participate in idolatry with his wives. Solomon never renounced the LORD, but his heart was not entirely devoted to the LORD either. The syncretism that he began to display was a curse that plagued Israel through the years and ultimately led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and to the exile of the people.... Intermarriage inevitably led to toleration and finally observance of Canaanite religious practices. Another danger lay in the fact that there was great similarity in some of the religious terminology; and though the theology behind the terms was radically different, it was very easy to adopt by degrees a comfortable syncretism and ultimately to forget the LORD and to serve idols."

Application: *Have you allowed something to creep in alongside your Christianity that really shouldn't be there? Is there something that needs to be removed now before it takes hold and leads to irreparable spiritual damage?*