

6. A king size backslider of Israel

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Many people have so much potential, so many resources and have the influence to do good, yet they waste their lives on the things that don't matter.

I remember a worship leader in the prison ministry where I was involved. This guy had such a charisma to command the congregation's complete attention, smooth talking, quick and pleasant smile, a great singing voice and good knowledge of the Bible. He was in prison for DUI and using drugs. When he got out, our family helped him to get involved in the church. He joined the church worship team and started to serve there. But with all that potential, he chose to go back to his old habit. He started to lie, cheat, drink and smoke pot. He ended up back in prison to do the full extended time.

Proverbs 26:11 As a dog returns to his own vomit, So a fool repeats his folly.

Very few people with such potential do something with their lives to help others and build their legacies before their death.

In my opinion, king Solomon topped any wasted life. He had intelligence beyond anyone's memory and insight, yet he made flat out dumb decisions to go against the Lord. He had wealth that made all the richest kings in his contemporary period look like beggars, yet he used them all for his own selfish wasted life with the exception of building the Temple of God. He could do so much for the Lord who gave him so much for the sake of his father king David, yet Solomon turned his back on the Lord and committed idolatry against Him.

It is my hope and prayer that we may learn from his bad examples that we may not bring disgrace to the name of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

A. SOLOMON'S BACKSLIDING

1 Kings 11:1-13 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 com-

manded 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."

Backsliding from the Lord is a NEVER sudden thing. It never happens overnight. It happens ever so gradually that the person who is backsliding doesn't even realize how far he is away from the Lord. He even thinks that all this time he is OK. That is what sin does to us – numb and dumb.

Solomon didn't walk away from the Lord one bright morning all of sudden. He started to backslide from the Lord decades before – when he started to accumulate horses, chariots, too much wealth and foreign women as his wives and concubines.

The Ammonites and Moabites were descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot. The Ammonites worshiped the hideous god Molech and sacrificed their infants on his altars. Chemosh was the chief god of the Moabites, and Ashtoreth was the goddess of the people of Tyre and Sidon. As the goddess of fertility, her worship included temple prostitution.

Solomon didn't totally abandon Jehovah but made Him one of the many gods that he worshiped. This was a direct violation of the first two commandments given at Mount Sinai. The Lord Jehovah is the only God, the true and living God, and He will not be put on the same level as the false idols of the nations.

Christians typically think of falling away from the Lord as engaging in gross sin. If somebody sins terribly, we say they have fallen. Perhaps they used to come to church, but now they spend their time down at the bar. They have fallen. Then there's the person who used to be dedicated to their spouse, but now they are committing the sin of adultery. They have fallen.

But we rarely think of someone who is still sitting in the pews on Sunday mornings or coming to Midweek Bible Studies as someone who has fallen. They must be right with the Lord, we think, because I still see them at church doing all the things that Christians are supposed to do. But don't be fooled.

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Revelation 2:2-5 I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; 3 and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. 4 Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent.

Realize this: You can sit in the pew and be fallen, while you have walked away from the passion that you once had for God. This is an important point to understand.

Losing our first love for the Lord is at the root of all sin. If you have fallen, repent and return to the passion you once had.

B. SOLOMON'S ENEMY #1 – HADAD

1 Kings 11:14-22 Now the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was a descendant of the king in Edom. 15 For it happened, when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army had gone up to bury the slain, after he had killed every male in Edom 16 (because for six months Joab remained there with all Israel, until he had cut down every male in Edom), 17 that Hadad fled to go to Egypt, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him. Hadad was still a little child. 18 Then they arose from Midian and came to Paran; and they took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house, apportioned food for him, and gave him land. 19 And Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him as wife the sister of his own wife, that is, the sister of Queen Tahpenes. 20 Then the sister of Tahpenes bore him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house. And Genubath was in Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh. 21 So when Hadad heard in Egypt that David rested with his fathers, and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Let me depart, that I may go to my own country." 22 Then Pharaoh said to him, "But what have you lacked with me, that suddenly you seek to go to your own country?" So he answered, "Nothing, but do let me go anyway."

One of the main reasons why Solomon married so many foreign wives was to guarantee peace with the surrounding nations during his reign. But in spite of that effort, God warned him that, after his death, the kingdom would be divided in two and his descendants would reign over only one more tribe in addition to his own tribe Judah.

Even though Solomon had women from Edom in his harem, it didn't stop Hadad the Edomite from causing trouble for Israel. Esau, the hairy son of Isaac, the brother of Jacob was the original ancestor of the Edomites.

This Egyptian Pharaoh must have been a new one who didn't care about the pact with Solomon to accept Hadad into his palace. This meant that Egypt and Edom were in league against Israel. This was happening at the southern border of Israel.

C. SOLOMON'S ENEMY #2 – REZON

1 Kings 11:23-25 And God raised up another adversary against him, Rezon the son of Eliadah, who had fled from his lord, Hadadezer king of Zobah. 24 So he gathered men to him and became captain over a band of raiders, when David killed those of Zobah. And they went to Damascus and dwelt there, and reigned in Damascus. 25 He was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon (besides the trouble that Hadad caused); and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.

This man Rezon must have been a capable man because under his leadership the power of Syria increased. Rezon established a dynasty of strong rulers in that area, later it was known as Aram, of which all the kings gave trouble to the kings of Judah. This was happening at the northern border of Israel.

D. SOLOMON'S ENEMY #3 – JEROBOAM

1 Kings 11:26-40 Then Solomon's servant, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zereda, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow, also

rebelled against the king. 27 And this is what caused him to rebel against the king: Solomon had built the Millo and repaired the damages to the City of David his father. 28 The man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valor; and Solomon, seeing that the young man was industrious, made him the officer over all the labor force of the house of Joseph. 29 Now it happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the way; and he had clothed himself with a new garment, and the two were alone in the field. 30 Then Ahijah took hold of the new garment that was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces. 35 But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and give it to you--ten tribes. 36 And to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there. 37 So I will take you, and you shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel. 38 Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you. 39 And I will afflict the descendants of David because of this, but not forever.'" 40 Solomon therefore sought to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

Hadad on the southern border, Rezon on the north, Solomon now has the formidable opponent in his own ranks, Jeroboam. He was known as a man of valor and was resourceful. By now, the nation had grown weary of Solomon's wasteful living and grand building projects, Jeroboam from the tribe of Ephraim which was one of the ten northern tribes became a darling to these disgruntle people against king Solomon.

By seeing the lack of records regarding the prophecies through the prophets during the reign of king Solomon, either he didn't care to hear the truth or God chose not to speak to him. But prophets will be very important from now until the end of the kingdom of Judah.

The Lord was offering the same promise to Jeroboam as He did to Solomon with the exception of a couple of things. All he had to do was obey God's commandments.

We don't know how Solomon found out about God's promise to Jeroboam, but Solomon reacted in a wrong way. Instead of falling before the Lord and repenting, he tried to kill Jeroboam. What else could God do more than what He did to this wayward king?

If Solomon turned back to the Lord, would He relent from His wrath against Solomon and restore the kingdom? Yes, He did with Nineveh.

This gives us a great lesson we should learn from. When the Lord warns us about our sins and backsliding, we need to repent right at that moment rather than denying it or making excuses. The Lord will take us through the woodshed to teach us and to restore us to His care. But if we resent His discipline, we will stay in the woodshed for very long, long time.

E. SOLOMON'S DEATH

1 Kings 11:41-43 Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? 42 And

*the period that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years.
43 Then Solomon rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David
his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.*

Solomon reigned from 971 to 931, B.C. Did he return to the Lord before he died? Bible students don't agree in their interpretations and answers for this. Some think that his admonition in Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 points in the direction of repentance and restoration. Like King Saul, Solomon was handed great opportunities but didn't make the most of them.

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

Solomon left behind the temple of God, his royal palace, a nation in bondage, a troubled economy, as well as the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. But the people followed Solomon's bad example and began to worship the gods of their neighbors.

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) We need to heed the warnings from the Lord through the Word of God or other godly people. Otherwise, we will face the ugly consequences of our sins.
- 2) Losing our first love for the Lord is at the root of all sin. If you have fallen, repent and return to the passion you once had.
- 3) When the Lord warns us about our sins and backsliding, we need to repent right at that moment rather than denying it or making excuses.