

GOD PORTRAYS MORE WOMEN

by

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

MANY STRANGE WOMEN

(I Kings 11)

SOLOMON WAS BORN with a silver spoon in his mouth, but none of the king's drinking vessels **"were of silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon"** (10:21). Though he was instructed in the Scriptures and enjoyed a religious atmosphere in his home, his every whim was indulged. As a youth his ambitions were spiritual and wholesome in their desire to be helpful to others. His mind was keen and highly developed, and he had abundant energy. He was an astute statesman and his wisdom became renowned throughout the world. **"So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom. And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart"** (10:23, 24).

What a court he must have held! Dignitaries from all the countries came with their extravagant presents that increased his love of beautiful ornate things and added to his growing love of display in art and in pride of horses. Knowing his appreciation of fine clothes, they presented him with costly garments. Even the Lord speaks of his glorious apparel: **"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow . . . Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these"**, (Matthew 6:28, 29). But the beauty of the lily came from within; Solomon was decked from without.

As he became occupied with the accumulation of "things," he seemed to lose his spiritual perspective. His time and mind were filled with fresh projects that brought him the admiration of others. He confessed in his dirge (Ecclesiastes) that he launched out on great building and engineering projects, agricultural pursuits, irrigation schemes, animal husbandry, art collections, symphony concerts, parties and night life. As he reviewed it all, he lamented: ***"What of it all? What have I accomplished that's worthwhile? I hate life. I hate all the labor I have wasted! All is vanity!"***

The king thought to strengthen his political alliances by marrying the daughter of the king of Egypt. The law expressly commanded that a king over Israel **"shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the Lord hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold"** (Deuteronomy 17:16, 17).

Added to this was the warning of Bathsheba his mother, **“Give not thy strength unto women”** (Proverbs 31:3). Solomon might have answered that his father was a good man and had a great admiration for the fair sex and that he had more than one wife. It is wonderful what we can forget when we want our own way. Had he so soon forgotten the tragedies in the several households of his own family caused by these plural marriages? Willful transgression knows no limits.

In spite of all the advantages of higher education and God-given wisdom, world-wide fame and success, Solomon broke down morally. A Christian is admonished to **“put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof”** (Romans 13:14).

The flesh is not dead even in an old Christian. It is as unchanged and as wicked as ever. Therefore, we are told in Colossians 3:5, 6: **“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry, for which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.”** Put to death the weeds that would spring from our old evil nature and leave room for the growth and cultivation of the heavenly virtues implanted at new birth. **“And put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him”** (Colossians 3:10).

“But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods” (11:1-4).

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure” (James 3:17).

In Christ who is greater than Solomon, we see wisdom coupled with meekness, humility, self-denial, submissiveness, and love for others, even amid privations. David’s and Solomon’s downfalls did not occur in exile but at home surrounded by all the luxuries of a palace. Sad to say a godly young life did not or does not guarantee a spiritual old age.

Though God loved Solomon, He has told us how far astray he departed that it might be a warning to every child of God, and that he should learn that he cannot rest on past experiences or past communion. It is imperative to keep ourselves in the love of God. Solomon had accepted the gifts of God but did not use them wisely. He built the magnificent Temple. He dedicated it with a remarkable prayer. He was one of the penmen of the Scriptures and gave wise counsel to others. Yet he turned aside and became a worshiper of idols.

The decline was gradual, beginning with building temples for his heathen wives. Old age does not cure the heart of evil propensities. If those who have been devoted Christians misbehave, the reproach is so much greater. We need to pray that we may **“finish our course with joy and the ministry, which we have received of the Lord”** (Acts 20:24).

It is the evening of life that commends the day. Let us fear lest having run well we seem to come short. Let us watch and be sober. There is need to keep under the body, lest after preaching to others I might be disqualified.

Solomon was noted for his largeness of heart, and his wives would take advantage of this characteristic. Can you not hear the princess of the Zidonians beseeching the king to grant an audience to one of her distinguished priests of Ashtoreth? He wanted a friendly discussion on religious subjects. The Moabite princess would tell of a project of the worshipers of Chemosh to build a new temple. They admired the architecture and situation of Solomon's Temple so much that the chief priests would like to consult with Solomon about a religious center where all the buildings would be in keeping. Perhaps he would give helpful suggestions as she was a patroness of the congregation.

Flattered by being deferred to, he granted these requests. He met these strangers and permitted them to build on land in the vicinity of the Temple. He assured the committee of his interest and possibly made a generous donation. Of course he and the princess would be on the platform for the dedication services. His broadmindedness and generosity again would be publicly praised. **“And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods”** (11:8). How shocking is the decline of one away from God!

These words, **“his wives turned away his heart,”** should be imprinted on our hearts. A woman's influence is a tremendous power. When a godly woman uses her influence for good, no one can predict the extent of blessing, but if her power is actuated for evil, the consequences are disastrous. **“For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father”** (11:4).

Solomon lost his balance even with all his worldly wisdom. His love toward the Lord had cooled. He had left his first love, and his ambition to be **“acceptable unto the Lord.”** He no longer desired to please the Lord. Instead of spiritual values being dominant, indulgence of the flesh, catering to the desires of the flesh and of the mind, controlled his ways. The decline had set in.

David, when old, turned aside under feminine influence, but there was this difference between David and Solomon, David genuinely repented and confessed his sin. More than that, his return to communion with the Lord brought a humble, contrite, spiritual adjustment. The world knew of his restoration. One regrets to say that we do not read of Solomon's contrition or restoration to the Lord. **“Solomon in all his glory”** finished his course ingloriously, a weak man, the tool of many scheming women.

Divine wisdom gave one woman to a man to be a help to him. In his “lament” the wisest man in all the world wrote for all in every age to read: **“I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands; whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her . . . one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found”** (Ecclesiastes 7:26-28).

Among all his thousand wives there was not one good one among them. He had chosen the wrong kind. How different the sunset of his life would have been had he chosen a woman who feared the Lord! She would have done him good all the days of her life—he had missed “the virtuous woman.” He found his foes to be those of his own household.

We read that Alexander and Hymenaeus put away a good conscience and concerning the faith made shipwreck (I Timothy 1:19). That is exactly what Solomon did. In disobeying the Lord in the choice of a wife, his departure from the faith was accelerated. His wives turned away his heart after other gods, and Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord and went not fully after the Lord. **“His heart was divided.”**

God says, **“My son, give me thine heart”** (Proverbs 23:26). David prayed, **“Unite my heart to fear thy name”** (Psalm 86:11). What woman would enjoy a husband with a divided heart? Instead of being devoted to the service of God, Solomon multiplied the altars of the heathen, bringing in heathenish ways and disgusting practices. He was lauded as very liberal-minded, a patron of all religions. But God is a jealous God and will not tolerate a rival.

In a later day Nehemiah contended with the priests who had married heathen women, and whose children were neither one thing nor the other. He smote certain of them, pulled out their hair, and put them under oath before God saying: **“Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon, king of Israel, sin by these things? Yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin. Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?”** (Nehemiah 13:25-27).

Even the high priest’s grandson had transgressed in marrying a Horonite, so Nehemiah chased him out because he had defiled the priesthood.

There is a significance in the sequence of the words:

- **“When Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods . . . For Solomon went after Ashtoreth . . . and Milcom.”**
- **“Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord and went not fully after the Lord.”**
- **“Solomon did build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of Ammon.”**

It would seem a brazen affront to God and His Temple. **“And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.”** One false step led to another.

Are we at all surprised at the next verse? **“And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded”** (11:9-10). Therefore, **“I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and give it to thy servant”** (11:11).

“Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant’s sake, and for Jerusalem’s sake which I have chosen” (11:13).

God tempered his judgment with mercy. Special privileges bring special responsibilities. If these are despised, there is a severer retribution. The principle laid down is: **“And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes . . . Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more”** (Luke 12:47, 48).

Worldly wisdom does not keep men from sin—neither does old age. Gray hairs are a crown of glory only when they are found in the way of righteousness. Solomon misused his blessings and ruined himself. His early piety and modesty were not maintained. He did not finish his course with joy, neither did he fulfill the ministry he had received of the Lord.

God has made Solomon a beacon on the horizon to warn us not only to begin well and promisingly, but to run the race set before us, keeping under all that would hamper our progress in reaching God’s purpose for us that we might win the prize, the approval of God: **“Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”**

Is Solomon an example of those who are saved **“yet so as by fire”**?

Much of the works of his later days will be consumed by fire! It might have been so different! Is this not his wail in Ecclesiastes, **“Vanity, vanity, all is vanity”**? **“Keep thy heart with all diligence”** (Proverbs 4:23).

~ end of chapter 17 ~

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