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In 1 Kings 2, we read that Solomon began his reign by killing his step-brother Adonijah (1 Kings 2:19-27), his first-cousin Joab (1 Kings 2:28-35), and Shimei (1 Kings 2:36-46). What a way to start one's reign! And to think that it was David, the man after God's own heart, who had suggested all this to Solomon and thus started him off on the pathway of destruction! Such is the long-term result of un-cleansed bitterness, by which many are defiled. But Solomon still imagined that God would bless him in spite of all this (1 Kings 2:45). How deceived can a person get!

Once you start out on the wrong path, you go further and further away from God! The next thing that Solomon did was get married to a heathen woman – Pharaoh's daughter. If only David had spent his last days advising Solomon on marrying wisely, instead of teaching him how to take revenge, what a different turn things might have taken in Solomon's life. What advice do you give your children? What are the things that are most important to you in life?

In 1 Kings 3:3, we read that "Solomon loved the Lord", except that he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. What a contradiction! Solomon finally destroyed himself because of such compromise. He lived a double-life – one in the temple and one in private. Unfortunately that is also how many Christians live today. They make many loud expressions of love for the Lord. But in private, they live in unrighteousness and sin. Finally their little backslidings become big ones and destroy them.

Solomon took seven years to build the Lord's temple (1 Kings 6:38) and thirteen years to build his own house (1 Kings 7:1). So we know which he valued more!! That is a fairly good description of many people who are doing Christian work today. They do "Christian" work all right. But their primary interest is in their own house and the comfort of their own family. God's work and God's house are secondary. Preaching the gospel has made them rich.

Solomon's backsliding was gradual – as all backsliding is. He started off his rule by killing people. He could have easily disagreed with his father David and refused to kill Shimei and Joab. He could have forgiven Adonijah and not killed him. Once he had started sliding down, the gradient became steeper. Next, he married Pharaoh's daughter – obviously for her wealth. Then he spent thirteen years building his own house. All this in spite of the fact that God had given him such wisdom. Many a time I have seen in Christian workers a drift towards the world right from the beginning of their lives. They start seeking their own right from the time they begin their ministry. When you see them years later, they have become experts in seeking their own.

But God still loved His people in spite of the backsliding of their king. So He filled the temple with His glory when it was completed (1 Kings 8:10). It was just like the day when Moses had completed the tabernacle. The temple was built in the same pattern as the tabernacle, but on a much bigger and grander scale.

Solomon prayed a beautiful prayer of dedication (1 Kings 8:22-61). The Lord then appeared to him a second time and told him that He had heard his prayer and again urged him to walk in integrity of heart and uprightness so that his kingdom would be established. He also warned Solomon that if he turned away from following the Lord, Israel would be removed from the land and the temple would become a heap of ruins (1 Kings 9:3-9).

That was exactly what happened when the Babylonians came and captured Judah and destroyed the temple. God had warned them, "Don't think you can live as you like and that I will just keep on blessing you." The Lord warns us long before we start going astray.

In 1 Kings Chapter 10, we read of the Queen of Sheba coming and meeting Solomon because she had heard of his wonderful wisdom. But despite all his worldwide reputation for wisdom, Solomon was a mixed-up man. He could pray beautiful prayers to the Lord in public, like most Christians. But in his private life, he was as godless as anyone – again like many Christians. He rivalled Samson in lust – for he married 700 wives and as if that were not enough, he kept 300 concubines as well – mostly from the heathen nations around him (1 Kings 11:1-3). He must have seen each of them just once in three years! Those wives finally turned him away from the Lord to the worship of idols.

When Solomon went astray, God was angry with him and told him that He would divide his kingdom into two (1 Kings 11

:9-13). But because David was a godly man, God did not do it in Solomon's lifetime (1 Kings 11:12). We see there, how much children are blessed because of the godliness of their father! God raised up enemies to trouble Solomon, but he still did not repent (1 Kings 11:14). When Solomon feared that Jeroboam was going to rebel against him, he tried to put Jeroboam to death (1 Kings 11:26, 40). Jeroboam later became king of the divided kingdom. Thus Solomon died (1 Kings 11:43).