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Fourth Quarter.

Lesson XI. Dec. 15. 1 Kings 11: 4-13.

SOLOMON'S FALL.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."—I Cor. 10: 12.

EXPLANATORY.

I. THE INFLUENCES WHICH LED SOLOMON ASTRAY.—(1) POLYGAMY. *For it came to pass when Solomon was old.* Between 50 and 60 years old; when his energies, being somewhat relaxed, he would have less power of continued resistance to the influences of his foreign wives. *His wives turned away his heart after other Gods.* Solomon, largely for the sake of making friendly alliances with the neighboring states, had taken 700 wives, princesses. The very fact that this multiplying of wives was against the divine fundamental law of his kingdom, which it was his duty to write out (Deut. 17: 17) and against his own better judgment (Prov. 5: 18), dulled his conscience and weakened his power of resistance to temptation.

(2) BAD COMPANY. Through his heathen wives Solomon was thrown into bad company and unholy influences.

(3) A FALSE TOLERATION. Not the allowing each of his wives to have her own opinions and her own religion till convinced of better things by his wisdom and his conduct, but the favoring and aiding of religions and principles which were destructive of the very foundation of his prosperity. It was like tolerating drinking saloons and immorality.

II. SOLOMON'S FALL. Solomon's fall from his great height was not sudden, but gradual. His wealth was a gradual gain, till what was begun for the temple was continued for himself. He did not take his multitude of wives at once, nor suddenly fall under their influence; but he kept on defying more and more the law of his kingdom in Deut. 17: 16, 17. Let us note the sins into which he fell.

(1) A WRONG STATE OF HEART. 4. *And his heart was not perfect with the Lord.* The word rendered heart in the Old Testament is very significant. It means more than the will, the emotions, and the affections; it reaches down to the depths of one's self-hood out of which thought, feeling, action, flow. *Perfect* (entire) *with the Lord, as was the heart of David his father.* Not that David was a perfect man; but he never swerved from his loyalty to God. His service of God was imperfect indeed; but he never served other gods, and his bitter repentance shows that in heart he was always loyal and true.

How could so wise and clear-sighted a man as Solomon fall into deadly sins whose evil consequences he so well knew? Because wisdom is of the mind, while temptation attacks the heart and the senses.

(2) POLYGAMY. Contrary to the divine law of his kingdom (Deut. 17: 17) Solomon multiplied wives till he had 700 wives and 300 concubines (11: 3).

(3) IDOLATRY. 5. *For Solomon went after Ashtoreth.* Solomon never entirely forsook the worship of God. "He continued his attendance on the worship of Jehovah, and punctually made his offerings three times a year in the temple" (1 Kings 9: 25). *Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians.* Ashtoreth was the highest of the Phœnician deities; the ancient Venus of the Greeks. Her worship, which is not exactly known, was most probably associated with indecency. Solomon built an altar to her (2 Kings 23: 13). *Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites*: descendants of Lot, inhabiting the mountainous country on the east side of the Red Sea, reaching from the river Arnon to the Jabbok. Milcom, probably another name for Molech, was worshipped by the Ammonites with human sacrifices, especially children. The Rabbins tell us that it was made of brass and placed on a brazen throne, and that the head was that of a calf, with a crown on it. The throne and the image were made hollow, and a furious fire was kindled within it. The flames penetrated into the body and limbs of the idol, and when the arms were red-hot, the victim was thrown into them, and was almost immediately burned to death, while its cries were drowned by drums.

7. *Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab.* The supreme deity of the Moabites was a sun-god, who was worshipped as king of his people, and as a god of war. *In the hill that is before Jerusalem.* That is, east of Jerusalem, since the Jews in naming the points of the compass turned their faces toward the east. The hill is, of course, the Mount of Olives. *Molech*: the same as Milcom (ver. 5).

8. *And likewise did he for all his strange* (foreign, heathen) *wives*: named in ver. 1; Edomites and Hittites, besides those already mentioned. All were treated alike.

(4) EXTRAVAGANCE. The wealth of Solomon was enormous. The king was proportionately extravagant. See the account given of his palaces, his gardens, and his retinue. No country could long bear such a strain, and it tended to cherish pride, and selfishness, and self-conceit in the king.

(5) OPPRESSION. He appears to have copied the Pharaohs not only in magnificence, but in disregard for human suffering. The Canaanites were reduced to the position of helots; multitudes were torn from their homes to fell timber in the forests or hew stones in the quarries (9: 20-23). The greatness of the oppression is clearly seen not long after in the appeal of the citizens to Rehoboam to lighten their burdens (12: 4, 14).

III. SAFEGUARDS TO PREVENT HIS FALL. Solomon was not left to himself; but every possible good influence was thrown around him.

(1) SPECIAL WARNINGS. 9. *And the Lord was angry with Solomon.* The Lord's anger is a sense of justice which would stop the evil doer in his course and punish him. All good beings must have this anger; and it is the more intense in proportion to the purity of the person who feels it, and His clear perception of the evil, and His love for those who are injured by the wrong. *Which had appeared unto him twice.* First at Gibeon, at the beginning of his reign (3: 4-15), and then at Jerusalem, about the middle of his reign (9: 1-9) in the very height of his prosperity. These were special warnings and encouragements because of his great danger.

(2) THE WORD OF GOD. 10. *And had commanded him*: both in the visions and in His Word. Solomon had the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges, and practically both books of Samuel. As a wise and learned man he must have studied these thoroughly. His conduct was a direct disobedience of a positive command.

(3) WISDOM to foresee the trend of every course of life. He was not walking in the dark. He knew the consequences of his conduct.

(4) WIDE EXPERIENCE. He was 50 to 55 years old, and had enjoyed a larger observation and a fuller experience of life than falls to the lot of most men.

(5) GOD'S BLESSINGS. God's promises had been fulfilled to him, and God had given him every earthly blessing it was possible to bestow.

(6) RELIGIOUS WORSHIP. All the influences of the purest religion in the world were thrown around him.

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES; JUDGMENT AND MERCY. 11. *Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon.* Probably by a prophet, Ahijah or Iddo, as Nathan was no longer living. *I will surely rend.* I will violently take away. *The kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.* Not merely *subject*, but *officer, employe.* This made the decree the more bitter. For a hireling Solomon's vast treasures had been prepared. This verse should be read in the light of Eccles. 2: 18.

Tige.

BY E. L. BENEDICT.

It happened a good many years ago, said grandfather to Harry and me, as we sat around the fireplace one December evening, that father bought a piece of timber, several miles from our house, and he had some men there cutting it. One day he wanted me to go and carry a message to them. I was never afraid to go anywhere with Tige, our dog. He was such a big, strong fellow, and so brave. So we set off, happy as could be, both of us. The sun was shining when we started, but as we reached the woodlot, the sky began to cloud over. I didn't think anything about it, though. I hardly noticed it, till I had delivered my message, and turned around to go back. Then the "boss" said to me 'I don't know, little chap, but you'd better stay here. I guess there's a heavy snow storm coming, and you've got quite a piece to go.'

'O I ain't afraid,' I said, standing up straight. I didn't like to be called "little chap," and I meant to show them that I felt big enough to take care of myself.

'Well, you'd better walk along lively then, or you will be snowed under before you get home,' the man said, rightly laughing at me for the airs I had put on.

I walked off as cooly as could be, to show them I wasn't afraid. But before I had gone far, the flakes began to come down closer together. Tige acted as if he knew what was coming, and trotted on at a lively rate, looking back every now and then, and whining for me to keep up. I hurried on now, as fast as I could, and all the while the snow was coming down thicker, and the wind was rising higher. It seemed to blow right through my overcoat and muffler, and the fine flakes stung as they came against my cheek. By-and-by I began to grow tired. The wind was blowing straight against me, the snow was blinding me so I could not see, and all the while Tige was running on ahead so fast, that I feared I should lose sight of him. But he did not propose to leave me. Every little while he stopped and whined for me to come up. At last I grew so tired that I could only stumble on, and then Tige came back and walked at my side, or just in front of me, as if anxious to help me. And I was thinking if I should stop and rest a few moments I would be all right. But when I tried it, Tige caught hold of my coat and pulled me along. Then I grew so sleepy, I could hardly keep on my feet. I did not feel the cold now, and I was ready to lie down in the snow and go to sleep. Twice I tried it, but each time Tige pulled me up, and barked so loud that it woke me, and I stumbled on. At last we came to a fence, and I had not strength enough left to climb over it: I just rolled down in the snow, and Tige couldn't get me to move. I did not know what happened next, but I was told afterwards the fence where I had stopped was only about a mile away from home, and Tige at once ran there as fast as he could go. My people were all looking out anxiously for me, and father was talking of starting to meet me, when they saw the dog coming. They opened the door, and the minute he saw them he began to bark and whine, and started back. They knew at once what he meant, and hurrying on their coats, my father and brothers followed him as fast as they could.

I was sound asleep when they found me, almost covered with snow. Tige began to paw off the snow and lick me, they said, and barked furiously as they came up; and while they were carrying me home, kept jumping up against me, as if anxious to see me wake up. The first thing I did see when I did open my eyes, was Tige's head thrust in between my father and mother, who were rubbing me on one side, while my brothers rubbed on the other.

'*Yes, old fellow, you saved him. It's all on your account that he is here,*' mother said, hugging his great shaggy neck, after I had told them how he had dragged me along against my will. You may be sure that nothing was too good for Tige after that. He was cared for as kindly as if he had been one of the family—which he was to our way of thinking—and we kept him till he died of old age.—*The Fountain.*

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The Census of India.

The new census of India gives the population in March, 1888, as 269,477,728, of which 60,684,378 belonged to the native States. Distributed according to religion, in round numbers, the Hindoo population in millions is about 190; the Mohammedans 81, "aboriginals" 6¼, Buddhists 3¼, Christians nearly 2, Sikhs nearly 2, Jains 1½, while Parsees, Jews, and others are comparatively very few. The Church of England has nearly 360,000 members, other Episcopalian churches 20,000; the Church of Scotland the same number; all other Protestants, 138,000; Roman Catholics nearly a million; and Syrians, Armenians, and Greeks, over 300,000. About 106,000,000 males and 111,000,000 females are neither under instruction nor able to read or write. Details are given of 109 different languages spoken. Hindustani comes first with over 82 millions, then Bengali with nearly 40, Telugu with 17, Mahratti also 17, Punjabi 16, Tamil 13, Guzrati, Canarese, Oorlya, Malayalum, Sindi, Burmese, Hindi, Assamese, Kol, Southali, and Gondi come next in order. Next to Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, Hyderabad is the most populous city in India, Lucknow coming next.

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