

The Tragic Story of a Wise Fool

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[0 : 00] Do you like stories with happy endings? Most people do. In fact, I don't really know anybody who would say, I love to read a story that just rips my heart out at the end.

I can't imagine that. Well, have you ever noticed that most of the Bible stories that you were taught growing up or that you just have read yourself, have you ever noticed that most Bible stories have a happy ending?

Think about some that you know well, like the story of Joseph. Joseph started off, he was sold into slavery. He was abused in various ways, but God raised him up to a position of prominence and power in Egypt.

His story had a great ending. You know the story of Daniel, how he was thrown into a den of lions, but God rescued him, closed the mouths of those lions, brought him not only out of the lion's den, but put him back in a place of power, of great influence in a foreign pagan nation.

The greatest story is the story of Jesus, how he died on a cross and was buried, but God brought him back from the grave.

[1 : 24] He not only was resurrected, but he has ascended back into heaven where he is today and one day will return to this world. And if you know him as your Lord and Savior, or you'll come to put your faith in him, your life story can have a great ending.

No matter what happens in this world, you will live for eternity in heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ. That'd be the greatest ending, wouldn't it?

But I'm going to guess most people in this room, you know that not all stories, even in the Bible, have a happy ending.

One of the saddest stories that you'll ever read in the Bible is the story of Solomon. Now last week we saw how God blessed him with such wisdom that the Bible even calls him the wisest man who ever lived.

Now you would think that the wisest man who ever lived, according to Scripture, that his life would be a great life.

[2 : 33] That his life would just be a life of faithfulness. It'd just be a good life that would end well. But it didn't.

Solomon's life does not have a happy ending because he, even though he was a man of wisdom, he made a lot of unwise choices throughout his life.

Chuck Swindoll describes how Solomon's failure to consistently act wisely led to its tragic ending. Look at it. By the end of Solomon's life, the royal tree that once stood so straight and tall had rotted from within.

In the springtime of his life, he had written, Solomon wrote that, Proverbs 1.7.

But by the autumn of his life, he had ceased fearing God and simply depended on his own human wisdom. He was no longer the world's wisest man.

[3 : 50] He had become the world's wisest fool. Last week, we looked at the bright side of Solomon's life.

Well, today we're going to look at the dark side. It's in 1 Kings chapter 11. Turn with me if you would. 1 Kings chapter 11. As we go through this message, as we go through this passage, our goal is to learn some good lessons from Solomon's bad example.

Our goal is that we learn from him and not follow in his footsteps because we don't want to become wise fools with a tragic ending to our life.

So let's read 1 Kings chapter 11. Now Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh, Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the people of Israel, You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods.

Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives who were princesses and 300 concubines, and his wives turned away his heart.

[5 : 27] For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.

For Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Amorites.

So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and did not wholly follow the Lord as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Molech, the abomination of the Amorites on the mountain east of Jerusalem.

And so he did for all his foreign wives who made offerings and sacrifices to their gods. And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice and had commanded him concerning this thing that he should not go after other gods.

But he did not keep what the Lord commanded. Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant.

[7 : 03] Yet for the sake of David your father, I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.

Solomon, the wisest man on earth because God had graciously chosen to bless him with that wisdom. He didn't use it wisely.

He made foolish choices. And the result was, God was angry and God told him, I'm not going to take the kingdom from you right now, not because of you, but because of your father David and my covenant with him.

But I'm going to take this kingdom from your son. And every parent in here knows that would have ripped the heart out of Solomon to think all that he had, all that he had amassed, that he knew one day would belong to his heirs, God was going to take it away.

His son would suffer. And Solomon, if you go ahead and read on, Solomon suffers all, also because God raises up adversaries who are going to create problems for Solomon from here on out.

[8 : 42] Solomon shows us the way someone becomes a wise fool. Let's see what we can see with prayer to help us avoid following those footsteps.

Number one, a wise fool compromises biblical truth when it seems personally beneficial. Solomon compromised what he knew, the scripture says, because he thought he was an exception.

He thought it would help him maybe be a better king, enhance his reputation, and in the back of his mind, he probably thought, as the king of God's people, if my image is made greater, burns brighter, maybe that'll make God's burn brighter as well.

He was a compromiser, and so he had probably all kinds of rationalizations in his mind. Let's look at some of the ways he compromised. Number one, he compromised in the way he sought power.

He sought to make his kingdom secure by developing alliances with foreign kings through marriages to their daughter. Look at verse 3 that we've just read.

[10 : 03] Look at the description of his many wives. It says, He had 700 wives who were princesses. Now that word, princesses, means that many of his wives were daughters of foreign kings.

Those marriages were politically motivated. He didn't have a real relationship with 700 wives and 300 concubines.

That was a part of his image. That was a part of what kings did in that day to make them look greater and mightier before people.

But also in this case, this was Solomon's way of aligning himself with other kings and kingdoms to avoid future conflict.

He did not have to do it at this time because there were no problems. David had taken care of everything. Basically, the kingdom that Solomon inherited was at peace.

[11 : 03] He did not need to do this, but he chose to do it. He was politically motivated. You can understand maybe he wanted to make sure that his people, his nation, would be secure.

So I'm going to make what might be an enemy become my ally through these marriages. Now, what we were reading about in chapter 11 took place at the end of Solomon's life or near the end.

But Solomon didn't do this just toward the end of his life. He started his reign as king making the same compromise as we saw last week in chapter 3.

In chapter 3 of this 1 Kings that we're looking at, verse 1, it says this, Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

He took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David. Solomon thought he was being, what you might say, politically savvy.

[12:10] Now, he was not trying to be defiant. He was not trying to, he was not openly rebelling against God.

Especially here in chapter 3, he didn't really see it as a compromise. Chapter 3, verse 3 says, he loved the Lord and we looked at that last week.

Solomon probably thought in his mind, this is just what kings do. This will enhance our nation's security. This will prevent problems from happening.

It will make peace between neighboring countries. That may have been a very wise thing for a secular king, but it was not for God's king.

God warned his people. God warned the people of Israel from the beginning, before they ever went to the promised land, before this ever could happen. He warned his people that they were not to do things like this.

[13:11] What is said in the last part of verse 2 here in chapter 11 that we saw, that came from Deuteronomy chapter 7. I want you to look at it from Deuteronomy 7 on the screen. God said to the people of Israel, you shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them.

That's those foreigners who occupied the promised land prior to God sending his people in there to take it. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them.

You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me to serve other gods.

Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you and he would destroy you quickly. Now I want you to just stop and think. The very thing that happened to Solomon, God said before there was ever even a nation of Israel, don't do things like that.

Don't intermarry because if you do, these pagan, false God worshiping people, they'll lead you astray.

[14:28] They'll take you away from me and that'll result in my anger and your judgment. God mercifully warned them. Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, didn't listen.

He compromised the truth of God in order to maybe seek or maintain political power, national security. That's not all he did. That's not the only compromise.

He compromised in some of the ways he spent his wealth. Solomon in some ways flaunted that great wealth that God gave him.

One was in the way he accumulated many horses and chariots from Egypt. I want you to just look at it real quickly, just a couple of verses. In 2 Chronicles chapter 9, that's sort of a parallel story.

And horses were imported for Solomon from Egypt and from all the lands. Here in 1 Kings, just back up from where we are in chapter 11, chapter 10, verses 26 and 28.

[15:36] And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen. And Solomon imported horses from Egypt and Q.

And you might think, what's the big deal? Don't kings acquire all kinds of things like that? Yes.

But Israel's kings were specifically instructed not to amass an army of chariots and horsemen.

Look at it from Deuteronomy chapter 17. Basically, instructions to Israel's former or future kings.

When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me, you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose.

Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses since the Lord has said to you, you shall never return that way again.

[17:00] Solomon, it appears, was more concerned with competing with other kings in accumulating a lot of horses and chariots, that kind of army, that kind of division in his army.

He was more concerned with competing with the other kings, maybe outdoing the other kings than he was with obeying God. Solomon also put more emphasis on building his own house than he did the house of God.

I want you to note one sentence that is said about Solomon building the temple, God's house. It's in 1 Kings 6, 39.

It says, he was seven years in building. That's the temple. The very next verse is chapter 7, verse 1. And just look at what it says. Solomon was building his own house 13 years and he finished his entire house.

Now, most commentators, most Old Testament scholars who are trying to figure out what's going on here, interpret that as the writer of 1 Kings contrasting, pointing out the difference between the time and the money Solomon spent on the Lord's house versus the time and money he spent on his own house.

[18 : 24] And time-wise, Solomon spent almost twice as much time building his elaborate palace than he did building the temple of God.

the ESV study Bible points this out. Look at it. Solomon spent much more time building his own house or palace complex than he did building God's house, another indication of his divided heart. From everything we see, it appeared there were times, not all the times, there were times when Solomon was not wise in the way he used his money.

And there were times when he was just concerned to put on a show, flaunt what he had, make other kings envious, but he was compromising.

He wasn't acting faithfully to the Word of God as he knew it. and he really just wasn't acting as a man that God had given such great wisdom to.

[19 : 37] But there's a third compromise we need to notice. He compromised in the way he fulfilled his sexual desires. Solomon had a great interest in women, in foreign women.

He had a weakness for women. Look at verse one. Now Solomon loved many foreign women. Now as we've said, some of these marriages were politically motivated.

Hey, but nobody twisted Solomon's arm to make him do this. Nobody put any pressure on him to take all these women. Solomon was king.

Solomon could do what he wanted to do and not do anything he didn't want to do. Solomon loved women. He loved foreign women. And in the power, with the power he had, the position he was in, he took advantage of that.

Whoever he wanted, that's who he got. And he did it excessively. Look at verse three. They captured his heart.

[20 : 45] He loved foreign women. He gave himself to many women. There was love, there was emotional attachment. And because he gave himself that way, they had influence over him.

They influenced him in some terrible ways. Verse three, and his wives turned his heart, turned away his heart.

As we have already seen, this was a clear violation of God's word. Deuteronomy seven, you shall not intermarry with them. Also in Deuteronomy 17, Israel's kings were not supposed to take all these wives.

Look at it. And he shall, talking about Israel's kings, and he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away. Solomon compromised the truth of God's word in his pursuit of women.

He compromised the truth of God's word in the way he fulfilled his sexual desires. Now, let's look at it now. Solomon never renounced his faith.

[22 : 02] Solomon never says or does anything to say he's turning away from God. He doesn't believe God's word. He doesn't care what God thinks.

But his love for God, and his trust in God is obviously, as you just read through this, it's not wholehearted.

He did love God to a certain degree. He was committed to a certain degree. But there was not the wholehearted love and commitment that God required.

How do you know that? Because all along the way he compromised and disobeyed God to increase his power, to flaunt his wealth, to fulfill his lusts.

All too many times, Solomon was more committed to pleasing himself than he was to pleasing God. God. Now, do you see yourself in any of these pictures, in any of these compromising situations?

[23 : 19] You know, money, sex, and power are the big three sources of temptation in this world, aren't they? One or two of them, probably not all three, one or two of them really resonates with you, because we're just that way.

You know, you know what's one of your, maybe what you might call root sins, one of the greatest temptations for you, but the person sitting right beside you in a pew, that may not be a temptation for them at all.

What you struggle with, it's not even a thought for somebody else. But you think about it. We in this room, we all struggle with temptations.

Are yours more along the lines of, you struggle with an area of money, of wealth, of material things. Maybe just your desire for it.

Maybe some of the things you might compromise in order to get it, or to hold on to it. Or maybe do you compromise in the area of power, of control?

[24 : 39] Maybe you abuse your authority. Maybe you envy those who are in authority, who have power.

Maybe you resent it. Or maybe your temptations in the sexual realm. maybe it's just thoughts.

Maybe it's some of the ways you entertain yourself.

Or it could be just a flat-out relationship that you know is not right. We struggle. We are tempted.

We're not tempted all in the same ways. But most of us in this room, we struggle with one or more money, sex, power.

What are you doing to guard against stumbling and falling over one or more of these temptations in your life? I mean, what are you doing?

[25 : 44] How are you fighting it? How are you resisting it? One of the most important ways to avoid compromising and falling, as Solomon did, is to learn to choose God's way of wisdom and obedience every day.

You know, if you're familiar with the Old Testament, this story, or here last week, chapter three, verse three, God said, Solomon, I'll give you anything you want.

You tell me. And Solomon made this choice. I want wisdom. A great choice. But it wasn't enough for Solomon to ask for wisdom one time at the beginning of his reign.

Solomon should have been asking for wisdom every day of his reign. And he would have avoided these compromises if he had truly sought day by day to be faithful to God, to listen to God, to obey God, in every detail.

Here's what I want us to understand. Choosing to trust God and be faithful to him is not a once-in-a-lifetime choice that you make. You don't have some kind of emotional experience or really just think it through and come to a real serious decision and say, I am going to put my faith and trust in God.

[27 : 11] I am going to really and truly trust Jesus as my Lord and Savior and think to yourself, it's a done deal. I never need to think about it again. I make this commitment and I go on with my life.

That's crazy. That is not biblical faith. faith. We must make this a daily, sometimes even hourly commitment if we really want to be faithful.

You don't make a decision to trust Christ one day, never think about it again. Saving faith is continuing faith or it's nothing at all.

Everything you read about faith in both the Old and New Testament. Somebody begins a relationship with the Lord one day, putting their faith and trust in Him, but they continue to trust Him, to obey Him if they're faithful.

That's what God calls us to do. That's why it's so important for us to spend time every day with the Lord in meaningful, heartfelt prayer and Bible reading.

[28 : 23] We need to seek to cultivate a conscious awareness of God's presence in our life on a regular basis.

Begin the day with Him in the morning. Talk to Him as we go through the day. Become familiar enough with His Word that as we encounter situations, have to make decisions, we have a good idea of what God's will is and we ask His help to enable us to do His will.

The only way we can avoid compromising like Solomon did is to live in close fellowship with God every day. And I'm as serious as I can be. That applies to every single one of us in this room.

Your level of commitment could be stated this morning if someone observed you, knew what was in your mind, knew what was in your heart, knew how you spent your time.

Every one of us, our level of commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ, our faithfulness could be pretty much explained based on the amount of time we spend with Him, talking to Him, listening to Him, loving Him, praising Him, desiring Him, obeying Him.

[29 : 47] that's true about me and I know it's true about you. Solomon got too busy with his kingdom.

Solomon got too concerned about himself. He got preoccupied by his wealth, by his power, by his position. Solomon got distracted by women and sex.

And it destroyed his kingdom. It destroyed his life. The only way we can avoid this divided heart, Solomon's problem, is to have a guard over our hearts and not let it become distracted and divided like he did.

Let's look at one more point quickly. A wise fool carelessly fails to guard his heart because he thinks he can handle anything. I want you to look at Solomon.

Chapter 11, verse 4 first. For when Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David, his father.

[31 : 13] Look at verse 6. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not wholly follow the Lord as David's father had done.

And then verse 9. And the Lord was angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.

Solomon allowed his heart to become divided. Again, he never renounced his faith or even his love for God.

But for all practical purposes, he really did because when his heart turned away from God, his heart turned to his wives and false gods.

Solomon became an idolater. Solomon became one who worshipped things that were not even gods because his wives captured his heart.

[32 : 20] He desired to please them more than he desired to please God. Solomon's idolatry emphasizes how important it is for us to guard our hearts and guard them every day.

You know, today we're expected to accept everyone's view of the truth as being equally valid. Every day, today, I mean, in this world in which we live today, if we're going to be politically correct, if we're going to get along, if we're not going to get labeled as some kind of extremist, whatever anyone thinks, whatever anyone considers to be true, we're supposed to say, okay.

It's okay. You believe what you want to believe, I believe what I want to believe. You believe what you do and it's true for you. I believe what I want to believe and it's true for me.

That's the way the world tells us to think. That's the world tells us what we've got to do in order to get along. That's what we've got to do in order to please the world.

But if we try to please the world, we're going to be just like Solomon who tried to please his wives and the result will be we will compromise God's word.

[33 : 44] Our hearts will be pulled away from God, from his will. Here's what we need to be aware of. It's not going to happen overnight. It's going to happen gradually.

It's going to happen almost unnoticeably. But a life made up of little compromises here and there, year in and year out, will eventually result in a heart that's turned away from God just like Solomon's was.

We need to learn from the mistakes of this wise fool. Solomon was smarter than any of us in this room. Solomon had a gift from God that we do not have.

But because he compromised, because he did not guard his heart, he became the biggest fool from the heights he fell from.

He became a wise fool. Before we go, I want us to hear from one who was wiser than Solomon, the only one.

[35 : 00] The Lord Jesus Christ, along the same line. Look at what he said. No one can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and money. That's what Jesus said. You may think you can't because Solomon thought he could.

And in light of what we see in Solomon's life, we need to understand not only can we not serve God and money simultaneously, we can't serve God and power.

We can't serve God and sex. We can't serve God and anything else. We must serve God wholeheartedly, we're not at all.

Jesus, as the old cliché says, Jesus must be Lord of all, or he will not be Lord at all. So I want to ask you, who are you serving?

[36 : 13] What are you serving? There's nothing in the world wrong with wisely using power. Nothing in the world wrong with wisely using wealth.

Nothing in the world wrong with having strong sex drive and having those needs met in the context of a marriage, one man and one woman.

But your heart, your wholehearted commitment, your wholehearted devotion must be, must rest upon the Lord Jesus Christ, your heavenly Father.

It cannot be divided between him and anything else. hear that word. Don't compromise. Guard your heart.

Your life will never end well if you don't. Let's pray together. Dear God, help us to see how we should respond right now.

[37 : 28] Father, if there are people in this room who do not really have a relationship with you, their heart is not for you. It's for themselves or something else. Dear God, call them to turn from their sin and put their trust in Jesus right now for their salvation.

If there's Christians in this room, dear God, who have been more like Solomon and not guarded their heart but made compromises, convict them and help them and help them to see the importance right now of confessing their sin, renouncing these wrong allegiances or wrong priorities.

Dear God, call them back right now to wholehearted love, trust, commitment to you. and in an attitude of prayer, let's listen to the Lord and respond to Him.

Do what God's calling you to do and I'd be glad to pray with you here at the front if you'd like for me to pray with you during this time. you to