

Disobedience leads to Disaster

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When the Apostle Paul reminded Timothy that he had known the Holy Scriptures from the days of his childhood, he alluded of course to that part of our Bibles that we call the Old Testament. It was able to make him "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Today we have the far clearer light of the New Testament as regards the salvation of the soul, but as to the salvation, that we all so much need from the perils of the world and the seductions of Satan, the Old Testament remains full of instruction which will make us wise, if only we observe it.

Let us take a striking example. There are many outstanding human figures in its pages, but none of them are more resplendent than King Solomon. We read the early chapters of 1 Kings, and observe that everything concerning him was in his favour. At his birth he was given a second name, which signified, "Beloved of the Lord." He stepped into kingship just when the Israelitish state had been enlarged and consolidated by his father David. Peace reigned on all sides. Moreover, when tested by God, the desire he expressed was very acceptable: asking for wisdom, he received it and much else beside. His knowledge of God was so exceptional that the fame of it travelled far afield, for the Queen of Sheba was attracted by it. She came to Solomon, not because she heard of his literary gifts or his vast acquaintance with natural history, that we read about in the end of 1 Kings 4, but because of his fame, "concerning the name of the Lord" (1 Kings 10: 1)

And then we turn to 1 Kings 11 and the record it sets before us seems almost incredible. What! this highly blessed, highly endowed King, ends his days a worshipper of abominable idols, erecting high places in their honour, bringing himself under the severe discipline of God, and sowing the seeds that finally wrecked the whole nation. This almost unbelievable disaster is vouched for by the Word of God, and its roots are laid bare, that we may be saved from anything similar.

We have written, "roots," for we may discern a variety of causes, yet they all sprang from one main cause. The tap-root, if so we may call it, of the whole disaster was found in **disobedience** to the word of God.

The first wrong step we notice is mentioned at the beginning of 1 Kings 3. Solomon "made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt" and took his daughter as his wife. In the days of Moses the people were told not to take in marriage the daughters of heathen peoples — see, Exodus 34: 16. The Lord knew what evil would spring out of this, and so prohibited it for all the people. Did Solomon think that he was so lifted up above the ordinary folk that legislation that applied to them did not apply to him? Or did he think that the lapse of time since Moses and altered conditions had made this law obsolete?

If now we read Deuteronomy 17: 14-20, we shall see how God anticipated that when in the land a day would come when Israel would demand a king, and so in advance special laws were enacted that should apply to him. The closing verse shows that the tendency would be for the king to be lifted up in heart and consider that legislation for the multitude did not apply to him, so that he could ignore laws made for the people, as we have just suggested.

But beside this there were three laws specially laid down for him. First, he was NOT to multiply horses to himself, and thereby cause the people to return to Egypt. Second, he was NOT to multiply wives to himself, that his heart should not be turned away. Third, he was NOT to multiply to himself silver and gold. It is noticeable how the word "**multiply**" occurs and the third time it is "**greatly**

multiply." And in each case it is "multiply **to himself.**"

And further, in these verses the king-to-be was bidden to keep himself well posted up in the law. He was to go to the trouble of writing a copy of it and then reading therein all the days of his life. Did Solomon act in obedience with this? We fear he did not. If he did, he simply treated these three prohibitions as a dead letter.

So, as regards the first, "Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen" (1 Kings 4: 26). And again, "Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt" (1 Kings 10: 28). What more natural since his wife came out of Egypt, and was not likely to be contented with humble asses or mules? It is to be noted that with the exception of the few that David captured and reserved, according to 2 Samuel 8: 4, and of Absalom, who, when making his bid for the kingdom, prepared him chariots and horses (2 Sam. 15: 1) there is no mention of a horse in Israel up to the days of Solomon. This first enactment, then, Solomon flagrantly disobeyed.

The second enactment was also disobeyed in flagrant fashion, for King Solomon loved many strange women together with the daughter of Pharaoh (1 Kings 11: 1). This transgression it was that wrought such havoc in his religious life, and carried away by their influence he plunged into sad idolatry — the special error which brought down upon him, and ultimately upon his people, the judgment of God. In his younger days and in middle life he may have had the strength of mind to resist the tendency, but "it came to pass when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods (1 Kings 11: 4). Sowing to the flesh in earlier days, he reaped corruption when he was old.

Nor was it otherwise as regards the third prohibition, as the latter part of chapter 10 testifies. He greatly multiplied gold and silver and ivory, and not only these but things that were useless, or that merely pandered to his personal vanity, like apes and peacocks. All these things he multiplied **to himself.**

We may remember that his father David also amassed great stores of gold and other precious things. Yes, but he did it for the house of God, that he was forbidden to build. The latter part of 1 Chronicles 28, tells us about this. And the next chapter tells us that because he set his affection to the house of his God he gave out of his privy purse no less than 3,000 talents of gold and 7,000 talents of silver. David multiplied **for the service of God**, though he was never to see the wealth expended. Solomon used it, and then multiplied much more **to himself.**

These things are recorded for our learning and warning. Riches may be a snare to a Christian, as 1 Timothy 6: 9 bears witness; but we are thinking of the many other plain instructions laid down in the New Testament for us. Because we are not under the law but under grace, we must not imagine that we have no commandments to observe. Indeed some of us might be surprised if we counted the number of times that Scripture mentions a commandment applying to Christians, particularly in the writings of the Apostle John. If we were under law, our standing before God would be determined by our keeping, or not keeping, His commandments. We are under grace, and our standing is in Christ, beyond all forfeiture. Yet if we disregard the commandments of our Lord, we dishonour Him and bring ourselves under His discipline.

There may be many details of our lives as to which the Lord has not issued any definite commandment, and we are then left to inference which with an exercised conscience we may deduce from Scripture. In such matters there may be differences of judgment. But when our Lord has spoken - as He indeed has — it is ours simply to obey. He has issued commandments in assembly affairs — see, 1 Corinthians 14: 37 — as well as in matters of personal conduct, and if we fly in the face of these, or simply ignore them, we are bound for a disaster of some sort.

When we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and He surveys all our earthly course, He will doubtless show us how much of the troubles and even disasters of a spiritual sort, that we suffered, we brought upon ourselves by our disobedience to His plain commands, and to the definite instructions that have reached us in the apostolic writings.