

BIBLE 1108

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

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III. RECOVERY

God's loving care and concern reaches out even to those who are out of His fellowship. Both the will of God and the wisdom of God were made available to Solomon, but he departed from both. One of God's laws is that we will lose blessings that we abuse or neglect. Luke 12:48 tells us, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." And I Corinthians 4:2 tells us, "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

Solomon had sinned through pride and idolatry. As king of Israel, his sin affected not only himself but also the entire nation over which he ruled. The Lord measured out rebuke and discipline to Solomon as he was unwilling to turn from his sin.

At the conclusion of his vain search for

happiness, Solomon said that the fear of God is the whole duty of man. Did he preach to others and himself become a castaway? The Bible does not tell us that Solomon repented. But we do learn that wisdom of itself, though given by God, is no match for the sinful nature. We can overcome only as we yield to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this final section you will study about God's grace in extending to Solomon both rebuke and discipline. Remember that God disciplines us when we need it because He loves us. This discipline comes justly upon us. Hebrews 12:7 likens God's chastening to that of a father and son: "God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"

SECTION OBJECTIVES

Read these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able:

6. To explain the divine rebuke that God gave to Solomon as he fell into sin.
7. To summarize the intensive circumstantial discipline Solomon received as he sank into reversion:
 - 7.1 To relate how God used Hadad of Edom to discipline Solomon.
 - 7.2 To describe how God employed Rezon of Damascus to correct Solomon.
 - 7.3 To tell how God used Jeroboam to bring chastisement to Solomon.
8. To identify Solomon's statement of man's duty to obey God:
 - 8.1 To describe Solomon's conclusions about his search for happiness.
 - 8.2 To categorize Solomon's discovery of the purpose of man's life.

VOCABULARY

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.



autonomy
circumstantial

errant
heinous

pithy
seceded



Read I Kings 11:9 through 43.



GOD'S ACTION

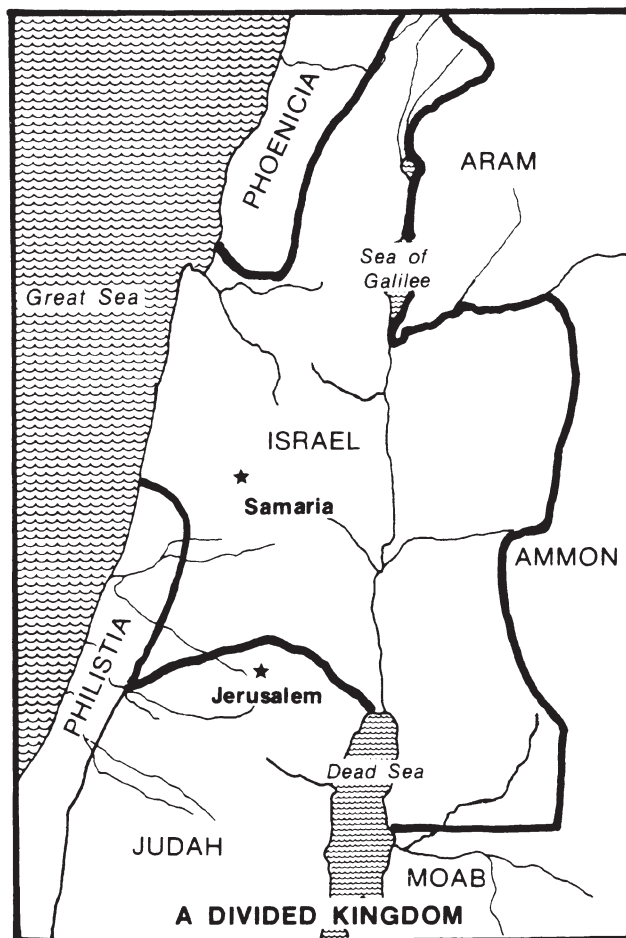
As the king of Israel, the ruler over God's people, and the servant of God, Solomon started out well. However, his pride and his concessions to his foreign wives eventually brought **heinous** idolatry into Israel. Solomon engaged in a search for happiness in temporal things that resulted in emptiness. The writer of the book of Kings revealed God's attitude toward Solomon's reversion by writing (I Kings 11:9) that "... the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice." God's anger was revealed to Solomon through a rebuke that was not heeded and then through **circumstantial** discipline.

The rebuke. On two occasions God had appeared to Solomon. At Gibeon, following Solomon's coronation as king and following the completion of the Temple in Jerusalem, God made a conditional covenant with Solomon regarding his rule over Israel. God promised Solomon (I Kings 9:4-7) that "... if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel forever . . . But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land. . . ." Solomon's responsibility was clear. He was to be obedient to the Lord God, and God would bless him and cause him to prosper. Solomon, however, rejected his responsibility and broke the conditions of the divine agreement by allowing his foreign wives to turn his heart away from God to worship false gods.

As Solomon fell into the sin of idolatry, God appeared to him a third time. God's first step in giving Solomon an opportunity to confess his sin and be restored to fellowship was a revealed warning. God appeared to Solomon and (I Kings 11:10) "... commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. . . ." When the believer allows himself to be distracted from God's perfect way, the first measure of divine correction will be a warning. In the Old Testament era God often appeared directly to his servants, rebuked them for their

sin, and warned them of the inevitable outcome of such attitudes or actions. Today God's warning to us comes from His Word. As the Christian is distracted from God's plan, the Spirit of God will direct him either to read or to hear God's rebuke from the Bible.

Whenever the child of God receives divine rebuke, correction, or conviction, he should confess his sin and correct his **errant** ways. When the divine rebuke came to Solomon (I Kings 11:10), "... he kept not that which the Lord commanded." Solomon's refusal to obey God resulted in the intensification of the warning discipline of God to Solomon. Because Solomon continued in his sin, God declared (I Kings 11:11-12) that He would "... surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son."



God told Solomon that most of the kingdom would be ruled by someone other than his son,

Rehoboam. God promised within His warning (I Kings 11:13) that He would “. . . 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.”

Following Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam attempted to manage the affairs of united Israel. Soon, however, dissatisfaction set

in and the nation was divided to the north with Israel and the ten tribes and to the south with Judah and the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin at first was thought to have allied with the Northern Kingdom, but eventually allied with Judah. Jeroboam, who had once been a servant in Solomon's court, ruled over the northern tribes as their king.



Write true or false.

- 3.1 _____ God rebukes and disciplines us by His grace when we sin.
- 3.2 _____ Solomon's sins affected all of Israel.
- 3.3 _____ Divine discipline is a mark of divine sonship in God's family.
- 3.4 _____ Solomon started out poorly as king of Israel.
- 3.5 _____ The Lord God appeared to Solomon only twice.



Complete these statements.

- 3.6 Sin on the part of the believer will break his _____ with God.
- 3.7 Following Solomon's sin, he began his own search for _____.
- 3.8 God made a conditional _____ with Solomon.
- 3.9 Because Solomon continued in his sin, God _____ his kingdom.
- 3.10 The heir to Solomon's throne was _____.
- 3.11 The tribes of Judah and _____ formed the southern kingdom.
- 3.12 The king of the northern kingdom was _____.
- 3.13 The northern kingdom included _____ tribes of Israel.
- 3.14 God allowed Judah to continue for _____ sake.
- 3.15 God's anger with Solomon was first revealed through divine _____.

The discipline. As Solomon refused to abandon his idolatrous practices, God moved from rebuke and warning to circumstantial discipline. God chastened Solomon in the exact manner in which He had foretold David. In II Samuel 7:14 God stated that “. . . If he [David's heir] commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men.” God used three men, Hadad of Edom, Rezon of Damascus, and Jeroboam to discipline Solomon.

Hadad the Edomite was heir apparent to the throne of Edom. During David's reign Edom aggressively moved against Israel. The conflict between these two nations extended back to their inception as people. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob (Genesis 25:24-26). The struggle and conflict between these two brothers preceded the long intensive struggle between Israel and Edom. Even during the Exodus, Moses and the children of God were forbidden to pass through any

portion of Edom thus causing a lengthy detour (Numbers 20:14-22). During the conflict between David and the Edomites, the royal family of the nation that lay southeast of Israel fled to Egypt. Although Hadad did not successfully secure **autonomy** for Edom until after Solomon's death, the Biblical record states that he was an adversary of Israel and caused considerable problems during Solomon's reign (I Kings 11:25).

Rezon, the son of Eliadah, was a servant of Hadadezer who was king of Zobah during David's reign. As the borders of Israel were pushed northward, David defeated Hadadezer in battle (II Samuel 8:3). Rezon fled with what remained of the army of Zobah and established himself as king of Damascus in Syria. Rezon's stronghold in Damascus may have been the reason that Solomon established a military outpost in Tadmor (I Kings 9:17-18). Toward the end of Solomon's reign, Rezon and his troops were an adversary to Israel.

These external conflicts were greatly

overshadowed during the conclusion of Solomon's life by an internal conflict that arose within Solomon's own court. Jeroboam was a capable servant in Solomon's administration. His abilities were soon recognized and he was given charge of the work force of the northern tribes that labored on Jerusalem's defenses. Ahijah, a prophet, encountered Jeroboam in a field near Jerusalem and (I Kings 11:30-31) "... caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it into twelve pieces: And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee." Upon learning of this prophecy (I Kings 11:40) "Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt . . . and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon." Following Solomon's death, the northern tribes **seceded** from Jerusalem and Jeroboam was their king (I Kings 12:16-24).



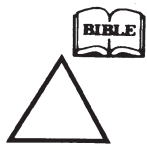
Match these items.

- | | | | |
|------|-------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| 3.16 | _____ | Hadadezer | a. king of Damascus |
| 3.17 | _____ | Hadad | b. king of Edom |
| 3.18 | _____ | Tadmor | c. king of Zobah |
| 3.19 | _____ | Jeroboam | d. military outpost |
| 3.20 | _____ | Rezon | e. forbidden to pass through Edom |
| 3.21 | _____ | Moses | f. leader of a work force |
| 3.22 | _____ | Edomites | g. king of Judah |
| 3.23 | _____ | Rehoboam | h. descendants of Esau |
| 3.24 | _____ | Ahijah | i. descendants of Jacob |
| | | | j. a prophet |



Define these words.

- 3.25 errant _____
- 3.26 autonomy _____
- 3.27 seceded _____



Read Ecclesiastes, Chapters 8 through 12.

SOLOMON'S RESPONSE

Unfortunately, Solomon did not heed the rebuke and discipline from God. He did not confess his sin and turn from idolatry. Instead, he engaged in a futile search for happiness through temporal activities and endeavors. After he had exhausted all supposed avenues to happiness and had become a very old man, he concluded all under the term “vanity.”

Solomon recognized the value of wisdom from God. He concluded that much of the happiness that man seeks for results in folly. He observed what was available to the natural man who was outside of God's divine purpose. Finally, he declared what the purpose of man should be as he is led by the Lord God.

Solomon, who was known for his wisdom and yet at one time sought a reputation among men, realized that the words of a wise man are often rejected by others. Solomon had rejected the wisdom of God, but he had come to realize (Ecclesiastes 9:18) that “. . . one sinner destroyeth much good.” Solomon, who had known the pure wisdom of God's Word and the many distractions of his own pride and idolatry, came face to face with all that his sin had destroyed.

Solomon followed his determination of the value of wisdom with a series of proverbs regarding the folly of man's activities. Within these short two-line proverbs Solomon states (Ecclesiastes 10:5), “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler.” Solomon was Israel's ruler and much evil had been caused by him as he gave in to idolatry and searched for happiness in temporal things. He now realized (Ecclesiastes 10:6) that “Folly is set in great dignity. . . .” These **pithy** sayings, spoken by Solomon, were directed toward himself and his own foolish ways. His evaluation of himself became even more specific when he declared (Ecclesiastes 10:16) “Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child. . . .” Indeed, Solomon had acted like a foolish child who had abandoned his responsibility and had chosen to seek after pleasure and temporal happiness.

In Ecclesiastes, Chapter 11, Solomon concluded a comparison between the natural

man and the child of God. He evaluated the man who (Ecclesiastes 11:5) “. . . knowest not the works of God. . . .” The sum of the life of the natural man is vanity (Ecclesiastes 11:8) if he rejoices in temporal things. Through this discourse Solomon was implying that his frantic search for happiness should even demonstrate to the unbeliever that much of life is vanity. Although the natural man may have temporary times of rejoicing, his end is sure; for God will bring him to judgment (Ecclesiastes 11:9).

Finally, Solomon considered himself and looked back over the years of frustration during which he searched for happiness. Ecclesiastes, Chapter 12, begins with an impressive poetical section describing old age. Ecclesiastes 12:3-7 refers to age as

. . . the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God, who gave it.

This description used numerous figures of speech to identify the ailments of age. The *keepers of the house* are the trembling hands of the aged. The *strong men* are the legs weakened by time. The *grinders* are the teeth worn by years of use. The *windows* and *doors* refer to the eyes and ears that weaken after the years of seeing and hearing. The *sound of the grinding* are the ailments of the digestive system that occur in the elderly. Insomnia, common in the aged, causes him to awaken to the *voice of birds*. Music is not heard and heights frighten the elderly and fear becomes a major part of life. The flourish of the *almond tree* refers to the

white hair of the old and the *grasshopper* describes the loss of physical strength. The *long home* and the *mourners* relate age to the grave and those who will be left behind. The *silver cord*, the *golden bowl*, the *pitcher*, and the *wheel* are metaphors for the spinal cord, skull, and circulatory systems that may weaken during the aging process.

Solomon had wasted many years of his life in a frantic search for happiness. His experience can serve as a divine warning to all God's people. Believers, regardless of age, must recognize that the only true peace, purpose, joy, and happiness comes from being in God's perfect plan. We do not have to wait until old age is upon us to conclude with Solomon that we must (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14) ". . . Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the

whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

Remember that the Book of Ecclesiastes is one of the Bible books of poetry. The actual happenings of the book are arranged to drive home the lessons taught. We cannot tell from this style exactly when or in what order the experiments were conducted. In historical books that are more strictly "narrative" we can place people, places, and events with greater precision. From 11:7 to the end of the Book, the appeal is to youth, saying that "prevention is better than cure." Better learn wisdom in youth from wise teachers than to learn "the hard way" by experimenting contrary to God's will. It is easier, as Solomon demonstrated, to tell others how to live than to follow our own advice.



Complete these statements.

- 3.28 Solomon concluded that much of the happiness that man seeks for results in _____ .
- 3.29 God will surely bring the natural man to _____ .
- 3.30 Solomon described the hands of the aged as the _____ .
- 3.31 Solomon described the teeth of the aged as the _____ .
- 3.32 In Solomon's analogy the windows refer to the _____ of the aged.
- 3.33 In Solomon's analogy the doors refer to the _____ of the elderly.
- 3.34 The grave was described by Solomon as the _____ .
- 3.35 The silver cord of Solomon's analogy to old age referred to the _____ .
- 3.36 The sum of the life of the natural man is _____ .



Complete these lists.

- 3.37 List the four basic conclusions Solomon came to in his response.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____
- 3.38 List the two things Solomon concluded to be the whole duty of man.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____