

Little by Little (1 Kings 8)



Have you ever read about the temple, the house for the Lord that King Solomon built? Wow, how extravagant, how elaborate it was. Made by artisans and crafted with the finest materials. It's truly impressive, and as King Solomon says, **"I have surely built You a lofty house, a place for Your dwelling forever."** (1 Kings 8: 13 nasb) Then, we're told, he also built himself a house that was just as extravagant and amazing.

What I find really interesting is that for all of King Solomon's wisdom, for all the beauty he created around him, for all the wealth he had been blessed with, for all his fame throughout the country, in the end, we find he was left fighting his battles alone, because he left the God who had blessed him and followed after those who were not gods at all.

After reading in 1 Kings and the Book of Ecclesiastes this past week, I am left with the conviction that just as with Solomon, we, too, can fall into the same temptations that he did. We can be good at surrounding ourselves with beauty and put on a pretty show for those around us. We can dress in our finest, enjoy the blessings that God and this life offers, and look as if our life is just perfect, but, ladies, if God is not the center of our life, if He is not our daily companion and the One who propels us, we might as well live by Solomon's fatalistic words, **"...there is nothing good for a man, except to eat, and to drink and to be merry."** (Ecclesiastes 8:15 nasb)

King Solomon started off walking with God, the son of King David (who himself was known as "a man after God's own heart.") It was Solomon whom God would use in a myriad of ways during his years as King. It was he that penned words, such as these when he had built the temple for the Lord, **"O Lord, the God of Israel, there is no God like You in heaven above or earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing loving-kindness to Your servants who walk before You with all their heart, who have kept with Your servant, my father David, that which You have promised him; indeed You have spoken with Your mouth and have fulfilled it with Your hand as it is this day.... But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built! ... And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day requires so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no one else. Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day."** (1 Kings 8:23-24, 27, 59-61 nasb)

So how does one go from believing like that, and serving God like that, to not following God at all? You can probably tell the answer to that, it's the same way it can happen to any one of us - Little by Little. One decision at a time. It began when King Solomon married a woman who served a different god. Then, he married another woman who served a different god. And married another woman who served a different god. And no, he can't blame it on the women, but rather, little by little his own beliefs were dismantled as he chose to appease his wives and their gods.

After the years of building a temple for God the Most High we find Solomon building shrines to the gods of his wives. Erecting idols for his wives to worship. You would have thought his knowledge of his God, the God of his father's, would have set off alarm bells at the mere thought of having an idol in his home. We hear nothing about him trying to draw his wives to his God. He didn't try to sway them to his position, but rather, accepted and succumbed to their desires (most likely due in part to his own physical desires toward them.)

Little by little, Solomon surrounded himself with false gods and his view of the true God became skewed. He forgot who his God was. What began as toleration of other gods became the pathway leading right out of the control of God. The result was that it left him to fend for himself against whatever enemy would come.

So, let's talk about self-preservation. If we don't want to have to fight our battles alone, we need to remember who our God is! For us, the shift happens a little at a time, too, and it's usually a subtle shift that starts us down that slope. The problem is we haven't listened to the alarm bells. God asks us to be alert, be on guard, be diligent. (2 Peter 3:17-18, 1 John 5:21, Philippians 4:8-9, and the list could go on.)

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Warning signs are everywhere, but the subtle shift begins. Perhaps we become immune to the magnitude of God's love for us. We knew it at one time, felt it so deeply that it shook our world and caused us to surrender to Him, but lately... there's been a subtle shift in our thinking and we're not all that sure that His love is really that amazing, after all, He hasn't given us what we have longed for, and life is still hard, so He must not really love us like we thought He did. Perhaps we begin to take for granted the sacrifice of Christ, especially since God could have done it any other way, He's the one that chose to come and die. We didn't make Him do that; oh, but we did, we made Him do that with every sin we committed, for even one sin committed was strong enough to make us unable to have a relationship with the Holy God, and Dear One, He wants a relationship with us. His coming was from His great love for us.

Little by little, our thinking becomes skewed. Have you noticed that sin isn't even called sin anymore, it's now a "mistake", or "no big deal", or accepted as "normal". "As long as it doesn't hurt anybody, what's wrong with it?" "No reason to get excited, it wasn't like you killed someone." But you did, His name was Jesus, and that seemingly small, insignificant thing that God said not to do, well, it required death as a penalty, a penalty that Jesus was willing to pay on our behalf, because of His great love.

It happens little by little when we stifle the Holy Spirit's control over our actions and reactions (aren't we so much better at fixing a situation?) It's only human to feel as we feel... Exactly, it's *only human*. Little by little, we trade the One True God and accept the world's view. Erecting idols. Perhaps it's self-absorption and we become god in our life. Or material possessions do. Or control. Or family. Or work. Or money. Or, or, or.... Anything or anyone that we give higher priority than God, that becomes our god and totally tweaks our view of the Lord God Almighty, making Him less.

Harsh? His word is compelling. We see how easy it is to fall into the same sins of those who went before us. God gave these as examples so that we would learn to live different. I admit, the fact that we live in this "age of grace" allows us to wander off pretty quickly. We think we are hearing dancing music and off we dance, instead of realizing they were warning bells that needed heeding. Ladies, there is only One True God. There is no other beside Him. All else will leave you fighting your battles alone.

Are you there? Having to fight your battles alone, as King Solomon did? Perhaps it's time to check and see where your heart is concerning the gods you have placed in your life. Perhaps you have some idols that need tearing down so that you can position God back on the throne of your life. Do you know Him? Only you can know that, in the quietness of your own heart. Only the Holy Spirit can speak to your spirit to let you know where you have erected idols. Maybe today is the day to clean house. Check every corner, look high and low, and clear out anything that would skew your allegiance to God Almighty. Tear down every idol. Today is the day to bow before Him, asking Him to show you how you've given authority to other things in your life that rightfully belong to Him? Pray, ask Him to help you guard your heart. My plan of attack is in humility to throw myself on the mercy of the court, He alone is my Judge, and He judges rightly. Now is the time to turn and to walk with the One True God.

Father, it's so easy for us to get led away as we follow our own impulses and desires. Forgive us Father. Send the warning bells, and help us to walk in direct fellowship with Your Spirit so that we are careful to not build houses for other gods. Don't let them take up residence in our lives, Lord. By Your Spirit, tear down those idols, revealing the true splendor of You as our One and Only God. To You be the Glory and praise! In Christ I ask. Amen.

For more reading: Check out 1 Kings 8:54-61

Psalm 101:3; Romans 3:23, 6:23; Philippians 4:8-9; 2 Peter 3:17-18; 1 John 5:21;

If you have more time, read all of 1 Kings 6-8 and learn more of the temple and Solomon's heart at that time.