



King Solomon

The Temptations of Money, Sex, and Power

~ Philip Graham Ryken | Crossway, 2011 | 254 pages

Take-Aways

- Neither a successful beginning nor a strong mid-life can insulate you from failure later on.
- Failure may come on slowly, over many years, before it bears fruit in your life.
- Sinful passions can pull at you even as you serve the Lord effectively. These passions must be addressed or they will gain power over you in time.
- Finishing well requires making good choices every moment, every day.
- Guarding your heart as you depend on God's grace is the way to have ultimate success.

Big Promise



By understanding Solomon's life choices and by resisting the mistakes that led him to failure, you can be insulated against the three big temptations every man faces: money, sex, and power.

What You Will Learn

In this abstract, you will learn why Solomon's life ultimately ended in failure despite his strong beginning and his unsurpassed success in mid-life. By understanding how his heart was gradually led astray from the Lord and by guarding your own heart against the sinful passions that controlled Solomon, you can be protected from failure and disgrace so that you finish well.

Recommendation

Passion for money, sex, and power tempt every man to drift away from the Lord. King Solomon is a book every Christian man should read because of the insight it offers into how to resist these three kinds of temptation. Even though Solomon is a familiar biblical character, Ryken offers an intriguing new look into this man's successes and ultimate failure. Through clear exegesis of the Bible's statements about Solomon, he shows why and how Solomon failed late in life, even after having so many blessings along the way. The seeds of failure were planted early on. They were allowed to grow through mid-life. They ultimately bore fruit, leading to Solomon's turning away from the Lord in his old age. Ryken demonstrates clearly where and when you must make different choices to avoid Solomon's fate.

If you thought that spiritual success would insulate you from future failure, you may already be headed for serious trouble. Solomon's success was unsurpassed, but it did not prevent his turning away from the Lord late in life. He was ultimately led away from the Lord by his own passions. Even though Solomon loved the Lord, he also loved some other things that distracted him from the Lord. In the end, those other things won him over. His failure stands as a needed warning to men today that we must be wholehearted in our devotion to the Lord.

Much has changed since Solomon's time, but the dangers of money, sex, and power have not changed. These three dangers still have a pull on every man's heart. Any serious-minded Christian man must be vigilant to prevent failure in these areas. This book tells you how to use Solomon's negative example to your own advantage. You can guard against your own ultimate failure by heeding its warnings.

Much of Ryken's focus is on carefully explaining Solomon's life before applying his points to the reader. This approach adds power to his conclusions and keeps him focused on the applications to be gained from Solomon's life. The book includes a detailed study guide, general index, and Scripture index.

Rating

Biblical Accuracy
10

Reading Ease
8

Practical Application
7

Quality
8

Value
9

Abstract

“Solomon was a lot like us. He loved the Lord, as every Christian does. But he also had some other loves in his life – sinful passions that had power to destroy...”
(page 49).

Solomon had an incredibly successful beginning. Despite his relative youth, his kingdom was quickly and firmly established. An even greater victory came when he chose to ask God for wisdom to lead God’s people. God was so pleased with this request that he gave Solomon wisdom, but also granted him riches and long life. It was a great beginning. As Solomon’s kingdom matured, his success became even more amazing. He ruled well, and Israel was blessed in every way that a nation could hope for.

With this great success, however, there were some early warning signs of the failure that was coming. Solomon’s willingness to marry a foreign wife in order to gain a political alliance with Pharaoh shows that his heart was already divided. Adding numerous wives and concubines indicates that sex was a driving force for him. Marrying for political gain demonstrates a passion for power. Solomon’s love for the Lord was not as wholehearted as it should have been. Dangerous passions for sex and power were already quietly working in Solomon’s heart.

The Road to Failure

To understand Solomon’s failure effectively, it is important to grasp what he achieved before his fall. The wisdom God gave him was so significant that Solomon’s fame spread throughout the world. God granted him peace on all sides so that his kingdom flourished. He built the majestic Temple that his

father, David, had dreamed of building. Through wise spiritual and national leadership, he accomplished astounding things for the people he ruled. He also built his own home in such a way that royal majesty was taken to new levels of splendor. It was after having had such success that Solomon experienced catastrophic failure. Solomon's road to failure was one of incredible wealth, power, prestige, and privilege.

As his blessings increased year after year, there is continued evidence of Solomon's lack of wholehearted devotion to the Lord. His extravagance seems to indicate too strong a desire to acquire more and more wealth. He continued to multiply wives and concubines in contradiction of Scripture's commands. The seeds of his future failure continued to grow quietly, even at the height of his success.

"Everyone has a choice to make in life, and this choice is always before us, even if we have made the right choice before" (page 133).

Wise Choices

The key to understanding Solomon's failure and to insulating yourself against the same fate is realizing that lasting success requires a continuing series of wise choices. As Ryken points out regarding the path of life, "Many Christians seem to think that this is a choice we make only once in life, when we first decide to follow Christ. But in fact we face this choice every day at every moment" (pages 129-130). Since there are only two possible ways to go, whenever you fail to obey, you put yourself on the path of disobedience – the path that leads to failure.

As was the case with Solomon, many of God's promises to you are conditioned on your obedience. Even if you have made right choices before, and even if you have had tremendous success, there is still a choice before you to obey or disobey in each new moment. Solomon's example serves as a warning that your next choice will not automatically be a wise one. You cannot rest on your success. You must continue to pursue obedience. Neither earthly nor spiritual success will insulate you from future failure.

A Long Growing Season

Solomon's failure took many years to bear fruit. In the meantime, he continued to enjoy unsurpassed blessings. The official visit of the Queen of Sheba, recorded in 1 Kings, shows how successful Solomon was in both earthly and spiritual matters. The Queen of Sheba was a powerful world leader who was staggered by what she saw and learned during her visit with Solomon. In response to Solomon's wisdom, this pagan leader even gave glory to the God of Scripture (note 1 Kings 10:9). Solomon's success included great spiritual influence.

*"We start falling
into sin long before
we ever fall
into disgrace"
(page 179).*

In spite of his great achievements, Solomon eventually experienced significant loss. His love for the Lord was set aside as he clung to other loves. Before that final fall came, Solomon had been making deadly spiritual compromises for years. He had failed to heed Moses' explicit warning not to acquire many wives or excessive gold and silver (Deuteronomy 17:17). He had put his trust in military power, multiplying horses and chariots, again in disobedience to Scripture. Passion for money, sex, and power had long pulled at this great man's heart. The sin was established in his heart long before it became obvious in his actions. That sin was working on him, quietly gaining strength year by year, until, finally, Solomon clung to his foreign wives and turned away from the Lord. The slide into sin begins long before disgrace and failure overtake the sinner.

Preventing Failure

“Even the greatest spiritual gifts will not keep us from sin if our hearts turn away from God” (page 182).

Solomon’s example makes it clear that spiritual giftedness will not keep you from turning away from the Lord. Your gifts do not operate independently of your heart. If your heart turns away from God, even the greatest spiritual gifts will not stop you from falling into abject sin.

Scripture gives us Solomon’s example so that we can learn from his failure and avoid repeating it. Let his example teach you to depend on God’s grace as you guard your heart and make wise choices every day.

Who Benefits From This Book?

- Any Christian man

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