

SOLOMON LESSONS FROM A FALLEN KING

STUDY THREE

Signs of Erosion

Selected Scriptures

Fortune, fame, power, and pleasure—Solomon had it all. God trusted Solomon with these things in abundance, but he fell into traps laid by the flesh.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

EROSION happens all the time, and the signs are everywhere. Jagged mountain peaks bear the marks of the wind's wear-and-tear. Old wooden barns sag into heaps of scrap from years of exposure to the sun. Rust eats through iron girders on bridges. Invasive insects consume massive oaks from the inside out. Trees that once stood the test of tornadoes collapse in a rain shower—because of internal rot and ruin.

Flowing water is the most powerful erosive force. The Colorado River carved out the Grand Canyon by cutting through limestone, displacing boulders, and washing away tons of sediment. Pebble by pebble, grain of sand by grain of sand, the erosion process goes on and on—slowly and silently, with a force that is imperceptible and unstoppable.

What is true in nature is true in the soul. A person's character can erode, compromise by compromise, sin by sin. People rarely notice spiritual erosion at first. It may take years, but erosion will have its way. Eventually, granite-like character—even character as solid as Solomon's—can deteriorate into a gaping moral void.

In this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study, we'll witness Solomon's spiritual erosion. It began imperceptibly. No one noticed when the first gaps formed, but, tragically, the fissures grew and eventually led to his downfall.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

God gave us the Scriptures “to teach us what is true” (2 Timothy 3:16). Use the following space to invite the Holy Spirit to help you learn what God has for you today.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

For many years, Solomon was a towering monument to God’s blessing. “And the LORD his God was *with him* and *exalted him* greatly” (2 Chronicles 1:1 NASB, emphasis added). The word *exalted* is from the Hebrew term *gadal*, which means to “become great or important, promote, make powerful . . . to do great things.”¹

The Lord exalted Solomon by giving him “knowledge as vast as the sands of the seashore” (1 Kings 4:29)—seemingly limitless understanding of the arts and sciences. Solomon’s ornate temple to the Lord was an architectural wonder. His exquisite palace, pools, resorts, stables, and fortresses were the envy of the world. From all corners of civilization, people praised the glory of Solomon.

Solomon’s image was flawless, but under the surface, erosion was eating away his character. Let’s examine some of the cracks that led to his tragic collapse.



Observation: Subtle Traps and a Deteriorating Life

To look beneath his polished exterior, turn to Solomon’s own words in Ecclesiastes. In this book, Solomon confesses all the ways he sought the “good things’ in life” (Ecclesiastes 2:1). What did Solomon pursue, according to [Ecclesiastes 2:2–10](#)?

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His extravagant lifestyle laid traps for him. Describe the miseries that ensnared his soul, according to *Ecclesiastes 2:11, 18–24*.

Solomon was a man with unlimited resources. Unlimited wisdom. Unlimited riches. And yet, he wound up empty because the major focus of his life shifted. Nothing satisfied any longer. Unless God is in the center, giving direction and stability, boredom sets in. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Over time, Solomon's spiritual passion faded in the blinding light of his fame, fortune, and pleasure. Erosion never happens suddenly. It starts quietly and progresses gradually. A chip here . . . a crack there. A compromise here . . . a crumbling conviction there.

In the chart below, record the subtle compromises you observe in the verses within each area.

Compromise	Description
Unwise Alliance <i>1 Kings 3:1; 7:8; 9:16, 24</i>	
Unholy Involvement <i>1 Kings 3:2–3</i>	
Unresolved Conflict <i>1 Kings 9:10–14</i>	
Unrestrained Preoccupation <i>1 Kings 11:1–3</i>	

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While Solomon flirted with sin, how did he ease his conscience? The way we all do, by rationalizing and excusing. We can imagine Solomon telling himself:

- *Marrying daughters of foreign kings is good diplomacy.*
- *Unloading worthless property is just smart business.*
- *Sacrificing to idols shows tolerance to all faiths.*
- *Great kings deserve to be indulged.*

Where did Solomon pick up his compromising ways? To some extent, from his father.



Interpretation: Like Father, Like Son

David acquired wives, ignoring God's prohibition (*Deuteronomy 17:17*), and so did Solomon—which led both father and son into big trouble.

Solomon sunk even deeper, however. He offered sacrifices to God “on the high places” where pagans worshiped (*1 Kings 3:3*), which David never did, and Solomon married foreign wives who brought their idol worship with them (*11:1–3*).

What virtues and vices in David multiplied in his son?

What timeless principles can you draw by comparing Solomon with his father?

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Correlation: Pride, the Primary Cause of Erosion

The lessons from the Old Testament carry over into the New. The apostle Paul warned the Corinthians to avoid the ways of the Israelites. His warning could have referred to Solomon's sins too.

What warning does Paul give in *1 Corinthians 10:11–12*?

If you had been in Solomon's court, what warning would you have given him? Have you ever tried to warn someone like Solomon? Did he or she listen?

Solomon started walking with a swagger. He had the world by the tail! Nobody was as brilliant, rich, gifted, and capable as him. A man like that doesn't need to be accountable, right? . . . Wrong. Having no accountability ultimately spelled disaster. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Strong Warnings

How could such a wise man as Solomon act so foolishly? We can point to at least two causes of the king's folly.

First, *he willfully ignored the counsel of Scripture*. The law of Moses forbade Israel's kings from marrying many wives and forming alliances with idol worshipers. Solomon snubbed these commands and set in motion the forces of erosion.

Second, *he had no accountability*. We have no record of anyone confronting Solomon like Nathan confronted David. With no checks on his behavior, Solomon's river of sin overflowed its banks and flooded his whole life, as well as the nation.

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Are there any signs of spiritual erosion appearing in your life that are similar to what you studied in Solomon? Any unwise alliances? Unholy involvements? Unresolved conflicts? Unrestrained preoccupations?

The Lord points out these signs to protect you from disaster. He doesn't want anything to affect your walk with Him. Have you seen erosion impacting your relationship with the Lord?

What steps can you take to shore up your spiritual foundation? Perhaps there's a sin to confess? A command to obey? A friend who can hold you accountable?

Paul warned the one who thinks he or she is "standing strong" to "*be careful* not to fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12, emphasis added). Watch out for Solomon's traps of boredom and disillusionment that come from extravagant living. Watch out for the rationalizations, compromises, and weakening convictions that undermine greatness. Stop the erosion, and you'll be wise. Wiser than Solomon!

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A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I give You full access to every chamber of my heart. Inspect me thoroughly. See if there are any signs of erosion that I have overlooked. Help me stay true to the commands of Your Word. Give me not only wisdom but also the strength to live wisely. In Christ's name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Elmer B. Smick, "gadal," *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 151.

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 1978, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

