

THE FROG AND KING SOLOMON

By Pastor Murray Davis

I remember only two things from my high school chemistry class. First, I got rid of a wart on the back of my right hand through applications of sulfuric acid for 33 consecutive days. Second, I watched the slow death of a frog in an unforgettable experiment.

My teacher placed the hapless creature in an oversized beaker of cool water. Beneath the beaker he moved a Bunsen Burner with a very low flame so that the water heated very slowly—something like .017 of a degree Fahrenheit per second. In fact, the temperature rose so gradually that the frog was never aware of the change. Two and a half hours later the frog was dead—boiled to death. The change occurred so slowly that the frog neither tried to jump out nor released a complaining kick.

Attentive as I was to the gruesome demonstration, I never realized I was witnessing a profound principle that would remind me of that frog for the rest of my life. The principle in a word is erosion—the silent tool of deterioration.

The first eleven chapters of I Kings record the erosion of a great man, in fact, the greatest of his day. Blessed with royal blood and an abundance of brains, Solomon was a natural for the throne of David. As the heir-apparent, he was tutored at the feet of Nathan, groomed through the heart of Bathsheba, polished under the eyes of David, and nurtured by the hand of God. The mark of excellence was upon him. Though he was young when his father died, he was thoroughly prepared to take the scepter and reign over Israel.

Wisdom, loyalty, diplomacy and faithfulness and efficiency characterized the attitudes and acts of David's gifted son for the first few years of his kingship. Best of all, "Solomon loved the Lord" (I Kings 3:3) and carefully walked in His ways. His achievements, power, international influence and wealth were nothing short of phenomenal: Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. And Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men., and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations...So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom...And all the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon (I Kings 4:29-31; 10:23-24a).

His annual income reached well into the millions. The unparalleled achievement of his life was the design and construction of Solomon's temple, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. After the suspicious queen of Sheba came to visit his kingdom to satisfy her mind that all she had heard was not merely an exaggeration, she humbly admitted: "...I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard" (1 Kings 10:7). Candidly, Solomon had it all.

Things slowly began to change, however. Almost as if he had attained the mastery of man and God, he seized the reigns of compromise and wrong and drove himself to the misty flats of licentiousness, pride, and even permitted idolatry by his Gentile wives. Solomon gave himself to women, pleasure, fame and money. No wonder he lost the things he once held precious.

Layers of dust collected in the majestic temple he had built, now that the monarch had turned his attention to another project. The building of strange edifices for the strange gods he and his strange wives were now serving. Solomon (like many-another absolute monarch, super-salesman, top business executive, athletic prima donna, or film-star playboy) simply drove too fast and traveled too far. The vultures of his own vulnerability soon spotted his carnal carcass and began to feed upon his vitals. The termination of his now sterile life came prematurely. His so-called *success story* now stank.

The son of David died far from God. He knew from experience that the things of this world, even to excess, do not satisfy, and that life was all “vanity and vexation of spirit” (Ecclesiastes 2:26b). He left a nation confused, in conflict and soon to be fractured by civil war.

Deterioration is never sudden. No garden *suddenly* overgrows with thorns. No church *suddenly* splits. No building *suddenly* crumbles. No tree *suddenly* falls. No marriage *suddenly* breaks down. No nation *suddenly* becomes a mediocre power. No person *suddenly* becomes base. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, certain things are accepted that once were rejected. Things once considered hurtful are now secretly tolerated, At the outset it appears harmless, perhaps even exciting, but the wedge it brings leaves a gap that grows wider as moral erosion joins hands with spiritual decay. The gap becomes a canyon. That *way* which seems right becomes in fact the way of death (Proverbs 14:2). Solomon wrote that. He ought to know.

Take heed, you who stand, lest you fall! Be careful about changing your standard so that it corresponds with your desires. Be very cautious about becoming inflated with thoughts of your own importance. Be alert to the pitfalls of prosperity and success. Should God grant riches, fame and success, don't run scared or feel guilty. Just stay balanced. Remember Solomon, who deteriorated from a humble man who loved wisdom and righteousness, to a proud man who practiced foolishness in a rather brief span of time.

I'm now grateful for that chemistry class experiment I witnessed back in 1951. At that time I kept thinking, *what a drag*. No longer. The memory of that frog has kept me out of a lot of hot water.

(Originally Published September 1982)