



Am I Throwing Away My Life's Greatest Privilege? (Part I)

1 Kings 12:24: (KJV) *Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel; return every man to his house; for this thing is from Me...*



When God miraculously rescued His people from Egyptian slavery and established Israel as a nation, He put a system of rulership through judges in place that did not include having a king. Before you knew it, the people complained to the prophet Samuel because they wanted a king, just like everybody else. Even though they were warned of the dire consequences that a monarch would bring, they stood fast in their desire, so God let them have their way. Saul was Israel's first king, and of course, that did not end well. David was their second king, and his life and reign ended with turmoil. Solomon was their third king. His reign began in wisdom and faithfulness and ended in the grip of hideous idolatry. From that time on, Israel's unity fractured, and they would never have a king to rule over their entire nation again. What happened? Israel and its rulers would teach us how easy it is to throw away great privilege!

In this two-part series, we will track the events that broke the nation of Israel into two separate kingdoms. As with the experiences of King Solomon, we will watch opportunities and privileges given by God Himself be squandered and lost by the kings that followed him, but more importantly, the potential for US to lose our opportunities as we follow our king, Jesus.

There is a lot of "lesson-learning" to be done.



It is easy to look back at Israel and say, "I would NEVER do THAT!" What is so much harder is looking at our own experiences to trace and track our own patterns of half-hearted obedience to - or ignoring of - God's will and way in our own lives. Let us see the lessons of opportunities lost and decide that we will NOT follow the folly of foolish pride.

We want to have the proverbial mirror in our hands as we go through these accounts of the kings. They are exciting and dramatic accounts with a lot to pay attention to on our part.

To understand how God's chosen nation could so irreparably split, we need to understand the conditions of the nation beforehand. Solomon, in all his glory, was king of Israel. He had expanded Israel's territory and gathered great wealth. He had hundreds of foreign wives who brought their idol worship with them to Israel.

Despite his vaunted wisdom, Solomon degraded himself and his people with grotesque idol worship:

1 Kings 11:3-4: (NASB) *³He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. ⁴For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.*

Early on in his kingship, he had been facing the right way - towards God. But *when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away*. Solomon brought into Israel Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Milcom, the detestable idol of the Ammonites. He established places of worship for the idols Chemosh and Molech.

Worship of the true God was contaminated:

1 Kings 11:6,8: (NASB) ⁶*Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done.* ⁸*Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.*

(Source: Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary) 1 Kings 11:1-8: There is not a more melancholy and more astonishing instance of human depravity in the sacred Scriptures, than that here recorded. Solomon became a public worshipper of abominable idols! Probably he by degrees gave way to pride and luxury, and thus lost his relish for true wisdom. Nothing forms in itself a security against the deceitfulness and depravity of the human heart. Nor will old age cure the heart of any evil propensity. If our sinful passions are not crucified and mortified by the grace of God, they never will die of themselves, but will last even when opportunities to gratify them are taken away. Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. We see how weak we are of ourselves, without the grace of God; let us therefore live in constant dependence on that grace. Let us watch and be sober: ours is a dangerous warfare, and in an enemy's country, while our worst foes are the traitors in our own hearts.

Over time, divided loyalty will subtly and ultimately bring one to the sad state of being unworthy of trust:

1 Kings 11:9,11-13: (NASB) ⁹*Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice.* ¹¹*So the LORD said to Solomon, Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant (an important foreshadowing!).* ¹²*Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son.* ¹³*However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.*



God reveals the kingdom of Israel's destiny to Solomon. God appeared to him twice, which means Solomon must have been special in God's sight, but look at what he did with that special privilege!

God says, *you have not kept My covenant and...I will surely tear the kingdom away from you...However, I will not tear away all the kingdom...for the sake of My servant (and your father), David.*

Q Why would God allow even a portion of the kingdom to remain in the family?



Because David, even amid his ups and downs and weaknesses, was a model of honoring and loyalty to God. God tells Solomon that He will not tear away all the kingdom; this is not for Solomon's sake, but for His promise to David and for the sake of His chosen city, Jerusalem.

In other words: *Solomon, you have messed everything up. But, because of things that have gone on before you and promises that I have made, I will keep some of these things intact.* It is important for us to see how God works through such experiences.



Am I
POLLUTING
or
PROTECTING
my privileges?



God's favor is pure privilege. This privilege brings opportunity, which in turn brings responsibility, which in turn brings accountability. God is always fair and merciful when He bestows

such grace. The question is, what will we do when the opportunity to have His privilege upon us comes our way?



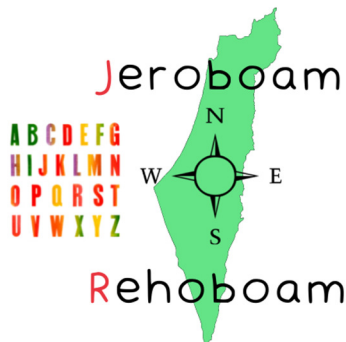
While both David and Solomon ruled over a united kingdom of the twelve tribes of Israel, during both reigns tribal jealousies were prevalent between the northern and southern regions. This was especially true between Ephraim in the north and Judah in the south. The nation's capital of Jerusalem and the worship center of the Temple were both in the south. This rivalry and the location of the Temple were important details as we unfold the following account of these two kings.

The two key players in this account are Jeroboam and Rehoboam.

Remember how God said, *I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.* Jeroboam was that servant of Solomon.

1 Kings 11:28 describes him as a *mighty man of valor*. He and his family were from Ephraim in the north. Solomon saw Jeroboam's industrious work ethic and appointed him to oversee the conscripted (forced) labor force.

Rehoboam was one of Solomon's sons. At age 41, Rehoboam was given the throne of Israel when Solomon died. His mother, one of Solomon's wives, was an Ammonite.



Interestingly, out of all the children Solomon had by his thousands of wives and concubines, he is the only son of Solomon named in the Bible.

They are easy to remember because their names are alphabetical: "J" for Jeroboam is first in the alphabet - he is from the north, so picture him at the top of Israel. "R" for Rehoboam is second in the alphabet - he is from the south or the bottom part of Israel.

A prophet of the LORD came to Jeroboam with a dramatic message. When a prophet of God appears with a message, this is an incredible privilege:

1 Kings 11:29-30: (NASB) ²⁹*It came about at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had clothed himself with a new cloak; and both of them were alone in the field.* ³⁰*Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him and tore it into twelve pieces.*

This prophet of God, Ahijah, comes upon Jeroboam in a field. Ahijah is wearing a new cloak which he tears into 12 pieces.



1 Kings 11:31-34: (NASB) ³¹He said to Jeroboam, Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and give you ten tribes ³²(but he will have one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel),

Again, we see *My servant David* mentioned. We hear of God's respect for King David because of his absolute loyalty to God. David, in his imperfection, showed the rest of imperfect humanity how to be loyal to God. He showed us how to recognize our sins, go before God for forgiveness, and to stand again.

David was Solomon's father, Rehoboam's grandfather. Solomon had first-hand knowledge of David's absolute loyalty to Jehovah God, and Rehoboam should have heard about this from his father. All of Israel knew well the stories of David and his love for God.

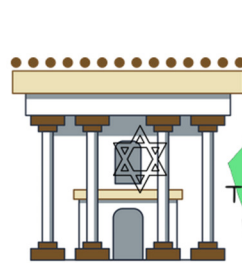
David - a man after God's own heart



Why did no one listen to **the man after God's own heart**, in whom we have an incredible example of loyalty in imperfection? Not only should Rehoboam have known of David's love for the Lord, but Jeroboam, the servant, would have known of David's example since he worked for the court, the family, and he was an Israelite.

³³because they have forsaken Me and have worshiped... (all the gods that Solomon polluted Israel with) and they have not walked in My ways, doing what is right in My sight and observing My statutes and My ordinances, as his father David did. ³⁴Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of My servant David whom I chose, who observed My commandments and My statutes:

People like to talk about God's generational punishment, but here we see His generational mercy. God would let Solomon's son, Rehoboam, keep a small part of the kingdom out of respect for his grandfather, David. Hearing the LORD respect David's loyalty over and over again gives us the model of how to keep the privileges given to us by God so He will respect us as well.



The center of worship would remain in the south at the Temple in Jerusalem.

The dividing of the Kingdom would be a governmental division only.

Jeroboam would be blessed **IF** he kept God's commandments. "If" is such a little word, but there is a lot riding on Jeroboam's decision. "**IF** we, **THEN** He" is how God works.

Jeroboam must have been a great man of integrity and leadership

- 1) for Solomon to put him in charge of so many who were rebuilding cities and other important projects.
- 2) that the Lord would trust Jeroboam enough to give him charge over ten tribes of the LORD's own people.



1 Kings 11:37-38: (NASB) ³⁷*I will take you, and you shall reign over whatever you desire, and you shall be king over Israel.* ³⁸*Then it will be, that if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you.*

The references to David cannot be overstated. He is the one God goes back to and says, just like *My servant David...* when He is speaking of praiseworthy behavior. Jeroboam is being shown what a great privilege he is being given. This was undoubtedly the greatest privilege of Jeroboam's life! This *mighty man of valor* was in position for untold blessing and favor. All he had to do was what was "right" in God's sight! If he fell down, he was to get up, ask forgiveness and go back to it. That is how it is done.

Am I
POLLUTING
or
PROTECTING
my privileges?



It is not every day that we are given an opportunity for such a profound privilege. The key to understanding this is to realize that God will only offer this kind of blessing to those He knows are capable of following through.



Am I trusting
in God's trust in me?

This is the kind of thing that can either excite us beyond measure...or scare us to death! God wants to give me WHAT?!?!

God speaks through a prophet to Jeroboam about restoring Israel's spirituality. What could possibly go wrong?

The Bible is full of what can go wrong when God gives instruction and opportunity, and this account will be no exception. The difficulties began with King Solomon himself, as he heard of God's choosing Jeroboam to be king of the northern tribes. Solomon tried to put Jeroboam to death, but Jeroboam fled to Egypt under the protection of the Pharaoh Shishak. Solomon was still in the picture looking to wipe out what he saw as a threat to his throne over all of Israel.

Then Solomon died and his son, Rehoboam, took the throne as the new monarch over all Israel. It was now safe for Jeroboam to leave Egypt and return to his home in the north of Israel.

So far, we have only talked about the promise made to the servant Jeroboam. Now we going to talk about Solomon's son, Rehoboam, the new king over all of Israel.

This is a great history lesson, but what can we learn from the privileges God gives to us?



Am I
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Too often we see God's blessings and opportunities misused or squandered. Too often we look at the experiences of a King Solomon and wonder just how things can go that wrong.



Do we see where
our opportunities
and privileges
are being wasted?

Much of the splendor of King Solomon's greatness was accomplished at the expense of his people. Heavy taxes and conscription (forced labor) turned what could have been loyalty into thankless labor and burden. People under such burdens, when given the chance, will undoubtedly revolt.

With Solomon now gone, the discontented northern tribes sent word to Jeroboam to be their leader in presenting a petition to the new king, Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

Everyone is assembled at the king's coronation in the town of Shechem:



1 Kings 12:1-4: (NASB) ¹Then Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. ²Now when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it, he was living in Egypt (for he was yet in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon). ³Then they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, ⁴Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.

The people have called Jeroboam back from Egypt to act as their spokesperson.



Jeroboam presents the fact that the people feel Solomon had made their lives and labor overwhelmingly difficult, *the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us...*

How heavy were their burdens?

(Source: Bible Commentary by C.T. Russell) Solomon divided the whole country into twelve districts, each of which was compelled to furnish contributions to the luxury of the royal palaces and court. He also established a system of forced labor in connection with the building of roads, palaces, fortifications, immense gardens, reservoirs, etc. And while these public improvements were in many respects proper enough, the method of securing the labor was particularly distasteful to the Israelites, who were thereby reminded of the Egyptian slavery.



Not only were they forced into grueling work, but taxes were exorbitantly high to support the royal lifestyle. When we look at King Solomon's reign, it was marked by glory, wealth and development - the building of beautiful palaces and gardens, the construction of roads throughout the expanded kingdom. But these came at an incredibly high price. The labor was so hard that it reminded the people of Egyptian slavery. It was financially, physically and emotionally burdensome, all for the glory of the royal family while the average person was made low.

This message to new King Rehoboam spoken through the people's leader, Jeroboam, shows us a grand opportunity for a unified fresh start. The people are gathered together, and a respected leader is talking to the king!

The people's request is for reasonable expectations and their promise is to work hard and to be loyal.



A promise of loyalty was like a contract.

Rehoboam replied to the peoples' request brought by Jeroboam:

1 Kings 12:5-7: (NASB) ⁵Then he said to them, Depart for three days, then return to me. So the people departed.

He asked for three days to think about the people's plea. This request for reasonable service was being considered with apparent thoughtfulness. "All right! He is going to carefully think our proposal through! Maybe we will finally get relief!"

⁶King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, How do you counsel me to answer this people?

This new king went to the wise men of Israel who were already experienced with matters of the state; that was their job.

One may think that they would be all about continuing the hard labor of Solomon, but instead, they gave sound and wise advice:

⁷Then they spoke to him, saying, If you will be a servant to this people today, and will serve them and grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.

This sounds like great advice they probably were too scared to give his father, Solomon. Remember, Solomon was considered the wisest man in all the earth. He could talk circles around anyone, and besides, he was the king!

The opportunity was there for the elders to look back and see that Solomon's reign had not gone well for the people. They had the integrity to say, "Do it differently and they will serve you forever!" The wise elders saw the difficulties the people were facing. They saw the trauma, the trials and the burden Solomon had put on them, wearing them out and destroying their loyalty because they were being pushed too hard. They brought this before King Rehoboam.



This is striking! These experienced counselors knew that the hardship the people had previously endured had damaged their loyalty, and that a gracious response from their new king would inspire and encourage them. It had the possibility of uniting them all, pulling those rivalries together. It was an open opportunity to heal, to join and to conquer - forging a unit, all together.

Respecting those who are called into service is a universal principle of loyalty. If we want someone to be loyal to us, we must respect them.









In a very dramatic way, Jesus illustrated how to appropriately call others to loyalty.

Using Jesus' example, let's look at what was put before King Rehoboam and see how he could have handled his opportunity:

Matthew 11:28-30: (NASB) ²⁸*Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.* ²⁹*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* ³⁰*For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

What an invitation! Let's take a look at the points in these scriptures - there is a profound message in Jesus' compassion:



-  Jesus invites those who feel worn and burdened to come to him. He gives them a place to go.
-  He promises them relief.
-  He lets them know there will be work ahead, as they are to take his yoke.
-  He assures them that they will be taught how to work in a wise, gentle and humble manner. He is going to teach them how to do the work. It is not blind labor or conscripted labor. It is exampled labor.
-  He reassures them of rest as a result of laboring in his work. Yes, there will be work, but there will also be a rest with that work.
-  His end result assurance is that they will be able to accomplish their work. When we want to draw others to a loyal position, give them the sense that "we can do this," and "we can do this together." This gives a sense of unity and strength. There is great strength in numbers.

Jesus showed us how to do this.

We are at a turning point for the new king. The people were ready to work hard for him if only the work was reasonable. He just received the best counsel from his father's wise men on how to easily create true loyalty, which would mean he would rule a strong, united kingdom of Israel and go down in history as an amazing king. What did Rehoboam do?

Am I
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my privileges?



Any great privilege from God ALWAYS comes fully equipped with all that is necessary to make it into a flourishing success. The challenge is to see and embrace that which God has provided. Am I looking at the “standard equipment” that God provides with His opportunities to make them work, or am I distracted by my own ways of doing things?

What do we get as “standard equipment” that comes with our opportunity to serve God? When we buy a car we want it to be fully equipped and know the standard equipment. Here is the deal with Jesus: when God calls us to walk in Jesus’ footsteps, there is a long list of standard equipment:

- God’s spirit - His power and influence guides us
- God’s promises - what we receive when we follow His ways
- God’s providence - experiences for our best benefit
- Shield of faith
- Breastplate of righteousness
- Girdle of truth
- Helmet of salvation...and more!



These are some of the standard equipment that comes to every Christian if we decide to fully comply with God’s will. Rehoboam was in that position - and so are we! We have a great privilege if we are called of God to follow Christ. We should look at the “standard equipment” and say, “This is the most remarkable thing I have ever seen!”

This sounds inspiring and fulfilling!

**The stage was set for King Rehoboam to act with godliness.
Would he follow through based on the wise counsel he was given?**

This is always the question when we are in a situation that requires sound thinking and action. Will we follow through with the highest and most righteous course of action, or are our minds tuned in to other courses of action? You do not have to be a king to be in a position to make wise and appropriate use of a God-given privilege! What do we do when we are given them?

*Rehoboam asks the advice of the
young men he grew up with.*



Instead of simply taking the advice of the experienced counselors of his father, Rehoboam asked the advice of the young men he grew up with. These were his buddies, likely benefitting from the extravagant lifestyle of living in the court - supported by all these low-ranking workers who are bringing the complaint.

Their advice was the complete opposite of the good counsel he received from the elders that advised his father:

1 Kings 12:8-9: (NASB) ⁸But he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him (the right answer) and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him. ⁹So he said to them, What counsel do you give that we may answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?

He goes to his buddies who are new to the “I am friends with the king” thing. They thought this was their opportunity to shine in the king’s eyes and secure their own positions.

(Source: Bible Commentary by David Guzik) This is a common phenomenon today - what some call “advice shopping.” The idea is that you keep asking different people for advice until you find someone who will tell you what you want to hear. This is an unwise and ungodly way to get counsel. It is better to have a few trusted counselors you will listen to even when they tell you what you don’t want to hear.



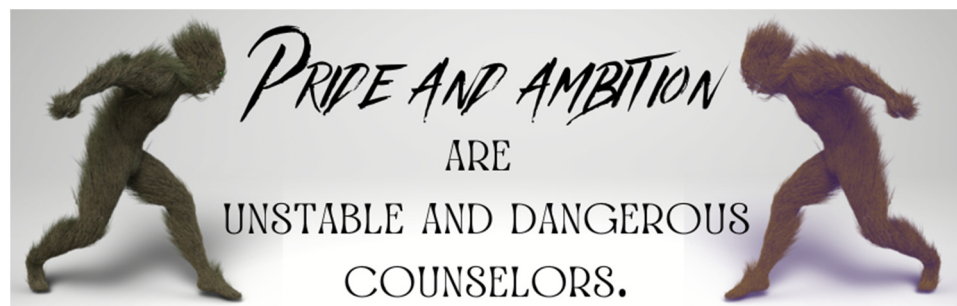
This is why a proven counselor is so important. If we “advice shop,” we will not have to reconsider, not have to change, not have to do anything we do not want to do. This is not the way to be wise.

Here is what the young, ambitious men said:

1 Kings 12:10-11: (NASB) ¹⁰The young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us! But you shall speak to them, My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins! ¹¹Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions (knotted whips).

They are telling him to pile it on, to press them mercilessly!

Pride, ambition and inexperience said, “Proclaim your power and hold to it! If you yield even an inch, they will consider you weak and inefficient and will ask for more and more. Make sure they know who is boss!” This is pride, inexperience and power-seeking speaking loudly.



Unlike what his grandfather David was quick to do, Rehoboam did NOT consult the LORD on the matter. David was good at going to God when there was an issue. He was good at righting the ship, finding God’s way, listening to God’s prophecy. He was *a man after God’s own heart*. Rehoboam was now a man getting counsel contrary to the path David would have taken.



Am I
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The temptation to seek our personal glory and might cannot be overstated. In stark contrast, we have the responsibility to give God all the glory because of His might. Grab that mirror - are we seeing our privileges as God-honoring or as self-exalting?



Who are we listening to?
Are we feeding on
the Word of God
or just feeding our ego?

The narrative continues. Here comes the big meeting.

Rehoboam has been given wise counsel
and self-serving counsel, what is he
going to say on day three?



1 Kings 12:12-15: (KJV) ¹²So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day. ¹³And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; ¹⁴And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions (the knotted whips). ¹⁵Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people...

**WRONG
ANSWER!**

(Source: Bible Commentary by David Guzik, quoting Pastor Steven Dilday) With a dozen rash words, Rehoboam, the bungling dictator, opened the door for 400 years of strife, weakness, and, eventually, the destruction of the entire nation.

Ugh - he came so close! This is a big “ouch” we just described here. Rehoboam had the opportunity to truly bring together these people who had been striving against each other. But he followed the counsel of those who had no experience and who were simply power hungry. Rehoboam, by following that counsel, established the self-serving pattern that would eventually bring the destruction of the nation of Israel. It would take God’s chosen nation and break it into pieces. That is not something he would ever want to be remembered for, and yet that is what he is doing here.

Rehoboam displays several “failures of a foolish king” from which we can learn:



1. Not seeking God's will in a matter of importance:

To illustrate each of these failures we will quote several verses from Proverbs 3 as an answer to each of these failures.

Proverbs 3:1: (NASB) *My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments.*

Solomon was given the gift of God's wisdom and wrote most of the book of Proverbs. Here he writes, *my son*. He would have known which son would be his successor on the throne. We assume he would have taken a special interest in Rehoboam in order to prepare him and would have known his temperament, weaknesses and the critical challenges that lay ahead. This advice to *my son* was crucial.

The first failure of this foolish king was not seeking God's will. Solomon's advice when he was wise was, *My son, do not forget my teaching. Let your heart keep my commandments.*



2. Addressing those whose respect you seek and loyalty you expect, with harsh fury:

Proverbs 3:3: (NASB) *Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.*

The beauty and simplicity of binding kindness and truth around his neck, writing them on his heart and keeping them close was lost on him. As a new king with a major decision, Rehoboam had the opportunity to protect and help his people with *kindness and truth*. Instead, he addressed his people with a harsh fury that showed how it was all about power.



3. Heeding the advice of foolishness instead of the advice of godliness:

Proverbs 3:5-8: (NASB) ⁵*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.* ⁶*In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.*

Whom should we trust? We trust God. Why? Because life is full of decisions, and God will make our *paths straight*. He sees the beginning from the end - He sees from above and we are below. Instead, this foolish king listened to his peers. We can easily fall into this selfish need to give in to peer pressure if we are not careful.



4. Making and living by bad decisions which inevitably have lasting consequences:

⁷*Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and turn away from evil.* ⁸*It will be healing to your body and refreshment to your bones.*

Oh, and by the way...it will save the entire nation!



Think how ironic this is - Solomon is writing to his son, *Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the LORD, respect God, turn away from evil.* In this case, it could have kept a nation from fracturing. This is how powerful the goodness of this wisdom is and how powerful the foolishness of this king was - what a dramatic contrast!



If we mishandle our own godly privileges, we will undoubtedly miss out on the blessing of His will and reject His reproof and correction in our lives.

We have seen Rehoboam in his foolishness, so now let's focus on us:

Proverbs 3:9-12: (NASB) ⁹Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; ¹⁰So your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine. ¹¹My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, ¹²for whom the LORD loves He reproveth, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.

If the father is not correcting the son, he is not showing true love for his son. The lessons abound when we consider King Rehoboam. It is easy to look to him and say, "Look at that," but we need to look to ourselves:

Am I
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or
PROTECTING
my privileges?



To give our time and attention to ungodly input is a recipe for disaster. To take that ungodly advice and run with it is an actual disaster! Godly privileges are easily - and unfortunately - often traded in exchange for power, prestige and personal preference.



How clearly are we focusing on the appropriate process of pursuing and developing the privileges we have before us?

This comes down to the clarity of our focus. We need to look at our lives. If we are a Christian trying to follow God through Christ - what a privilege! How good are we doing at keeping that front and center when we go to work, or hang out with friends, or do what we should not do? How clearly do we focus on the appropriateness of how we handle what God has given us? How do we weigh that out in our own hearts and minds? These are important things to consider when we look at ourselves in regard to these lessons.

Just as King Solomon was swallowed up in the pride of what was once wisdom, so his son was swallowed up in the power of his position.

Now that Rehoboam has drawn the line in the sand, what would be the response of those who were supposed to serve him?

Unfortunately, the results were easily predictable. They are always easily predictable when we aggressively step forward towards those with whom we have challenges.

Let's again remember that Rehoboam was the natural heir to the throne of Israel and therefore in a position of privilege before God - leading God's chosen nation. His response revealed that he viewed this privilege as an entitlement and not a God-honoring opportunity.



Privilege always has to stay respected as such in our hearts and minds. Once it becomes all about us, we lose it; the privilege is gone. We cannot forget what a miracle it is to be chosen by God to follow Jesus. Lucifer was a great example of failing when he thought, *I will be like the Most High* in [Isaiah 14:14](#). Privilege became entitlement.

It is easy to see this when somebody inherits a throne, but how about the privileges we have been given by grace? Grace means we did not earn or deserve the gift. In our next episode, we will delve into this aspect further.

Rehoboam has just proclaimed that if the people thought it was bad before, just wait until he was finished with them.

The ten northern tribes were not happy and ended up naming Jeroboam as their king:

1 Kings 12:16-17: (NASB) *¹⁶When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; to your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David! (In other words, Good luck! We are leaving you.) So Israel departed to their tents. ¹⁷But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.*



We have Jeroboam (the servant) ruling in the north and Rehoboam (Solomon's son) ruling in the south.

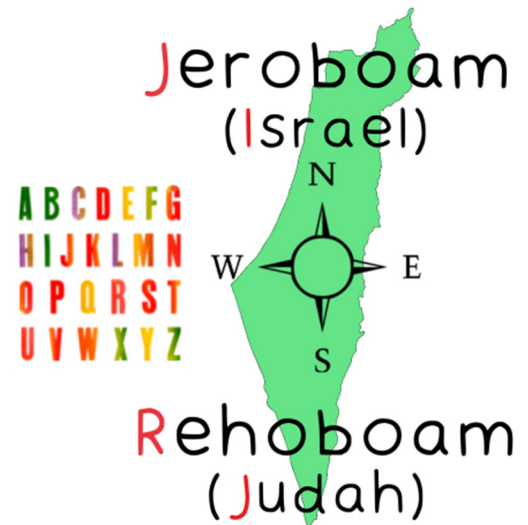
There are clear dividing lines forming. Pause and think about times in our lives when things happen and dividing lines begin to form. God's chosen people (all 12 tribes) will soon be called Israel to the north (with 10 tribes) and Judah to the south (two tribes - Judah and the tiny tribe, Benjamin).



Remember, it is all alphabetical. “J” for Jeroboam is on the top; “R” for Rehoboam is on the bottom. The nation splits into two kingdoms - Israel and Judah. “I” for Israel with the 10 tribes in the north (a little top-heavy); “J” for the two tribes of Judah is in the south.

Yet, the king continues to aggressively assert his kingly authority:

1 Kings 12:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death. And King Rehoboam made haste to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. ¹⁹So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.



Well, that was not so smart! Of all people to help tamp down the revolt, King Rehoboam sends the peoples’ second most-hated person - the boss who forced them to work so hard. And they kill him! Rehoboam is now understandably afraid for his life. The workers are unified against him - the situation is getting more dangerous because he could not make the right decision.

Why did he send Adoram? Because his mindset was all about power, crushing the revolt and asserting authority. Therefore, he sent his bully, who was always asserting authority. He did not understand the folly because he was so immersed in the search for power. As a result, he lost the people and lost Adoram as well.

Sadly, aggression is met with aggression. This is not *eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, life for a life*. That is justice. THIS IS ANGER. Inappropriate pushing and prodding is met with a retaliating response. This makes things escalate. We have all seen this kind of response.



Further, Rehoboam’s aggression provokes a new independent identity to be formed by the tribes in the north out of self-preservation:

²⁰It came about when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, that they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David.

This says, *None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David*. We keep saying, “ten tribes to the north, two to the south.” But it only mentions the one tribe, *Judah*, in many passages.

Q. What is missing?



The tribe of Benjamin was the second tribe of Judah. Benjamin was so small a tribe that it was frequently lumped in with Judah and not mentioned separately. Judah and Benjamin were the two tribes in the south.



Am I
POLLUTING
or
PROTECTING
my privileges?



We need to be aware that even though the privileges God gives us are powerful, positive and promising, they can easily unravel if we disrespect them. Whatever we are given in life, let us be sure that we recognize the source of all true righteousness is God, and He ALWAYS must be first in our thoughts, words, decisions and deeds.

Disrespecting privilege will unravel that privilege. Rehoboam disrespected his privilege by disrespecting the people for whose care he was responsible. This is not the behavior we want to emulate. This is an important lesson we want to apply to our own lives.

Once again, we will see that aggression will be met with aggression. Rehoboam starts making plans to stop the revolt, gathering an army to fight the north:

1 Kings 12:21-24: (KJV) ²¹And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand (180,000) chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel (in the north), to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.

He assembles this huge army and is ready to take back what he believes is his. The problem with this is that ALL of Israel are God's chosen people. Rehoboam is willing to take *an hundred and fourscore thousand* (180,000) warriors up north to wreak havoc and destruction so he can take back territory he thinks is his. In taking back what he thinks is his, he is going to destroy a good portion of what he thinks is his! This is civil war. There is no sense to this whatsoever.

All of Israel was still God's chosen people, despite their unfaithfulness. God intervened and sent His prophet Shemaiah to Rehoboam. Again - when a prophet of God came to speak, they had better listen because that was God speaking to them. In our day, God's word speaks to us rather than a human prophet.

Here is the account of Shemaiah speaking to Rehoboam:

²²But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying, ²³Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, ²⁴Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for **this thing is from Me**. They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the word of the LORD.


A dramatic turn of events! There are 180,000 men assembled and now this prophet of God says DO NOT DO THIS!


There are several layers to this instruction from God:

- They were NOT to go and fight their own brothers!
- They were to SEND EVERYONE HOME, not to send them back to a camp to stand ready to fight against their brothers. The preservation of their nation, their brotherhood - THIS THING IS FROM GOD!




Q Why would God support Jeroboam's rebellion by sending home Rehoboam's army which was against them?

 We already read in 1 Kings 11:11 it was punishment on Solomon's line for turning away from God - remember how God said to Solomon, *Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant.*

 The Life Application Study Bible makes another suggestion: "It may also have been God's way of saving Rehoboam's smaller kingdom from defeat. In doing so, God preserved David's line and kept intact His plan for the Messiah to be a descendant of David (2 Samuel 7:16)."

God chose these consequences for Solomon's actions. He also understood that Rehoboam was wrong in his stance against his workmen, and He would not have this kingdom turn against itself. God's will was going to be done.

Q Did Rehoboam have a choice in this?

 Remember the prophecy from Ahijah with his cloak, that Jeroboam the servant would be king over the ten northern tribes? In spite of this, Rehoboam had a choice. God just knew what Rehoboam would choose. It is so clear in looking at his personality. A good parent always knows what their child is going to do before they do it!

On one hand, there are natural consequences of God-dishonoring thoughts and actions. But on the other hand, our faith in God and in His overruling providences in our lives as Christians should make us realize with our experiences - *this thing is from Me*. Nothing can come to us except by His divine permission. Our most painful experiences come from God allowing such a thing; and often the greatest trials result in the richest blessings. But we do not go through these alone - God and our elder brother, Jesus, are at our side.

This thing is from Me reminds us of this text:

Jeremiah 17:7: (KJV) *Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD and whose trust is the LORD.*

"*This thing*" can even be our own mistakes, bad judgement, or following the wrong guidance or influences. God does not send evil upon us - He sends experiences upon us so that we may learn and grow from and through them.



For about three years, Rehoboam DID walk closely according to the laws of God. However, with his kingship firmly established, he also turned to disobedience. He got restless and all puffed up about himself.

He permitted Judah to practice Asherim idolatry and allowed male cult prostitutes in the land, perhaps influenced by his Ammonite mother and her family (1 Kings 14:23,24). So much for being genetically wise! Solomon's wisdom did not get passed down (nor did Solomon exhibit much wisdom, himself, at the end of his reign).



Rehoboam reigned as king for 17 years and died at age 58. He is listed in the genealogy of Jesus through his stepfather Joseph in Matthew 1:7.

Rehoboam's life is sadly summed up this way - how would we like this to be on our gravestone?

2 Chronicles 12:14: (NASB) *He did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the LORD.*

In relation to our question, "Am I throwing away my life's greatest privilege?" - there was no greater earthly privilege in those days than to be the king of Israel. Rehoboam threw that away.

In our next episode we fill in the rest of the story of how Jeroboam reacted and responded to all that happened. Each and every lesson should ring in our own ears as warnings on every level to keep sacred that which is sacred and discard that which is dark and deceptive. Let's learn from these kings!

*So, am I throwing away my life's greatest privilege?
For Jonathan, Rick, Julie and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

All quoted scriptures are from the 1995 version of NASB unless otherwise indicated.



Join us next week for our podcast on March 13, 2023
Ep. 1272: Am I Throwing Away My Life's
Greatest Privilege? (Part II)

Study Questions follow

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Ep. 1271: Am I Throwing Away My Life's Greatest Privilege? (Part I)

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1271-privilege-part-i/>

1. Describe the downfall of Solomon's reign. Give the timeline and describe the events of God's punishment for Solomon's turning away. What was the privilege God gave Solomon? As a result, what was his responsibility? How did he fail on the accountability of this privilege? (See 1 Kings 11:1-13)
2. Who was Jeroboam? How did he gain recognition under Solomon? How do we know he was a man of integrity? What did the prophet Ahijah tell Jeroboam? What was Jeroboam's great privilege? What was the condition attached to this privilege? (See 1 Kings 11:28-38)
3. Who was Rehoboam? What great privilege was he given at age 41? What was Rehoboam's part in Ahijah's prophecy? How does this show God's "generational mercy" here? How did David show loyalty to God even in his imperfection? Explain how Rehoboam would have been aware of King David's example. (See 1 Kings 11:31-34)
4. What was the petition the northern tribes had Jeroboam present to King Rehoboam? Was it reasonable? What did they promise if the new king acted on their petition? Describe the counsel of Solomon's elder advisors and why they said what they did. If Rehoboam chose to follow this advice, what was the likely future of the kingdom? (See 1 Kings 12:1-7)
5. If we choose to take on Jesus' yoke, what does he promise us in Matthew 11:28-30? What comes as "standard equipment" when we are called by God to walk in Jesus' footsteps?
6. What was the advice given to King Rehoboam by his young friends? Might they have had agendas other than serving the people of Israel? Why do you think they gave this advice? What is "advice shopping"? What would King David likely have done in Rehoboam's place? (See 1 Kings 12:8-11)
7. How did King Rehoboam answer the northern tribes under Jeroboam's representation? What was the result for the nation? Explain the four "failures of the foolish king," relating them to Proverbs 3:1-12. How does Proverbs 3 apply to us? What must we keep in mind with our privileges? (See 1 Kings 12:12-15)
8. How does King Rehoboam treat his position of privilege before God? What is the lesson for us? How did the northern tribes react to King Rehoboam's proclamation? Why did Rehoboam send Adoram to handle the rebellion in the north? What happened? (See Isaiah 14:14, 1 Kings 12:16-20)
9. What was King Rehoboam's next step? Who stopped this step? List the instructions from God given in 1 Kings 12:22-24. Why did God stop the attack? How do we explain whether Rehoboam had a choice in what he did? (See 1 Kings 12:21-24)
10. Explain what "This thing is from Me" means to you in your life's walk with Christ. What could the "things" be? How does God use your failures? Are you in any way throwing away your life's greatest privilege? (See 1 Kings 12:24, Jeremiah 17:7)