

# He Did Not Set His Heart

by Russell Kelfer

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*Rehoboam's life was marked by a pattern of rebellion to authority followed by repentance, ultimately leading to a lack of commitment to seeking God.*

**Duration:** 26:52

**Scripture:** 2 Chronicles 11:1-7, 2 Chronicles 12:1-3, 2 Chronicles 12:8-12, 2 Chronicles 12:14-16, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Rehoboam"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, and his reign as king. The sermon emphasizes the importance of humbling oneself before God and the consequences of forsaking Him. Rehoboam's reign was marked by rebellion, warfare, prosperity, apostasy, and repentance. However, due to his lack of consistency and failure to set his heart on God, the kingdom faced division and unnecessary wars. The sermon is divided into four parts, exploring different aspects of Rehoboam's life and the lessons to be learned from his mistakes.

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## Transcript

Things were a little tense around the palace about now. Rehoboam, Solomon's favorite son, has just risen to take the place of his father on the throne, only to immediately be confronted with the threat of an insurrection. You can just imagine the media coverage, can't you, when Jeroboam and his army of disgruntled Israelites ride into town to challenge the young king before he even has time to polish his crown.

I mean, this kid was still marveling over the Polaroid snapshots his kinfolk had taken at the coronation when the doorbell rang. And with half the Jews in the world gathered in the courtyard, this astute young monarch realized suddenly that this wasn't a welcome to the throne party. It was bad day at Black Rock.

It was high noon in the Mideast. It was Reheb's day of reckoning. In fact, it must have seemed to this young upstart king that if his first day in office was any example, they could keep this king stuff.

I mean, how would you like it if you were to show up on your first day for work after you'd been made president of the company only to find all the employees standing around the outside of your office with an ultimatum in their hand? Sort of makes you want to go back and be one of the boys again. But this cocky king, however, wasn't intimidated by the angry throng that gathered that day at the palace. Nor did he seem to even respect the political clout that this man Jeroboam appeared to possess.

Rehoboam instead looked him straight in the eye, listened to his story, and then ordered him to take all of his cohorts and cool it for a spell while he sought counsel on answering their demands. You remember what their demands were. They amounted to this.

Rehob's dad, Saul, Solomon we are accustomed to calling him, had been a most demanding king. He'd taken all the foreigners in the land, made them slaves, taken all the citizens in the country, and drafted them into service for his pet projects, all of which amounted to what you and I would call hard labor. So as you can imagine, the Indians were getting restless.

And now Solomon was dead, and this son of his favorite wife has risen to the throne. And even before TV7 had time to show its reruns of the swearing-in ceremonies, Jerry and his anxious compadres gather around and make this stirring request of their new monarch. In loose translation, it would say, ease up a little, king baby.

We're tired. I mean, just give us a little room to breathe. Back off.

Let us rest a spell. We'll be the best bunch of subjects a king ever had. That was a reasonable request.

But Rehoboam was not a reasonable man. His newfound authority had gone to his head, and it was about to affect the first and most important decision he would ever make. So he went to the elders who had served under his father, you recall, and he asked them what to do.

And here is their advice. They said, if you will be kind to these people, and please them, and give them a favorable answer, then they will always be your servants. But Rehoboam, you remember, didn't cotton to that idea, so he went to the yo-yos he'd grown up with, and he asked their advice.

And they said, here's what you do, Rehob. Turn up the heat, lay down the law, flex your newly commissioned muscles, and show them who's boss. Unfortunately, our young king listened to the wrong group.

The kingdom was torn asunder, and the people of God were divided, a division that lasted 260 years at the expense of hundreds of thousands of lives and dozens of unnecessary wars. But that was his decision, and the whole world crashed down around his shoulders. Today, we will take up reading there and begin to look at the rest of this young man's life, the title he did not set his heart.

The outline, the battle he must not fight, part one, found in 2nd Chronicles chapter 11. Part two, when he was strong, verses 1 through 7 of chapter 12. Part three, that they might learn the difference, verses 8 through 11 of the same chapter.

And finally, part four, he did not set his heart, 2nd Chronicles 12 14 through 16. As we stated, the scene is set in the very earliest days of Rehoboam's reign as king. Just after his secretary of labor, you remember, had been ruthlessly murdered carrying out the king's instructions.

Rehoboam races home to Jerusalem in utter humiliation. The kingdom is divided, and the lines have been drawn. We'll take up reading then in 2nd Chronicles 11, beginning with verse 1. Now, when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled the house of Judah and Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men, warriors, to fight against Israel and to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam.

He said, we're going to get this thing, this thing back together, we're going to fight. Verse 2, but the word of the Lord came. It came through Shemariah, the man of God, Shemariah rather, the man of God, who said, speak to Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, the king of Judah, and to all Israel and Judah and Benjamin, say this, thus says the Lord, you shall not go up and fight against your relatives.

Return every man to his house, this thing is for me. So they listened to the words of the Lord, and they returned from going against Jeroboam. Beloved, there's some battles we're not supposed to fight.

Some conflicts, in fact, many conflicts that are counterproductive. And knowing which battles are of God and which are of the enemy takes a sensitive spirit indeed, and this man Rehoboam didn't have that kind of spirit. Nevertheless, God decided to warn this young man of the danger of what he was about to do.

Jerry, you'll remember, and his Israeli commandos had just murdered Rehob's secretary of labor and chased the king all the way back to Jerusalem in utter humiliation. And the battle lines were clear. Now only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to David's throne.

The rest of the nation had aligned themselves with Jerry and the revolution withdrew from Jerusalem and refused to serve the king. So Rehoboam responded to might with might. He gathered a hundred and eighty thousand choice warriors from the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and he was going to employ his own Star Wars technology and blast some sense into these rebels.

He was going to restore his nation to its former state by force, a kind of thinking not at all unnatural to this aggressive, self-confident young man. He was, that is, until God intervened. So often the case in Scripture, when God's man or woman is about to go off and make a fool of themselves, we will read these precious words, but the word of the Lord came.

This time it came through Shemaiah, God's spokesman, and it was clear. He said, you tell Rehob and these Marine Corps of crack warriors to unpack. They're not going anywhere.

Tell them thy I Am is still in control, and this division that's taken place is a part of my discipline of your nation. Tell them the last thing they need to do is compound the problem by fighting their own people. Tell them take their guns back to the armory.

Tell them the commander-in-chief just called off the war. You see, the last thing God needed was for his children to butcher each other and kill each other off. Nothing could be less productive than that.

The last thing God needs is for his people to lose sight of their common enemies and begin to focus their self-righteous indignation on each other. You cannot help but wonder how he feels in our generation when so much of the church's energy is spent in warfare between parts of its own body. So seldom does the body of Christ work together for common good.

So seldom do different churches, even in the same denomination, cooperate beyond a token handshake at conferences, lest one group or the other get more members or bigger buildings or more attention. How seldom do churches even consider cooperating in Christian activities that cross denominational lines or supporting parachurch groups who've been called into the battle for specific work. Though the church's call is to build up one another in the faith, everyone's so paranoid that someone else might get more attention or, God forbid, more money, that there is this constant undercurrent of conflict pervading the church, especially the evangelical church of our day.

God help us. He has allowed the divisions that exist, though they may not be his perfect will, but the last thing he wants is for us to declare war on each other. It's simply a battle we must not fight.

There's an enemy out there, a common enemy, and our energy must be expended against him, not each other. Praise God. Rehoboam listened to the prophet and he called off the war.

And because he did, God blessed his kingdom, at least for a season, and there was a time of peace and a time of prosperity at last. He built fortified cities to protect the people. He stored up food and staples in case of an emergency.

He called in the priests and the Levites from all over Israel. And since his counterpart, Jeroboam, had forbidden them from serving the Lord, they gladly came and they served Rehoboam and his people. And, beloved, for three whole years under their leadership there was spiritual victory.

Verse 17 of chapter 11 says so. It says, And they strengthened the kingdom of Judah and supported Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, for three years. For they walked in the way of David and Solomon for three years.

Verse 22 goes on. And Rehoboam appointed Abijah, the son of Micah, as head and leader among his brothers. He intended to make him king and he acted wisely.

He distributed some of his sons through all the territories of Judah and Benjamin to all the fortified cities and he gave them food in abundance. So, you see, things were going well for what was left of the kingdom. For the moment it is characterized by peace, spiritual obedience, reasonable prosperity.

The troops are at rest, well-fed, following the Lord. You say, Well, it took a while but they learned. All they needed was a little time and God got their attention.

And even though they're divided from their brothers, they finally got a handle on doing it God's way. I'll bet they live happily ever after, right? Wrong. That would be neat.

But, you see, beloved, prosperity and the absence of warfare often spell disaster for God's people. We can usually handle just so much success and then we forget where we came from. Chapter 12, a new chapter in Rehoboam's reign as king, begins with this insightful comment.

Verse 1. It took place when the kingdom of Rehoboam was established and strong, that he and all Israel with him forsook the law of the Lord. And it came about in King Rehoboam's fifth year, because they had been unfaithful to the Lord, that Shishak, the king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem with 1,200 chariots, with 60,000 horsemen, and the people who came with him for Egypt were without number. You couldn't even count them.

Lubam, the Sukkim, the Ethiopians. He captured all the fortified cities of Judah. He came as far as Jerusalem.

Looks like the end, doesn't it? Then Shemaiah, the prophet, came to Rehoboam again and the princes of Judah, who'd gathered in Jerusalem because of Shishak, they called an emergency meeting. And he said to them, thus says the Lord, you have forsaken me, so I also have forsaken you, to Shishak. Now look how it all began.

It took place when they were strong. What a sad commentary on human nature. It came to pass that when things were finally going the way they were supposed to, when God was honoring his word and blessing his people, it came to pass when the kingdom was established and strong, that Rehoboam forgot who God was, and the whole kingdom, like a herd of sheep, followed him in blind obedience.

The responsibilities of a spiritual leader. It says he and all Israel with him, forsook the law of the Lord. God honored this man's leadership in spite of his early rebellion, so long as he honored God's word.

And one man honoring God's word was all it took to steer the whole nation back on course. That's all it took. But beloved, conversely, they were looking to him rather than to the God he served.

So all it took for them to veer off course and become apostate was for him to lose sight of how he got where he was. Here was a man who had been blessed with forgiveness. He'd taken his father's kingdom and his heavenly father's kingdom as well and torn them asunder through self-centeredness and arrogance.

And yet as long as he listened to the priests and the Levites and kept the word of God in the forefront, God blessed his reign and blessed his people anyway. Ah, but it came to pass. After they were established, after they were strong, after they had experienced the blessings of God, they said, hey Lord, thanks for everything.

We really appreciate what you've done. We'll call you if we need you. And God must have answered quietly, yes my child, you will.

And you will need me quite soon. Because you see, God gently lifted the shield of protection he had placed about them and let the enemy have access to them. In this case it was Shishak, but Shishak was nobody special.

He was just one of the kings whose heart was in the hand of the Lord and God needed him to teach his children a lesson. So God lifted this umbrella from over Rehoboam's kingdom and he enabled Shishak and a bunch of anti-Israeli buddies of his to swoop down, capture all those fortified cities they were so proud of. And in one motion they crushed this once-imposing many-nation to nothingness.

And then God whispered through Shemaiah to the people, beloved this is not what I wanted to do, but you have forsaken me. So at least for now I have forsaken you. And once again when God's people without God's protection were allowed in their own strength to deal with the enemy and experienced defeat, reality set in.

You know what they realized? They suddenly woke up and said hey we're nobody apart from God, we just keep forgetting. Just the way we do. But finally when the enemy had once again triumphed over them they knew what they had to do and they did it.

Verse 6. So the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and they said the Lord is righteous. Verse 7. And when the Lord saw that they humbled themselves the word of the Lord came again to Shemaiah saying they have humbled themselves. Listen now.

So I will not destroy them but I will grant them some measure of deliverance. My wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by means of Shishak but they will become his slaves so that they may learn the difference between serving me and serving the kingdoms of the countries. Did you hear what he said? He

said I will grant them some measure of deliverance.

And we'll be looking at that principle further as we proceed to study these living legends but in a nutshell because they humbled themselves God did not let the enemy totally destroy them but because they had forsaken him neither did he allow them total deliverance. He gave them some measure of deliverance. That is he didn't allow the enemy total control but he did allow them to suffer a measure of bondage so that they might learn the difference between serving him and serving them.

In other words he gave them a taste of what they thought they wanted. They thought they wanted freedom. He gave them just enough freedom to experience bondage.

Why? That they might learn the difference. You see beloved it's called God's schoolhouse of grace. It's his way of teaching us the difference between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God.

We set our sights on what this world has to offer and we forget the law of the Lord and he must allow the enemy just enough freedom to invade the kingdom of our lives to teach us what it's like to have what we thought we wanted. It often happens too just after a season of spiritual blessing when we become complacent. So complacent that we forgot who we are and why we are where we are and we let it happen.

When we're helpless at those times in our lives when it seems we have no one to turn to but God and there are no other answers we usually cry out in desperation and let him take control of our lives again. Gradually we begin to experience the victory and as Paul said in ever increasing splendor from one degree of glory to the other. But as we experience that victory so often we also experience pride and we cry look God no hands.

Got it under control Lord called you if I need you. And God because he loves us so allows the enemy at that point just enough room to test us. Satan thinks he's going to take us to the depths of defeat but God knows he's only taking us to the schoolhouse of grace that we might learn the difference between serving him and serving the enemy.

So the closing pages of this man's life represent a time once again of great trouble and strife. But the final chapter tells us two things. It tells us of his repentance and then it tells us why he struggled so.

Verse 12 tells us of his repentance and when he humbled himself the anger of the Lord turned away from him so as not to destroy him completely. King Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem and he reigned. He was 41 when he began to reign and he reigned for 17 years.

17 years. 17 years of confusion. 17 years of division and strife.

17 years of roller coaster living. Rebellion to authority followed by repentance. Open warfare followed by repentance.

Prosperity followed by apostasy followed by repentance. Until finally a patient loving God allowed the dreaded enemy enough access to the king in the kingdom to take them back to the schoolhouse of grace that they might learn the difference. You see there's not much of a life.

There's not much consistency there. Not much victory. Not much of a legacy left for generations yet to come.

No. And yet can't the pattern of Rehoboam's life be superimposed on many of our own and aren't the similarities frightening? So we must ask the question what was wrong with this man's life? What was wrong with his reign in the kingdom? Why didn't he ever achieve that level of intimacy with and confidence in his God that his father and his grandfather had experienced? I believe the answer is found in chapter 12 verse 14 and there the final words about Rehoboam are written in this form. It says and he did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the Lord.

There's the answer. He did not set his heart. It means he vacillated in his commitment.

He wavered in his heart over who was really king in the kingdom. He didn't mind seeking the Lord mind you and the battle was raging and there was no place else to go. But when he was strong when God's hand was upon him he was more than he could handle and he began to handle his own life as though he was where he was because he was who he was and beloved God won't tolerate that not from you not for me and not from him.

Rehoboam he was a living legend. He was a man destined for greatness simply because of who his father was but he missed greatness simply because he forgot who his heavenly father was. He did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the Lord.

His was no great moral violation like his grandfather David. It was not because he achieved such success as his father Solomon did. No he was just an ordinary man who belonged to an extraordinary God who never fully grasped the inheritance that was his.

He wanted to enjoy the fruits of the kingdom without surrendering to the disciplines of the king. So he missed it and his name goes down in history simply as one of the king's kids who almost became great. God's assessment was straightforward.

He did not set his heart. He never came to a place of such abandonment that nothing else mattered but God. He never came to that place of commitment that separated the men from the boys the ones who would end up in Hebrews 11 from the ones who would end up on the roads of dishonorable mention in Scripture.

Even when he humbled himself it was to get God off his back and get back into his favor. But he never surrendered to the will of God no matter what it would cost or where it would lead. He never took his heart and laid it on the altar of eternity and said here Lord I don't care what kind of king I become.

I don't even care if I'm king. I just care that you're king in your kingdom and I hereby yield all I have and all I am and all I hope for into your hands. Take me, break me, make me yours.

I set my heart on seeking you. The enemy may surround me with pain or surround me with prosperity. I will simply seek you.

The enemy may assail me with strife as he did with Jeroboam or assail me with success as he did in the middle of my reign but it does not matter what circumstances he gives me I set my heart on you. You see that's all God was looking for from Rehoboam. Not great talent, not great leadership, not even great charisma.

God's eyes were simply running to and fro throughout the whole earth looking for a man whose heart was perfect towards him. A man who could set his heart on seeking God. He looked in every room in the

palace and never found him.

Oh God used Rehoboam. His life was not a total waste. There's some good things we can say about him but there's one thing God could not say about him.

He could not say this man ever set his heart on seeking God and so the final words he did evil. You see Rehoboam could never say with the psalmist in Psalm 16 verses 8 and 9 I have set the Lord continually before me because he is at my right hand I will not be shaken therefore my heart is glad my glory rejoices. He could not say that.

Can you? Has there ever been a time when by an act of your will you simply gave the reins of your life over to a sovereign God? A God who had such a plan for your life that would honor him and make you what in eternity past he knew you were intended to be. Why not take a cue from the living legend of Rehoboam? He ruled and he reigned but he was never ruled over so he lost. He did evil because he did not set his heart.

He didn't mind being one of God's children. He just didn't want to be one of God's servants. So he never fully surrendered to the Lordship of God.

Have you? You can do that this very moment. May or may not be the first time that's not the issue. Right now you can bow your heart before God and set your heart before God and tell him you're not going to be king anymore and then you can ask him to get up on the throne of your heart where he belongs and then you can purpose to leave him on the throne of your heart where he belongs.

In other words, beloved, you can set your heart. Let's pray. Our gracious and loving God there are those of us here this morning who need to set our hearts either for the first time or for the 40th time.

Afresh and anew at your feet in purpose that nothing else we do tomorrow and the days to come really matters but serving you. That every decision we make must be made in the light of the kingdom. That every thought we think must be thought in the light of eternity.

That apart from you we can do nothing and apart from you we have no purpose. And that we're tired of living dual lives, one foot in the world and one foot in the kingdom. We're tired of trying to sit on the throne ourselves and pretend to be kings when we don't have what it takes to wear the crown.

And some of us this morning need afresh and anew to say to you, Heavenly Father, here as of this moment we set our hearts on serving you. Nothing else matters. In Jesus name.

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