

CHAPTER 12

This chapter gives us a more full account of the reign of Rehoboam than we had before in Kings and it is a very melancholy account. Methinks we are in the book of Judges again; for,

I. Rehoboam and his people did evil in the sight of the Lord (v. 1).

II. God thereupon sold them into the hands of Shishak, king of Egypt, who greatly oppressed them (v. 2-4)

III. God sent a prophet to them, to expound to them the judgment and to call them to repentance (v. 5).

IV. They thereupon humbled themselves (v. 6).

V. God, upon their repentance, turned from his anger (v. 7, 12) and yet left them under the marks of his displeasure (v. 8-11). Lastly, Here is a general character of Rehoboam and his reign, with the conclusion of it (v. 13-16).

<4121>2 CHRONICLES 12:1-12

REHOBOAM'S FALL FROM GOD

Israel was very much disgraced and weakened by being divided into two kingdoms; yet the kingdom of Judah, having both the temple and the royal city, both the house of David and the house of Aaron, might have done very well if they had continued in the way of their duty; but here we have all out of order there.

I. Rehoboam and his people left God: He *forsook the law of the Lord*, and so in effect forsook God, and *all Israel with him*, v. 1. He had his happy triennium, when he walked in the way of David and Solomon (<4117>2 Chronicles 11:17), but it expired, and he grew remiss in the worship of God; in what instances we are not told, but he fell off, and Judah with him, here called *Israel*, because they walked in the evil ways into which Jeroboam had drawn the kingdom of Israel. Thus he did *when he had*

established the kingdom and strengthened himself. As long as he thought his throne tottered he kept to his duty, that he might make God his friend; but, when he found it stood pretty firmly, he thought he had no more occasion for religion; he was safe enough without it. Thus *the prosperity of fools destroys them. Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked.* When men prosper, and are in no apprehension of troubles, they are ready to say to God, *Depart from us.*

II. God quickly brought troubles upon them, to awaken them, and recover them to repentance, before their hearts were hardened. It was but in the fourth year of Rehoboam that they began to corrupt themselves, and in the fifth year the king of Egypt came up against them with a vast army, took *the fenced cities of Judah, and came against Jerusalem,* v. 2, 3, 4. This great calamity coming upon them so soon after they began to desert the worship of God, by a hand they had little reason to suspect (having had a great deal of friendly correspondence with Egypt in the last reign), and coming with so much violence that all the *fenced cities of Judah,* which Rehoboam had lately fortified and garrisoned and on which he relied much for the safety of his kingdom, fell immediately into the hands of the enemy, without making any resistance, plainly showed that it was from the Lord, because they had transgressed against him.

III. Lest they should not readily or not rightly understand the meaning of this providence, God by the word explains the rod, v. 5. When the princes of Judah had all met at Jerusalem, probably in a great council of war, to concert measures for their own safety in this critical juncture, he sent a prophet to them, the same that had brought them an injunction from God not to fight against the ten tribes (~~1~~2 Chronicles 11:2), Shemaiah by name; he told them plainly that the reason why Shishak prevailed against them was not because they had been impolitic in the management of their affairs (which perhaps the princes in this congress were at this time scrutinizing), but because they had forsaken God. God never leaves any till they first leave him.

IV. The rebukes both of the word and of the rod being thus joined, the king and princes humbled themselves before God for their iniquity, penitently acknowledged the sin, and patiently accepted the punishment of it, saying, *The Lord is righteous,* v. 6. “We have none to blame but ourselves; let God be clear when he judgeth.” Thus it becomes us, when we are under the rebukes of Providence, to justify God and judge

ourselves. Even kings and princes must either bend or break before God, either be humbled or be ruined.

V. Upon the profession they made of repentance God showed them some favour, saved them from ruin, and yet left them under some remaining fears of the judgment, to prevent their revolt again.

1. God, in mercy, prevented the destruction they were now upon the brink of. Such a vast and now victorious army as Shishak had, having made themselves masters of all the fenced cities, what could be expected but that the whole country, and even Jerusalem itself, would in a little time be theirs? But when God saith, *Here shall the proud waves be stayed*, the most threatening force strangely dwindles and becomes impotent. Here again the destroying angel, when he comes to Jerusalem, is forbidden to destroy it: "*My wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem; not at this time, not by this hand, not utterly to destroy it,*" v. 7, 12. Note, Those that acknowledge God righteous in afflicting them shall find him gracious. Those that humble themselves before him shall find favour with him. So ready is the God of mercy to take the first occasion to show mercy. If we have humbled hearts under humbling providences, the affliction has done its work, and it shall either be removed or the property of it altered.

2. He granted them some deliverance, not complete, but in part; he gave them some advantages against the enemy, so that they recruited a little; he *gave them deliverance for a little while*, so some. They reformed but partially, and for a little while, soon relapsing again; and, as their reformation was, so was their deliverance. Yet it is said (v. 12), *in Judah things went well*, and began to look with a better face.

(1.) In respect of piety. *There were good things in Judah* (so it is in the margin), good ministers, good people, good families, who were made better by the calamities of their country. Note, In times of great corruption and degeneracy it is some comfort if there be a remnant among whom good things are found; this is a ground of hope in Israel.

(2.) In respect of prosperity. In Judah things went ill when all the fenced cities were taken (v. 4), but when they repented the posture of their affairs altered, and things went well. Note, If things do not go so well as we could wish, yet we have reason to take notice of it with thankfulness if they go better than was to have been expected, better than formerly, and better

than we deserved. We should own God's goodness if he do but grant us some deliverance.

3. Yet he left them to smart sorely by the hand of Shishak, both in their liberty and in their wealth.

(1.) In their liberty (v. 8): *They shall be his servants* (that is, they shall lie much at his mercy and be put under contribution by him, and some of them perhaps be taken prisoners and held in captivity by him), *that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.* They complained, it may be, of the strictness of their religion, and *forsook the law of the Lord* (v. 1) because they thought it a yoke too hard, too heavy, upon them. “Well,” saith God, “let them better themselves if they can; let the neighbouring princes rule them awhile, since they are not willing that I should rule them, and let them try how they like that. They might have *served God with joyfulness and gladness of heart*, and would not; let them *serve their enemies then in hunger and thirst* (^{<R197>}Deuteronomy 28:47, 48), till they think of returning to *their first Master, for then it was better with them,*” ^{<R198>}Hosea 2:7. This, some think, is the meaning of ^{<R199>}Ezekiel 20:24, 25. *Because they despised my statutes, I gave them statutes that were not good.* Note,

[1.] The more God's service is compared with other services the more reasonable and easy it will appear.

[2.] Whatever difficulties or hardships we may imagine there are in the way of obedience, it is better a thousand times to go through them than to expose ourselves to the punishment of disobedience. Are the laws of temperance thought hard? The effects of intemperance will be much harder. The service of virtue is perfect liberty; the service of lust is perfect slavery.

(2.) In their wealth. The king of Egypt plundered both the temple and the exchequer, the treasuries of both which Solomon left very full; but he *took them away*; yea, he *took all*, all he could lay his hands on, v. 9. This was what he came for. David and Solomon, who walked in the way of God, filled the treasuries, one by war and the other by merchandise; but Rehoboam, who forsook the law of God, emptied them. The taking away of the golden shields, and the substituting of brazen ones in their place (v. 9-11), we had an account of before, ^{<R200>}1 Kings 14:25-28.

~~4423~~ 2 CHRONICLES 12:13-16

THE DEATH OF REHOBOAM

The story of Rehoboam's reign is here concluded, much as the story of the other reigns concludes. Two things especially are observable here: —

1. That he was at length pretty well *fixed in his kingdom*, v. 13. His fenced cities in Judah did not answer his expectation, so he now *strengthened himself in Jerusalem*, which he made it his business to fortify, and there he reigned seventeen years, in *the city which the Lord had chosen to put his name there*. This intimates his honour and privilege, that he had his royal seat in the holy city, which yet was but an aggravation of his impiety — near the temple, but far from God. Frequent skirmishes there were between his subjects and Jeroboam's, such as amounted to *continual wars*, (v. 15), but he held his own, and reigned, and, as it should seem, did not so grossly *forsake the law of God* as he had done (v. 1) in his fourth year.

2. That he was never rightly fixed in his religion, v. 14. He never quite cast off God; and yet in this he did evil, that he *prepared not, he engaged not, his heart to seek the Lord*. See what the fault is laid upon.

(1.) He did not serve the Lord because he did not seek the Lord. He did not pray, as Solomon did, for wisdom and grace. If we prayed better, we should be every way better. Or he did not consult the word of God, did not seek to that as his oracle, nor take directions from it.

(2.) He made nothing of his religion because he did not set his heart to it, never minded it with any closeness of application, and never any hearty disposition to it, nor ever came up to a steady resolution in it. What little goodness he had was transient and passed away like the morning cloud. He did evil because he was never determined for that which is good. Those are easily drawn by Satan to any evil who are wavering and inconstant in that which is good and are never persuaded to make religion their business.