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He Did Not Set His Heart

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Series: Living Legends - Part 3

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Things were tense around the palace, to say the least. Rehoboam, Solomon's favorite son, had risen to the throne of his father, only to be confronted immediately with the threat of an insurrection. You can just imagine the media coverage when Jeroboam and his army of disgruntled Israelites rode into town to challenge the young king before he even had 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 'round the courtyard, the astute young Monarch realized 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 Rehob's day of reckoning. In fact, it must have seemed to this young upstart that if his first day in office was any example, they could keep this king stuff. I mean, how would you like to show up for work the first day after you were appointed head of the company, only to find all your employees gathered around your office with an ultimatum in their hands? Sort of makes you want to go back and be one of the boys again. But this cocky king wasn't intimidated by the angry throng that gathered at the palace that day. Nor did he even seem to respect the political clout this man Jeroboam appeared to possess.

He looked him in the eye, listened to his story, then ordered him to take all his cohorts and cool it for a spell while he sought counsel on answering their demands. Their demands amounted to this: Rehob's dad, Solomon, a most demanding king, had taken all the foreigners in the country and made them slaves. He had taken all the citizens in the country and drafted them into service for his pet projects, most of which involved what we would call "hard labor". So, as you can imagine, the Indians were getting restless. Now Solomon was dead, and this son of his favorite wife had risen to the throne. And even before TV even had time to show its reruns of the swearing in ceremonies, Jerry and his anxious compadres gathered 'round and made this stirring request of their new monarch. They said, "Ease up a little, King...

He Did Not Set His Heart

we're tired. Just give us some breathing room; back off and let us rest a spell, and we'll be the best bunch of subjects a young ruler ever had."

It was a reasonable request, but Rehob 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 of his reign. So he went to the elders who had served under his father and asked their advice. They counseled him like this:

If you will be kind to these people and please them, and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your servants.

(II Chronicles 10:7 NAS)

But Rehob, you remember, didn't cotton to that idea, so he went to the yo-yos he had grown up with and asked their advice. They counseled him to turn up the heat, and lay down the law and flex his newly commissioned muscles, just to show the troops who was boss.

Unfortunately, the young king listened to the wrong advice; the kingdom was torn asunder, and God's people were divided, a division that lasted for more than 260 years at the expense of hundreds of thousands of lives and dozens of wars. But decide he did, and his whole world crashed down around him. Today we take up reading there and begin to look at the remainder of this young man's reign.

Our title: He Did Not Set His Heart

Our outline:

I- The Battle You Must Not Fight (II Chronicles 11)

II- When He Was Strong (II Chronicles 12:1-7)

III- That They Might Learn the Difference

(II Chronicles 12:8-11)

IV- He Did Not Set His Heart (II Chronicles 12:14-16)

As we stated, the scene is set in the earliest days of Rehoboam's reign as king, just after his Secretary of Labor is ruthlessly murdered while carrying out the king's orders. Rehob races home to Jerusalem in humiliation; the kingdom is divided and the battle lines are drawn. We take up reading in II Chronicles 11,

Now when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled the house of Judah and Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam.

He Did Not Set His Heart

But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

“Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying,

“Thus says the LORD, “You shall not go up or fight against your relatives; return every man to his house, for this thing is from Me.”” So they listened to the words of the LORD and returned from going against Jeroboam.

(II Chronicles 11:1-4 NAS)

I- THE BATTLE YOU MUST NOT FIGHT

There are some battles we are not supposed to fight. There are some conflicts, in fact, many conflicts, that are counter-productive. Knowing which battles are of God and which are of the enemy takes a sensitive spirit indeed. And Rehoboam didn't have that kind of spirit. Nevertheless, God decided to warn the young man of the danger of doing what he was about to do.

Jerry and his Israeli commandos had just murdered Rebob's Secretary of Labor and had chased the king himself all the way back to Jerusalem in humiliation. The battle lines were now clear. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to David's throne. The rest of the nation had aligned themselves with Jerry in the revolution, had withdrawn from Jerusalem and refused to serve the King.

So Rebob responded to might with might. He gathered 180,000 choice warriors from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and he was going to employ his “starwars” technology and blast some sense into the rebels. He was going to restore the nation to its former state by force, a kind of thinking not at all unnatural to this aggressive, self-confident lifestyle. He was, that is, till God intervened. As is so often the case in Scripture, when God's man is about to go off and make a fool of himself, we read those precious words...

But the word of the Lord came...

(verse 2 NAS)

This time it came through Shemaiah, God's spokesman, and it was a clear word, indeed. He said, “Tell Rebob and his Marine Corps of crack warriors to unpack. They're not going anywhere. Tell them I AM is in full control, and this division is a part of my discipline of the nation. Tell them the last thing they need to do is compound what's already been done by fighting against their own people. Tell them to take their guns back to the armory. The

He Did Not Set His Heart

Commander-in-Chief is calling off the war.”

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 He needs is for His people to lose sight of their common enemies and begin to focus their self-righteous indignation on their brothers. You cannot help but wonder how He feels in our generation when so much of the church’s energy is spent in subtle warfare between parts of His own Body. So seldom do the parts of the Body work together for the common good. So seldom do different churches, even of 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 from headquarters. How seldom do churches even consider cooperating in Christian activities that cross denominational lines, or in supporting para-church groups who have been called into the battle for the faith to do a specific work.

Though the church’s call is to build up one another in the faith, we are 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, even, and especially, the evangelical church of our day. God help us. He has allowed the divisions that exist, though they may not be His perfect choice, but the last thing He wants us to do is to declare war against each other. It is simply a battle we must not fight. There is an enemy out there, a common enemy, and our energy must be expended against him, not against each other.

Praise God, Rehob listened to God’s prophet and called off the war. And because He did, God blessed his kingdom for a season, and there was a time of prosperity and peace at last. He built fortified cities to protect the people and stored up food and staples in case of an emergency. He called in the priests and Levites from all over Israel, and since his counterpart, Jeroboam, had forbidden them from serving the Lord, they gladly returned to serve Rehoboam and his people. And for three whole years, there was spiritual victory. In fact, verse 17 says just that:

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.

(II Chronicles 11:17 NAS)

The passage goes on:

He Did Not Set His Heart

And Rehoboam appointed Abijah the son of Maacah as head and leader among his brothers, for he intended to make him king.

And he acted wisely and 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. And he sought many wives for them. (II Chronicles 11:22,23 NAS)

II- WHEN HE WAS STRONG

So things are going well for what's left of Solomon's kingdom. It is, for the moment, characterized by peace, spiritual obedience, and reasonable prosperity. The troops are at rest, well fed, and following the Lord. You say, "Well, it took them a while, but they learned. All they needed was a little time; God got their attention, and even though they were divided from their brothers, they finally got a handle on doing things God's way. So they lived happily ever after, right?"

Wrong. I wish it were so. But prosperity and the absence of warfare so often spells disaster for the believer. God's people can usually handle just so much success...and then they forget the God who gave it to them. Enter chapter 12, a new chapter in Rehoboam's short reign as king. It begins with this insightful comment:

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 king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem

with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen. And the people who came with him from Egypt were without number: the Lubim, the Sukkiim, and the Ethiopians.

And he captured the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem.

Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the princes of Judah who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and he said to them, "Thus says the Lord, 'You have forsaken Me, so I also have forsaken you to Shishak.'"

(II Chronicles 12:1-5 NAS)

"When he was strong..." What a sad commentary on human nature! It came to pass that when things were finally going the

He Did Not Set His Heart

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 Rehob forgot who God was, and the whole kingdom, like a herd of sheep, followed him in blind obedience. Oh, the responsibility of being a spiritual leader. "He and *all Israel with him* forsook the law of the LORD." God honored this man's leadership, in spite of his rebellion, so long as he honored God. And *one man in harmony with God's purposes was all it took to steer a whole nation on course.* That's all it took. But conversely, since they were looking to him rather than to the God he served, 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 blessed with forgiveness. He had taken his father's kingdom and His Heavenly Father's Kingdom, as well, and torn it asunder through self-centeredness and arrogance, and yet so long as he listened to the priests and Levites, and kept the word of God in the forefront of the kingdom, God nonetheless blessed his reign and his people. Ah, *but it came to pass...after they were established and strong,* after they had experienced the blessings of God that they said, "Hey, Lord, thanks for everything; we'll call you if we need you." God answered quietly, "Yes, my child, you will...and you'll need me quite soon." Because God gently lifted the shield of protection He had placed about His people and let the enemy have access to them. In this case, it was Shishak. But Shishak was nobody special. His king's heart was in the hand of a Sovereign God who needed to teach His children a lesson. So God lifted His umbrella from over Rehoboam's kingdom, and he enabled Shishak and a bunch of his anti-Israeli buddies to swoop down and capture the fortified cities that Rehob was so proud of...and in one motion, they crushed this once-imposing minination into nothingness. Then God whispered through Shemaiah to His people.

"This is not what I wanted to do...but you have forsaken Me, so for the moment, I also have forsaken you..."

III- THAT THEY MIGHT LEARN THE DIFFERENCE

And once again, when God's people without God's protection were allowed in their own strength to deal with the enemy and thus experience defeat, reality set in. They were nobody apart from God. They just kept forgetting that (just the way we do!). But finally, when the enemy had once again triumphed over them,

He Did Not Set His Heart

they did what they had to do to enter back into victory.

So the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, “The LORD is righteous.”

And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, “They have humbled themselves so I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some measure of deliverance, and 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 My service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.” (II Chronicles 12:6-8 NAS)

Some measure of deliverance. We will look at that principle as we continue through the pages of God’s Living Legends. Because they humbled themselves, God did not let the enemy *totally destroy His people or their ministry*. But because they had forsaken Him, neither did He allow them total deliverance. He gave them *some measure of deliverance*, that is, He did not allow the enemy to gain total control over them. But He did allow them a measure of bondage *that they might learn the difference between serving Him and serving them*.

He gave them a taste of what they thought they wanted. Freedom. He gave them enough freedom for them to experience bondage. Why? *That they might learn the difference*, that’s why. You see, it’s called “God’s Schoolhouse of Grace”. It is His way of teaching us the difference between the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of our God. We set our sights on what this world has to offer and 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 is like to have what we thought we wanted*. And it is usually just after a season of spiritual blessing when we become so complacent that we forget who we are and why we are where we are and let it happen. This little diagram illustrates it in part:



He Did Not Set His Heart

When we are helpless and have no one to turn to but God, we cry out in desperation and let Him be Himself in us. Gradually, we begin to experience victory, in “ever increasing splendor from one degree of glory to another” (as Paul puts it). But *as we experience victory*, so often we begin to experience pride. And we cry, “Look, God, no hands! Got it under control, Lord, call you if I need you!” And so God, because He loves us so, allows the enemy just enough room to test us. Satan thinks he’s taking us to the depths of defeat. But God knows he is only taking us into the Schoolhouse of Grace *that we might learn the difference between serving Him and serving the enemy.*

IV- HE DID NOT SET HIS HEART

And so the closing pages of this man’s life represent a time once again of great warfare and strife. But the final chapter tells us two things. It tells us of his repentance, and it tells us the reason for his struggles. Then we read:

And when he humbled himself, the anger of the LORD turned away from him, so as not to destroy him completely; and also conditions were good in Judah.

So King Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned. Now Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years...

(II Chronicles 12:12,13 NAS)

Seventeen years of confusion. Seventeen years of division. Seventeen 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 and the kingdom to take them back once again to the schoolhouse of grace *that they might learn the difference.*

You say, not much of a life. Not much consistency. Not much victory. Not much of a legacy to leave for generations yet to come. No. And yet cannot the pattern of Rehoboam’s life be superimposed over many of our own and are not the similarities frightening? What was wrong with this man’s life? What was wrong with this man’s reign in the kingdom? Why didn’t he ever achieve that level of intimacy with and confidence in his God that his father and grandfather had experienced? The answer is in verse 14. There it says this:

He Did Not Set His Heart

And he did evil because he did not set his heart to seek the Lord.
(II Chronicles 12:14 NAS)

There you have the answer. “He did not set his heart.” 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, when the battle was raging, and there was no place else to go. Ah, but when he was strong, when God’s hand was upon him, it was just 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 God won’t tolerate that. In me. In you. In anyone.

Rehoboam, a Living Legend. A man destined for greatness simply by virtue of *who his father was*. And yet a man who 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. It was no great moral violation like David’s. It was not because he achieved the kinds of acclaim that Solomon did. No, he was just an ordinary man who belonged to an extraordinary God. But he 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 missed his claim to greatness.

God’s assessment was this: He did not set his heart. He never came to a place of such abandonment that nothing else but God mattered. He never came to that place of commitment that separated the men from the boys, and the ones who would end up in Hebrews 11 from the ones who would end up on the rolls 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 are King in your Kingdom, and I hereby yield all I am, all I have and all I hope for into your precious hands. Take me. Break me. Make me wholly yours. *I hereby set my heart on seeking you*. The enemy may surround me with pain or surround me with prosperity; either way, 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

He Did Not Set His Heart

matter what circumstances he throws at me, or what you allow. *I simply set my heart on seeking you.*”

That’s all God was looking for from Rehoboam. Not great talent. Not great leadership ability. Not even great charisma. His eyes were simply running to and fro throughout the earth looking for a man whose heart was perfect towards Him. A man who had *set his heart on seeking God*. He looked all over the palace for such a man...and never found him. Oh, God used Rehoboam. His life was not a total disaster. There are some good things we can say about this man. But there is one thing God could not say about this man. He could not say this man had ever set his heart. And so we read of him... “He did evil.”

Rehoboam could never say with the Psalmist:

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, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. (Psalms 16:8,9 NAS)

Can you? Has there ever been a time when, by an act of your will, you simply handed over the reins of your life to a Sovereign God who has an incredible plan for that life that will both honor Him and make you what in eternity past you were intended to be?

Then why not take a cue from the Living Legend of Rehoboam. He reigned, and he ruled; 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 surrendered fully to the Kingship and Lordship of God. Have you? You can do that this very minute. It 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. 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 there...where He belongs.

In other words, *you can set your heart.*

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