

Next Sunday morning we will begin our study of Job.

The title of tonight’s sermon could well describe some of what Job’s friends say:
Bad things happen “because you have been unfaithful.”

Job will nuance this –

but it is important to start by saying that *sometimes* this is exactly what is happening!

1. Rehoboam and the Fall of the House of David (v1-8)

a. If You Abandon the LORD, He Will Abandon You (v1-5)

¹ When the rule of Rehoboam was established and he was strong, he abandoned the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him. ² In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem ³ with 1,200 chariots and 60,000 horsemen. And the people were without number who came with him from Egypt— Libyans, Sukkiim, and Ethiopians. ⁴ And he took the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem. ⁵ Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and to the princes of Judah, who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, “Thus says the LORD, ‘You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak.’”

We saw last time that it was the faithfulness of the remnant of Israel that preserved Rehoboam for the first three years.

And during that time Rehoboam fortified the cities of Judah.

If you look at a map of those fortified cities,
they outline a very small circle in the center of Judah and Benjamin.
Rehoboam is willing to surrender the Negeb in the south,
the coastal plains – basically everything except a small territory
surrounding Jerusalem.

But in the fifth year of Rehoboam, Shishak the king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and the Chronicler tells us that this happened
“because they had been unfaithful to the LORD.”

A few weeks ago we looked at Paul’s “faithful saying” in 2 Timothy 2:11-13 –
“If we have died with him, we will also live with him;
if we endure, we will also reign with him;
if we deny him, he also will deny us;
if we are faithless, he remains faithful –
for he cannot deny himself.”

2 Chronicles 12 illustrates this.

Rehoboam abandoned the law of the LORD and all Israel with him.
And God sends Shemaiah the prophet
and says, “Thus says the LORD,
‘You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak.’”

If you feel like God has abandoned you –
Well, perhaps he has!

Next Sunday morning, as we start into the book of Job,
we'll see that you cannot reduce this to a formula.

It would be wrong to say:
“If you feel like God has abandoned you *then* God has abandoned you!”

Your feelings do not provide sufficient evidence to explain what God is doing!

But *one possibility* for your feeling that God has abandoned you
is that you have abandoned God.

And it is that situation which we will explore tonight!

What do you *do* when you think that God has abandoned you?

**b. If You Will Humble Yourself, You Will Be Delivered from Destruction
(not necessarily from the consequences of sin) (v6-8)**

⁶ *Then the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, “The LORD is righteous.”*

This shows us that the princes of Israel and King Rehoboam are not too far gone yet.
Some people respond by getting mad at God and telling him to “get lost.”

[That’s never a good idea – I should know, because I tried that once;
the problem with telling God to get lost is that it doesn’t work;
he doesn’t get lost, so the only possible result
is that *you* wind up lost!

Fortunately, he is also really good at seeking out that which is lost,
and so by his grace he found me again.]

But Rehoboam and the princes of Israel humble themselves.

What does it mean to humble yourself?

There may be outward signs of humility
(fasting, tearing clothes, sackcloth and ashes – are all outward signs) –
but the Chronicler isn’t interested in that.

He wants to focus on the *one thing* that is essential to humility:

what you *say* to him.

The princes and the king say,
“The LORD is righteous.”

They are not merely stating a general theological truth (although it is always true!).
(Yahweh is *always* righteous!)

They are saying that *in this case*, the LORD is righteous.
They are acknowledging that God is just –
and that he has passed just judgment in this case.

As the Chronicler writes to a people who live nearly 200 years after the Exile,
and who have lived the whole time under foreign princes,
he wants them to say with Rehoboam and the princes of his day,
“the LORD is righteous.”

He has accused us of abandoning him.
And he is right.

⁷ *When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah:
“They have humbled themselves. I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance,
and my wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak.*

So, when you have been faithless –
when you have turned from the living and true God
and you have neglected him and forsaken his ways,
the only thing to do is “humble yourself”!

Admit that you have sinned –
as John says,
“if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,
but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin,
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

And this is what should characterize our life together.
After Peter exhorts the elders to shepherd the flock with gentleness,
he adds:

⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.
Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another,
for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God
so that at the proper time he may exalt you,
⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:5-7)

God has mercy on those who humble themselves before him.

But that does not mean that there are no consequences for sin.

⁸ *Nevertheless, they shall be servants to him, that they may know my service and the service of*

the kingdoms of the countries.”

The wages of sin is death.

And when a nation sins, the wages of national sin is national death.

God had called Israel out of Egypt –

“Israel is my son, my firstborn, let my son go that he may worship/serve me”

Israel was called to love and serve the LORD.

Jesus said it this way: no man can serve two masters.

The Son of God cannot serve both Pharaoh and Yahweh.

And so God called his son out of Egypt and established him in the land.

Israel was to serve Yahweh only.

But Israel didn't seem to like serving Yahweh only.

They abandoned the law of the LORD – and were unfaithful to God.

And so God says, “Okay, if you want to serve other gods,

let me remind you what that is like!”

Do you want to be happy?

How would you like never to be miserable again – even for a moment?!

There is a way!

Love the LORD your God with your whole heart,

every single moment of every single day!

I can't guarantee that you'll never be sick –

but no sickness can *make* you miserable!

I know people who have experienced tremendous happiness in the midst of terrific pain
because they bore the cross with their eyes fixed on Jesus!

So if we would love God perfectly, we would be perfectly happy!

Israel had an opportunity to be happy – but they blew it,

and now God wants to remind them that the wages of sin is death.

Ray Dillard (my former professor at WTS)

points out that Romans 6 develops this point.

Paul says, “Sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

The natural question that follows is:

“What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?”

By no means!

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,

you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death,

or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?

But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin

have become obedient from the heart
to the standard of teaching to which you were committed,
and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” (15-18)

You are either slaves of sin or slaves of righteousness.

And Paul points out that “when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness”
In other words, when you were slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness!
Righteousness had no power over you!
“But what fruit were you getting at that time
from the things of which you are now ashamed?”

What fruit – what reward – what profit – have you ever received from sin?

“For the end of those things is death.”
Sure, it may look pretty for a while, but sin is a hard master –
who drives all his subjects into the grave!
“But now that you have been set free from sin
and have become slaves of God,
the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.”

Now that you are slaves to righteousness – slave of God –
you are free with respect to sin –
you are no longer under its power or dominion.

Sin is no longer your master –
so do not let it master you!

“For the wages of sin is death,
but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord”

But if you really want to go back to Egypt –
if you really want to go back to slavery to sin and death,
sometimes God will remind you what it looks like;

the believer will never face eternal death – the final wages of sin –
but sometimes God will give us reminders of that misery in this life,
as consequences for our sin:

2. Rehoboam and the Age of Bronze (v9-12)

⁹ *So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem.*

Why did Shishak come against Jerusalem?
We know that Jeroboam – now the king of Israel –
had taken refuge in Egypt
when Solomon had tried to kill him.

So it is likely that Jeroboam would “owe” Shishak something for his hospitality –
and so Jeroboam could not object if Egypt invaded Judah.

Shishak himself has left us an account of his invasion.

He records that he went up the coastal plain,
only reaching up into the foothills of Judea.

But that was enough to frighten Rehoboam into giving him all the wealth of Solomon.

He took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house. He took away everything.

The Chronicler has emphasized the wealth and splendor of Solomon’s day –
a golden age, where silver was as common as stone.

Now, all of that is gone.

The service of God was golden.
But now Egypt plunders Israel.

When Israel came up out of Egypt,
they had plundered the Egyptians
taking much gold and silver,
because after the ten plagues,
the Egyptians were willing to pay *anything* to get rid of the Israelites!

Now, several hundred years later,
Egypt plunders Israel – taking back (with interest!) what they had given.

The basic principle here is that while repentance may deliver you from destruction,
it does not necessarily deliver you from the consequences of your sin.

In the same way,

if someone repents of the sin of murder,
it does not mean that there will be no consequences!
If you lie repeatedly to someone,
just saying, “please forgive me,” will not earn their trust!

God’s own example with Rehoboam helps us understand the difference
between being forgiven for the penalty of sin,
and being delivered from the consequences of sin.

There was once a minister who had been found guilty of adultery.

He confessed his fault before the presbytery –
he recognized that he had forfeited his ministry;
he had no defense.

All he asked was that he not be cut off from the church.

That is very much what God says to Jerusalem –
because you have humbled yourselves before me, God says,

Jerusalem is not going to die – Jerusalem will not be excommunicated by God –
but Jerusalem will learn how much better it is to serve God
than to serve the nations!

We saw in the narrative about Solomon that his reign was the golden age of Jerusalem.
But here we see that within a few brief years, the golden age has ended:

He also took away the shields of gold that Solomon had made,¹⁰ and King Rehoboam made in their place shields of bronze and committed them to the hands of the officers of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house.¹¹ And as often as the king went into the house of the LORD, the guard came and carried them and brought them back to the guardroom.

Some archeologists claim that because there is no evidence of Solomon's splendor,
therefore it didn't happen.

The Chronicler suggests that there is another reason:
Solomon's splendor was short-lived,
the evidence was quickly taken away to Egypt!

Rehoboam now surrenders all the gold of King Solomon
in order to turn aside the threat of Shishak.

And then Rehoboam made bronze shields and put them in place of the golden shields.
But precious metals are now so rare in Israel
that Rehoboam cannot leave the shields in the house of the LORD!
Where once it seemed as though the streets were paved with silver,
now bronze is treated as a rare and precious commodity.

But while Rehoboam fell short –

¹² *And when he humbled himself the wrath of the LORD turned from him, so as not to make a complete destruction. Moreover, conditions were good^[a] in Judah.*

The Chronicler is setting up his overall theme for the rest of the book:
Pride goes before destruction –
but if you humble yourself, you will avoid destruction!

And *because* Rehoboam humbled himself,
therefore “conditions were good.”

The Chronicler is not concerned with nuance and complexity.
He wants you to see that sin leads to death and destruction –
humility and repentance leads to life and good.

3. The Evaluation of Rehoboam: He Did Not Set His Heart to Seek the LORD (v13-14)

Verses 13-14 give the Chronicler's basic evaluation of Rehoboam:

¹³ So King Rehoboam grew strong in Jerusalem and reigned. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. ¹⁴ And he did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the LORD.

The Chronicler reminds us of Solomon's sermon – and Solomon's prayer:

The LORD chose Jerusalem to be the city where he would put his name.
The LORD chose David to be the king – and Solomon to build the temple.

If the Son of David sets his heart to seek the LORD, then all is well in the world!
But if the Son of David does not set his heart to seek the LORD,
then all is evil.

There is only one thing that God requires of us.

You can say it a lot of different ways –
but it is really just *one thing*.

Set your heart to seek the LORD.

(the idea of “set your heart” has to do with “firmly establishing” your heart;
this is the word used to describe how God has firmly established
the heavens and the earth).

The point here is that this must be your fixed and determined purpose.

This is not something that you can “try” for a few weeks to see if it works.
It must be your settled conviction – the one thing that drives you in everything else –

To seek the LORD.

You can say this in different ways:

Jesus said, “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”

Moses said, “Love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength.”

Paul said, “One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

John said, “And this is his commandment, that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ
and love one another, just as he has commanded us.”

But all of this comes back to a single-minded focus on knowing and loving the LORD our God,
and pursuing him relentlessly!

4. The Death of Rehoboam (v15-16)

¹⁵ Now the acts of Rehoboam, from first to last, are they not written in the chronicles of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer?^[b] There were continual wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. ¹⁶ And Rehoboam slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David, and

Abijah^[c] his son reigned in his place.

Verse 15-16 then conclude by saying,

“Yeah, there was a lot more to it –
but others have written it down, so I don’t need to.”
Sure Rehoboam and Jeroboam kept fighting,
but that’s not all that important.

There will be wars and rumors of wars – life goes on –
but what matters is that Rehoboam did not seek the LORD.

And if you want to say “Oh but he humbled himself when it got really bad!”
don’t forget that this was an “Oops!” sort of repentance.

If you only humble yourself and repent when you get caught –
after the enemy invades –
that is *not* what it means to *set your heart to seek the LORD*.

Paul expresses what it means to set your heart to seek the LORD when he says,

⁸ *Indeed, I count everything as loss
because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.
For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish,
in order that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him,
not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law,
but that which comes through faith in Christ,
the righteousness from God that depends on faith—
¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection,
and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,
¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

Whatever it takes!

Nothing will get in the way of knowing Christ!

¹² *Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect,
but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.*

Jesus Christ is the Son of David who has loved God with his whole heart.

He is the one who has attained the resurrection from the dead!

Therefore I want to know him!

I want his righteousness! (because mine plainly hasn’t gotten me very far!)

I want him!