

Brass for Gold
Bible Characters
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Bible Text: 1 Kings 1:25-28; 2 Chronicles 12:1-12
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The lesson is taken from 1 Kings chapter 14 beginning at verse 25, you'll find this on page 550 in the Bibles in the pews.

In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak King of Egypt attacked Jerusalem. He carried off the treasures of the temple of the Lord and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including all the gold shields Solomon had made. So King Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them and assigned these to the commanders of the guard on duty at the entrance of the royal palace. Whenever the king went to the Lord's temple, the guards bore the shields and afterward they returned them to the guard's guard room. (1 Kings 14:25-28)

The word of the Lord. ["Thanks be to God."]

May we pray.

Lord, help me to extract from this event in your word practical truth for everyday living as we look at the reality of events that actually happened in history. Lord, grant us lessons, we pray, in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

Now that is the Reader's Digest condensed version of the story, and as Paul Harvey used to say—does anybody remember Paul Harvey? The rest of the story—the rest of the story is fleshed out in 2 Chronicles. So I'd like you to turn with me now to 2 Chronicles chapter 12, and you'll find that on page 691. 2 Chronicles chapter 12, and that's page 691. And we read there,

After Rehoboam's position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD. (2 Chronicles 12:1)

Now I want to think about that for a moment. We know how old he was. We know that Rehoboam became king at the age of 41, so it means that he was entering into his prime. That's midlife, which begins at 35. I don't know what that makes me. But anyhow, he's in his prime, and he's established and if we read all of the things that are going on, we discover that he was greatly strengthened for three years because when Jeroboam, the king of the northern country, Israel, when Jeroboam began to turn to idolatry, those who really sought the Lord left Israel and went to Judah. And so he's greatly strengthened (2 Chronicles 11:13-17).

So we can figure now that he's maybe 44 years old, and he's really getting to be strong, and he's established, and all these things are looking good for him. Nice time in life. Many times people have begun to get peak income by that time. They're in their prime. Someone told me one time, the ideal age for a minister is 40. Before, when he's under 30 is too young, when he's over 50 is too old.

Anyhow, so here he is. He's in his prime. He's in good earning time. And if you think about it in contemporary life, he's about 44 years old. And so you discover here, he begins to be cocky and we see here in the next sentence, rather, in the next clause:

He and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD. (2 Chronicles 12:1)

"I want to do it my way. What about me?" Isn't there a little narcissist inside all of us? And hopefully no one here has narcissistic personality disorder. That's a very serious malady. But there's a little narcissist in all of us, every single one of us. You know, "What about me?" And so here we find this man is beginning to abandon God's word.

"If loving you is wrong, I don't want to be right." You remember that country song? Think about that. If loving you is wrong, I don't want to be right. Isn't that the story of life? When we abandon God's precepts, when we abandon his commandments, we begin to get into trouble, and we see absolutely that's what happens here.

Verse 2:

Because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem in the fifth year of King Rehoboam. (2 Chronicles 12:2)

That would make him about 46. Wow, in the fifth year.

Who is Shishak? Well, Shishak, or Shoshenq I reigned in Egypt from 945 to 924, and so this means that he came to Judah and to Jerusalem in the year 926 BC. So about two years before he ceased his reign in Egypt, he comes to Jerusalem in Judah, and he takes away all the treasure. It's really amazing, isn't it? And he has this enormous army, in verse 3, and he comes, and he captured—we're told in verse 4—the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem.

Now notice what the prophet Shemaiah says in verse 5,

Then the prophet Shemaiah came to Rehoboam and to the leaders of Judah who had assembled in Jerusalem for fear of Shishak, and he said to them, 'This is what the LORD says, "You have abandoned me; therefore, I now abandon you to Shishak."' (2 Chronicles 12:5)

Wow! I don't want God to abandon me. Do you want God to abandon you? You want it your way? Okay, here have it. When we turn our back on God, whether it's as an individual, or as a family, or an institution, or a church, or a denomination, or schools, or what have you, when we say, we don't need you around here, we don't want to recognize God...

I think back to '62 and '63, and we're not going to do that, we can't do that. Wow! and so God says, "You've abandoned me, I'm abandoning you."

I look at America today compared to America of my childhood, born in the first half of the 20th century. Wow! America today is very, very different. Very different, and it's a very dangerous place. Our cities are dangerous. They're very dangerous. And so we see this here, he said, "I've abandoned you. You've abandoned me; therefore I now abandon you to Shishak."

Now notice this does get a good response. In verse 6:

The leaders of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said,
'The LORD is just.' (2 Chronicles 12:6)

What's the very first thing to begin getting right with God when trouble comes, when God chastens you? Does God chasten people today? Of course.

If you're without chastisement whereof all God's children are partakers, then says the writer of Hebrews, you're illegitimate children, and you're not really the children of God. (Hebrews 12:8)

If you're a child of God, you're going to get yourself whipped sometimes. You're going to go to the woodshed sometimes. If you belong to the Lord, he is not going to let you go on and on and on in sin. He will chasten you. And he will do it, why?

Because whom the Lord loves he chastens and scourges every son whom he receives. (Hebrews 12:6)

And so, God responds. The first thing is to say, "Lord, you're right, I'm wrong." That's the beginning. "You're right, I'm wrong. I tried doing it my way, Lord, I was wrong. You're right, and you're just to chasing me." The beginning of getting the chastisement off your back is to say, "Lord, you're just, you're right." And that's what happens.

Now notice the next verse, verse 7:

When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, this word of the LORD came to Shemaiah: 'Since they have humbled themselves, I will not destroy them but will soon give them deliverance. My wrath will not be poured out on Jerusalem through Shishak. They will, however, become subject to him, so that they may learn the difference between serving me and serving the kings of other lands.' (2 Chronicles 12:7-8)

Now there is so much packed in that when we understand who Israel and Judah were supposed to be.

At Mount Sinai, God took them to be his own people. He was the King. He was over them. That's why Israel sinned when they asked for a king. Do you know that monarchy is not God's way? And you look at kings throughout history, wow!

My wife and I love watching historical things. We enjoy it so much, and the thing I learn is this: most of them, most of the kings throughout history are just worthless bums you wouldn't want to invite into your home. Really, I look back, take the British royal family, and you take—Queen Elizabeth II was a bright spot, and I won't go into her boy. But you know King George III, a lunatic. I mean, this is the deal.

When you've got monarchy, you've got trouble and if you really analyze the Bible, what is the Bible's ideal form of government? It is what we might call a Republic. The people are represented by leaders, and they answer to the people. And that's what John Calvin referred to in *The Institutes* as an aristocracy.

For if the three forms of government which the philosophers discuss be considered in themselves, I will not deny that aristocracy, or a system compounded of aristocracy and democracy, far excels all others: not indeed of itself, but because it is very rare for kings so to control themselves that their will never disagrees with what is just and right; or for them to have been endowed with such great keenness and prudence, that each knows how much is enough. Therefore, men's fault or failing causes it to be safer and more bearable for a number to exercise government, so that they may help one another, teach and admonish one another; and, if one asserts himself unfairly, there may be a number of censors and masters to restrain his willfulness. This has both been proved by experience, and also the Lord confirmed it by his authority when he ordained among the Israelites an aristocracy bordering on democracy, since he willed to keep them in best condition [Ex. 18:13–26; Deut. 1:9–17] until he should bring forward the image of Christ in David. And, as I freely admit that no kind of government is more happy than one where freedom is regulated with becoming moderation and is properly established on a durable basis, so also I reckon most happy those permitted to enjoy this state; and if they stoutly and constantly labor to

preserve and retain it, I grant that they are doing nothing alien to this office. Indeed, the magistrates ought to apply themselves with the highest diligence to prevent the freedom (whose guardians they have been appointed) from being in any respect diminished, far less be violated. If they are not sufficiently alert and careful, they are faithless in office, and traitors to their country. (John Calvin (1960), *Institutes of the Christian religion*, Vol. XX and XXI of *The library of Christian classics*. Edited by John T. McNeill, Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press), pp. 1493-94)

The aristocracy doesn't mean the way we think of it, but it's representative government. The people have representative leaders. It's not raw mob rule of so-called democracy, but it's actual leaders who lead, and not a monarch. And you know what God said to Samuel when Israel demanded a king. He said, "They haven't rejected you; they've rejected me."

And the LORD told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do." (1 Samuel 8:7-9)

That's an interesting thing. Why do we want a king? Now, in the providence of God, he used that so that he would send his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be King of kings and Lord of lords.

But the thing I want us to see in that verse 8 at the top of page 691 is God sometimes allows us to come under the control of somebody who is not real nice. Think about it. You want, you dislike being under the rule of the Lord? Well here, try somebody else. Wow! And that's what happened. God said, "I want you to understand in choosing to reject me and reject my way, I'm going to teach you the difference between being under me, because I'm the Suzerain and you are the vassals, the difference of being under me and being under somebody else."

Wow! that's quite a striking thing, isn't it?

They will, however, become subject to him so that they may learn the difference between serving me and serving the kings of other lands. (2 Chronicles 12:8)

Verse 9:

When Shishak king of Egypt attacked Jerusalem, he carried off the treasures of the temple of the LORD and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including the gold shields Solomon had made. (2 Chronicles 12:9)

Now, verse 10:

So King Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them and assigned these to the commanders of the guard on duty at the entrance to the royal palace. (2 Chronicles 12:10)

Notice the next verse, 11:

Whenever the king went to the Lord's temple, the guards went with him, bearing the shields, and afterward they returned them to the guardroom. (2 Chronicles 12:11)

I want you to reflect on that for a moment. Now this is brass or bronze or copper. We get—the Hebrew word is *nechoshet* (n^eḥōšet, נֶחֱשֶׁת). And, in fact, that's the metal that Moses crafted a snake out of when the people in the desert wanderings were being bitten, and God instructed him to make a serpent, *nachash* (nāḥāš, נָחָשׁ) out of brass, bronze, or copper (n^eḥōšet, נֶחֱשֶׁת): נֶחֱשֶׁת נָחָשׁ (*nachash nechoshet*, Numbers 21:9).

And he held it up, and those that looked at the serpent, that is that bronze serpent, were instantly healed of the deadly snake bite (Numbers 21:6-9; John 3:14-15).

Then later, that, that God had used at one era in Israel's history became an idol, and it was destroyed by Hezekiah. And he said, "It's Nehushtan" (n^eḥušṭān, נְחֻשְׁטָן) (2 Kings 18:4), which is simply saying it's a piece of bronze. It's amazing. People worship stuff. People worship things that God may have used in the past as if they are for all time.

So we see here what he does, and let's reflect on it for a moment. It's all about appearances, isn't it?

The gold's gone. We're going to replace it with copper, bronze, or brass. Why? Notice that people don't get a good look at it. It can be polished and look like gold from a distance, and the guards escort the king as he goes into the temple and escort him back out, and then they put them in the guard room. Now the guards knew, this is bronze, this is brass (2 Chronicles 12:11). I want you to think about replacing gold with brass.

Anyone know about the Coin Act of 1965? You know, I have bags of circulated silver all before 1965, because a dime was made out of silver, a quarter was made out of silver, a 50 cents piece was made out of silver, and a dollar was made out of silver. But in 1965, they were made out of copper, but they're made to look like they've got silver. Copper, nickel on it. Your dime isn't worth a penny, and the quarter. I mean, just think about it. 1965 (*The Coinage Act of 1965*, Pub.L. 89–81, 79 Stat. 254, enacted July 23, 1965, eliminated silver from the circulating United States dime (ten-cent piece) and quarter dollar coins. It also reduced the silver content of the half dollar from 90 percent to 40 percent; silver in the half dollar was subsequently eliminated by a 1970 law.

<<https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/STATUTE-79/STATUTE-79-Pg254>>),

But get this, think about gold and what is the price of gold today? Well, I happened to check the price of gold and I discovered that the price of gold was over \$2,000 on Friday, spot price of gold (\$2,094.05).

Now my parents—and I've told this story before—bought a house in old Myrtle Beach, which is Myrtle Beach proper, that was as close to the Atlantic Ocean as we are to these apartments over here. And it was a four-bedroom, three-bathroom house, and they paid \$14,500 for that house in 1955. They moved from the south end of Myrtle Beach after the hurricane cut off getting out of there. Daddy decided to move to the north end—\$14,500. Now, the price of that house in gold coin then, which was \$35 an ounce.

Remember that during World War II, as World War II is ending, they had the Bretton Woods Conference, and that's when they decided that the world needed a standard trading currency, and so they agreed that the US dollar

would be the world's reserve currency, and it would be valued at \$35 an ounce, \$35 an ounce (<<https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/GPO-CRECB-1944-pt6/GPO-CRECB-1944-pt6-19-1>>).

Now, back when my parents bought their house at \$35 an ounce, given today's price for gold, their house would sell for \$867,435. Think about that for a moment: 1955, what their house cost in real dollars versus what their house today would sell for, \$867,435.

What does that tell you? It tells you that one of our presidents was well named Tricky Dick. I happened to see him when he attended an event I was attending. And as he's walking down the street, the people started chanting, former Vice President Nixon, "Here comes Tricky Dick."

And he was smart. He was probably the smartest president of the end of the 20th century. But boy, was he tricky. And he had a problem. He had a problem because we were, according to Bretton Woods, the world's reserve currency: \$35 for an ounce of gold. That was the value of our currency. And the dollar was good as gold. Then the problems hit.

People started wanting that gold. And the problems hit because we did great social programs and we fought a war on borrowed money, and when you do things on borrowed stuff that's not going to come back, you've got a problem.

So in 1971, I remember very well when it happened, August 1971, he removed us from the gold standard, and at that point, for all practical purposes, the Bretton Woods Agreement of 1944 collapsed. And what happened to our country?

What happened to our country is going on now. The printing presses began to run. Now when Nixon announced it in August of 1971, they had a freeze put on prices and wages, so you couldn't....

Now what do you do when you put the lid on the pressure cooker? Anybody ever cooked with a pressure cooker? Well, those months of no hike in wages and no hike in prices, suddenly when that's removed, the spinach blew the top off, and all of that green is up on the ceiling. That's what happened.

Where are we today? You know, my bill for garbage collection—because I have to have a private collector—went up from three months ago: It's gone up seven dollars a quarter. Now that's not much, but what they're doing is trying to get out ahead of inflation because inflation is real. Don't let anybody tell you it's not real. When we disconnected the dollar from gold, we allowed the dollar to go into a nosedive, and that's why my parents' house from 1955 would be worth over \$800,000 today in today's money. Wow! \$14,500! Think about it. What are we facing? We're facing debased currency.

But you know, that's not the point of this biblical event.

What's the point of the biblical event? He's replacing gold shields with brass shields. What's that mean? That means pretense. That means cover-up. That means hiding the fact that things are not the way they were. And the ordinary person missed it. They didn't see it because the guards escort the king, King Rehoboam, into the temple, and then they escort him back, and then they hide those brass shields in the guard room. And I think about that in terms of life.

Think about the great denominations in our nation's history and think about now. I look at so many major denominations where the gold shields of long ago now have brass shields. Seriously.

When you lose the gospel, when you lose the reality that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried and that he rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3-4), when you fail to preach that this book is God's true word, it's authoritative, it speaks to what we should believe, and it speaks to how we ought to live (2 Timothy 3:16-17), when you take that away, what have you got? You've replaced gold with brass.

I think back to that great, charming preacher from San Francisco, Jim Jones. Do you know that he even had Mrs. Carter come visit him in his People's Temple? I always like the way that people name things. The **People's** Temple, like the **People's** Republic of China. And so, The People's Temple, and one day he was preaching, and people had their Bibles, and he said, he said, "Too many of you have your eyes on this." He threw the Bible out of the pulpit. "Too many of you have your eyes on this. You need to be looking at me." Wow! He's replaced the gold of God's word with brass (David Chidester (2003) *Salvation and Suicide: An Interpretation of Jim Jones, the*

Peoples Temple, and Jonestown (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press) p. 64ff.)

Think about it today. Think of the things in your life. Maybe you will meditate this afternoon when you take a Sunday afternoon nap as you doze off, “Lord, give me application in my life. What is the gold that I had that I’m giving up for brass? Looks good to people but what’s underneath?”

It reminds me when I worked for a funeral home when I moved to Philadelphia, and we didn’t have a good place to live, and a friend said, “You ought to go to that funeral home.” And the man happened to be a Presbyterian, and that’s when minimum wage was a dollar an hour. He found out I was a Presbyterian ministerial student in seminary, and he said, “Tell you what I’ll do.” He said, “That house that we were going to let somebody have, one of our funeral directors is living there to answer the phone, but I’ll do this for you. I’ll pay you \$3.50 an hour, work you 16 hours on a Saturday, and you can study on the job.”

And I thought, wow! And I discovered something, I discovered not only does nobody ever look asleep in a casket, but I discovered something else: In order for things to be put on the person, they cut out the back of the shirt; they cut out the back of the suit.

And so if you could see from behind, it’s like when I used to have a ventriloquist dummy. And my ventriloquist dummy had a bow tie, and he had a coat and a shirt, but in the back, there was a hole, and that’s where I had my hand, and I could turn his head all over the place, and I could not only move his mouth, but his eyebrows. And it was great for entertaining children except my own children told me, said, “Daddy, that thing scared us to death.” Anyhow, the point is that what you see here, isn’t what you see here, and that’s the brass, that’s the bronze.

Think about it. Think about how many people put on a front when they come to church, and so I want to ask you today, as you’re dealing with the brass that looks like gold, all polished and shiny and reflective, what’s in your life that you need to deal with today? What is the gold that’s missing that you’ve covered up with brass? What is it that God would want you to say, “Deal with this today”?

You know, this is a beautiful thing. No matter what's happening in life, in an instant of time, you can be right with God. All you have got to do is say: "Lord, you're right. I'm wrong. I wanted it my way and, Lord, I sure am sad that I did it my way, because when I turned my back on your word, and went my way, look at the mess I've gotten myself into. What am I going to do? What am I going to do?"

And the beginning is to say, "Lord, you're right. You're right to chasten me. I want that hand of chastisement off of me. I want, Lord, to submit to your will in everything." That's all you have to do.

Look, we're going to have the Lord's Supper in a minute, and there's never a better moment in the life of a believer than when we prepare for the Lord's Supper because God wants you to take the Lord's Supper.

He says, "Take it seriously, but take it. Let a person examine himself, examine herself, and so let that person eat." (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)

What do we do in examination? You begin to say, "Lord, please show me my own heart."

You know, we can't know our heart until the Lord shows it to us. We can't know what's really going on in our lives. We can be blind as bats without self-examination. So I want to invite you now, before we take the bread and the wine, to ask the Lord to search you, and I'm going to lead us in a prayer of searching.

Lord, who can discern his errors? Keep me back from presumptuous sins (Psalm 19:12-13).

Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked, any evil, any destructive way in me, and lead me in the way of life everlasting (Psalm 139:23-24).

Lord, you tell us that the heart is deceitful above everything else and desperately wicked, who can know it? And then you tell us that you examine the heart and the kidneys (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

And Lord, help us to examine ourselves, and if we discover anything there that is hindering us in our walk with you, anything that is distracting us from our eyes on you, would you reveal it?

And then, Lord, would you give us, not in our pride, but in our humility to say, "Lord, give me the grace to turn my back on that. I want to turn everything over to you. Help me, Lord, because left to myself, I cannot help myself."

In Jesus' name, amen.