

SERVITUDE OR SERVICE—WHICH?

NO. 2306

A SERMON
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*“Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service,
and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.”*
2 Chronicles 12:8

THE people of God had left their God and He had left them, so that Shishak, the king of Egypt, came against them, and though the Lord had respect to their humble prayer and would not suffer Shishak to destroy Jerusalem, yet He brought them into subjection to the Egyptian king. Our text tells us the reason for this servitude—“They shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.”

Beloved friends, the children of Israel were bound to the service of God. JEHOVAH had chosen them out of all the nations of the world to be His people. He had committed the holy oracles to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—they were from before the foundation of the world set apart in the eternal purpose to be the Lord’s. That highly honorable and gracious choice ought to have bound them to His service.

In addition to this, they were called out by His own voice. Their father Abraham was fetched out from Ur of the Chaldees where he served other gods, and he was led to know JEHOVAH and to follow Him. He walked with God and God was very familiar with him, so that He spoke with him as a man speaks with his friend.

All along the ages God called His people out from the world, especially did He call them out of Egypt, delivering them out of the house of bondage with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. He led them through the wilderness, and fed them with manna, and instructed them. And in this way He separated them to be His own peculiar portion beyond all the sons of men. By their calling, then, as well as by their election, they were bound to keep close to the one living and true God.

And above this, as if to make them doubly His own, He entered into a covenant with them. It was first made with Abraham, then it was renewed with Isaac and with Jacob. The covenant was still further ratified in the wilderness, where the Lord promised that when they came into Canaan, He would be their God and He would bless them. But He stipulated that they must obey His voice, and cling to Him, and have Him only to be their God, His Word, and His law to be the rule and guide of their life. This covenant God always kept, but the people broke it very soon, so that Moses shattered the tablets of stone, a fit symbol of the way in which Israel broke the law of God.

Is it not very sad to think that the great God, who made the heavens and the earth, should have but one nation out of all the inhabitants of the world—and these His by choice, by calling and by covenant—and yet that they should continually grow weary of Him? Other peoples did not change their gods. It was a rare thing for a nation to cast away its idols in those days. But Israel, which alone had the true God, while the rest had gods that were only idols, quitted the living and true God to set up in His place the gods of the heathen, which could do them no good.

Now, this phenomenon of human nature, this going after idols and leaving the true God, is constantly being renewed. We have the same thing even in the church of God, which never seems to be satisfied with chaste love for Christ, but continually goes after one strange lover and another. Thus

Christ's pure truth is left for some brilliant error and His simple worship is deserted for some invention of man.

Even when God spoke by His servant Shemaiah the prophet, the men of Judah were itching to be after their idols and panting to get away from God. And the Lord said, "Inasmuch as they have forsaken me, I have left them in the hand of Shishak, and they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."

I. In considering these words tonight I shall say, first, that THERE ARE SOME WHO HAVE ALREADY CHOSEN THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOMS OF THE COUNTRIES.

We have many round about us who have deliberately chosen not to serve God, but to serve other masters. O beloved, if you have chosen to serve God, it is because God has chosen you! If I am speaking tonight to any of you whose one object in life is God's glory, who can truly say that you live as in the fear of God, and before Him, endeavoring to please Him—that is evidence of a work of grace within your heart. You are very grateful that such a work of grace has been worked upon you, but how many there are of our fellow men who have chosen some other god and some other way of living!

Some choose *to be the slaves of open sin*. Hardly, I think, would they choose such slavery if they really knew all that it included, but they have chosen it practically. How many there are who are the devotees of drunkenness! Ah, me! what can they see in Bacchus that they should worship him?

Others are the slaves of licentiousness. I need not mention the forms of uncleanness in which so many wallow in this foul city of ours, where the temptation to sin is in every street. The forms of evil are many—I need not mention them, for if I did, I might omit one, and then, perhaps, the person who is under its influence might fancy that I did not think it to be a sin.

But if you choose to live for sinful pleasure, let me tell you that you have entered upon a servitude compared with which the service of God is light and pleasant indeed. Whatever the strictest form of religion may require of you, it will never demand of you so much as vicious pleasure will do. I could stand here and tell of cases that have come under my own notice, of men and women who, in pursuit of sin, have brought themselves to beggary. Have I not seen the son of honest and godly parents clothed in rags and covered with vermin, so that when I spoke to him, I could not, with the utmost sympathy, dare to come within an arm's length of him?

Have I not seen the same sort of person, through drunkenness, full of disease, bloated, and sure soon to die? And when other sins have been added to these, have we not sometimes been in a hospital where, talking with a wretched man upon his bed, who brought upon himself the whole of his disease, we could not but feel that a martyr, when he died at the stake, did not endure for God such awful agony as this poor fool endured in the pursuit of his lusts?

I tell you, and I defy the world to doubt the statement, that the service of sin is the most horrible of slaveries, and that, when men give themselves to it, and their passions become dominant, the worse serfdom that there ever was upon the face of the earth is freedom compared with the bondage of a man's own passions.

If you want to know the truth about this matter, I would not advise you to learn it by experience, but I would recommend you to go to someone who has run his evil course and has come to the end of it—and ask him if it be not true that the wages of sin is death. Then go to the dying Christian, like one of our brethren who has passed away this week, a man who spent his Sabbaths preaching the Word and earned his bread in the week-days.

When he came to die, with an internal cancer, those who saw him said that nobody could be happier, nobody could be more full of triumph than he in the prospect of soon being with his Savior. Oh, let me serve God! Let me not serve my lusts! Young men, young women, God help you, by His grace, to make that wise and happy choice at once!

There are many persons who are not the worshippers of vice, but they are the *votaries of money-making*. They are the slaves of the thirst for wealth. This is a very common evil and I invite you to look

upon those who have made gain the one object of life. Some have carried it out very resolutely. The miser lives poor that he may die rich. He scrapes money together that his heir may fling it away again. I do think that his god is a very poor one and that the service he renders to his god is a very wretched business, for when he succeeds in gathering money, then there is the care of keeping it—and with some it is a very great care indeed. I will not mention the name of one of the richest men of this period, but I believe it is true that, when one congratulated him upon his great wealth, he said, “Oh, do not talk in that way! Here is a fellow who has just written to me, saying that I must give him £200 or else he will blow my brains out. And wherever I am, I am always being persecuted for money. Money brings no happiness to people who possess it.”

He is one who ought to know, for he has more than most men. You will find that persons who rise in what are called the ranks of society, do not have more happiness—they only have a heavier load to carry.

I find one stick to be a great help to me when I go out walking, but if I had a bundle of twenty sticks, I suppose I should find it quite a load to carry. And those who accumulate so much wealth often have to confess that the game is not worth the candle—they have only acquired that which they cannot enjoy. A man cannot wear more than one suit of clothes at a time, after all, and let him do what he likes, he cannot eat seven dinners in a day, and he cannot enjoy ten times more than anyone else.

While the poor man always has a stomach for his meat and his only trouble is to get meat for his stomach, this poor rich man can find no appetite to enjoy his dainties. Ah, the votary of money-making is employed in a hard service! I have seen him even when he is getting old, and when he has made sufficient wealth, with his nose still on the grindstone.

He must be always at the office, he must be always sticking to his post like the worst paid clerk in the place—and he is still as penurious as ever. He has buried himself beneath a hill of gold. Live for God, my dear sir—He will give you the things of this life—He will show you how to get as much as shall be truly useful to you. But if you make gold your god, you will serve a hard master.

There are some others who do not try to get much money, but they are *lovers of fashion, lovers of society, admirers of the world*. I will not say much about these ladies and gentlemen. I do not think that I have enough respect for them to speak about their special form of slavery. They must go away from London when “society” goes. They would be ashamed to stay at home when fashionable people go out of town. They must go to such and such a place, not because they care to go there, but because it is the fashion. They have to do just this much and they must not do that much.

Poor slaves, I should like to snap every link of their chains! It does seem such a dreadful piece of slavery for men and women that they dare not do what is right, and what they would like to do, but must do what other people do. Etiquette binds them hand and foot. Oh, that they had but the will and the strength to break these fetters!

The man who dresses for fashion and lives for fashion, ceases to be a man. I know what they call such creatures, but I will not repeat the term of contempt which is applied to them. The woman who lives only to be fashionable ceases to be a woman. I will say no more about her. This idol of fashion is a hard and silly god, for it requires its devotees to make themselves into fools, if not into something worse.

Then there is another cult that has lately come up, which some have chosen, so that they have become the *devotees of “culture.”* Many have forsaken the simple Gospel and turned away from the belief in their Bible which their mother had, and in which their father died, because they want to be considered very thoughtful and clever and superior persons!

Now, I have noticed that whenever a person gives up his belief in the Word of God because it requires that he should believe a good deal, his unbelief requires him to believe a great deal more. If there be any difficulties in the faith of Christ, they are not one-tenth as great as the absurdities in any system of unbelief which seeks to take its place.

I do not hesitate to say that the whole doctrine of evolution, with which many men are fascinated today, is ten thousand times more absurd than the most ridiculous travesty of what is taught in the Word of God and it requires more faith, and also far greater gullibility, than to believe any doctrine which is deduced from Holy Scripture.

You will find great demands made upon your faith by Shishak, if you become his servants. He will tax you and take all you have, whereas, to believe what God has said is, after all, but a reasonable service. The man who goes in for the new ideas in religion—the man of “progress,” who is so wise and learned—must confess that he loses that sweet rest of heart that he has seen in Christian people, which was enjoyed by the godly woman described by Cowper,—

*“Who knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,
A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew.”*

There is safe anchorage for us here, but there is no anchorage in the sea of personal infallibility. “Oh!” says one, “I never claimed that.” No, my dear sir, but there must be infallibility somewhere—and if you are the judge of the Word of God, you have shifted the infallibility from the Word to yourself—and you are really the claimant of it. In your own heart of hearts, you think so. Where will you ever get rest with such a delusion as that? He who rests on himself, rests on a very frail foundation indeed.

I believe this night that upon which I can pray, that upon which I can live, that upon which I can die. My faith is fixed in the revealed Word of God and I find that it sustains me in the hour of bitter bodily pain, with which I am too well-acquainted—and in the hour of deep depression of spirit, with which I am all too familiar—and in the time of cruel desertion, for I have had some of the best friends fail me.

And in the time of slander, for who has had anything worse spoken of him than they have uttered against me? I can fall back upon the eternal verities—they are the hills from which my help comes—and they never fail me. Can any man say the same of his “culture” and “progress,” and of his “advanced thought”? Can he live or die on such stuff as that?

Why, he cannot even live on it, for by his own admission, he cannot write out his creed because he believes one thing today, but he may believe quite another thing tomorrow—and the next day he will in all probability have shifted his ground again. Oh, this Shishak, this new god, lately come up—his service is unspeakably harder than the service of the eternal truth—and there is no wage to be won from it!

I will only refer to one more class of those who have chosen the service of the kingdoms—these are *the seekers of self-righteousness*. This is an old-fashioned and very respectable deity whom many still worship. They are seeking to be saved by their own works, by their charitableness, by their religiousness, by sacraments, by priests, by their own feelings, by something of their own.

It is a hard way in which a man never has any rest or assurance. It is a way in which he runs, because of the crack of the whip behind him—“Do this and you shall live. Do not do this and you shall perish.” How infinitely superior is the way of simply trusting Christ and then obeying Him out of gratitude—not working for life, but from life—not seeking to serve Christ in order to be saved, but because you are saved, and wish to work out that which God has worked in you, to will and to do of His own good pleasure!

Surveying these different masters, I venture to say, once for all, and then I leave this part of my subject, that those who have chosen the service of the kingdoms have made a very foolish and evil choice—and that those who have chosen the service of God may forever bless the Lord with all their hearts.

II. Here is our second point. SOME SEEM TO BE PINING TO GIVE UP THE SERVICE OF GOD AND TO GO TO THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOMS.

It is a strange thing, but this evil is always breaking out even among the people of God. Some want to change out of *sheer love of change*. That you should want to change ministers, I do not at all wonder at—my voice must have become very monotonous to some of you—but that you should want to change

gospels, that does distress me. That there should be any man who grows weary of the everlasting chimes of the glorious notes of free grace and dying love appalls me.

No, no. Let me hear the voice of God through eternity, for it has a perpetual freshness and novelty about it. I can bear with the monotony of the preacher, if the monotone is still full of Jesus and His love. But there are some people who cannot be constant to anything. They are like the moon. You could not measure the moon for a suit of clothes with the hope of ever fitting it, and so you cannot tell what these men are or where they are, for they are ever on the change.

Some want to be off to their idols, because of *the outward aspect of the new thing*. It looks grand to them to go in for the “culture” ideas, and it seems a fine thing to live for the world. Men of the world seem so grand as they roll along in their carriages—why should we not be as great as they? Then there is something very tangible about minding the main chance, for after all, if you do not get the pounds and pence, where are you? The world will not think much of you.

“Oh!” says one, “I like the thought of this following after Christ, but He is a root out of a dry ground, and His people are generally poor, common sort of folk. I should like to get in amongst the uppermost people.” When men begin to run down the people of God, I always find that they are not worth much themselves. When any man is ashamed of a child of God because he is poor, he must be a very poor creature himself. But that is often a reason for turning away from the service of God to the service of the kingdoms.

Sometimes men turn aside because of their *loss of joy in the service of God*. They are not serving the Lord as they used to do. They are doing but little for Him. Now, a little religion is a very bitter thing. If you have only a little of it, you will find that there is no sweetness in it. It is like the boys that go to bathe in the river in the early morning. One just dips his foot in the water. “Ugh!” he cries. It shivers him right through.

But he who takes a header and plunges in, glows all over in a moment. I wish that some religious people would just take a header. If they did, they would feel the joy of the Lord thrill through them and there would be no fear that they would ever want to leave His service. Beware of a little godliness. To say, “I want just as much religion as will take me into heaven, just as much godliness as will save my bacon,” is dishonoring to Christ and essentially evil. When the joy is gone out of religion, we do not wonder that men want to get away from it.

Then, there are many who are led to want a change from the service of God by *the flagging of others*. They meet with many who say, “Well, really you are not going to keep to that old style of things, are you?” Another says, “I have found something very brilliant and fresh.” They listen to these tempting voices and they think to themselves, “One cannot always go against the stream.” If they would really think, they would remember that live fish swim against the stream—it is the dead fish that go floating down with the tide.

I like the man who says, “I am not going to take my religion from my companions. If they do not intend to go to heaven, I am sorry for them. But as for myself, I know what I am at. My heart is fixed, almighty God, fixed on You, believing in Your dear Son, resting in His precious blood! I am resolved, come fair or foul, to keep my face towards the celestial city till I behold the King in His beauty and reign with Him forever and ever.” God give you that fixed and firm resolution! Many cannot do anything contrary to their surroundings—they must do as other people do, poor creatures that they are.

There are some who turn aside because religion has brought them to a point where *it entails some extra self-sacrifice*. I have known some who have said, “Well, I am prepared for many things in the cause of God, but we must draw a line somewhere. One may buy gold too dearly. I could not, for instance, give up my situation. If my employer commanded me to do a wrong thing, I think that I should stretch my conscience a little and do it. I could not lose my job.”

Another says, “Well, I could not enter a protest against such and such an error. If I did, I should have all my friends down upon me and they would call me bigoted and narrow-minded.” And that would

break your heart, would it? It would be a very soft heart if it would. “Oh, but really, I am not the man to stand out by myself!” Are you not?

Remember that text, “The fearful”—that is, the cowardly—“and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.” God grant that you may not have that for your portion! Oh, that you may follow Christ at all hazards! Be this your word—

*“Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I’ll follow where He goes;
‘Hinder me not,’ shall be my cry,
Though earth and hell oppose.”*

III. I am going to finish with this point. THERE IS A GREAT CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SERVICE OF GOD AND ANY OTHER SERVICE.

The service of God is delightful. Remember, young man, if you are about to engage in the service of God, *there is nothing demanded of you that will harm you*. There is no commandment of God which, if you keep it, will injure either your body or your soul. There is nothing asked of you but what will be for your benefit—nothing that will really be to your loss. If it should seem to involve a present loss, yet it shall be turned to future gain, for God will overrule it for your permanent good.

Next, notice, that *there is nothing denied you in the service of God that would be a blessing to you*. The promise is, “No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.” You shall neither have less pleasure, nor less strength, nor less real honor, if you obey the commands of God. You may seem sometimes to give up what appears to be pleasant to you, but God denies His children nothing that would be really for their advantage.

The service of God is, after all, such a service that if we lived selfishly, we might wish to live as God bids us live. If a man were infinitely wise and could fashion a life which, upon the whole, would be best for himself, he could not do better than to fashion it according to the commands of God and the example of Christ—and you cannot say that of any of the servitudes of which I have spoken.

Once more, observe, that *in the service of God strength will always be given according to your day*. When you serve the Lord, if He sends you out upon a tough piece of work, He will give you extra grace. And if He calls you to great suffering, He will give you greater patience. He does not require of you more than He is prepared to give you. He will do for you exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think.

What a service is this in which we are never sent to warfare at our own charges! Shishak, the king of Egypt, and all the Egyptian kings built pyramids and dug canals. You have often wondered how they made them. In the reign of one of them, nearly the third of a million of people were forced to go and dig a canal—and they were not only never paid a penny, but they never had even a piece of bread given to them, nor were they even furnished with tools. The bulk of them had to dig out the canals with their own fingers and they perished by the thousands.

That is your Shishak, king of Egypt. That is the devil’s service all over. There is no reward given and no help whatever. You are left to do the best you can—and that best brings you no reward, either in this life or in that which is to come.

Here, again, is a further beauty about the service of God, that *there is no threat made to hang upon it*. You are saved if you are a believer in Christ—that matter is done with—Christ has saved you. You do not go out to work for God with any idea of winning heaven or of escaping hell by what you do. You are saved and you serve the Lord with a higher, purer, grander motive, namely, that of unselfish gratitude, loving Him because He first loved you. You serve God after a very different fashion from the servitude of sin. The servitude of a slave is bitter, but the service of a son is sweet—and to that we are called.

And all the while that you are the servant of God, *you have a sweet peace in reflecting upon what you have done*. Did you ever go out for a day, or for an evening, with friends, spending a merry time in

gaiety, perhaps not altogether censurable, but still, not entirely commendable? When you have gone upstairs to bed, have you not thought, “Well, somehow, I do not feel quite happy”?

When you went to pray, did you not feel as if you had broken your knee, and when you awoke in the night, and thought over what seemed so very nice at the time, was it not honey in your mouth, but gall in your bowels? Did you ever spend a whole day in the service of God? When you have gone to bed at night, how have you felt? Very tired, perhaps, but oh, so thankful that you could look upon it all without regret! You could chew the cud of that service. There was something in the remembrance that soothed you in the night.

As George Herbert said, when he helped a poor woman with her load—and men wondered that the parson of the parish should carry a poor woman’s basket for her—“The memory of this will make the bells ring in my heart at night,” so the service of God makes the bells ring in our hearts.

Lastly, there is above all this, *a hope of the eternal reward which is so soon to come*. I spoke, the other day, on board ship with a brother in Christ, and as we talked together, I said, “Well, you know, I may be in heaven in a quarter of an hour. If the ship went down, I do not believe that it would make any difference to me.” And he said, “Nor to me.” I believe that we were the happiest men on board that steamer.

How sweet it is to feel that you are not your own, but that you belong to God! If you really belong to God, He will not lose you. He has never yet lost anything that was truly His. He puts the broad arrow or the bleeding heart on you to show that you belong to the King. The devil himself dare not run away with you. God will call for you in that day when the inventory of the divine possessions shall be read. You shall be known as marked by the King—and you shall be His forever and ever. Oh, let us try to live so that we can die in the same style as we are living!

It is well to be walking in such a way that you can walk right straight on though a grave should be in your way—and walk right straight through it—and out at the other side. Young man, are you going the way that you would like to keep on going forever and ever? The train is starting. You are taking your seat. Which way do you want to go, to the realm of brightness, or the land of eternal darkness? Take your seat in that carriage which will go right through to the better land, and taking your seat, feel, “Now the train may go right on to the terminus. For this purpose did I enter it, that I might go to the end of the journey.”

Many want to go as far as they can down the dark valley and then they hope that they will get out at some station or other and change their track. Be not so unwise, but tonight enter the right train. Lay hold on eternal life. Put your trust in Jesus and may we meet in heaven without having had to know by bitter experience the awful difference between the service of God and the service of the kingdom of darkness!

God bless you, dear friends, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON

1 KINGS 14:21-24 AND 2 CHRONICLES 12

1 Kings 14:21. *And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah.*

After great mountains often come low valleys. Solomon was a wise man—Rehoboam was otherwise.

21. *Rehoboam was forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there.*

Rehoboam ought to have been a good king. Jerusalem was the holy city, the chosen city. God put His own name there. It is a sad thing that this king should try to put away God’s name from the chosen city.

21. *And his mother’s name was Naamah an Ammonitess.*

There was bad blood in him. How often do we find that the good king has a good mother's name mentioned with his own! Bad kings generally come from some stranger, some heathen princess. It was so with Rehoboam.

22. *And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done.*

Their fathers had been great sinners, but in the days of David, they had not set up false gods. In the days of Solomon, after the temple had been built, they began to go astray. It is a curious thing that a high ritualistic service, even if it be right, is usually attended with a down-coming in spirituality. When the temple service was instituted, it was the beginning of a decline, but in Rehoboam's day that decline became more apparent, the "down-grade" became more visible.

23. *For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree.*

They could not have enough of it. When men go wrong, they generally go wrong very greedily—they cannot have too much of evil.

24. *And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.*

When men once turn aside from the living God to follow inventions of their own, there is no telling where they will go. Nothing is too foul, nothing is too filthy for them.

Now read the same story as you find it in

2 Chronicles 12. Verse 1. *And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.*

They prospered, at first, by adhering to JEHOVAH. The good people out of the neighboring land of Israel emigrated to them, strengthening them, but as soon as they grew strong, they forsook the law of JEHOVAH.

2. *And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD.*

Shishak did not know that fact, nor did he care about JEHOVAH. God so ruled in providence that, when His people cast Him off, He soon found a rod with which to chasten them. The King of Egypt determined to conquer them. You do not know, my friends, how God will smite you, but if you err from His statutes, He will never be long without a rod. You will bring chastisement on yourself if you depart from the living God. You will have yourself to blame if some dire affliction happens to you.

3. *With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians.*

This vast crowd ate up everything. The rule was to quarter on the enemy. They would devour every eatable thing throughout the whole country.

4. *And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem.*

When God means to chasten a people, He does not take long to do it, neither can their weakened strength successfully oppose their enemy.

5. *Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, that were gathered together at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.*

The prophet gave them no invitation to repentance, but just an explanation of the sorrow which had come upon them.

6. *Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The LORD is righteous.*

That was well done. They had not yet become so confirmed in their rebellion as to reject the prophet of God and to turn in willful, wanton, resolute disobedience against him.

7. And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves,

Though it was not in a spiritual way, yet—

7. The word of the LORD came to Shemaiah saying, They have humbled themselves: therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak.

He shall not storm the city. He shall not destroy it.

8. Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.

The Lord's people were to know the difference between the service of God and the service of the kings of the countries round about them. It would be a very sharp contrast and a very bitter one.

9. So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD,

The Temple was always very rich. Shishak came and stripped it. Everything there that was really valuable was taken away.

9. And the treasures of the king's house; he took all:

He could not very well take any more. That is generally the way with the devil. God is satisfied with tithes, but Shishak and Satan take all.

9-11. He carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made. Instead of which king Rehoboam, made shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house. And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard chamber.

That was a come-down indeed from shield's of gold to shields of copper. That is, I suppose, what is meant here by the brass. This is what the king suffered at the hands of Shishak and it was an emblem of the condition of his people. The golden kingdom had become a brazen one.

12. And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well.

Or, some behaved well. Even a measure of humiliation is acceptable with God. And though He did not save the nation from being plundered, yet He did rescue it from being altogether smitten. Alas for Rehoboam, he did a bad day's work when he turned away from God!

13-14. So King Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam, was one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess. And he did evil because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.

He was one of that fickle sort, neither here nor there—a compromising gentleman—not very definite in anything. He would go right if he were driven that way, and he would go wrong if he were led in that direction. Oh, how many there are who never prepare their hearts to seek the Lord! They are not determinately bad—they have not enough backbone in them to be leaders in evil—but they are never good for much, because they have never made up their minds to do the right at all costs. They have never had their heart prepared by the Holy Spirit to seek the Lord.

15-16. Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer concerning genealogies? And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

So they pass away. One generation dies and another follows. God grant that, when we fall asleep, it may not be with the sin of Rehoboam lying upon us, neither may we be succeeded by evil sons, but may we serve God in our day and be followed by those who shall serve Him still better! The Lord grant it! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—668, 666, 667

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