

REHOBOAM - WHEN FOLLY TAKES THE REIGNS

1 Kings 12:1-24; 1 Kings 14:21-31; 2 Chronicles 10-12

Westend Bible Chapel

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Rehoboam was the son of Solomon—the wisest king Israel ever knew. He inherited wealth, power, prestige, and the legacy of David’s throne. Yet within days of his reign, he fractured the kingdom.

Why? Because he rejected wisdom. He surrounded himself with voices that fed his pride instead of voices that pointed him to God.

This is not just history—it is a mirror. Every one of us faces the same crossroads: Will I listen to godly counsel, or will I feed my pride?

Thesis: *Pride rejects God’s wisdom, multiplies burdens, and fractures what God intends to bless.*

1) COUNSEL IGNORED (1 KINGS 12:1–7)

When Rehoboam become king, Jeroboam (the leader of the labor force) and all Israel come with a reasonable appeal— *‘Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.’*

The nation is not seeking to overthrow him. They are not demanding independence. They are saying, in effect: *“We will serve you, if you will lead us with compassion.”*

Under King Solomon, the “yoke” of building projects, taxation and forced labor had grown heavy.

So, the people were not rebelling against the throne — they are appealing to the heart of the man who sits on it – for compassion and relief from their actual hardships .

Rehoboam’s response: *‘Depart for three days, then come back to me , by then I’ll have made a decision . ‘*

So, during those three days, Rehoboam sought counsel—but not from God. There is no record of prayer, no turning to the Lord, no desire for divine guidance. From the outset, his heart was empty of faith and devoid of the fear of the LORD.

Proverbs 9:10 — *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”*

Rather than turning to God, Rehoboam turned to two contrasting voices within the kingdom.

- a) To the older men—those who had stood in the court of Solomon and learned leadership under wisdom shaped by experience.

They represent godly counsel—not because of age alone, but because they understood that authority is strengthened by humility and secured by mercy.

The seasoned elders said, *“If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever”* (v. 7).

In essence, they were saying: to rule well, you must serve—this is godly leadership. Authority is not secured by intimidation, but by humility; not by harshness, but by kindness.

Their words really foreshadowed the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself “ *Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant*” (Mark 10:43).

Rehoboam, if you are willing *to abase yourself* , they *will attach* themselves to you. Do good if you want to receive what is good!

b) He turned to were his companions—the young men who grew up with him. Their advice is worldly ,fleshly and foolish.

Their advice was : “*Thus you shall say to the people, “My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s waist!*”

And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!” (vv. 9–11).

To the people, the message was clear —: “*I am stronger, harsher, and more oppressive than my father ever was.*”

By claiming that his little finger outweighed his father’s waist, Rehoboam boasted that even the smallest part of his rule would surpass Solomon’s greatest power.

A whip was a single leather strap used for punishment. A scourge was far more brutal—multiple leather thongs tipped with bone or metal, designed to tear flesh and inflict torture.

Whips punished; scourges tortured. It was with the scourge, not the whip, that they tortured our Lord Jesus, tearing His flesh as He bore our sin.

Do you see the heart and hear the tone of these young men? They seek power, position, and proximity to the king. Their advice is not aimed at

the good of the people, but at asserting dominance and strengthening Rehoboam's authority.

Contrast the Two Counsels:

- The elders: *"Be a servant to these people."*
- The young men: *"Crush them so they'll fear you."*

Their brand of leadership is intimidation, not service—rule by threat, not by trust. The flesh loves the sound of selfish ambition and conceit; it loves to hear, *"Show them who's boss."*

Upon hearing these words, Rehoboam embraced their counsel that matched his pride. I believe he "sought counsel" only to confirm his plan. Pride seeks validation, not correction. Rehoboam had itchy ears !

The three days of reflection end, and folly takes the throne.

2) CONCEIT INFLATED (1 KINGS 12:8–15)

The tragedy is not that Rehoboam lacked counsel—it is that he preferred counsel that pleased his flesh and pride over counsel that honored God. Following the advice of the young men, he answered the people harshly, employing the exact words of his foolish friends:

I will add to your yoke; forget the whips, I will chastise you with scourges!" "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's waist."

Rehoboam mistook force for strength and harshness for authority. Rehoboam's brand of leadership soon bore its bitter fruit: a divided kingdom and a legacy of sorrow.

His name meant " may the people increase " and expositors says , *" He was named for increase ; but will be remembered for division."*

Rehoboam's failure exposes four things pride always demonstrates.

1) Pride Refuses to Listen to God

God promises guidance to those who trust Him rather than themselves.

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“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” — Proverbs 3:5–6

“Whoever trusts in his own heart is a fool, but he who walks wisely will be delivered.” — Proverbs 28:26

Rehoboam's failure was not ignorance of God's law, but independence from it. Scripture states plainly:

“When Rehoboam had established the kingdom and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD...” — 2 Chronicles 12:1 (NKJV)

2) Pride Distorts Self-Perception

Pride convinces a man that his perspective is sufficient, his instincts reliable, and his conclusions unquestionable. Once this mindset settles in, correction feels unnecessary—even offensive. Pride relabels self-confidence as wisdom.

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.”— Proverbs 12:15 (NKJV)

Wisdom requires listening, and listening requires humility. When a man is convinced, he is already right, discernment begins to die.

A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel (Proverb 1:5)

“In the multitude of counselors there is safety.”— Proverbs 11:14 (NKJV)

3) Pride Corrupts Power

Power without wisdom quickly degenerates into domination, oppression, and control. Rehoboam's heart had already settled the matter: *"I will not bend; I will rule by fear."*

He ruled with a heavy hand. His reign proved harsher than his father Solomon's, and instead of correcting Solomon's failures, he intensified them.

The idolatry Solomon tolerated, Rehoboam institutionalized. The gods his father permitted, he embraced and entrenched (2 Chronicles 12:1).

Pride marks moral collapse.

"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts... blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man." — Mark 7:21–23 (NKJV)

Pride does not merely mislead a man—it defiles him.

4) Pride's Consequences Are Never Private

Pride-driven decisions always ripple outward, damaging those we are called to lead, shepherd, and love.

Rehoboam stands as a sober warning: when a man closes his ears to godly counsel, he opens the door to ruin—personally, spiritually, and publicly.

If the voices we heed only agree with us and applaud our flesh rather than confront our heart, they may be leading us away from God, not toward Him.

3) CONSEQUENCES INCURRED (1 KINGS 12:16–24)

When Rehoboam refused to listen, Israel responded decisively:

“What share have we in David? ... Now, see to your own house, O David!” (1 Kings 12:16, NKJV)

In a matter of days, ten tribes were lost. From that moment, Scripture speaks of two kingdoms—Israel in the north under Jeroboam, and Judah in the south under Rehoboam. What began in pride ended in lasting division.

This division was not accidental. God had already declared, through the prophet Ahijah, that the kingdom would be torn from Solomon’s house because of Solomon’s idolatry.

The judgment was delayed, not cancelled. Rehoboam’s proud response did not create the judgment—it exposed his heart and became the means by which God carried out what He had already decreed.

As Scripture warns: *“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”* (Galatians 6:7). Both what Solomon and Rehoboam sowed is being reaped.

Still unwilling to yield, Rehoboam tried to undo the consequences of his pride with force. He assembled 180,000 men to reclaim the kingdom by the sword. But God intervened:

“Thus says the LORD: You shall not go up nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel... for this thing is from Me.”
(1 Kings 12:22–24)

That statement—*“this thing is from Me”*—is staggering.

God would not permit bloodshed between the tribes, nor would He allow Rehoboam’s sword to overturn His righteous judgment.

The Lord restrained further disaster while allowing the division to stand. Judgment was fulfilled exactly as promised, but mercy prevented civil war.

Only then did Rehoboam listen—not because his heart had changed, but because God had spoken.

God holds the hearts of kings and turns them as He wills. Rehoboam's pride fractured the kingdom, but God remained sovereign over the outcome.

Conclusion:

Two Voices — One Throne

There were two voices in Rehoboam's life—but only one throne in his heart.

He heard wise counsel, yet he would not bow. And in refusing wisdom, he lost far more than a kingdom—he lost peace, unity, and blessing.

Scripture reminds us that wisdom is not merely information; it is submission. God's Word does not ask to be consulted—it calls to be obeyed.

And so, the question presses upon every heart: Who reigns on the throne within you?

Pride promises strength but delivers bondage. The fear of man offers approval but produces slavery.

Christ alone calls us to surrender—and gives rest in return.
Rehoboam ruled by threat.
Christ rules by grace.

Rehoboam said, *“I will add to your yoke.”* But Christ says, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest... For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* (Matthew 11:28–30)

Rehoboam multiplied burdens. Christ bore them Himself.

Those who despise wisdom must learn by consequences. But those who bow to Christ receive rest, guidance, and transforming grace.

Therefore, *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart... and do not be wise in your own eyes.”*

Bow gladly to the King who never misuses His power—our Lord Jesus Christ.