

## THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

### The Books Of The Chronicles: God's Preservation Of His Davidic And Levitical Covenants

#### XXV. Responding To The Stress Of An Upended Life

(2 Chronicles 12:1-16)

Introduction: (To show the need . . . )

The lives of millions of people worldwide have been upended by the pandemic, producing a lot of stress:

(1) Chris Powell's piece, "Putting a price on lives" (Republican-American, April 17, 2020, p. 12A) observed, "(T)he national lockdown . . . is costing or damaging lives, increasing the number of suicides, eliminating jobs, ruining households, bankrupting businesses and vaporizing retirement savings . . . unemployment is approaching a third of the labor force, millions of people suddenly have become destitute and are queuing for charity at food banks."

(2) This vast and immense livelihood problem coupled with the pandemic quarantine itself is taking a toll on family life: "Behavioral health experts" report "a 20% increase in domestic violence in some parts of" Connecticut, what also occurred "in Spain, France and China . . . where domestic violence increased as much as 30% with stay-at-home orders." (Brigitte Ruthman, "Experts see a 20% increase in violence at home," Ibid., April 9, 2020, p. 1A)

(3) The stress tends to build on itself, too: Mark Price's story, "To Sleep . . . Perchance To Experience A Bad Dream" (Ibid., April 14, 2020, p. 1B) told how "pandemic dreams" by "understandably frightened" people are "keeping stressed out Americans up at night," and that "is worrisome to health experts because lack of sleep makes us more vulnerable to illnesses, including the coronavirus."

Need: *So we ask, "How does God want us to handle the stress of seeing our lives upended by the pandemic?!"*

- I. **When Rehoboam ceased heeding Scripture, God let his way of life be stressfully upended, 2 Chr. 12:1-4:**
  - A. We recall from a former message that Rehoboam began to rule uprightly, so God blessed him, 2 Chron. 11:17:
    1. Rehoboam fortified 15 cities mainly southwest of Jerusalem to protect his reign in Judah against an invasion from Egypt, 2 Chronicles 11:5-12; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to 2 Chronicles 11:5-12.
    2. He then placed his sons as officials in these cities, solidifying his power, Ibid., fn. to 2 Chronicles 11:23.
    3. God led priests and Levites from the Northern Kingdom of Israel to relocate in Judah, and other godly folk from Israel traveled south to worship the Lord in Jerusalem, strengthening Rehoboam, 2 Chron. 11:13-17.
  - B. Yet, when Rehoboam and Judah "forsook" (*'azav*, Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 1394; B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 736-737) God's Law (2 Chron. 12:1), The Lord let their way of life be stressfully upended:
    1. God let Pharaoh with many of his mercenaries defeat all of Rehoboam's 15 fortified cities, 2 Chr. 12:2-4.
    2. Rehoboam's sons also fled from those defeated cities to Jerusalem for protection, 2 Chronicles 12:5b.
    3. Thus, Rehoboam's entire effort to strengthen himself against Egypt was completely, stressfully upended!
- II. **God's prophet then explained to Rehoboam and his sons that their "forsaking" (*'azav*, Ibid. Kittel, p. 1395; Ibid., B. D. B.) the Lord had led to His "forsaking" (*'azab* again) them to Pharaoh, 2 Chron. 12:5.**
- III. **Rehoboam and his sons then humbled themselves at this message, saying God was righteous, 2 Chr. 12:6.**
- IV. **However, in 2 Chronicles 7:14, God had said He wanted His wayward people NOT ONLY to HUMBLE themselves before Him, BUT ALSO to FELLOWSHIP with Him before He fully restored their blessings!**
- V. **God thus PARTLY preserved Rehoboam by causing Pharaoh to withdraw from Jerusalem without destroying the city, but He let Pharaoh seize all of Rehoboam's gold, 2 Chron. 12:7, 9. God's INTENT was to teach Rehoboam and his sons to serve HIM versus PHARAOH, to go BEYOND mere humility to SEEK FELLOWSHIP with the LORD for a COMPLETE restoration of God's blessings, 2 Chron. 12:8.**
- VI. **Sadly, Rehoboam never sought God's fellowship (2 Chron. 12:14), so he lived the rest of his life with the Lord's partial blessing as illustrated in his experience with the decorative shields, 2 Chronicles 12:9-11:**
  - A. Rehoboam had inherited lavish gold shields that his father Solomon had hung up in his palace, but Pharaoh Shishak took those and all of the gold left in Rehoboam's palace and in the Lord's temple, 2 Chronicles 12:9.
  - B. Since Rehoboam failed to fellowship with God, he was left with a lesser blessing of shields, 2 Chr. 12:10-11:
    1. In place of his former gold shields, Rehoboam made less-valuable bronze ones, 2 Chronicles 12:10a.
    2. Instead of permanently hanging these shields on his walls, Rehoboam kept them under guard, v. 10b.
    3. Only when Rehoboam entered the temple of the Lord did he have the bronze shields brought out by the guards, but after he returned, the bronze shields were put back in the guard chamber, 2 Chronicles 12:11.
- VII. **After Pharaoh's withdrawal, Rehoboam again strengthened himself (2 Chron. 12:12-13), but his failure to seek fellowship with the Lord kept him from enjoying a return to God's full blessing, 2 Chron. 12:14.**

***Lesson:*** *When Rehoboam forsook the Lord, God let his life be stressfully upended. When Rehoboam responded to the stress by humbling himself before the Lord, God partially blessed him to teach him to seek His fellowship for a full restoration to his former blessing. Rehoboam failed to seek God's fellowship, so God left him partly blessed.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (2) Since we learned in our Easter message that God has allowed the current pandemic since the lost world and many professing Christians disobey Him, (a) may we humbly confess to God any sin we have, 1 John 1:9. (b) Then, may we go further and fellowship with the Lord, relying on the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16) for the power to heed Scripture and enjoy God's full blessing, Jn. 14:21-23!*

***Conclusion:*** (To illustrate the message . . . )

Since enjoying God's fellowship and full blessing comes by heeding His Word, we view the Scriptures that address each issue of concern in our introduction that we might heed them for the Lord's full blessing (as follows):

(1) As for the loss of a job, income or a business due to the pandemic, (a) James 4:13-15 claims that even under normal business conditions, none of us knows what will occur tomorrow, and our earthly lives are so short anyway that we *should* be saying, "If the Lord will, we shall live and do this, or that," James 4:15. (b) In addition, Luke 12:24 claims God feeds the ravens that Job 38:41 reveals are often neglected by their parents in their youth so that the very survival of the raven since the creation of the world testifies to God's many providential interventions in that species' behalf! Accordingly, though we may need livelihood help from parties like the government, banks, businesses or medical facilities, but we instead face bottlenecks in obtaining emergency loans, unemployment checks, goods or medical care, since God for 6,000 years has continually intervened to keep the raven species thriving amid the inherent incompetence of parent ravens, He will address our needs even amid the inadequacies of institutions we normally expect to be of help! [God's use of ravens to feed Elijah in a famine is also encouraging! In 1 Kings 17:2-6, God ordered ravens that often neglect their own young to bring Elijah bread (carbohydrates) and meat (protein) each morning and the same diet each evening! God can thus intervene to help us in this crisis!] (c) Also, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 teaches we should work independently of others to make a living to avoid being in financial need! (d) In working on the job the Lord provides us, He will reward us according to our workmanship, Psalm 61:11-12.

(2) As for the stress on family relationships in the home due to the pandemic and its quarantine, Galatians 5:16 claims that if we rely on the Holy Spirit in our Christian walk, we will produce the fruit of the Spirit in the form of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, Galatians 5:22-23 ESV. We will thus also not exhibit the works of the sinful nature that produce problems in family relationships, those works being sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like that, Galatians 5:19-21a ESV.

(3) As for sleeplessness due to stress over the pandemic, (a) David in Psalm 4:8 ESV wrote, "In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." Fear of dying, of a loss of a job or of an inability to pay an outstanding loan -- each such concern we must leave with God that He might handle it. He is the only One who always protects us from unseen calamity even in "normal" times anyway, so we might as well lie down and go to sleep in the pandemic!

(b) Also, regarding our fears, Philippians 4:6-7 calls us to be anxious for nothing, but to let our requests be made unto God that the peace of God might guard our hearts and minds in Christ from anxiety. Then, Philippians 4:8-9 directs us to think on righteous and edifying things and to practice in our lives what Paul has exemplified and taught us so that the God of peace might "be with" us. [The verb "be" (*einai*) together with the preposition "with" (*meta*) with the genitive case (as here, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 690) means "in someone's company" (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 509-511). Paul indicated that heeding his example and words in our life will result in the edifying presence of the Lord in our daily experience [much as is taught in John 14:21-23!]

(4) Some may ask if the fallout from the pandemic might ruin our nation's or the world's economy, sinking us financially and ruining society. In response, we note how Daniel who had been taken captive from Judah by Babylon at the age of sixteen and lived in captivity into his eighties, faced threats from lions in a lion's den, foreign kings with life-and-death power and powerful people who were jealous of him and the threat of death in war during the switch from the empire of Babylon to the empire of Persia. All during this time, he enjoyed God's livelihood provisions and mental health! (F. B. Minirth, You Can Measure Your Mental Health, 1980, p. 3, 7, 14) Why? "Daniel was a man of God's Word. He greatly valued 'the law of his God,'" Ibid., p. 14, citing Daniel 6:1-5. Psychological tests have shown that believers who spend time daily in Scripture "show no significant pathology," no notable mental problems, Ibid.

**May we trust in Christ for salvation. May we then fellowship with God in accord with His Word for great personal blessing without being stressed regardless of the pandemic crisis.**