

## The High Cost of Cleverness

### Scripture: I Kings 11:37-38

In Jim Cymbala's book entitled: **Fresh Faith**, he has a chapter called, **The High Cost of Cleverness**.

In my personal time with God last week, I was reading this and felt led of God to talk to you about what Jim wrote about.

Please listen carefully and try to focus on this truth.

For many trusting God completely can at times be pretty challenging and unnerving.

Sometimes we can be accused of going overboard with all that "spiritual stuff."

Even within church circles today seeking direction from God goes against the modern mind's reliance on self.

We just want to rely on what we can do ourselves rather than trust or have faith in a God that we are sure got the message.

Our culture teaches us to take charge of our lives and call our own shots.

In sharp contrast to the open, inquiring heart of David, the Bible tells about another king less than a hundred years later who had every chance to be as great as David – until he decided to do what seemed smart and clever to his own mind instead of what God had said.

This man followed King Solomon, David's son and this man's name was Jeroboam.

Jeroboam was probably shocked and amazed by him becoming King after Solomon considering that he was not in the royal bloodline to become a King.

But God sent to him a prophet by the name of Ahaijah.

Get this picture with me:

- The prophet walked up to Jeroboam and took off his outer garment – ripped it into twelve pieces.
- He gave ten pieces to Jeroboam
- And he told him that God was going to judge Solomon for what he had done and would tear the nation of Israel apart.
- And amazingly, Jeroboam would end up being the king of ten of twelve tribes in Israel.

But God gave him a promise in I Kings 11:37-38 where it says, ***“As for you, I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. If you do whatever I command you and walk in my ways and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my***

*statutes and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you.”*

Can you imagine how you would have felt if you were walking out in the field and all of a sudden this man comes up and does this strange thing and tells you that you are going to be the next king of Israel?

I can see Jeroboam with his mouth hanging wide open.

Out of nowhere, he was selected as God’s sovereign choice, much like David was chosen to be King.

- This is what he received.
- Control of a nation.
- An ongoing dynasty
- The Promise of God’s abiding presence

Now let me drift ahead many years until we find that Jeroboam has totally drifted away from God.

The King and his wife are in a family crisis.

There little boy has become seriously ill and the worried parents are fearing for his life.

Jeroboam is beside himself trying to figure out what to do and then he remembers the old prophet who originally had come to him to tell him that he would become King of Israel.

But Jeroboam is no fool! He knows his relationship with God is not right.

He tells his wife to get in touch with the old prophet, but knows that his lifestyle had taken him far away from being godly.

So Jeroboam tells his wife to disguise herself when she goes to see the old prophet.

Ahijah, the old prophet still has a close relationship with God, although he had gone blind.

Even in his blindness, Ahijah recognizes immediately the King wife and gives her a shocking prophecy that Jeroboam had blatantly disobeyed God and set up idols and God said, *“You have done more evil than all who lived before you ...”*

He told Mrs. Jeroboam that there son would die and Israel would be stricken and scattered *“because of the sins Jeroboam had committed.”*

What a stinging rebuke!

We read this kind of story, and we can’t help wondering:

How in the world did this happen!

What do you have to do to go from being chosen by God as the next King ... to the same prophet now telling you that you’re cooked meat – headed for the garbage pail of

history, with no hope of salvaging your kingdom or even your life?

God was saying, ***“Jeroboam, it’s all over. You have provoked my anger. You are now rejected as king. In fact, I’m going to punish your whole nation for what you got them to go along with.”***

So in capsule form, Jeroboam had moved from his faith in God to becoming too smart and too clever.

### **What got him into trouble?**

**Read with me 8 verses that explains it:**

***“Jeroboam thought to himself, ‘The Kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam, king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam.***

***After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, “It’s too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt. One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin; the people went as far as Dan to worship the one there.” I Kings 12:26-30***

The tragedy began – look at it in verse 26 when Jeroboam ***“thought to himself”*** and forgot about God and His word of promise.

The tragedy lurks in those four words, ***“Jeroboam thought to himself.”***

This is where his whole downfall began with an attempt to be clever.

Instead of trusting God, he begins to strategize – he reasons how he can help the situation.

And God puts this story of Jeroboam as a flashing red light to us.

It’s a warning. It’s a Stop what you’re doing and pay attention to God.

It fairly shouts that when unbelief gets into a leader, or anyone else for that matter, it leads to the first bad decision, which leads to the second, which leads to the third, until the momentum builds out of control.

### **What makes this thing so bad?**

■ Using cleverness Jeroboam

And God had said to Jeroboam out in the field through the prophet, ***“If you do whatever I command you and walk in my ways and do what is right in my eyes ..., I will be with you.”***

But Jeroboam opted to make up his own game plan, and at the end God thundered against him with words and

actions so devastating that they make us shudder to read them.

### **But what did Jeroboam do that was so wrong?**

- Trusting God to build the kingdom as he had promised probably seemed too simple.
- So Jeroboam decided to improvise to secure his position of leadership.
- This was Jeroboam's first mistake, not believing in the promise of God and taking things into his own hands.
- But who can be wiser than God.

### **Spiritual Application:**

#### **So how do we apply this story to our lives?**

#### **What does this all have to do with how we have a relationship with God?**

We must remember first of all that when God states a direction for us, we cannot on our own decide to go another direction, no matter how wise it might seem to us.

Let me give you some examples from Jim Cymbala book:

“As a pastor I sometimes see men in our congregation who are working two or three jobs in order to get ahead financially. They are going to expand their business, make money for a rainy day, or buy a rental property

here to a little side business there, and their assets will grow even faster. Yes, it means missing church on Sunday and missing time with their kids, but they use the old saying, “Mama didn't raise no fool, you know.” In a little while, they tell me, their schedule will lighten up so they can give more attention to the Word and prayer, their service for the Lord, their marriage, their child-raising responsibilities ...soon, but not yet. At the moment, they have to virtually kill themselves for the almighty dollar.”

These men are sure they can improve on God's formula: *“Seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” Matthew 6:33*

Jeroboam must have felt so smart putting those idols up in Dan and Bethel – Remember now these two cities were in his territory.

He was telling his people he was saving them that long and hard trip to Jerusalem.

But in reality it became a perversion/ a sick substitution of the true worship of God.

At the heart of “Jeroboam's religion” is doing anything to keep the crowd.

Folks, I'm not here to compromise God's Word to keep the crowd.

I'm convinced today that many people do not stay at the PCN because we preach the truth straight and in the heart of holiness.

You see – today people don't want to be held accountable to the life of Holiness unto the Lord.

Jim Cymbala says, “In the church today, we are still busy inventing new forms of religion as Jeroboam did. The new models are just as logical and user-friendly.”

In other words, we have to do anything to make it easier and more attractive to the people.

### **Doing anything to help Number #1.**

No attendance numbers can hide the fact that our new kind of Christianity is foreign to the Bible and grievous to the Holy Spirit.

All over America, churchgoers chafe at a Sunday morning service that runs an hour and ten minutes, but have no problem with a three-hour football or baseball game on television.

So where do we find such mentality in the New Testament?

Jim Cymbala - “I am convinced that in many places today, Jeroboam religion has become so institutionalized

that even many in leadership have no clue as to what a true, Spirit filled church would look like.”

You see - when we begin not to believe in God and talk to ourselves we find ourselves in a pretty tough situations.

If Jeroboam had only prayed to God and ask God to help him in his weakness or frustration, I am sure God would have intervened and helped him.

If only he would have prayed, “Oh God, I didn't ask to be king, but I know you put me here. The way it looks to me, I could lose everything if my people kept treakking down to Jerusalem. But you said you would be with me and establish my dynasty. So tell me what to do.”

Jeroboam didn't do this!

Instead he talked to himself.

As I read this chapter I began to do an personal evaluation of my own spiritual walk with God.

I asked myself the question, “Have I been talking to myself?”

Now understand this – If I am talking to myself, I'm not talking to anyone very smart, because my outlook is too limited.

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But if I'm talking to God then I'm talking to the Smartest of the Smartest.

God knows everything!

He knows how to work out circumstances for my good.

He knows how to rescue me from situations where I feel doomed.

He know how to give wisdom for leadership when I don't know which way to turn.

The most important thing in my life right now is to be completely obedient to Him in everything He leads me to do.

Friend, do you feel that way?

Have you come to the conclusion that if it was left up to you – you would mess it up?

You see – when we begin to talk to ourselves, we loose touch with God and begin to reason and the Age of Reason got humanity in trouble and still gets it in trouble.

If all of us would be sensitive to this and seek God to follow Him day by day it would do some remarkable things to us and our church.

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**Another problem Jeroboam had was he turned to some advisors.**

**It says in verse 28 “After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves.”**

### **Spiritual Application:**

Friend, listen to me, everyone of us can find some old friends who will listen to our story and tell us what we want to hear.

Some of these friends will pat us on the back.

They agree with us.

But a true – spiritual man of God will tell you the truth.

### **Illustration:**

This past week I was talking to a man who attended another church.

He was voicing his criticism and wasn't happy in his spiritual life.

I could have told him what he wanted to hear, but instead I ask him the question, “Are you involved in any ministry in your local church?”

And he said, “No!”

And my response to him was, “If you will pray and seek God and find your area of ministry in your local church, you will find peace and joy in your spiritual life.”

**Listen people this is not a story of embezzlement, or some kind of immorality, or smoking some illegal drug.**

**This is a story about simply drifting away from God and His Word.**

Yes, I’m aware of what God said – but in the present situation, I really feel the need to do such and such.

Instead of focusing on the faithfulness of God, we focus on what the circumstances seem to dictate.

**Listen friend, If God is for you, and He is, then it doesn’t matter how many demons in hell are trying to come against you or me.**

**If God is for you, it doesn’t matter what your opponents whisper in the ears of people.**

**Unbelief has a devious way of envisioning negative things.**

**When you’re walking in faith, you get out of the bed in the morning saying, “Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Psalm 23:6**

**It’s claiming that old hymn of the church Living by Faith in Jesus above.**

- 1) I care not today what the morrow may bring,  
If shadow or sunshine or rain.  
The Lord, I know, ruleth over everything,  
And all of my worry is vain.
- 2) Tho’ tempests may blow and storm clouds arise,  
Obscuring the brightness of life,  
I’m never alarmed at the overcast skies;  
The Master looks on at the strife.
- 3) I know that He will safely carry me thro’,  
No matter what evils betide.  
Why should I then care, tho’ the tempest may blow  
If Jesus walks close to my side?
- 4) Our Lord will return to this earth some sweet day;  
Our troubles will then all be o’er.  
The Master so gently will lead us away,  
Beyond that blest heavenly shore.

Cho:

Living by faith in Jesus above  
Trusting confiding in His great love;  
Safe from all harm  
In His sheltering arm.  
I’m living by faith and feel no alarm.

## Learning to Listen to the Voice of Faith

What we have to do is listen to the voice of Faith!

Over a period of time Jeroboam went from unbelief to fatalism.

Unbelief paints a picture that is very bleak.

You might feel this morning that you're not going to make it.

Jeroboam felt that way when he said, *"They're going to kill me."*

You might feel that something in your life is going to turn out terrible.

You might feel that the future not only is bleak, but also that it is going to come crashing down on you.

Listen very carefully; God is a God of promises.

God said *"I will never leave us nor forsake you."*

And with that promise, He that began a good work in you and me will not stop now.

We need to declare war on unbelief and cleverness.

Bring your problem to God and know and believe that God alone can fix whatever is broken in your spiritual life.

Go to the Word of God and find where the Holy Spirit plants in you the seeds of "Fresh Faith" that will blossom as you wait on the Lord.

Don't give up asking, seeking, knocking – no matter what pressure you feel you are facing.

Jesus said in Luke 18:7-8

*"Will not God bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? I tell you, He will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"*

### Conclusion:

**What have you decided in your life that you could change and you know it's not what God would want?**