

Bitter Fruit of Disobedience

by Chuck Smith

The sermon emphasizes the dire consequences of disobedience to God's word, illustrated through the historical account of Judah's downfall.

Duration: 28:48

Scripture: Numbers 11:4, Jeremiah 42:6

Topics: "Disobedience And Consequences", "Obedience To God"

Description

This sermon focuses on the story from Jeremiah 42, where a small remnant of people, despite promising to obey God's word, choose to go against His warning and head to Egypt for safety, facing the consequences of their disobedience. It highlights the dangers of selective memory regarding sin, the allure of returning to a life of fleshly desires, and the importance of not only hearing but obeying God's word to avoid destruction and bondage.

Transcript

Let's turn now in our Bibles to Psalm 95 for our scripture reading. Psalm 95. I'll read the first and the odd-numbered verses.

Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the reading of the even-numbered verses. Let us stand to read the Word of God. O come and let us sing unto the Lord.

Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and make a joyful noise unto him with songs. For the Lord is a great God and a great King above all gods.

In his hand are the deep places of the earth. The strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his.

He made it and his hands formed the dry land. Come let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker.

For he is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. Today if you will hear his voice. Harden not your heart as in the provocation and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness.

When your fathers tempted me proved me and saw my work. Forty years long I was grieved with this generation and said it is a people that do err in their heart and they have not known my ways. Unto whom I swore in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

Let's pray. Father we pray that our hearts will ever be pliable. That our hearts will ever be open to the instruction of your word.

Lord we do pray that even today as we again look at the nation of Judah and their destruction. Realizing Lord that had they only obeyed they could have been blessed. But chose to go their own way and suffered the consequences.

So Lord may we today choose to obey. To follow your way. To do what is right in your sight.

To bring glory and honor Lord unto you. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

You may be seated. Tonight we'll be studying Jeremiah 40 through 42. As Pastor Skip is leading us through the study of the book of Jeremiah.

Interesting chapters that deal with the fall of Jerusalem and the events that followed the fall of Jerusalem. This morning we'd like to draw your attention to the 42nd chapter. It deals with the people that are left.

A small, small group. When the Babylonians had conquered Jerusalem killing thousands of people and those that survived the siege were taken as captives back to Babylon. They did leave a few people there in the land.

They made a man by the name of Genneliah the governor. But the governor Genneliah was assassinated and thus the people that were left felt that once again they would surely experience the wrath of the Babylonians because the man who assassinated or the men 10 of them who assassinated Genneliah also killed the Babylonian garrison. The small garrison that was left there to help keep order in the land.

So the people gathered together and they were getting ready to go to Egypt for safety. They called for Jeremiah to have Jeremiah pray and get direction from the Lord promising that whatever the Lord would say they would do it. Jeremiah began his prophetic ministry to the nation of Judah in the year 626 BC.

This is now the year 586 BC. He has been prophesying for some 40 years. During this time he had been warning the people over and over again of the desolation, the destruction that would come if they would not obey the commands of the Lord.

He would give them the word of the Lord but they would turn away from it and they would listen to the false prophets. But one by one the prophecies of Jeremiah proved to be true. The things that he said would happen did happen.

And so now after 40 years these people ready to go to Egypt call for Jeremiah that he might tell them the word of the Lord to pray and to seek the mind of God. I see in this book of Jeremiah the faithfulness of God. Even though the people weren't listening, God was still speaking.

That shows me the grace of God to continue to warn them, to continue to speak to them. If I were God I would have quit talking to them a long time ago. But God was so faithful.

And here they are 40 years later not listening to God but God is still speaking. Over and over Jeremiah had told the people what God said they should do in order to escape destruction and escape with their lives. But over and over the people did not believe Jeremiah.

They did their own thing. They continued in their downward plunge until the nation was destroyed. The city of Jerusalem destroyed and burned just like Jeremiah said it would.

Jeremiah said that the Babylonians were going to come and make war against them. The false prophets were saying the Babylonians will never come. You don't have to listen to Jeremiah.

But the Babylonians did come and made war against them. Jeremiah said the Babylonians are going to conquer the city of Jerusalem. Your best action would be to make a treaty, to surrender, to yield to them and you can spare the city.

You can spare your lives. But the false prophets were saying we will destroy Babylon. They can't take the city.

But the Babylonians did take the city, killed so many of the people, destroyed and burned the city. Jeremiah said don't trust in the Egyptians to deliver you from the Babylonians. When it gets really tough the Egyptians will desert you.

They'll go back to Egypt. The false prophets were saying in the Egyptians is our salvation. They will deliver us from the Babylonians.

When the battle got tough the Egyptians deserted and went back to Egypt and the Babylonians then conquered the city of Jerusalem just like Jeremiah had said. Over and over again the words of Jeremiah proved to be true. Had they listened to Jeremiah their history would have been a different story.

But they went their own way. Now here again most of the people are gone. They either have been killed or taken as captives to Babylon.

This small remnant fearful because of the insurrection against Babylon in the assassination of the governor that was established by Nebuchadnezzar they gathered together and they have purposed to go down to Egypt to find safety and preservation there. But more or less just to cover their bases they called Jeremiah in and they said Jeremiah we want you to pray for us and find out what God is saying to us at this time. I'm sure that this must have pleased Jeremiah.

They're finally willing to listen to what God has to say and I'm certain that this change of attitude was something that really encouraged Jeremiah after 40 years of the people not wanting to hear not paying any attention. Now at least they're asking that he would pray. They went further than that they said whatsoever the Lord tells you we will do it.

Made a vow that they would obey the word of the Lord no matter what it was just seek the Lord and bring us God's word we will keep it. So after 10 days Jeremiah came to the people and he said to them this is what God says don't go down to Egypt for safety. Stay here and God will be with you and bless you and God will help you to rebuild the ruins and the king of Babylon will be merciful toward you and he won't retaliate against you for the assassination of Gedaliah.

But he will be favorably inclined toward you so stay here in the land. Don't go down to Egypt. In the next chapter we will read that the people said to Jeremiah God didn't tell you that because they were determined that they were going to go to Egypt and felt that they would find safety there.

In the scriptures Egypt is a type of the slavery that one experiences when they live after the flesh. So Egypt is a type of the life of the flesh that brings a person into bondage even as their fathers were slaves in Egypt. It's interesting how that the flesh seems to have an allurements for us.

Even those who have been delivered from the life of the flesh there oftentimes seems to be that interest of maybe going back to Egypt. Back to the place of the flesh. We do read in Numbers chapter 11 that the mixed multitude that was among them began to lust.

The children of Israel also began to weep saying who's going to give us flesh to eat. We remember the fish which we ate in Egypt freely. The cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, the garlic.

All we have is this manna. And how that they were weeping over the provision that God had made just the bland manna. Oh remember the onions and the garlic and flavorful you know and the melons and cucumbers and oh all the meat we could eat.

In the 14th chapter of Numbers and all the congregation of Israel lifted up their voice and cried all night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron. The whole congregation said unto them would to God that we had died in the land of Egypt rather than to die here in this wilderness.

Why has the Lord brought us into this land to die by the sword? Would it not have been better for us to return to Egypt? They said let's find someone that will lead us back to Egypt. The sensual pleasures of the flesh seem to have a strong draw on the people. Here we are 850 years since their fathers were delivered by God from Egypt.

But now the desire to return to Egypt to that land of the flesh. It's interesting how that we can have selective memory. All they could remember were the onion rings and french fries of Egypt.

They didn't remember the story of the horrible bondage and slavery that their fathers had experienced in Egypt. They were slave laborers. They served under heavy task masters.

They were beaten daily as they were for larger production than what they could actually perform. And so it was a selective memory. Just remembering the good things but sort of forgetting the nights of weeping all night and the sorrow that they had.

The killing of their sons and these things. They seemed to forget that. As they thought only of the sensual pleasures of Egypt.

People often have selective memories concerning the life of sin. They think of the parties, the drinking. They forget the misery of the hangovers.

They think of the excitements of the sexual escapades. But they forget that misery, that turmoil, that confusion when a pregnancy develops and the horrible guilt after the abortion. Here's a group of people.

They're determined to go back to Egypt. Back to that old life. Though God is warning them, do not go back to Egypt.

God told them what would happen if they went back to Egypt. There you will be slain. There you will die.

Don't go back. Wouldn't you think that by this time they would have recognized that Jeremiah was a true prophet of God? Everything that he said would happen has happened. He's been batting a thousand

percent.

And you think well surely they will recognize he is a true prophet of God and they will listen to him as they vowed and promised that they would listen to him. Tell us whatever God says we will obey. Again I'm amazed at the blinding and the stupefying power of sin.

How it blinds you to things that are quite obvious. As God tells us there are things that if you do them they're going to destroy you. They're going to bring you into bondage.

They're going to rob you of things that are worthwhile and precious to you. Somehow people seem to have the misconception that they can go against the Word of God and still be successful. Even the Greek philosophers knew that you couldn't fight against God.

The Greek philosophers had a saying the dice of the gods are loaded. They recognized you can't go against God and hope to win. Saint Peter warned in his second epistle, for if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

If they are again entangled in it and overcome by it they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. Going back into the world of the flesh having received Jesus Christ you're in worse condition than you were even to start with. There will be no deliverance for them out of Egypt.

They'll be slain in Egypt. They'll die in Egypt if they go back. That's God's Word.

It no doubt became very obvious to Jeremiah that they weren't really accepting what he was telling them. He could tell by their reactions that they were determined to go to Egypt even though he was giving them the warnings from God not to go. So Jeremiah said, just be sure of this.

You made a fatal mistake when you sent me to the Lord and said pray to the Lord our God for us and tell us everything. And everything he says we will do it. I have told you today but you still have not obeyed in all that God sent me to tell you.

So now be sure of this. You will die by the sword and the plague in the place where you want to go and settle. In spite of the warning they went to Egypt where they died by the sword and the famine and the plague just like Jeremiah said.

Now as they are there in Egypt and as the Babylonian army comes and they are being slain, would it be right for them to say, God why did you allow this to happen to us? Would that be a right thing? You know it's so often what people do. You disobey the Word of God. You go after the things of the flesh and then when you start to experience the bitter consequences, the bitter fruit of the life of the flesh, you say, oh why would God allow this to happen to me? Well God told you that that's what's going to happen if you give yourself over to the flesh life.

God had warned them what would happen if they went back to Egypt. It would be manifestly wrong for them to then complain to God and say, oh God why did you desert us? Why did you allow this to happen? They were in deliberate willful disobedience to the commands and the Word of God and they are now suffering the bitter fruit of disobedience. The people were much like many people today who go for counsel, who really don't want counsel.

They go in order that they might be affirmed that what they're doing is all right. And if you say, no you can't do that. The Bible says that you shouldn't do that.

Then they'll get angry and they'll say, oh he's a horrible counselor, you know. And they'll start shopping for a counselor until they can find one that says, oh well that's fine, you know, don't worry about it. Sure you can do that and they'll say, oh my what a wonderful counselor.

But then when the consequences come, when God's Word again is proven to be true, then they want to blame God for the calamities that they are going through. Paul the Apostle said, if I seek to please all men, I'm not a servant of Jesus Christ. God's Word is something that we may not always want to hear.

It may go against what I was planning to do. Such was the case with Jeremiah. They said, pray to the Lord for us.

Whatever the Lord says, we'll do it. Jeremiah came back with the Word of the Lord. Oh, God didn't tell you that.

We're going to Egypt. And so they really didn't want to hear what God had to say. They had their minds made up of what they were going to do, and it cost them dearly.

The bitter fruit of disobedience cost them their lives. It's so important not to just hear the Word of God, but to obey the Word of God. May God help us to be obedient listeners to the Word.

Father, we thank you for the fact that you don't give up easily. You were still speaking to these people and still holding out at this late hour, holding out promises of blessings, promises of being with them, helping them. And still Lord, they went their own way to that destruction that you told them would happen if they went their own way.

Lord, help us not to be so foolish as to insist on what we want to do. But Lord, speak to us. Show us what you want us to do.

And may we follow, Lord, your leading. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

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