

Trustworthy
August 13, 2023
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Jeremiah 42:7-22

My grandmother used to have a saying: *“That person is so stubborn they would argue with a road sign!”* How well do you follow directions? If you needed driving directions would you argue with the map? *“It says go this way but I don’t want to go that way!”* *“The GPS shows that route in red but I don’t care, I like that route.”* *“It says ‘lane closed’ but I don’t see any construction!”* Arguing with road signs.

Our youngest grandson Tyson will be two in two months. We’re not yet into the “terrible twos” but we are getting a preview of coming attractions. He has plans. He has opinions. How dare we say there are objects he shouldn’t touch or things he shouldn’t do? Like the old Burger King slogan, he wants to have it HIS way.

When confronted with God’s revealed will in scripture, His people can sometimes be like a toddler going through the terrible twos. That tendency to reject God’s commands began with the *disobedient* two: Adam and Eve.

The point: When we turn to the Creator of the Universe for directions in life, do we trust His commands and obey or do we argue with the map?

The small, struggling remnant of God’s people in Jerusalem living under the thumb of Babylon’s king Nebuchadnezzar were like toddlers in the terrible twos. They had their own opinions and plans that were different than God’s plan.

A little context before the text:

- Jerusalem had fallen to the Babylonians. King Nebuchadnezzar took the best and brightest Judeans to Babylon for indoctrination as slaves (i.e. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) but left a remnant of poor people to serve as farmers and laborers.
- Jeremiah was to be deported to Babylon but God intervened and allowed him to stay in Jerusalem to minister to that poor remnant.
- Nebuchadnezzar had appointed a Judean named Gedaliah as governor.
- Gedaliah was assassinated and some of Judah’s leaders feared payback so they came to Jeremiah with a plan to deal with their fears.

2 ...They said, “Please pray to the Lord your God for us. As you can see, we are only a tiny remnant compared to what we were before. **3** Pray that the Lord your God will show us what to do and where to go.” **4** “All right,” Jeremiah replied. “I will pray to the Lord your God, as you have asked, and I will tell you everything he says. I will hide nothing from you.” **5** Then they said to Jeremiah, “May the Lord your God be a faithful witness against us if we refuse to obey whatever he tells us to do! **6** Whether we like it or not, we will obey the Lord our God to whom

we are sending you with our plea. For if we obey him, everything will turn out well for us.”

- What does your gut tell you about their words in verses five and six?
- Verse three: “Ask God to show us what to do.” Was that their real request? What were they really seeking from God?

7 Ten days later the Lord gave his reply to Jeremiah. **8** So he called for Johanan son of Kareah and the other military leaders, and for all the people, from the least to the greatest. **9** He said to them, “You sent me to the Lord, the God of Israel, with your request, and this is his reply: **10** ‘Stay here in this land. If you do, I will build you up and not tear you down; I will plant you and not uproot you. For I am sorry about all the punishment I have had to bring upon you. **11** Do not fear the king of Babylon anymore,’ says the Lord. ‘For I am with you and will save you and rescue you from his power. **12** I will be merciful to you by making him kind, so he will let you stay here in your land.’

- Verse 10: How was God’s promise conditional? (If/then)
- “God’s blessings come from obedience to His commands. If the people obeyed His commands, He would rebuild and replant them.”ⁱ
- In fairness, their fear that the Babylonians might seek vengeance over Gedaliah’s murder seemed reasonable based on human understanding.
- However, God gave them a specific command (V.11): “*Do not fear the king of Babylon anymore*” and a promise: “*I am with you and will save you and rescue you from his power....I will be merciful...by making him kind.*”
- God was specific about His plan to handle the king of Babylon. If they rejected God’s command what had they forgotten about God?
- To quote Bob the Tomato, Larry the Cucumber, and Junior Asparagus those great theologians from VeggieTales, “*God is bigger than the boogeyman and He’s watching out for you and me.*”ⁱⁱ
- It’s a silly song but theologically correct based on Isaiah chapter 40:

Isaiah 40:12–17 (NLT) — **12** Who else has held the oceans in his hand? Who has measured off the heavens with his fingers? Who else knows the weight of the earth or has weighed the mountains and hills on a scale? **13** Who is able to advise the Spirit of the Lord? Who knows enough to give him advice or teach him? **14** Has the Lord ever needed anyone’s advice? Does he need instruction about what is good? Did someone teach him what is right or show him the path of justice? **15** No, for all the nations of the world are but a drop in the bucket. They are nothing more than dust on the scales. He picks up the whole earth as though it were a grain of sand. **[then verse]** **17** The nations of the world are worth nothing to him. In his eyes they count for less than nothing— mere emptiness and froth.

- Indeed, God IS “bigger than whatever “boogeyman” we fear!
- Isaiah quoted the Lord Himself: **Isaiah 41:10 (ESV)** — **10** fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

- When our “reasonable” human fears arise, we need to remember God’s promises and respond in obedience to what He has revealed in His word.
- As we continue to count the “ifs” and “thens” look at verse 13:

13 “But if you refuse to obey the Lord your God, and if you say, ‘We will not stay here; **14** instead, we will go to Egypt where we will be free from war, the call to arms, and hunger,’ **15** then hear the Lord’s message to the remnant of Judah. This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, the God of Israel, says: ‘If you are determined to go to Egypt and live there, **16** the very war and famine you fear will catch up to you, and you will die there. **17** That is the fate awaiting every one of you who insists on going to live in Egypt. Yes, you will die from war, famine, and disease. None of you will escape the disaster I will bring upon you there.’ **18** “This is what the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, the God of Israel, says: ‘Just as my anger and fury have been poured out on the people of Jerusalem, so they will be poured out on you when you enter Egypt. You will be an object of damnation, horror, cursing, and mockery. And you will never see your homeland again.’

- God’s command and promise were clear. Now His warning was equally clear and equally conditional. *“If you refuse to obey, then you will get the very things you fear. Egypt won’t be your refuge, it will be your graveyard.”*
- In case they were not clear on God’s warning, Jeremiah reinforced it:

19 “Listen, you remnant of Judah. The Lord has told you: ‘Do not go to Egypt!’ Don’t forget this warning I have given you today. **20** For you were not being honest when you sent me to pray to the Lord your God for you. You said, ‘Just tell us what the Lord our God says, and we will do it!’ **21** And today I have told you exactly what he said, but you will not obey the Lord your God any better now than you have in the past. **22** So you can be sure that you will die from war, famine, and disease in Egypt, where you insist on going.”

- Can you guess what happened? Did they go to Egypt? (See Jer. 44:29.)
- How does this incident apply to us? How can we learn from their mistake?
- First, is it wrong to ask God to bless our plans? (See Pr. 16:1&3, Ps. 37:4)
- This wasn’t a matter of trying to discern if it is God’s will that I marry Fred, buy a Corvette, or move to Des Moines. These people were given God’s revealed will. He spelled it out to them with great specificity.
- We also have access to God’s complete revealed will in scripture.
- Why would someone ask for God’s counsel and then ignore it?
- How do our fears get in the way of obedience to God?
- We may think: *“Love my enemies? Pray for those who persecute me? Turn the other cheek? Go the extra mile? If you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! Won’t people just roll all over me? Be salt and light? If I stand for biblical principles what will it cost me?”*
- If fear causes us to disobey God’s clear commands what does that say about what we think about God?

- **Hebrews 13:6 (ESV) — 6** So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?”
- At the end of Ecclesiastes Solomon wrote: “Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” (Eccl. 12:13)
- Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. (Jn. 14:15)
- If we fear God we will obey Him and not let fear keep us from obedience.
- Sometimes disobeying God’s clear commands is not so much about fear versus trust. Let’s circle back to that *disobedient* two: Adam and Eve.
- What were Adam and Eve really saying to God when they disobeyed His one command in the Garden?
- **James 1:14–15 (ESV) — 14** But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. **15** Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.
- To be clear, if we’ve trusted Christ as Savior and Lord disobeying Him won’t cost us our salvation, but just as obedience leads to blessings, disobedience leads to negative consequences. Consider King David.
- Is it wrong to desire things? **Psalms 37:4 (ESV) — 4** Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.
- If we will delight in Him, He will give us desires consistent with His commands.

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Disobedience to God’s revealed will (in scripture) basically boils down to either fear versus trusting God or rebellion versus submission to Him.
- Sometimes we disobey God because we fear men more than God.
- **Proverbs 29:25 (ESV) — 25** The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.
- We said, sometimes when confronted with God’s revealed will, His people can be like a toddler going through the terrible twos.
- *“Don’t distract me with warnings, don’t tell me no. I have my own plan and I just want you to make my plan happen!”* That’s pure rebellion.
- When seeking God’s direction for living we must turn to His revealed will and trust and obey. Here are two verses to help us do just that:
- We need to remember, **Isaiah 55:8–9 (ESV) — 8** For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. **9** For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.
- Then we need to put **Proverbs 3:5–6 (ESV) — 5** Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. **6** In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
- Finally, we need to ask ourselves: When I turn to the Creator of the Universe for directions in my life, do I trust His commands and obey, or do I argue with the map?

ⁱ Explore the Bible Commentary P.113

ⁱⁱ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LK72_--ZsM4