

Explore the Bible: Disobedience, Judgment and Exile

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- *The Explore the Bible Lesson for Aug. 14 focuses on 2 Kings 17:7-20.*

Parenting kids is a fun and exciting experience. When I became a dad, I understood a little more about how God our Father loves us and expects obedience from his children. I also want the same from my children. I expect my children to obey the rules of the house, respect and honor their elders, be responsible for taking the trash out, and keep their rooms as clean and tidy as possible. When disobedience happens, my wife and I step in with loving correction in hopes that behavior changes. Often, patience wears thin, and some tough love needs to take place in the form of discipline.

My experience as a child and now as a parent taught me that disobedience renders consequences, or at least it should. Disobedience, if not dealt with, creates a lifestyle of disobedience.

In the Old Testament, Yahweh instructs the people of Israel not to fall prey to idolatrous worship or judgment would come. The children of Israel disobeyed Yahweh's instruction and became heavily involved in idol worship. These idolatrous sites began to proliferate throughout the land and soon became widely accepted by Israel.

Yahweh demonstrating his grace, provided Israel with prophets to call them back to obedience. Yet time and time again, Israel ignored God's

messages through his prophets. Judgment falls on the people of Israel for their disobedience. The Assyrians invaded and wiped out Israel. Yahweh's judgment has come.

Grace-filled Warning (2 Kings 17:7-13)

Assyria conquered Israel as a judgment for their perpetual sin against Yahweh through their practice of idolatrous worship. The promised land was given to Israel because Yahweh promised to give it to them after liberating them from Egyptian slavery. In Yahweh's covenant with Israel, he was going to be their God, and they were going to be his people. They were to obey all of God's commandments and be a light to other nations. God would protect them and keep them as his people; however, judgment would come if they would sin and disobey Yahweh's covenant.

Although Israel was caught up in a sin cycle of idolatrous worship, Yahweh still showed grace to them by sending prophets who would speak for him. The prophets would call Israel back into a right relationship with Yahweh, pleading for them to repent and to return to the Lord. Time and again, Israel would ignore the Lord's prophets, and their messages would fall on deaf ears as each generation moved further and further away from Yahweh and in adherence to his laws and ordinances.

Rejection and Consequences (2 Kings 17:14-17)

Disobedience to Yahweh became a lifestyle for the people of Israel. Scripture states that they would not listen to any call for repentance. In fact, they became "stiff-necked" people obstinate towards any change. Their hearts were extremely hardened, and any hope for a return to following Yahweh in obedience was nonexistent. It is heartbreaking to see Israel come to a point in their history where they refused and rejected Yahweh after he had been so faithful to them. Israel traded the power and presence of all-mighty Yahweh for some empty, worthless idols.

We might know some friends or family who might express similar sentiments toward God. These individuals seem to reject anything to do with the things of God. They might seem like a lost cause; however, we must continue to love them and minister to them in any way possible.

Removal (2 Kings 17:18-20)

It is hard to lose a home. Angered by Israel's choice to sin against him and worship false idols, Yahweh caused a severe judgment to fall. Although the prophets preached repentance, the people of Israel chose to remain prideful in their sin and were dealt a consequence that caused them to be removed from their homeland. They no longer were people who served and worshipped Yahweh; they were now a people without a homeland, without an identity. Their choice to worship the emptiness of idols left them empty in return. Exiles lose everything. Israel lost their home and the blessing of being in the presence of Yahweh.

Let us consider the price of pride and idolatry. We might not be worshipping graven images, but maybe something else has taken priority in our lives, and we worship and idolize it nonetheless. Let us examine our hearts and look into the things that we have allowed to take priority in our lives. We might need to choose repentance today and return to a place where Yahweh continues to be our priority and obedience to his commands take precedence in our hearts and minds.

Dr. Joe Rangel is the associate dean of the School of Christian Studies and teaches Christian ministry at Wayland Baptist University.