

Spiritual Stubbornness



"13 Again and again the Lord had sent his prophets and seers to warn both Israel and Judah: 'Turn from all your evil ways. Obey my commands and decrees—the entire law that I commanded your ancestors to obey, and that I gave you through my servants the prophets.' 14 But the Israelites would not listen. They were as stubborn as their ancestors who had refused to believe in the Lord their God." 2 Kings 7:13-14 NLT

- Do you consider yourself to be stubborn or just persistent?

The book of 2 Kings is about the consequences of living without God and the painful consequences of spiritual stubbornness. God sent His prophets to warn Israel & Judah of their spiritual indifference and rebellion to God. He repeatedly called them back to Himself. **Israel** lived independently of God & eventually fell to the **Assyrians** as their captives (2 Kings 17). **Judah** had periods when they were devoted to God and prospered. Unfortunately, approximately 140 years later, because they also excluded God from their lives, they fell to the **Babylonians** and became slaves (2 Kings 25). **Israel** never returned from their exile. **Judah** was in exile for only seventy years and returned to rebuild Jerusalem. We were not created to live independently of God. We experience the best of life when God is at the center of our lives. However, spiritual stubbornness hardens hearts and kills hunger for God.

Central Lesson

Spiritual stubbornness hardens hearts and kills hunger for God.

1. **LEADERSHIP** Matters (17:8, 21-23).

"8 They had followed the practices of the pagan nations the Lord had driven from the land ahead of them, as well as the practices the kings of Israel had introduced." 22 ...But Jeroboam drew Israel away from following the Lord and made them commit a great sin. 22 And the people of Israel persisted in all the evil ways of Jeroboam. They did not turn from these sins."

Both the people of Israel and their leaders were guilty of being indifferent and rebellious. Israel's leaders should have been a positive influence on the people. We must not underestimate the importance of being led by Godly leaders and avoiding bad ones.

2. **SIN** was deep and damaging (17:9-10, 14-18).

- They sinned in secret and in public (v. 9).

The Life Application Study Bible explains, "Ruin came upon Israel for both public sins and their secret sins. Not only did they condone wickedness and idolatry in public, but they committed even more sins in private. Secret sins are the ones we don't want others to know about because they are embarrassing or incriminating. Sins done in private are not secret to God, and secret defiance of him is just as damaging as open rebellion." (Note on 17:9).

- They would not listen and stubbornly refused to believe in the Lord (v.14).

The Life Application Study Bible adds, "...God's patience and mercy are beyond our ability to understand. He will pursue us until we either respond to him or, by our own choice and hardness of heart, make ourselves unreachable. Then God's judgment is swift and sure. The only safe course is to turn to God before our stubbornness puts us out of his reach." (Note on 17:13-15).

- They rejected God's decrees and covenant (v. 15).
- They worshipped idols (v. 15).
- They lived like the sinful nations around them (v.15, also v. 8).
- They sacrificed their children in the fires to false gods (v. 17).
- They consulted fortune-tellers and practiced sorcery (v. 17).

The Life Application Study Bible states, "Forms of witchcraft, fortune-telling, and black magic were forbidden by God (Deuteronomy 18:9-14). They were wrong because they sought power and guidance totally apart from God, his law, and his word. Isaiah echoed this law and prophesied of the complete destruction these occult practices would bring to those who participated in them (Isaiah 8:19-22)." (Note on 17:17).

- They angered the Lord (vs. 9, 17-18).

3. **WARNINGS** were sent & God was patient (17:13, 23).

"13 Again and again the Lord had sent his prophets and seers to warn both Israel and Judah: 'Turn from all your evil ways. Obey my commands and decrees—the entire law that I commanded your ancestors to obey, and that I gave you through my servants the prophets.'" 23...just as all his prophets had warned...."

4. Sin is not compatible with **HOLINESS** (17:20, 22-23).

"20... he had banished Israel from his presence." 22 And the people of Israel persisted in all the evil ways of Jeroboam. They did not turn from these sins 23 until the Lord finally swept them away from his presence, just as all his prophets had warned. So Israel was exiled from their land to Assyria, where they remain to this day."

5. **JUDGMENT** eventually comes (17:20, 23, also 5-6).

"20 The Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel. He punished them by handing them over to their attackers until he had banished Israel from his presence." 23 until the Lord finally swept them away from his presence, just as all his prophets had warned. So Israel was exiled from their land to Assyria, where they remain to this day."

"5 Then the king of Assyria invaded the entire land, and for three years he besieged the city of Samaria. 6 Finally, in the ninth year of King Hoshea's reign, Samaria fell, and the people of Israel were exiled to Assyria...."

The Life Application Study Bible adds, "Israel was taken into exile, just as God's prophets had warned. Whatever God predicts will come to pass. This, of course, is good news to those who trust and obey him—they can be confident of his promises; but it is bad news to those who ignore or disobey him. Both the promises and warnings God has given in his Word will surely come true." (Note on 17:23).

Central Lesson

Spiritual stubbornness hardens hearts and kills hunger for God.

► Accept Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ► Attend a small group. ► Read the Bible & journal meaningful verses. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.