

Jeremiah 21

Read Jeremiah 21:1-7: It is amazing that Jeremiah was punished and shamed for talking about Jewish moral failure, idolatry and the resulting punishment...but now he is being consulted as judgement finally comes. Like children, sometimes words are not enough. They need to see the paddle to substantiate the threat of punishment. They were beginning to experience the results of bad decisions personally. Children will yield to discipline when they have *skin in the game*. When we live in sin with impunity, we can live a lie and snap back at those who try to restrain us.

A whip for the horse, A bridle for the donkey, And a rod for the fool's back. Proverbs 26:3

Once our sins catch up to us and we have become vulnerable, the truth tends to come out. We live in a world where people speak a lot of nonsense; because there is no accountability. At this point King Jehoiachin had been taken into captivity with all of the government. Now a puppet king relative (Zedekiah) was in his place. Zedekiah played the part for a while but he tried to break away from paying tribute to Babylon. Evil King Zedekiah is literally begging and saying to Jeremiah: 'please help us. King Zedekiah requests that God would do one of his *wonderful works*.

Jeremiah went from being a hated man to a feared man. Our life is full of seasons. One day we can face a hopeless situation. In a moment, the season has changed. It can take a while to believe it and fully process it.

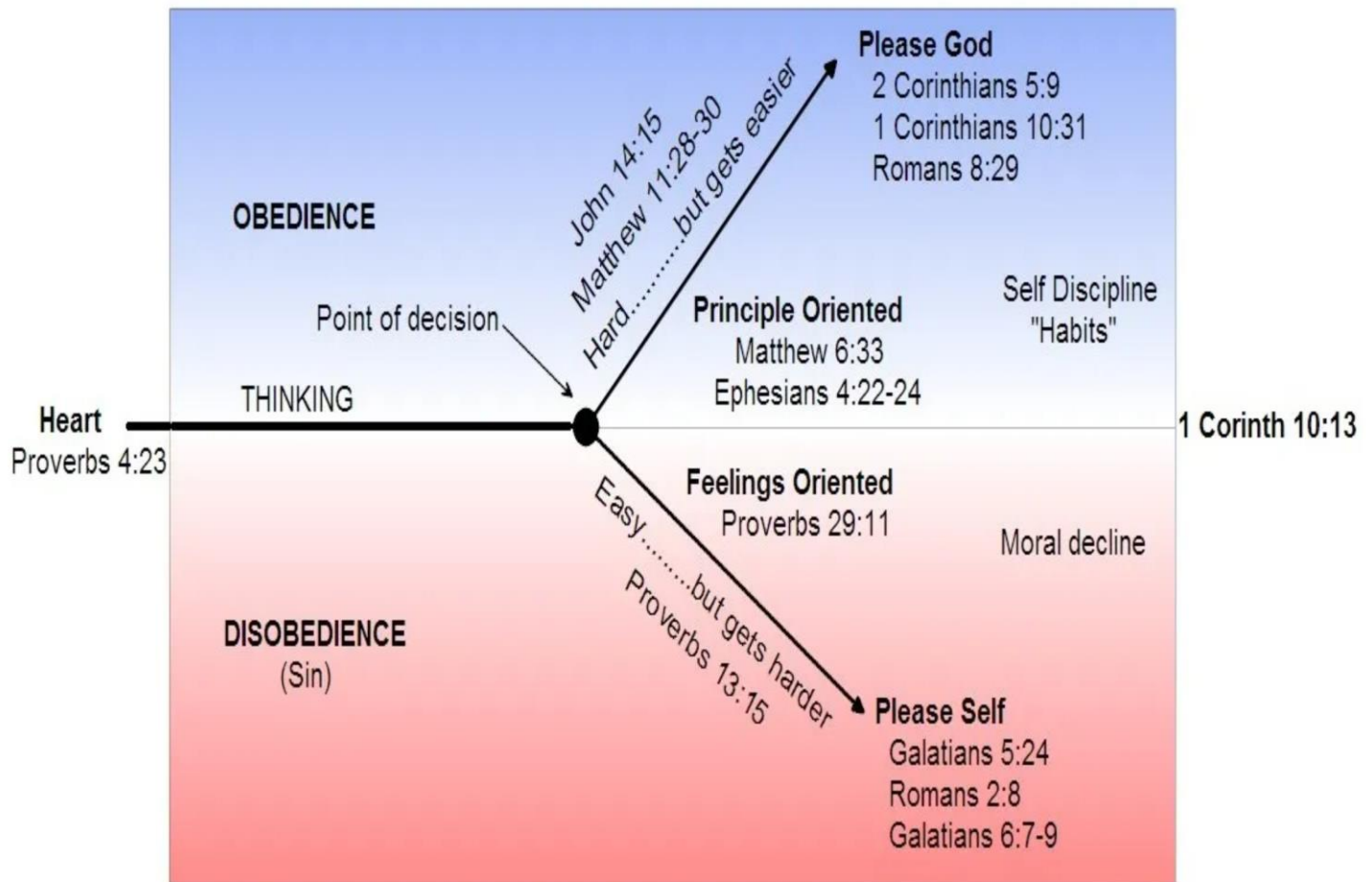
Barbarians at the Gate

The first of three Babylonian sieges and invasions of Jerusalem took place in 587/586 BC. The temple was destroyed and took away King Jehoiachin and the royal family and staff. This all happened before Zedekiah was king. This is where Daniel and his friends were taken to Babylon. The hostages were taken to cities in Babylon to become assimilated in the culture.

God tells Jeremiah to reply to King Zedekiah by assuring him that their defenses will be helpless. Their swords and arrows will be useless. It only makes sense; since they had already lost in the first invasion. Zedekiah became the puppet king to Babylon to keep things going. God himself will assemble the Babylonians in the middle of Jerusalem. Then God will send a deadly disease on all of the people and animals. God will send a famine (all wars cause a lack of food) and death by the sword, and death by disease. God also allowed the neighboring enemy nations to join in the *open season* and hunt Jews.

And the LORD sent against him raiding bands of Chaldeans, bands of Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of the people of Ammon; He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken by His servants the prophets. (2 Kings 24:2-3)

Read Jeremiah 21:8-10: God still allows one last chance for escape. He tells the Jews that they can survive if they comply and go peacefully with the Babylonians and leave the country voluntarily. Those who resisted would die from self-starvation, disease or the sword. God talks about a *fork in the road* leading to either life or death. This is the same kind of thing that Moses talked about long ago. We face *decision-trees* every day. Will I take 3 right turns and one left turn today? Where will that leave me? We are the sum total of our decisions.



“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, (Deuteronomy 30:15)



Read Jeremiah 21:11-14: Jeremiah told the people to go peacefully with the Babylonians. Babylon had already breached the walls and took away the royal family. They gave Jerusalem a chance to just quietly pay tribute. The irony is that all of the starvation and disease was self-imposed. They could have left on their own. Regardless, it is appointed by God to empty the country.

Jeremiah also tells the King to start doing the right thing. Stop making decisions that only benefit him, at the cost of the helpless. When you help the *little man*, it puts you at odds with the wealthy. His confidence in being safe behind his city walls is about to blow up in his face. Everything that the Jews were hiding behind was crumbling. The ongoing resistance only made things worse. Even the beautiful cypress trees and the whole forest around it would be cut or burned down.

King Zedekiah

Zedekiah's predecessor King Jehoiachin had long-since been taken captive. Zedekiah stepped in after that first invasion. The King of Babylon selected him as their puppet king. He was a sinful and evil man.

He rebelled against Babylonian rule and was captured as he escaped from Jerusalem. They killed his sons in front of him right before they cut out his eyes. Meanwhile the temple was burned down, and the whole city was killed or taken captive. You can never successfully go against God.