

Explore the Bible: August 13

Trustworthy • Jeremiah 42:7-22

By Don Schuman



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Option 1 (Jeremiah 42:7-12). The first and best option was for the people to obey the Word of the Lord and remain in Jerusalem. Despite their fear that King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon would exact vengeance for the assassination of his appointed governor, the Lord promised to protect His people.

God's ways are always the best ways. Period.

Option 2 (Jeremiah 42:13-18). The second and worst option was for the people to take matters into their own hands and flee to Egypt with the hope of escaping the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar. People can run from the Lord and His ways, but they cannot hide. He knows where we are.

Moses tried to hide when he fled Egypt, yet the Lord knew where he was and appeared to him in a burning bush. Jonah

tried to hide when he sailed for Tarshish, yet the Lord sent a whale to take Jonah where he needed, rather than wanted, to go.

Ignoring God's ways and running away never go well.

Warned (Jeremiah 42:19-22). The obvious choice was option one. The Lord added dire warnings if they rejected option one. Notice how sincere to the will of God the people sounded in Jeremiah 42:5-6, *Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God (KJV).*

"Whatever the outcome," they claimed, "we will obey the voice of the Lord our God and do all that the Lord tells us to do." Sounded good until they heard the message from the Lord.

If God's ways are always right – and they are – why are God's ways so hard? One reason is because God's way is a narrow way, like a path, whereas the way of the world is broad, according to Jesus in Matthew 7:13-14.

Many choose the broad way; the choice seems easier when plenty of other people choose that way, too.

Another reason God's ways are so hard is because sometimes His ways seem counter intuitive.

The Syrian general Naaman was told by Elisha to dip in the Jordan seven times for healing of his leprosy. He almost refused to get into the river, but his men persuaded him and he was healed.

Joshua marched around the city of Jericho seven times according to God's directions and the wall fell.

Gideon's army was reduced to 300 against well over 100,000. The Apostle Peter asked to walk on the water to Jesus and Jesus told him to come. We can easily think that we know better.

A third reason God's ways are so hard is sin. The sinful heart fails to see the goodness of God

A well-known passage in this book of Jeremiah is Jeremiah 17: 9-10, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings (KJV).*

Deceitful hearts who rejected Jeremiah's message wanted the Lord to line up with *their* will instead of desiring to line up with the *Lord's* will. The sinful heart is self-centered and deceitful. The Lord puts us to tests to prove what is really in our hearts.

A fourth and possibly the greatest reason God's ways are so hard is lack of trust in God's ways. The people did not trust God to protect them from Nebuchadnezzar's wrath. Fear was stronger than what little faith they may have had.

How do we get better at following the Lord's ways? Love the Lord. When we love the Lord, we will trust Him. When Job experienced his monumental attacks from Satan, he said that he would trust the Lord, even to the point of death (Job 13:15).

We may have apprehension at times following God but His love in us casts out any paralyzing fear of following Him (1 John 4:18).

When we love the Lord, we will abhor sin and see His goodness. We will deny self, pride, and fear and follow Him. When we love the Lord, we will follow His narrow way, knowing that He is leading and with us always, even to the end of the age.

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