

It's Not Complicated

God is God; who can understand Him? It is easy to feel overwhelmed with His greatness & majesty and get lost in the unfathomable depths of His complexity. Yet, God is also very simple and we make Him more complicated in ways than He really is. In today's Templates of Truth, we explore one of those simple aspects of God's greatness and what it means to the attitudes & choices of our lives.

Consider the commands & expectations that are outlined in God's Word. For the most part, they are pretty straightforward and easily discernable. We don't have to guess what God wants and desires of us, His Word clearly teaches us what is right and what is wrong. We may not like what God says is wrong because it contradicts what we would rather think, feel and do; but, that doesn't change the holy & righteous quality of God's truth, nor His expectation that we abide by it.

God's basic message to us has always been that He created us, He knows what is best for us, He desires that we honor & serve Him with our lives, and He has told us extensively how we can do that. He has even given us the divine presence & power of His Holy Spirit to help us. He has also told us very clearly what we can expect if we choose to live otherwise. It is not complicated. As early as the Law of Moses, God said, "Obey Me and I will bless you; disobey Me and I will curse you." We struggle with that simple proposal for several reasons.

First, we don't like acknowledging the angry, judgmental side of God. Our perspective of Him is loving, gracious, patient, kind, merciful and forgiving. He is indeed all of those. But if you study Scripture in its entirety, you discover another side of God that, because of His holy & righteous character, cannot and will not tolerate sinful rebellion and disobedience. Secondly, even though the New Testament God operates under grace while the Old Testament God operated under law, we seem to think the God of the New Testament is a different God. Accordingly, we have assumed that the God we relate to today is much more lenient & far less restrictive in His rules. That leads us to the erroneous conclusion that God would never deal with us and our sin in some of the same ways He dealt with Old Testament saints and kings. There is not a lot of fundamental difference, however, between Christians today and the ancient people of God. They knew what God expected, and they consistently lived otherwise. We do the same thing. We are determined to justify the things we want and like regardless of what God's Word teaches to the contrary.

Whether we like it or not, there is a line with God. Eventually, His patience runs out with our persistent sinful disregard and willful disobedience. That happened with Judah. Two stunning statements are made in the closing chapters of II Kings: (1) He *removed them from His sight* (24:3); and, (2) *the Lord would not forgive* them (24:4). We cannot miss the gravity of these statements and the conditions they wrought. The people of God were left as if they had lost their God. We know that God never leaves us nor forsakes us, but when we defiantly continue in

sinful rebellion against Him, He may so remove Himself from our defiance that we exist for a time as if we never had Him. That is a grave place for a child of God to be! But God may allow us to dwell in the darkness & isolation of that place for a season as a way of compelling us back to Him.

We often dismiss our hardships, sufferings and losses as just the realities of life. Few of us ever associate them with being a measure of God's corrective judgment and discipline. Yet, the Psalmist declared – *With reproofs Thou dost chasten a man for iniquity; Thou dost consume as a moth what is precious to him* (Psalm 39:11). God has a way of removing from our lives that which we place more value on, give more priority to, and invest more of ourselves in rather than Him. He is supreme, and He deserves and demands our total allegiance. If we truly belong to God, He will gain that commitment from us one way or another, for He disciplines those that He loves (Hebrews 12:6). If you have never experienced the chastisement & discipline of God in response to your persistent sinful indulgence, you would be wise to reevaluate the authenticity of your salvation experience.

As II Kings closes, the people of God are left abandoned in Babylonian exile. History reveals that God didn't leave them there. He did forgive them and eventually honored their repentance with the gracious opportunity to come back to Jerusalem and start-over again in a fresh, new walk with Him. That invitation is still one God extends to His wayward children today. It's not complicated. Doing right in the sight of God is always the sure way to divine blessing and favor.

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.