

SCRIPTURE READING: Jeremiah 18:5-12.

INTRODUCTION:

What is stubbornness? "Having or showing dogged determination not to change one's attitude or position on something, esp. in spite of good arguments or reasons to do so" (**New Oxford American Dictionary**).



There is a difference between being strong-minded and stubborn. Strong-minded people seek truth and are more than willing to listen to evidence that challenges their convictions. It's just that they aren't swayed by threats, enticements, or flatteries. Only true and convincing evidence will convince them to change.

In contrast, stubborn people don't want to listen to anything that challenges their convictions. They maintain their position no matter what. They are the proverbial "irresistible force." No matter what anyone says or the situation may be stubborn people are determined to have their own way. Their motto is, "Yes I will and you can't stop me."

They are the proverbial "immovable object." They are like stubborn mules that sit down on their haunches and refuse to rise and move on. The harder people push them, the harder they dig in and resist. If someone tells them, "Yes you will," their automatic reaction is, "Oh no I won't and you can't make me" and a battle of wills is on.

Pharaoh was a stubborn man. The more God made it clear to Pharaoh that it was in his own best interest to let the children of Israel go, the more determined Pharaoh became to do anything but let them go.

Have we ever had any Pharaohs in our lives? I know many of us have. Do we have any Pharaohs in our lives? I know many of us do.

In this morning's lesson I want to discuss how God wants us to deal with people who stubbornly refuse to change for the better.

DISCUSSION:

1. **Know that God understands.** Deuteronomy 9:6-7; 2 Kings 17:13-14; Acts 7:51.
2. **Understand the nature of stubbornness.** Exodus 8:16-19. We get frustrated with stubborn people because they won't listen to reason. But that's the very reason why they are stubborn. If they would listen to reason, they wouldn't be stubborn. With stubborn people, we have to realize that it's not about what's best. Yes, it should be, but it's not. It's about other things: pride (Nehemiah 9:16), control (Mark 3:1-6), sensuality (Ephesians 4:17-19), the approval of men (John 12:37-43), comfort (Judges 2:18-19), etc.
3. **Do our best and leave the rest to God.**
 - A. We must tell people what they need to hear even when they don't want to hear it. Ezekiel 3:4-11. We must be completely honest. Exodus 4:21-23.
 - B. However, we must not argue or lose our temper. We must be as reasonable as we want stubborn people to be.
 - C. We must properly define success. We successfully deal with stubborn people when we do our best to help them change, not when they actually change. We can't make people change. God can't and neither can we. Jeremiah 5:1-3; Ezekiel 3:7. We need to have God's attitude. Psalm 81:11-12; Hosea 4:16-17; Revelation 22:11. This isn't being cold hearted. It's just recognizing that people are free moral agents that we can't control. Frankly, we either adopt this attitude or two things happen. First, we'll drive ourselves to despair. Second, we'll tempt stubborn people to be even more set in their ways. This doesn't mean we give up on anyone. It just means that we must be exceedingly wise in how we go about trying to help people who are determined to do wrong.
4. **Learn to be content.** Philippians 4:11B-13.
5. **Be salt.** Deuteronomy 9:13-14, 18-19.
6. **Use stubborn people to save other people.** Psalm 78:5-8.
7. **Act much sooner than later.** Hebrews 3:7-13.