



Shepherd's Path

A Shepherd's Personal Devotions

Good Kings – Bad Kings Series, Lesson 22

Lesson Title: Jeremiah Warns the People

Take Home Point: God is patient – come back to him.

Warm-Up:

This morning when I left for work, I decided not to stop for gas even though the gauge showed my car's gas tank was empty. Of course, after only a couple of miles, the engine quit and I coasted to the side of the road. But right away someone pulled over, emptied a container of fuel into my car and said, "It's not your fault you didn't get gas earlier." Relieved that I hadn't been delayed, I began driving toward work again, much faster than the speed limit. Naturally a police officer pulled me over. I told him I was just in a hurry to get to work, to which he replied, "Well then it's not fair that the state law should slow you down. Go as fast as you like." Relieved again, I got to work. My boss gave me a difficult task, so I said I wouldn't do it. He responded, "No problem. I'll just get someone else to do it." Sound like one of your days? Of course not! Bad decisions without bad consequences! What a fantasy!

Read: Jeremiah 1-52; 2 Peter 3:9

Observation (What happened?):

According to Jeremiah 2:5, what had the Israelites done and what was the result?

According to Jeremiah 29:10-14, what does God have in mind for those who come back to him?

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

What made the Israelites so hard-hearted toward God?

Why do you think God judged so harshly those nations he used as his instruments of judgment against Israel?

Insight:

It's sad to read about the people of Judah so deep in sin, isn't it? They wouldn't even let God's prophet speak to them – the king destroyed a scroll and threw Jeremiah into a cistern; the people got angry with him and refused to listen. I doubt they started out with the idea they would turn away from God all at once, but that is what happened anyway. Just one altar to a false god, then an idol, then another, then another, then shutting down temple worship altogether, then turning away from God with a hardened heart. Just like Judah, as we sin we gradually develop a hardness of heart. We may fool ourselves into thinking everything is as it was in our relationship to God, but the effect is relentless and sure. It is the original "slippery slope," and only God reaching out can keep us from sliding all the way to hell. He is so patient. Judah had every opportunity to listen and turn to God, but they refused. Still today, so many people refuse God's lifelong presence and strength because of sin's steady enticement and a hard heart.

Application (What does it mean to me?):

At what time in your life did God restore you after you returned to him?

Pray for the children in your small group to always follow God's ways and not allow a hard heart to develop.

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