



Jeremiah 2.1-13 and Romans 1.18-25

"I believe that deep down people are basically good. We only do 'bad' things because we don't know any better. If we can just learn enough and have the right experiences, then we can turn out alright." I can't remember the first time I heard that thought, but it probably was in college. I want to say it was probably some remark made by a fellow student in one of my sociology courses, but who knows. I have slept a few times since then. Regardless of when I heard it first, it seems that I encounter this thought in one form or another on almost a weekly basis. It isn't always stated this plainly, but you can see it nonetheless, lurking in the background of a remark, a policy, or an agenda. You know, it makes a lot of sense. It is completely logical. People behave badly because they don't know any better. I like it because it gives some hope for life, some hope for this messed up world. The hope is that if we can just show people a better way then somehow this world will get straightened out. As much as I am drawn to this line of thinking, I pause because something deep in my soul tells me it isn't quite this easy.

How do I know? Well, consider the case of Israel. They pegged in the red zones on the experience and knowledge meters. Think about it. God personally led them out of slavery and gave them a bountiful land, revealing time and again His protection and provision in miraculous ways. God gave them the Law, a collection of advice and instructions not just on how to live life, but on how to live life the way it was meant to be lived. They knew all there was to know and had a wonderful experience with God to back it up. They threw it all away for a life on their own terms, a life as their own god, a life of basically behaving badly. But that was Israel, a couple thousand years ago. What does that have to do with me today? Everything. You see, I am learning that Israel's story is my story. I have knowledge and experience, we all do, that would blow an ancient Israelite's mind. God has revealed Himself to us, not in a cloud or pillar of fire, but in a person. He has laid out how to live in ways that are both practical and poignant to our present situation. Knowing this, time and again I throw it away and go my own way, go about the process of being my own god. Yes, I too can and do behave badly, in spite of my knowledge and experience. So I wonder, are we really good people in need of knowledge and experience, or are we basically bent and broken people incapable of anything other than rebellion? I am beginning to see myself as the later. You know, the more I see myself this way the more hope I have, because when I realize who I truly am then I am the most ready to receive help and healing. However, that is going to have to wait until the next chapter in *The Story*.

A fellow traveler,

Blake
Spiritual Formation Pastor

My Next Step

We encourage you to consider doing the following as a way of handing off faith to your family. . .

- **Confess rebellion:** This week, as you put your children to bed, spend a few moments reviewing the day with them. You might consider placing your hand over their heart and asking how they feel on the inside. Ask them if they were hurt by anyone, or if they hurt anyone that day. If so, ask them what they think led someone to hurt them or they to hurt others. Don't be surprised if they tell you that they do not know. Be ready to say briefly that we don't always know why we hurt people, but the truth is we do. It just seems to come out of us, but that God knows that about us and if we ask Him, He can fix that in us. Lead your child to pray a blessing for the one who hurt them and a confession for their own hurting of others. We recommend doing this every night with your children.

We encourage you to take one of the following next steps on your faith journey. . .

- **Acknowledging our brokenness:** Dallas Willard stated, "We must see the soul and the person in its ruined condition, with its malformed and dysfunctional mind, feelings, body, and social relations, before we can understand that it must be delivered and reformed and how that can be done. One of the greatest obstacles to effective spiritual formation in Christ today is simple failure to understand and acknowledge the reality of the human situation as it affects Christians and nonChristians alike." (*Renovation of the Heart*, 45) So how is one to acknowledge the ruined condition of their soul? This week set aside some time to read the paper or watch the news. We recommend setting aside an hour, or at least enough time to catch an entire news cycle. Before you begin, spend some time reading and meditating on Romans 3.10-18. What is the point Paul is trying to make? After you grasp the point, watch the news or read the paper, but do so through the lens of Romans 3. See if you can locate examples of what Paul speaks about. After you have observed the world, take some time and observe your own life. Do you see what Paul speaks of in your own life? As you feel led, acknowledge the depth of your own ruin to God and ask for His intervention through the person of Jesus to lead you into a different path.