

Decisions

4. Now that I Made the Wrong Decision

May 6-7, 2017

Many people know Henry Ford for the Ford Motor Company, one of the most successful automotive companies of all time. However, what they don't know is that prior to successfully launching the present incarnation of his company, Ford failed two times before that resulting in bankruptcies.

Ford is no stranger to failure. Yet, when we think about Ford, we don't picture the bad business decisions he made; we picture his good business decisions. In 1899, at the age of 36, Ford formed his first company, the Detroit Automobile Company with backing from the famed lumber baron, William H. Murphy. That company went bankrupt.

His second attempt was in 1901, when he formed the Henry Ford Company, which he ended up leaving with the rights to his name. That company was later renamed to the Cadillac Automobile Company. It was Ford's third try, with the Ford Motor Company, that he finally hit the proverbial nail on the head.

After that, we all know the story. Ford revolutionized the automobile industry, pioneering not only the Model T and the assembly line, but also the concept and notion of an automobile in every home. Driving became a "thing," and subsequently, Ford's Model T went on to sell over 17 million units.

Now, why did I share this story today? I wanted to remind each of us that the story of our life is not over until it's over. Let me repeat this to you today: even if you have made some really bad decisions in your life, **the story of your life is not over until it's over.**

So many of us are prone to think that if we don't have our lives set up by the time we are at the end of our 20's or even 30's, then the rest of our lives are a gradual march of regret until the end of our days. We look back at our life and say, "If I would have only made this decision or that decision...then my life would be so much more fulfilling. If I would have only made some better decisions as a parent...then today we would be living a different reality as a family. If I would not have made some decisions that messed up my marriage...then my life would have a different trajectory." Another way to say this would be, "If I would have made wise decisions in my life, then my life would be better."

I don't want to be a poetic spin master and throw out a bunch of inspirational platitudes that we can post on Facebook later. Today, I want us to embrace certain realities:

1. Some of us have made disastrous decisions in our lives that have led to significant consequences that cause us daily pain.
2. Some of you are reeling, right now in this very moment, because the decisions that you have made have backfired on you in ways that you did not foresee.
3. Some of us today feel like a failure when it comes to life.

I do, however, want to bring you hope today. There is a theological term that summarizes where you are today. It is called **brokenness**. And here is the good news: it's good to be broken, because we have a Lord who specializes in this area. If you and I can look at the world and see turnaround stories, then how much more can our Father (who loves us more than we could ever know) bring a directional change to our lives? That change can lead us to a new phase that brings joy, peace and fulfillment back into our lives, or for some of us, for the first time in our lives!

So, the big questions for today are: **what do we do when we recognize that we have made some wrong decisions in our life** and **what can God do with our brokenness?**

Today we are going to look at a lesson that came directly from God to his Prophet Jeremiah in which Jeremiah was asked to communicate to the people of Israel. This message was for a specific audience and for a specific time, yet it gives us insight into the following:

1. **God gives us free will** to make unwise decisions despite His repeated warnings for us to make God honoring decisions.
2. **God allows the unfolding of consequences** because of our unwise decisions.
3. God, at the end of the day, because of His grace and mercy still loves us enough to redeem our lives and to make things new again.

When we come to **Jeremiah 18**, God is taking Jeremiah on a physical journey so that Jeremiah can understand the spiritual journey that God is going to take His beloved Israel on.

Jeremiah 18 *This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: ² “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” ³ So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. ⁴ But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.*

⁵ Then the word of the LORD came to me. ⁶ He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the LORD. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel.

God had a design in His mind when he formed the nation of Israel. They were to be a people who were handcrafted by God who were vessels that were like spiritual

holding pots. The inside of the pot was intended to hold God's love, His ways, His peace, His Joy and His kindness. This pot that was filled with the life God had intended for them was to spill over and influence the other nations. They were to be a witness. They were to influence others.

Yet, because of their decision to sin and infidelity towards God, the pot was marred. It had cracks in it. It was not able to fulfill the purposes which God intended for them. Because of the decisions that the people of Israel made, they faced significant consequences for their sins and would eventually be led into the Babylonian Captivity.

Just as God had a design and purpose for the nation of Israel, God has a design and purpose for each of our lives. Yet, when we make unwise decisions that don't honor God or we sin and choose the ways of this world, cracks in our character form. What flows out of our life is bitterness, regret, greed, hate, lust. It overflows and affects the lives around us. We are no longer functioning in the purpose for which God created us. Then, there are the consequences.

So, what does God offer to do? Does he smash the pot, discard it and say, "Well, they had their chance"? Does He set us aside on a shelf, no longer able to be used for the greater purposes of God? Are we eternal failures?

What did God say to Jeremiah? ***5 Then the word of the LORD came to me. 6 He said, "Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel. Verse 4: so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.***

God is the only one who **can create wholeness out of brokenness**. God is the only one who can fill up what has been emptied. God is the game changer. Like I said earlier, it's not over until it is over.

This word, "shaping," must have caught Jeremiah's attention. When Jeremiah the Prophet began his ministry, God told him that He had shaped Jeremiah even before he was born. All of Jeremiah's life, he felt a special connection to God because He knew, without a doubt, that God Himself had shaped him. And now, God brings it full circle by showing Jeremiah, in dramatic fashion, that just as God shaped him into a vessel that would eternally impact the world, God was more than willing to reshape and reform those who had abandoned the ways of the Lord. What a powerful image for God to lay on Jeremiah! What a powerful message! And what's even more powerful is that **God is willing to reshape your life**. Yes, even after we made decisions that God told us not to make, He's willing to reshape us. Yes, even after we have sinned against our holy, loving God, He's willing to heal our brokenness.

A few years down the road, the writer of the book of Jeremiah gave an update to the captives who were living in Babylon who thought this was it: forever we are a broken pot. Yet, God told them that He was about to do the reshaping and reforming that only the living God could.

Jeremiah 29:¹¹ *For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.* ¹² *Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.* ¹³ *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.* ¹⁴ *I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity. [b] I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.”*

Even after they made the decision to defy the God who brought them out of slavery, even after they made the decision to trade in God and replace him with idols, and even after they rejected God as their king and put men on the throne instead God brought them back. God healed their wounds. God healed their brokenness.

What was required by God for them to receive this mercy, this new life, this redemption, even after making one bad decision after another? ¹³ *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.* ¹⁴ *I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity.* All that God wanted from the people of Israel was their love and devotion. Wow! What an amazing God we serve.

As I said earlier, with God, the story of your life is not over until it's over. And if you are here today, it's not over. So, what do we do once we have made some costly, bad decisions in our life and we are ready for God to hit the restart switch in our lives? What do we do when we are finally ready for a reboot in life?

Let Go. What do we let go of? We let go of our own will. We resign from leading life our way. We turn to God and we give him the reigns of our life. We say, “Whatever you want me to do in my life, I'm ready, my life belongs to you. I hand my future decision making over to you for your glory and honor.” Just to be clear, this isn't a, “Lord take my life and make it great.” It's, “Lord take my life and do whatever you will with it.”

Henry Varley looked at a young shoe salesman one day and said, “The world has yet to see what God could do with and for and through and in a man who is fully and wholly consecrated to Him.” Not long after that, the young man went across the ocean and watched the world's most famous preacher, Charles Spurgeon give a spellbinding sermon. This young man knew that he was an uneducated shoe salesman, yet the Holy Spirit reminded him of those words. As he was watching the brilliant preacher, he realized it wasn't the preacher who was doing the great work, but God. After that, the young shoe salesman made a decision that would change his life. He dedicated his whole being to God and D.L. Moody went on to lead tens of thousands of people to Christ throughout America and Britain.

Who knows what God will do in and through you when you resign from leading your life the way you decide it should be led. How could your life be different if you began your decisions with: Whatever you want Lord, not my will be done, but yours?

Secondly, after you let go, **adjust your life**. What do I mean by *adjust your life*? Once you surrender your will and your life to Christ, He will begin to show you new ways to live out your life. He will call you to deeper trust in Him than you have previously had. He might call you to leave your job to devote more time to your family or serving. He might call you to wake up earlier to seek Him in the mornings before you go into work so that you can be spiritually attuned to what God wants to do at your workplace. He might call you to adjust the rhythms of your life to bring more impact to other people. He might call you to re-establish old relationships that are broken in your life.

Moses was met by God in the middle of a desert after setting up life with a new family and a new career. God spoke to Moses and basically asked if he was ready to adjust his life to join God in what He was about to do with His nation Israel. Moses reminded God that he was a broken pot. He stuttered when he tried to speak the Egyptian language that he laid down 40 years ago. How was he going to go into the court of the Pharaoh? He established a new homestead. Was he to leave it behind? He had already made a bad decision in his life that led him to the desert in the first place that he believed disqualified him from leading God's people. Yet, he was broken enough to say, not my will Lord, but yours. He adjusted his life and the rest is history.

Thirdly, **let your past shape your future**. You might look at your life today and see a trail of broken dreams and heartache. When you hear a speaker on the stage speaking about how life can begin again, the thought comes to your mind, "I can't take another heartbreak. Hope has always been followed by failure in my life." So, instead of taking some steps forward, you allow your past to halt you in your tracks. What you have unknowingly done is this: you have allowed your past to determine your future instead of allowing your past to shape your future.

When you surrender your will to God and you are willing to adjust your life. You can bank on this. God will not waste any of the hurts from your past. You will begin to see how the pain in your past will bring kingdom gain on your new path. God takes our past and He uses it in mighty ways for His Kingdom purposes. Yes, you might be spinning today because of some bad decisions. But God is not willing to leave you where you are. If you are ready for a redo, a restart, here's some good news: the Lord has been waiting for you. He's ready to reshape your future.

Let's revisit our friend Henry Ford. Perhaps you've heard the story of Henry Ford and Charlie Steinmetz. Charlie Steinmetz had one of the greatest minds in the field of electricity that the world had ever known. In fact, Henry Ford hired him when he built his first plant in Dearborn, Michigan. He hired him to build the generators. Charlie Steinmetz built the generators. The cars started coming off the assembly line, making Henry Ford richer and richer, however, one day the generators stopped and they failed. Being the cheapskate and the miser that Ford was, Ford hired some ordinary mechanics to fix the generator. Unfortunately, they did not fix the generators, and Ford was losing business. He finally had to go back to Charlie who had built the generators. He said, "Charlie, I want you to restart the generators." Charlie went back and walked

around the generators for an hour or two just puttering and tinkering. Finally, after a couple hours, he threw the switch. The generators started again and the cars started coming off the assembly line. Ford was very happy. A couple of days later, Charlie sent a bill. It wasn't itemized, it just said, "Charge \$10,000." That was a whole lot of money back then. Ford wrote him a little note on that same bill. He said, "Charlie, \$10,000 is a lot of money for a couple hours of tinkering." Charlie got the bill and gave him an itemized explanation. He said, Mr. Ford, "\$10 for tinkering. \$9,990 for knowing where to tinker." Then he wrote at the bottom, "Total \$10,000."

Just as Charlie knew where to tinker so that he could restart the generators again, our God knows how to reshape us and begin a new future for each and every one of us. **Jeremiah 18** ⁶ *He said, "Can I not do with you, [people of Crossroads], as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand.* Will you decide to allow Him to reshape your life for His purposes?

The challenge today is not for you to go and do something. The challenge today is for you to let go of many things. Let go of your will and allow God to reshape your future. Allow forgiveness to overtake you today. Allow the bad decisions of your past to shape your future and not determine it. Let Go and allow God to heal your brokenness. Today is a new day, the first day. We can't go back and unmake our decisions from the past, but we can decide today to make decisions that bring Glory to God and honor others as he reshapes our future for His purposes.