The Rebel Road

No doubt you've heard the old, practical definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over again while expecting different results. Perhaps this is an ancient Jewish definition. We see this ragamuffin group of Israelites make the same mistakes, worshiping the same false gods, and finding themselves under the same old curse. You think they'd learn from their mistakes. You'd think they'd look at the results of their sin and ask, "What's wrong with this picture?"

But then again, we aren't very far removed from these ancient people. God's people are still riding the spiritual fence that divides righteous life and pagan catastrophe.

Selective Memory
2 Kings 17:5-9

The historian who wrote 2 Kings is as mystified as we are. He takes us all the way back to Egypt when Moses cried out to Pharaoh, "Let my people go!" Almighty God opened up the Red Sea, sent food from the heavens, brought water out of the rocks and gave them the most durable shoes ever made. And yet they still chose to run after the gods of sex, food, sorcery and idolatry. Again and again, they let their spiritual guard down and suffered for it. Frankly, there really aren't any memory verses you'd want to hang on your wall in this chapter.

> *It's messy, messy, messy.*

That's what disobedience is. It happens over everybody it touches. Sin's consequences are rarely pondered a few seconds before the sin is committed. The lure of temptation is so strong that it brings about amnesia to the sinner. And here we are in an age and place far from Samaria and yet we are

surrounded by the spirit of Samaria. The message for believers when confronted with their own sin is simple. *"STEP AWAY! TURN! AND DON'T LOOK BACK!"* What part of this story is your personal story? Are you willing to step away from the addictive lure of sin?

The Rebel Road
Kings 17:13-15

Amazingly God's offer still stood for His people. They could return to God and live His way. But like a kid staring at a cookie jar on the top shelf of the cupboard, the Israelites piled books on chairs to reach it before supper.

Dave is a guy who had everything he needed to succeed. His grandparents are believers, his parents are believers, and despite their constant instructions and pleas, he continues choosing a different path. Nothing would deter him from doing what he wanted to do. Busted and in jail three times he continued to choose a heartbreaking path. He's still out there. He's addicted to the things he thought would bring him bliss. Nothing's really changed. He accepted Christ when he was eight years old and but there's little doubt that somewhere along the line, he turned away. The amazing thing about Dave is that God still pursues him. God loves him as much today as He did when he prayed that prayer in his bedroom so many years ago. Our God is relentless. The truth above all truth is that God doesn't give up on His family even when His family walks away. Who is on the rebel road in your life? You are challenged to pray for rebels. In one way or another, no matter how much we'd like to hide it, we're all victims of the rebel road. Do you need to turn toward God and away from sin today? Forgiveness is available.

God is a Gentleman
2 Kings 17:18-20

I know. The subtitle doesn't quite sound divine, but hear me out as I try to explain. When I write "God is a Gentleman" I don't mean to put the emphasis on "man" but on "gentle." We've all been around righteous tyrants at one time or another. They are the ones that will ***make*** you do the right thing. God's not that way. Like a gentleman, he doesn't force Himself on you. If you aren't going to follow Him, he'll let you go. The choice is yours and He refuses to beg or manipulate you into right action. The Israelites experienced the dark solemn separation of God saying, "OK. Have it your way." Does it make God angry? Of course, it does. He's a righteous God who hates evil and despises the works of Satan. He's a jealous God. But He will release people into the results of their sin. He will hand us over to plunder. He doesn't make the plunder. Plunder just seem to happen. In short, He will allow us to get as jacked up as we choose to be. It's a frightful thing to be left to live in our own darkness. *Run to the light before it's too late!* That's been the cry of every prophet and evangelist and it's still relevant today. How does this story relate to your life? Are their pockets of unfaithfulness that remain in your world? Is there a rebel that needs to hear about the goodness of God's mercy today?