

Trust in God Alone! 7-22-01

Jeremiah 17:1-10,13-14,16

I want to follow the sermon on chapter 15 with this one on 17 because of the connections we find here and the lessons that come out of the two in combination. Chapter 16 is more on the wrath to come upon Judah with a few verses on the restoration.

Chapter 17 continues with the indictment against them. Jer 17:1 (NIV)¹ "Judah's sin is engraved with an iron tool, inscribed with a flint point, on the tablets of their hearts and on the horns of their altars.

Do you ever feel like that, like the sins of your life have left such ruts that you will never be free of the thoughts and temptations? In Arizona there are ruts in the sandstone left by the steel rims of wagon wheels. Wind and water have softened their edges over time but they are still plainly visible. Is that how you feel about some of your weaknesses? There is a great difference between you and Judah. God has given you a new heart. The old one with its ruts you leave on the cross with Christ. When you are tempted to return to it, you stand strong in the power of his might and declare that to be your old nature now crucified with Christ. Then you yield to the life of Christ in you – your new life. TYJ!

Jer 17:2-3 (NIV)² Even their children remember their altars and Asherah poles beside the spreading trees and on the high hills.

³ My mountain in the land

I intentionally chopped that last verse up as I think the translators put the period in the wrong place. Others share that opinion so it is not just some wild tangent. God is telling them the really sad thing is that the children who are suppose to be taught the ways of the LORD and their heritage as God's chosen people are being taught idolatry. In the place where God drove out idolaters for the people of God to live – there the Children of God learn the example of idolatry. King Josiah burned all those idols but Jeremiah is saying it was not that long ago – so recent that your children remember. There was even one great big one in the Temple of God. I would ask if the children in America are learning anything different? If they remember some of the idols you had while they were growing up, tell them your mistake, and encourage them to walk more closely than you did for their children's sake. I hope President Bush acts like King Josiah, but will that change a nation whose heart is set on evil?

Jer 17:3b,4 (NIV)and your wealth and all your treasures I will give away as plunder, together with your high places, because of sin throughout your country.⁴ Through your own fault you will lose the inheritance I gave you. I will enslave you to your enemies in a land you do not know, for you have kindled my anger, and it will burn forever."

Just why were they going to lose their treasures, the things they valued, their inheritance? Because of sin – through no ones fault but their own. Is God right to be angry when we credit his gifts and goodness to others or self? When Moses was on the

mountain receiving the Law, Aaron was telling the people, "This golden calf is the God that delivered you from Egypt." How should God feel? The pathetic God of the New Age or of modernism would be tolerant and say, "Poor humans, eventually they will progress." But the God of the Bible says, "You have kindled my anger!" The God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. He has not changed.

Some of the tourists I work as a translator for want to see angel stores – that is stores that specialize in art and nick knacks about angels. In a store that advertises 3000 angels I could only find 5 male angels and two of them looked like they might be gay. Why is that? Because the god of the New Age has no teeth – he is never angry with sin that destroys life. Those male angels represent the justice of God – his power and judgement. That is anathema to the wishy washy modernism of today. Makes me sick to my stomach – all those little child angels and women with long curly tresses. There is not one female angel in the whole Bible. Angels are flaming ministers of God that are ready to carry out God's command and the majority of the time they either deliver messages about judgement or execute it. Read the description in the Bible of some of these awesome creatures and then look at some of the paintings and china statues – different as night and day. Why? No judgement and power and I can sin as I please and be my own god. "Whatever I do – heaven awaits and MY angels will guide me", they say. Yeh, like the angel that met Balaam – ready to cut him to pieces or the angel that killed the 100,000 Assyrians. Sound like a two year old with wings?

My point is, God is angry with sin every day and He has enforcers! To sissify them or Him is a lie of Satan. Sin destroys and enslaves and God wont put up with it because He loves mankind. Look at the passion of Christ and you'll know how God feels about sin. Nuff said.

So Judah is about to face the wrath of God because of sin – idolatry and the murder of innocents. Now God elaborates on the curse they are under. This is not disconnected, it flows together. Hear the reason for the curse.

Jer 17:5 This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD.

What does trusting in man have to do with idolatry? Those priests are self appointed – the idols manmade in the image of man. Their prophecies come from the imagination of their own hearts. Is there anything about God in the whole thing? No! It's all about man. The Holy Spirit has countered many a man's word to me with this verse. I've had several men say, "Trust me." Immediately the Holy Spirit says, "If you want a curse on your life go ahead." Each of those people wanted to use me and could not be trusted. That is usually the person who will say, "just trust me". Whenever you hear that, the red warning flag should go up.

This is one of the biggest problems with the church. They place their trust in a pastor when Scripture clearly teaches in a plurality of elders. I usually bring you the message but you better check it out in the word of God and see if it jives with Scripture. When a congregation places its trust in a man, God lets that man fall so they will turn their eyes back on Jesus. We've all seen it too many times. Don't trust me, trust Jesus! Don't look

to me, look to His Word. I will fail you but Jesus will never fail! Your spiritual life needs to flow from the Life Giver not a man. If you want to place yourself under a curse, trust a man instead of God. That is idolatry. The last part of that verse describes what is happening – your heart is departing from the LORD and going to a man who you are making into an idol. Anything that comes between you and God is an idol. There is the connection with the idolatry. We have thousands of men idols in the world, and our culture and modern church methodology promotes it. Denominational officials know it increases numbers and are tempted rely on popularity or finesse. Many would find strength in popular men rather than Almighty God. But hear this – it brings with it a curse! God will not give his glory to another (Isa 42:8, 48:11) and He needs no man but the man Christ Jesus to be the head of his church! He does seek after men whose hearts are completely after Him so that they can together be his undershepherds and set an example. But those kind of men will always exalt Jesus as head and divert all attention to Him.

If you insist on the route of trusting man here is what is promised to you: ⁶ He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.

Does that not describe many of us Christians today? Running from big name speaker to big name speaker we look for blessing when all the while Jesus has his arms outstretched and calls, "Come to me". Thirsty and lonely, dry and tired they can't figure out why the high from the last meeting didn't last. Their report is about the man and his gift not the Word of Life and change in their heart. I'm not preaching this to slam others, but to warn us. When Christians come to you praising their pastor ask them what the Lord is showing them. Divert their attention to Jesus. Divert their praise to Jesus. And let us live that example. Please don't say, "Paul's message was ..." speak of the Holy Spirit and what He spoke to you through his Word.

⁷ "But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.

"But" ... I love God's interjections. You want to be blessed, right? Place your trust in the Lord alone. Don't put it in any man's words or your own ability but instead be confident in the LORD, in his character, in his good plan for you. Trust Him to reveal his method and his timing. Do you have that kind of confidence in Him? Can you trust Him instead of solving the problem yourself or sending it to committee for a consensus of men? We need to remember the word from Acts, "It seemed good to us and the Holy Spirit..." Will you have faith to seek what seems good to the Holy Spirit, and wait on his direction and timing?

If you do here is the promise to you: ⁸ He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." Instead of a salty dry desert you'll be by the water. My house looks over a canyon with a creek in it. I can see the illustration of this everyday. When we have drought the plants up on the hills around me get wilted, some even die. But no matter how long the drought those trees along the creek are green and flourishing. Place you trust in the LORD, your confidence in Him alone and that is a promise of your spiritual condition. Now where have you heard that before? Psalm 1 Who is that promise to? It's to the one who meditates in the Word day and night. What is the connection? Why is the one

who meditates on God's word and the one who trusts and places their confidence in the Lord both promised the same thing? Because the one who trusts in the Lord reads his word and considers it his direction – the voice of God – the counsel of the Almighty. So he ponders it and lets it speak to Him. He adjusts his life to the truth the Holy Spirit illuminates in it. And the result is he flourishes spiritually. Again, let me say, that does not mean he does not suffer. It means whatever is going on he has a source of refreshing, of life, of strength. Because of that source of living water, he bears fruit.

If you want fruit and especially fruit that remains you must be a person of faith that depends on the LORD – trusts in the LORD – all confidence placed in the LORD not man. You'll be hearing from his word and directed by it. The Holy Spirit will illuminate it. Like Jeremiah it will be your joy and your heart's delight.

⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?¹⁰ "I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve."

The heart is so great at justifying. "Oh, I don't trust in man. I trust in the call of God on his life." Right! I trust the call but I still don't trust the man. "I trust in God to keep the man", you might say. Well then why have so many fallen? We just don't want to face the truth that we will not take the time to get into God's word ourselves. We want someone else to do the digging for us. Face it, your old nature is beyond cure. I like this NIV translation here. I admit it is a little bit of a stretch but Scripturally it is true. All you can do with that old heart is put it to death. You can't fix it. God can't cure it. You need a new one. The old one has those engraved markings on it. You have to live in the new one and keep the old one on the cross.

Verse 10 is telling us our actions include our thoughts and desires. God sees every one of them. Jesus realized this when He told us adultery included looking on a woman to lust after her, and murder includes slander, etc. What do you deserve? Here is where I get real excited that Jesus gives me his righteousness in exchange for my sins. God is transforming my thought life but He's not done yet. He's changing my desires, but I am a work in progress. What do you deserve Christian? The inheritance and reward of Jesus Christ is yours. If He is your Lord and Savior the Father looks on Jesus' righteous life and will reward you accordingly. But that does not give us a license to go on sinning. If He is your Lord and Savior you are convicted of sin and repentance means a change in your actions. Your conduct does have a correlation to your reward.

Remember last week we talked about Jeremiah's temptation to give up on his call during the weakness of his illness? These last two verses show the change in his heart that repentance worked in him.

¹³ O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD, the spring of living water.¹⁴ Heal me, O LORD, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise. (on to verse 16)

¹⁶ I have not run away from being your shepherd; you know I have not desired the day of despair. What passes my lips is open before you.

He was tempted to turn away but now he says if he did he would be put to shame. Now instead of calling God a deceitful spring he calls Him the Spring of Living Water. He says, "If I'm going to be healed it will only be by your hand. If I am to be saved, then you must do it." You see his trust is in the Lord. His confidence is in God alone. He praises no man nor self but Jehovah alone. He is aware that God is the silent listener to every word that comes from his mouth. He wants to be a recipient of those promises to those who trust in God, a tree by Living Water. I hope you do too. Trust in God alone.

Let's review the themes in this chapter: Our old nature is helpless like the nation of Judah was. The sin is engraved there. That sin includes trusting in man – listening to man instead of God. We make idols of men and put our hope in them – our trust in flesh and that brings with it the curse of God. If we refuse to turn to God and continue this trust in man (which can be self) we will dry up and die spiritually. But if we will place our hope in God, looking to Him and not man, seeking his heart, not our old stubborn one, then we will taste the refreshing Living Water and be fruitful.

Don't let your heart deceive you. God looks into each heart to see where your trust is placed. Jeremiah had turned from his trust in self, his temptation to try to seek fulfillment his own way and remained God's undershepherd. He trusted God alone for his physical healing, for his emotional health, and his salvation. He declared God as his source of refreshment – his spring of Living Water.