

Jeremiah 17:1-10

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[0 : 00] If you have a Bible, I invite you to turn with me to Jeremiah chapter 17, page 645 in the church.

! Jeremiah is a prophet in Judah, during the reign of the last five kings of Judah. These were years that preceded and included the Babylonian invasion and the exile of God's people to Babylon. During the reign of the first of these five kings, the king Josiah, God's law was rediscovered and it was read to the people. And it was during Josiah's reign that there seemed to be a turning back to God from idols.

But it proved to be too little, too late. It could not turn back the inevitable judgment that God was sending upon his people for idolatry.

So let's hear God's word. This is Jeremiah chapter 17 and we'll read beginning in verse 1 through verse 10. Let's hear God's word. The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron.

[1 : 17] For the point of diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart and on the horns of their altars. While their children remember their altars and their ashram beside every green tree and on the high hills, on the mountains, in the open country.

Your wealth and all of your treasure I will give for a spoil as the price of your high places for sin throughout all your territory. You shall loosen your hand from your heritage that I gave to you. And I will make you serve your enemies in a land that you do not know. For in my anger a fire is kindled that shall burn forever. Thus says the Lord.

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord. And makes flesh his strength. Whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a shrub in the desert and shall not see any good come.

He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness. In an uninhabited salt land. Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord.

[2 : 28] Whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water. That spreads out its roots by the stream. And does not fear when heat comes. For its leaves remain green.

It is not anxious in the year of drought. For it does not cease to bear fruit. The heart is deceitful above all things. And desperately sick.

Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart. And test the mind. To give every man according to his ways.

According to the fruit of his deeds. Before we think further about this passage. I want us to come to God again in prayer. Father we thank you today for our privilege to gather together as your people. We thank you now that we can consider your word. We thank you that this is no ordinary word of man. That this is word that you have given through your holy prophets and apostles.

[3 : 28] This is the very word of God. And we ask you today for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We pray that he would come. And that he would be our teacher. We pray that he would cut the light on in our hearts.

And illumine your word to us. Father we pray that you would do in all of our hearts. What you desire to do in this time. We look to you. We thank you for what you will do.

And we pray these things in Jesus name. Amen. Perhaps you've read the story. Of a missionary couple.

They went to China. They were with the China Inland Mission. Arthur and Wilder Matthews. After they had been in China for some years in 1949.

The communists took over China. In 1951 the China Inland Mission gave the order. For all of their missionaries. To be evacuated out of China.

[4 : 29] But it was about this time. That the Matthews. Got an invitation. To go and minister in a certain place. And this looked like a wonderful opportunity.

An opportunity for Arthur to teach and preach. An open door. To teach and preach in China. In a certain place. And so the Matthews decided. Despite the new communist government. They would stay in China. And go through this door of opportunity. That seemingly God had opened. But they discovered. Very soon.

That the government would not allow them to do ministry. The door. Was obviously closed. So they decided to leave the country. They applied for exit visas.

And those were denied. They were restricted. They were restricted. Then they were restricted. To their missionary compound. They couldn't go out. They couldn't have fellowship. With other Christians. And then the government cut off.

[5 : 26] The transfer of funds to them. No money for food. No money for heat. The government was trying to starve them. And this went on. For.

Two and a half years. And despite. These unbearable circumstances. God. Provided for them physically. And he. And he sustained them spiritually.

And they flourished. Spiritually. Finally. After two and a half years. In 1953. First. Wilda and her daughter.

And then Arthur. Were permitted. To leave China. It's been recorded in the book. By Isabel Kuhn. And when she wrote this story.

She chose for the title. Words from. Verse eight. That we've just read. He is like a tree. Planted by water. That sends out its roots.

[6 : 25] By the stream. And does not fear. When he comes. For its leaves remain green. And is not anxious. In the year of drought. For it does not cease.

To bear fruit. She entitled. Their story. Green leaf. In drought time. You know this was a time of drought.

For the Matthews. They had no ministry. They had no fellowship. With other Christians. They had no money. Seemingly. Nothing to provide their needs. And yet.

God. Sustained them. And blessed them. And took care of them. In this time. How do our leaves. Stay green.

And fresh. How do we continue to bear fruit. In a time of drought. When we don't have what we need. When the circumstances that we face. Are unbearable. This morning I want us to think.

[7 : 22] About. How we seek. The roots. Of our faith. Deep. Into Christ. Before we look at verse 8 here.

I want us to look at the larger context. In this chapter. Verses 1 through 10. And the context is. The sin of God's people. I want us to see three things.

From this passage. Number one. In verses 1 through 4. Indelible sin. That brings. Inevitable judgment. The second thing. Verses 5 and 6. The self-sufficient heart.

A shrub. In the desert. And verses 7 and 8. The dependent heart. A tree. By the river. So number one. Verses 1 through 4.

And the. Indelible sin. That brings. Inevitable judgment. In these first few verses. We have. A dark picture. And this is all about. The people's sin.

[8 : 18] Notice the imagery. In verse 1. The sin of Judah. Is written. With a pen of iron. For the point of diamond. It is engraved. On the tablet of their heart. And on the horns.

Of their altars. This is. Indelible sin. This is. Indelibly. Ingraved. On their hearts. Proverbs 7. 2 says. Keep my commandments.

And live. Write them on the tablet. Of your heart. But what has happened here. God's commandments. Were written on their heart. Their sin. Was written. On their hearts.

It talks here. About the horns. Of the altars. This is. The horns. Of the altars. Upon which. They offered. Sacrifices. To pagan gods. The point here. Is that.

Their sin. Their idolatry. Is ingrained. Nothing is going to get rid of it. God's judgment. To them. Because of their sin. Was inevitable. And then we have.

[9 : 14] In verses 3 and 4. We have the terrible. Consequences. Of their sin. The coming. Babylonian invasion. And the exile. To Babylon. Your wealth. And all your treasures. I will give for spoil.

As the price. Of your high places. For sin. Throughout all your territory. You shall loosen your hand. From your heritage. That I gave to you. I will make you serve. Your enemies.

In a land. That you do not know. For in my anger. A fire. Is kindled. That shall burn forever. A terrible picture.

Their sin. And its consequences. But it's very interesting. What Jeremiah does next. He goes. Deeper. Into their sin.

He shows. The heart. Out of which. Their idolatry flowed. And he gives us. A graphic picture. Of that heart. You know.

[10:09] As I think about this passage. It's easy for me to say. Oh. They went into exile. Because of the sin. Of idolatry. You know. I would never engage. In the sin of idolatry. You know.

Really. This has nothing to do with me. But when I look at the description. Of the heart. Out of which idolatry flows. I begin to realize. Oh no.

At times. My heart. Does look like this. And this brings us to our second point. In verses 5 and 6. The self-sufficient heart.

A shrug. In the desert. Let's hear verses 5 and 6 again. Thus says the Lord. Cursed is the man. Who trusts in man. And makes flesh his strength.

Whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert. And shall not see when good comes. But shall inhabit. The parched places in the wilderness.

[11:06] In a salt land. Which is not inhabited. Do you get the picture here? A desert. It's dry. It's parched. It's a salt land. Cannot support a population of people. Not much growing here. Perhaps only one scrawny, tiny, little bush.

A shrug. You know this is a picture of a certain type of person. This is a picture of a certain type of heart.

This is the sinful heart that has brought the judgment of God upon his people. God says this person. This heart. This attitude. Is under my curse.

Whatever it is. It must be pretty bad. Is it murder. Is it adultery. Is it theft.

[12:11] What is this sin. This attitude. That brings the curse of God. We have it right there in verse 5. Cursed is the man.

Who trusts in man. And makes flesh his strength. This is a heart that trusts in man rather than in God. This is a heart that makes flesh its strength.

That makes flesh its arm. What is flesh in the Bible? It's not the meat on your bones. Flesh in the Bible. Is what you can do.

It's what you can do on your own. It's your own wisdom. It's your own schemes. To take care of yourself. And to meet your own needs. Flesh is what you can do apart from God.

And God says that attitude. Is under a curse. What is the sin here? Let's give it a name. We could call it the sin of self-sufficiency.

[13:13] And the question for me. And the question for you. Are we guilty of this sin? And it is. When new problems. New challenges. New difficulties come. Where.

Do we go? What is our default now? Do we go. To God. Or do we go to our lives. To ourselves. I'll have to be honest with you. Brothers and sisters. Very often. My default mode. Is not to go to God. It is to go.

To myself. Let's give it another name. We could call it the sin of. Self-salvation. You ever been guilty of the sin of self-salvation?

You may be saying. Well. I've got my theology straight. I know that my salvation from sin. And its consequences. And from hell. Is in Christ. And Christ alone. I've got my theology straight.

[14:11] But when I talk about the sin of self-salvation. I'm not talking about. Our theology. So much. As what we do. In our hearts. And I have to be honest with you.

Very often. That is the default mode of my heart. The question again. Where. Do I go. When I face. A problem. Do I go to myself. Or do I go. To the Lord. If you look at the book of Jeremiah here. When you go to yourself. You are in the same act.

You are turning away. And forsaking. The Lord. You know. If you have done much reading. In the book of Isaiah.

You have come across. This wonderful theme. This wonderful motif. In the book of Isaiah. It just occurs again. And again. And again. In the book of Isaiah. And the motif is this.

[15:08] God. Is. Our salvation. The references are too many. To quote. But just to give you a few. Isaiah 12. 2. God. Is my salvation. Isaiah 43.

1. I am the Lord. And besides me. Is no savior. Isaiah 43. 3. For I am the Lord. Your God. The Holy One of Israel. Your savior. Isaiah 45. 21.

There is no other God. Besides me. A righteous God. And a savior. And in the wonderful invitation. In Isaiah 45. 22. Turn to me.

And be saved. Do you see Isaiah's argument. He is saying. There is no other God. Therefore.

There is no other savior. Turn. To me. Brothers and sisters. Who.

[16:06] Do we turn to. I have to admit. Deep in my heart. Very often. I find. I have the desire. I want to be. My own savior.

And I am not talking about. Theologically. So much as I am talking about. Every day. In my life. The circumstances. That I face. The things I have confronted with. Very often. I go to myself.

Very often. I engage in self salvation. And in that very act. I am turning. Away. From God. You see. Sin is not just what we do. It is the heart. Out of which it flows. And he says here. It is a self sufficient heart. A heart that practices. Self salvation.

Now why is this such a heinous sin? Because when we turn to ourselves. When we trust ourselves. What are we doing? We are robbing God. Of the opportunity.

[17:01] To be our savior. And to be our savior. In that particular thing. We are facing. What glorifies God. Is when we let him. Save us. Save us from sin. And from the eternal consequences of sin.

But save us. Every minute. Of every day. From everything that we face. The truth is. I need a savior. You need a savior.

Every minute. Of every day. It is not just. Sin. And it is consequences of hell. It is that. But it is much more than that. It is everything that we face.

We need a savior. Who do we turn to? You see the sin here. The sin of. Self sufficiency. The sin. Of. Self salvation. Well how do we stop being this way? How do we stop being. Self sufficient. Self sufficient. How do we stop practicing.

[18:00] Self salvation. Well. Here in Jeremiah 17. There is another tree. We have looked at the first tree. This little shrub.

This little bush. That is cursed. But there is a second tree here. And that brings us to our third point. Verses 7 and 8.

The dependent heart. A tree by the river. The tree beginning in verse 7. Blessed is the man. You see the immediate contrast there.

Verse 5. Cursed is the man. Now here in verse 7. The contrast. Blessed is the man. Blessed is the man. Who trusts in the Lord. Whose trust.

Is the Lord. He is like a tree. Planted by water. That sends out its roots. By the screen. And does not fear. When he comes. For its leaves remain green.

[18:56] And is not anxious. In the year of drought. For it does not cease. To bear fruit. You see the picture here. A tree. It's lush.

It's green. It's by the river back. It has an extensive root system. It's always green. Even in a time of drought.

Even in the heat. And it's always fruitful. This tree. Is a picture of a certain type of person. This tree is a picture of a certain type of heart.

What kind of a heart is this? Verse 7. Blessed is the man who trusts. In the Lord. Whose trust. Is. The Lord.

This tree is a picture of a trusting heart. A dependent heart. A heart that goes to God. First. In every circumstance of life. Have you ever read about this tree?

[19:57] In another part of the Bible? You have. In fact. You even heard about it in the service. Earlier. Judy read for us. From Psalm 1. There's another tree.

The tree in Psalm 1. And. It's the same tree. The same tree. The same heart. The same person. Who is blessed of God. Now. Let's look at. Let's look in Psalm 1.

This is Psalm 1 verses 1 through 3. Blessed is the man. Blessed is the man. Who walks not in the counsel of the wicked. Nor stands in the way of sinners. Nor sits in the seat of scoffers.

But his delight. Is in the law of the Lord. And on his law. He meditates. Day and night. He is like a tree. Planted by streams of water.

That yields its fruit in its season. And its leaf does not wither. In all that he does. He prospers. Same tree. Same person.

[20 : 56] Same heart. Same blessing of God. You see the similarities between the two trees. Between the tree here in Jeremiah 17. And the tree in Psalm 1. Jeremiah 17.

A tree planted by the water. Psalm 1. A tree planted by the water. Both trees are by the water. Both trees are healthy. Jeremiah 17. Its leaves remain green. Psalm 1.

And its leaf does not wither. Both trees are fruitful. Jeremiah 17. Nor will cease from yielding fruit. Psalm 1. That yields its fruit in its season. Same tree.

Same person. But. There is a little difference between the two trees. There is a little difference in emphasis. And as we compare these two. I think there is a particular emphasis here.

About this tree. In Jeremiah 17. That is important. Let me point out to you. One thing that is emphasized here. That is not emphasized in Psalm 1.

[21 : 53] Is the root system of the tree. He is like a tree. Planted by the water. That sends out its roots.

By the stream. I remember years ago. I went fishing. Aluminum boat. Small. Slow.

Sleepy. Little. Meandering river. On the border of Alabama and Mississippi. The Pasquagula River. Very often on that river.

The trees. The leaves. On a tree. Provided a canopy. Over the river. And it was very interesting. What had happened in this river. When there was a curve.

And a bend in the river. That flowing water. That current. Would erode. The river bank. It would wash away the soil. And it would expose. The root system.

[22 : 47] For the trees. That were next. To the river. River. And so it was really neat. You could look up at a tree. From the boat. And you could look above ground. And you saw the trunk.

And you saw the branches. And you saw the green leaves. But then you could also. Look below ground. And what did you see? You saw this extensive root system.

These roots going down. Deep into the river. And into the water. It was really something to see. I want to ask you this morning.

Are you like this tree? Have you sunk your roots? Into the water? Let's answer three questions. Number one. What is the water? Number two. What are the roots? And number three. Most importantly. How do you sink your roots?

[23 : 46] Down into the water? Number one. What is the water? If you've got your Bible open. Look down just a little farther. In the same chapter. To verse 17. In Jeremiah 17.

Excuse me. Verse 13. In Jeremiah 17. O Lord. The hope of Israel. All who forsake you. Shall be put to shame. Those who turn away from you.

Shall be risen. In the earth. For they have forsaken the Lord. The fountain. Of living water. Earlier in the book of Jeremiah.

Chapter 2. Verse 13. They have forsaken me. The fountain of living water. Two places in Jeremiah. Who is the living water? The Lord.

The Lord. We all know the words of Jesus in John chapter 4. Where Jesus is talking to the woman at the well. Jesus said to her. This is verses 13 through 15.

[24 : 42] In John chapter 4. Jesus said to her. Everyone who drinks this water. Will be thirsty again. But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him. Will never be thirsty.

The water that I will give him. Will become in him a spring of water. Welling up into eternal life. Who is the water?

Who is the river? It's the Lord. It's Jesus. What are the roots? The roots.

Obviously are our faith. Back in Jeremiah 17. Verse 7. The man who trusts in the Lord. Whose trust is the Lord.

When you trust the Lord. That's the roots of your faith. Going down into Christ. Now let me point out another difference to you.

[25 : 36] Between the tree in Jeremiah 17. And the tree in Psalm 1. In Psalm 1 it says this tree is fruitful in season. But in Jeremiah 17.

It says that the fruitfulness here. Is contrary to its external circumstances. Verse 8b. And does not fear when heat comes. For its leaf remains green.

And is not anxious in the year of drought. This is fruitfulness. This is fruitfulness. When circumstances are contrary. This is fruitfulness in drought. This is fruitfulness when the heat comes. This tree. Is sustained. Because its roots. Go down into the river. Now how do we sink the roots of our faith.

Into Christ. I think there are three things that come together. Number one is circumstances. The heat. And the year of drought. You know I think from this verse.

[26 : 36] We can take. That the fact that your roots are deep into Christ. Will sustain you in difficult times. But I think the very opposite is true also. It is the difficult times. That cause you to sink.

Your roots. The roots of your faith. Deeper into Christ. So the first factor. In sinking our roots into Christ. Circumstances. The heat. The drought. The second factor.

I believe. Is God's word. You know if we go back to the tree. In Psalm 1. What is one of the emphasis there. About that tree. In Psalm 1. That kind of person.

But his delight. Is in the law of the Lord. And on his law. He meditates. Day and night. And then the third factor.

In sinking your roots into Christ. I believe is prayer. You know Jesus talks about. Fruitfulness in John chapter 15. The imagery there. Is that Jesus is the vine.

[27 : 32] And we are the branches. And in John 15. How do we bear fruit? Jesus said. If my word. If you abide in me. And my words abide in you. You will ask what you will.

It shall be done unto you. Herein is my father glorified. That you bear much fruit. What does Jesus say. Takes place. In a fruitful life. The word of God. Abiding in you.

And then prayer. So I'm going to say. To sink the roots of our faith. Into Christ. Three things come together. What is it? The circumstances of life. Drive us.

To the Bible. And drive us. To the promises of God. We find those promises. And then we pray them to God. And he sustains us. And that process. Is sinking the roots of our faith.

Into Christ. I want to ask you this morning. Is that going on. In your life. I want to ask you this morning.

[28 : 34] Which tree are you like? Are you allowing. The circumstances of life. The sometimes unbearable circumstances of life.

To drive you. Into God's word. And then you pray those promises. And God sustains you. What's going on there? You're sinking.

The roots of your faith. Deeper. And deeper. Into Christ. When you become a Christian. You begin to sink the roots of your faith.

Into Christ. What happens. All of your Christian life. This process goes on. And those roots go down deeper and deeper. Into Christ. Into the person.

And work of Christ. And you are sustained. And you're fresh. And you're vibrant. And you are fruitful. I have a friend that I went to seminary with.

[29 : 36] Lovely Christian man. I remember having fellowship with him and his wife years ago when I was in seminary. After we graduated from seminary.

We would occasionally run into each other and touch base with each other. Tragedy from a human perspective struck in the life of this man.

His wife was diagnosed with cancer. Very little hope from a human perspective. That she would live. And yet through surgery.

And through radiation. And through various treatments. She continues to live. Her chances are still not that great that she will live. My friend was in ministry.

And in the ministry situation that he was in. It just disappeared. It evaporated. He didn't have a place to go. He didn't have something to do. My friend has been through very difficult times.

[30 : 36] Wynum and I just had a meal with him several months ago. And as he told me the things that have been transpiring in his life. We put him down on a list of people to pray for.

What do you pray for someone like that? Someone whose wise health hangs and life hangs in the balance. Someone whose future in ministry is not clear.

What do you pray for people who are in a time of drought? What do you pray for people when it's hot? What do you pray for people when everything around them is almost unbearable?

Here's the thing to pray. Pray for them. That through this process. Their roots would go down deep. And pray for them. That they will find in Christ. Something that will sustain them. In this time. Is this going on in your life?

[31 : 38] Sometimes it's going on in my life. Sometimes it's not. Let's pray for each other. That we would not be like the first tree.

The tree with the attitude that is cursed of God. The attitude of self-sufficiency. The attitude of self-salvation. But that God through the circumstances of life. Would drive us into his word.

And drive us to prayer. And that in the process. Our roots go down. Deep. Into Christ. Let's bow together in prayer.
Let's bow together in prayer.