

THE PASSAGE

Jeremiah 17

1. "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; with the point of a diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of your altars,
2. while their children remember their altars and their wooden images by the green trees on the high hills.
3. O My mountain in the field, I will give as plunder your wealth, all your treasures, and your high places of sin within all your borders.
4. And you, even yourself, shall let go of your heritage which I gave you; and I will cause you to serve your enemies in the land which you do not know; for you have kindled a fire in My anger which shall burn forever."
5. Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord.
6. 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, in a salt land which is not inhabited.
7. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord.
8. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but her leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit.
9. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; Who can know it?
10. I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.
11. "As a partridge that broods but does not hatch, so is he who gets riches, but not by right; it will leave him in the midst of his days, and at his end he will be a fool."
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23. "But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction.
24. "And it shall be, if you diligently heed Me," says the Lord, "to bring no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work in it,
25. "then shall enter the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, accompanied by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain forever.
26. "And they shall come from the cities of Judah and from the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin and from the lowland, from the mountains and from the South, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, bringing sacrifices of praise to the house of the Lord.
27. "But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." " "

THE BACKGROUND

Jeremiah's ministry started in the last years of ancient Israel under King Josiah in 627 BC. He sees the fall of the remnant nation of Judah and lives in the following years of captivity in Babylon. Jeremiah warned against the elements that would bring about the time of tribulation for the ancient people of God, the dynamics of ancient Israel are the same spiritual dynamics that play out in our time, and in the time to come.

The nation did not listen, and the prophecy came to pass just as it's written. Take a look through the chapter above and answer the following questions:

- WHAT SINS WAS JUDAH COMMITTING? (WHAT SINS IN OUR DAY PARALLEL THOSE SINS?)
- WHAT DID GOD THREATEN? (HISTORICALLY, HOW DID IT COME TO PASS? WHAT MIGHT PARALLEL IN OUR DAY?)
- WHAT WAS PROMISED IF THEY REFORMED? (WHAT PARALLEL MIGHT BE IN OUR DAY?)
- WHAT CORRECTIONS WOULD THEY HAVE TO MAKE? (WHAT IS THE PARALLEL FOR OUR DAY?)

Most of the chapter is given for context, but our main focus is verses 5 through 11. Jeremiah draws a contrast between the cursed man and the blessed man. And the ultimate focus is where each of these types of people ends up.

THE BLESSED PERSON

The blessed person is summed up like this:

"But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him." (Jer. 17:7)

It's rather interesting phrasing, it literally says; blessed is the "valiant warrior or person" who "takes refuge" in ***Yahweh***. Hebrew has several names for God, and depending on the name, they are putting a fine point on the statement. This is the "I Am" name of God; His highest and truest name. Here is something to consider: It is only the courageous warrior who takes refuge in God, the ultimate being of the universe.

- WHAT EXACTLY IS "GOOD FRUIT"?
- WHY IS IT JUST THAT WE ARE REWARDED ACCORDING TO THE "FRUIT OF OUR DOINGS"; DO WE WORK FOR GOD'S REWARDS?

The blessed person bears fruit, and receives reward appropriate to the fruit. Keep in mind what Jesus told us about fruit:

"You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit." (Matt. 7:16-17)

Fruit is the impact a person makes in life. However, it manifests in their actions, but Jesus points out that it is just their ***true nature*** playing out in reality. **We DO what we ARE.**

That's why the passage makes this unexpected turn. It's speaking about people like trees and fruit, and then the next sentence is talking about the human heart. –Because God's judgment on what we DO, is really incidental; to what we ARE. ***The blessed person was given what they deserved as manifested in their conduct; but what is really being judged is the heart and mind.***

- WHAT DEFINES A BLESSED PERSON ACCORDING TO THIS PASSAGE?
- WHAT IS THEIR REWARD?

THE CURSED PERSON

What makes the man cursed is summed up in a single line:

"Cursed is the [man] who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh." (Jer. 17:5)

The word "adam" means literally, any individual of the human species. –Cursed is any human being who "**bawtakh**" – *trusts, takes refuge, puts confidence in, or feels secure, in the human system.*

~So what has lead the cursed person to be proven the fool?

The root of the problem is they gained their confidence from human ways. Although the ancient Hebrew wouldn't know the term, in time we develop this into an accepted philosophy; humanism. Jeremiah warns about the very thing we consider enlightenment today!

~The cursed become a success by human standards; they are rich.

They become rich by human standards. We have since coined another term since Jeremiah's time; it is a line of ethics called "**consequentialism**." It is summed up in the popular phrase "*the ends justify the means.*" It states that, if a goal is moral enough, any method of achieving it is acceptable. Consequentialism has taken on various forms through the ages.

It can be made to look good and to sound good, but at the root; it is the complete opposite of God's nature. Here are some examples:

"**State consequentialism**" considers the welfare of the state, regardless of what pain or suffering may be caused to the individual. **Utilitarianism** revolves around human pleasures and preferences instead of moral precepts. **Ethical egoism** focuses only on the consequences of self; while **ethical altruism** looks only to the consequences of others and not to the self at all. Its motto is "live for others."

The cursed person relies on the human heart as their compass. Shakespeare wrote, "This above all: to thine ownself be true, and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

Once again, it is something that sounds good, but consider this reflection from a "shmoop" article:

These days, most of the time we hear people say "to thine ownself be true," they are speaking literally. And it seems like pretty good advice, especially for people heading off to college, taking a new job, or making big changes in their lives. It's important to remember to be yourself and not change for other people.

This advice has been used as a self-help slogan. It's put on greeting cards, wall art, and more recently, used in a lot of tattoos. People are proclaiming to the world: we want to be who we are, without anyone else defining us. And that's a good thing.

But we can't help wondering if this catchy advice is really just the stuff of cliché greeting cards printed with insufferably cheesy little poems. ...

Think about it. Polonius [the character who says this in the play, "Hamlet"] is a verbose, out of touch dad with more than a slogan or two of advice to pass along to his son. It's got corny and cliché written all over it. So next time you see a greeting card or necklace with "to thine ownself be true" written on it, just think: that was exactly the way our boy Shakespeare intended it to be used—with a heaping helping of irony.

In essence, even when Shakespeare wrote it, it was with the idea that it sounded good to the superficial, but really didn't come out to a good end!

The dynamic of Jeremiah's day was not much different from ours. People got rich at the expense of others. Those with the power rigged the system for their own benefit. Jeremiah makes an interesting analogy that points directly to them being proven as fools in the end:

"As a *partridge that broods but does not hatch*, so is he who gets riches, but not by right; it will leave him in the midst of his days, and *at his end he will be a fool*."

The partridge apparently, is not a very smart bird. They will often "adopt" the eggs of other birds and hatch them. The idea is, they put all this effort into brooding these eggs only to find out that they have not hatched what they think they're hatching. For the welfare of partridges, it has come to nothing. They have been fools.

This is exactly how it played out for the Hebrew people of Judah. They played the system until the very end when Babylon reduced the remainder of Israel to rubble and took them all captive. They did not heed God. And for a time, it looked good, they were in step with the pagan world around them. It seemed to be working, the rich got richer and they fostered an illusion of security for themselves. That's why prophets like Isaiah were executed; the truth was inconvenient and uncomfortable. But in the end, they didn't hatch the eggs they thought they were hatching.

- CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING PHILOSOPHIES, WHAT COULD BE WRONG WITH THEM? WHERE HAVE THEY TAKEN PEOPLE IN THE PAST?
- CONSEQUENTIALISM (STATE/ UTILITARIANISM/ EGOISM/ ALTRUISM)
- WHAT MIGHT THE "CURSED ONE" LOOK LIKE IN OUR DAY? THE "BLESSED ONE"?
- WHAT "UNEXPECTED EGGS ARE WE HATCHING IN OUR DAY?"