

Message #21**Jeremiah 17:1-27**

I want to begin this by putting a twist on an illustration that I read from another minister. There were two apes who were sitting by each other talking. One ape said to the other ape, can you believe that there are idiots who think humans came from apes. The one ape responded and said no I can't. It is totally and completely degrading to us to say that. You would never see us abort one of our babies. You would never see us get involved in some same sex relationship. You would never see us want some sex change operation. You would never see any of our mothers abandon their children in a garbage bin. You would never see us leaving our families to go chase after some other ape. You would never find any of us getting drunk or taking drugs. It is totally degrading and disgraceful to any ape to say that humans came from apes.

The fact is, it is the human world that is evil. It is the human world that does detestable and depraved things. Human beings have hearts and minds that are desperately wicked. **But what is even worse than this reality is the truth that God's own people have the same kind of hearts.**

The judgments of God were coming against the people of God and the people of God had delusionally convinced themselves that they were right with God. God's people do not realize how much God hates sin. In fact, God's people were so delusional they did not see themselves as depraved sinners. That point is the one Jeremiah makes in one of the most famous verses in the Bible. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and desperately sick; who can understand it." Humans are sick sinful human beings and they are desperately wicked.

The only one who can understand this is one right with God. This person sees truth and admits truth because God has done a work in his heart and mind. That is what is so pathetic about the vast majority of even God's own people, they are delusional.

So what God does in this chapter is specifically point out some sins that were causing His anger to burn and causing Him to judge His own people. In the process of doing this, God wanted people coming to terms with truth about themselves and truth about Him. What we see here is this:

GOD'S ANGER IS BURNING AGAINST HIS OWN PEOPLE FOR SPECIFIC SINS AND IF THEY DO NOT ADMIT THEIR SIN PROBLEM AND TURN FROM THOSE SINS, HE WILL TAKE AWAY ALL OF HIS BLESSINGS AND POUR OUT HIS CHASTISING JUDGMENTS.

Now this chapter in Jeremiah presents several different themes. Jeremiah discusses a variety of topics. He discusses sin issues, judgment issues, heart issues, curses and blessings issues. This is one tough chapter to figure out.

This is a very serious passage of Scripture that points to at least six specific sins of God's people that were angering God. These six sins will cause God to pull the plug on His blessings.

SIN #1 – The sin of deeply engraved idolatry. 17:1-4

One commentator said the words in these verses “show the spiritual bankruptcy of Judah.” **This is God’s own assessment of His own people.** In **verse 1**, God says your sin is written down in your hearts as imbedded like an idolatrous stone engraved by an iron stylus and diamond point. The sin is deeply imbedded within the hearts of the people.

The reference to the iron stylus and diamond point is a reference to tools that were used for carving on idolatrous stones things that were permanent (Job 19:24). If you used these writing instruments, the writing would be forever.

What was engraved and written in God’s people’s hearts was sin. What is supposed to be written and engraved in the heart is the word of God. But what is actually engraved in the people’s heart is rebellion and sin. It is not some shallow level of sin. It is engraved with a diamond pointed iron stylus on their hearts. Righteousness is not in their hearts, the word of God is not in their hearts, horrible sin is engraved in their hearts.

What is needed is a complete heart replacement surgery and God says I am the one who can do it. But He warns if you do not turn to Me, I will give your wealth, including your land, to another power because you have “kindled a fire in My anger that will burn forever.”

According to **verse 2**, God’s people were so perverse that they yearned for idolatry like they did their own children and it was so prevalent that even their children pursued it.

The Asherim were sacred poles or trees placed beside the altars of Canaanite worship (Deut. 16:21). Asherah was a Canaanite goddess of fertility and Manasseh had placed a carved image of this in God’s temple (II Kings 21:7).

God’s own people had these idolatrous places of worship all over the land so God says in **verses 3-4** that I will give away all your wealth and treasures to others, and I will take away your inheritance and you will be taken captive out of your land to an enemy’s land because you have made Me burning mad.

Now what causes God’s people to do this kind of thing? A dirty, rotten, sinful, depraved heart.

SIN #2 – The sin of wrong trust. 17:5-10

God will curse a man who is part of His family, who trusts in man and does not trust in Him. Most people, even God’s own people, have way too much confidence in themselves and other things and very little trust in God. But as Charles Dyer said, “a person who trusts in man for protection is cursed because his heart has turned away from God” (*Jeremiah*, p. 1151).

Judah trusted in Egypt, Babylon, and other powers and she stopped trusting in God.

The truth is people trust in all kinds of things other than God. They trust in a politician, technology, counselors, economy, education, psychology, medicine, government, the military, and money. Philip Ryken said, “American money says, ‘In God We Trust,’ but what Americans really mean is ‘In Self We Trust’” (*Jeremiah & Lamentations*, p. 275). The truth is most people trust in men and trust in themselves and not God. But God says when one of His people trusts in this, they are cursed.

In **verses 5-6**, God says the one who trusts in man will have no strength, no refreshment and no prosperity. He will be barren. He will wither “like a desert bush.”

But in the middle of this section in **verses 7-8**, God says the one who trusts in the LORD will have the blessings of God. He will be like a tree planted by the water who will stand tall and strong and will continue to produce fruit. It will not matter what the difficulty or the drought or disaster, one who trusts in the Lord will stay alive and will bear fruit.

So if a person does not trust in men and chooses to trust in God, the outcome will be totally different even when the chastising judgments are coming from the hand of God.

Our problem is that we don’t know our own hearts, but God does. God’s people strut around as if they are right with Him, but God says most don’t judge their own hearts accurately, but God says I do. God says in **verse 10** that I search the heart, I test the mind and I will give to each man according to his ways and according to the results of his deeds.

Carefully look what is said in **verses 7-8**. In contrast to the man who trusts in men, blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD. He will be like a tree planted by water. He will have deep roots. He will not be afraid. He will stand with a confidence. He will produce fruit when others don’t. Others may be in a drought, but he will prosper and flourish.

But in **verse 9**, Jeremiah says the problem is most people don’t trust in the LORD. The vast majority of people do not trust in God. The vast majority of people trust in anything but God. **The reason why they do not trust in the LORD is because they have a deceitful and sick heart.** The human heart is the most crooked thing there is, when it comes to life and God.

A person’s heart is the most deceitful thing when it comes to what a person really trusts and believes. The heart is more deceitful than anything else in existence. You cannot trust your own heart. You cannot trust your own feelings. You cannot trust the feelings or heart of another person because it is desperately sick. It is depraved. Even the owner of the heart doesn’t know how corrupt and sick and depraved the heart actually is.

But in verse 10, God says I know. I am in the heart and mind searching business. I search the hearts to see who trusts Me and who doesn’t, and I will give rewards based on what is really in the heart.

Jeremiah concluded that the only chance one has to have a heart that trusts God is to cry out to God and ask Him to heal the heart (v. 14).

What would cause God's people to trust in something other than God? A dirty, rotten, sinful, depraved heart.

SIN #3 – The sin of unjust greed. 17:11

There were people who were prospering because of their greed and doing unjust things to prosper. The illustration of the partridge sitting on eggs, not her own, is an illustration that some say is absurd because a partridge would never sit and hatch eggs of other birds.

That is the point. It is totally absurd to think that someone can swoop in and take someone else's fortune and get away with it. If one tries to take something someone else was given by God, it won't last. If someone makes a fortune by doing unjust things and taking it from others, in the end he will discover it will all be gone.

What that person will discover is he was a greedy fool and in the end his wealth will forsake him and fly away and he will die a fool. The partridge would sit on eggs that were not hers and then when they would hatch they would desert her.

So it will be to the greedy fool. He may make his fortune and fame by manipulative deceitful means, but in the end it will forsake him and he will be seen to have been a fool.

SIN #4 – The sin of not honoring God, but forsaking God. 17:12-13

God is a glorious God and was seen as the glorious God by Israel at her sanctuary. God's throne and His sanctuary have always existed. God established His very glory in Israel's sanctuary as no other place in the world. He was Israel's hope. God, Himself, is Israel's hope and God is our hope.

But here is the problem. Israel did not trust in God. She forsook God and turned away from God. They forsook their fountain of living water and blessings.

God says in **verse 13** all those who turn away from God are written down. In other words, God keeps the record of those who turn away from Him in times of trouble and trial.

You do not want to be written down as one who turned away from God and His word, even when God is sending His chastisement against His own people.

SIN #5 – The sin of rejecting God’s word and God’s servant. **17:14-18**

When Jeremiah saw this truth revealed about sin and chastisement, he would often talk to God about himself. Jeremiah would always assess himself in view of the word of God he was proclaiming. There are six requests Jeremiah makes in view of depravity of heart:

Request #1 - Jeremiah asks God to heal him. **17:14a**

Request #2 - Jeremiah asks God to save him. **17:14b**

Jeremiah had stayed focused on God and His word and he continued to praise God. He did not want to end up written down in a book as being one who defected.

There are four ministry realities Jeremiah expressed in asking God to heal him and help him:

(Ministry Reality #1) - Jeremiah proclaims God’s prophecies and the people don’t believe it. **17:15**

In **verse 15**, Jeremiah says God I need your help because I proclaim your prophecies and they don’t believe them. Jeremiah says God look at this; these people keep saying where is the fulfillment of the word of the Lord, and let us see it right now. In other words, they are laughing at Jeremiah’s predictions and saying well let’s see God fulfill His word right now.

The basis for which Jeremiah makes these requests is his ministry:

(Ministry Reality #2) - Jeremiah was a shepherd who followed after the will and word of God. **17:16a**

(Ministry Reality #3) - Jeremiah did not hope for God’s woe judgment on His people. **17:16b**

(Ministry Reality #4) - Jeremiah had uttered everything God wanted. **17:16c**

Jeremiah says God please help me and heal me and save me for I trust in you.

Request #3 - Jeremiah asks God not to be a terror to him. **17:17a**

Request #4 - Jeremiah asks God to put to shame those who persecute him. **17:18a**

Request #5 - Jeremiah asks God to dismay his enemies but not dismay him. **17:18b**

Request #6 - Jeremiah asks God to bring crushing disaster on his enemies. **17:18c**

Jeremiah says people have been mocking You and Your word so bring on the prophetic disasters and let them experience them.

Jeremiah asks God to deliver him personally; he wanted God to do a surgical work on his heart. The only chance a person has when surrounded by sin and evil is for God to change one's heart. Jeremiah had prayed this often for the nation, but now he prays it for himself. Jeremiah knew God could heal the heart. No one was listening to him and he was being persecuted. God's people hated God's word and they hated God's servant. So Jeremiah says take notice of them and punish them, but not me.

SIN #6 – The sin of profaning the Sabbath Day. **17:19-27**

One of the major violations of God's law was that Israel had completely disregarded the mandates of the Sabbath Day. God's sacred day of worship was completely disregarded. God wanted His day kept holy (Lev. 25:1-22; 26:33-35; II Chron. 36:19-21).

His own people disregarded the importance of sacred worship. They had become very loose, even at the Temple in Jerusalem. It is quite obvious from **verses 19-20** that the people honored Kings, but they did not honor God.

In **verses 21-26** God told Jeremiah to stand in the gates and tell everyone that they have made a mockery of the Sabbath Day by treating it as just another work day, and if they will listen to Me and worship Me and reverence Me, then they will come into My Temple from all over the land and I will accept their worship.

But **verse 27** says if they do not listen, God would destroy Jerusalem and the people with fiery judgment. The Babylonian captivity was due in part to Sabbath Day violations. Daniel's prophecy of 70 weeks is clearly connected to Sabbath Day violations (II Chron. 36:19-21).

Even though things were on the verge of judgment, if the people would honor God, He would honor and bless them. So there still was a window of opportunity for the people of God to get back to a serious reverence and worship of God.