

Jeremiah 17:1-14 (tx: 5-8)

THE CONTRASTING TRUSTS

- I. The trust in man
- II. The trust in God

INTRODUCTION

Now, if you seriously study **Bible**, you will soon realize that it has quite a lot to say about trees.

- no, Bible is not a book about agriculture or gardening.
- it doesn't give helpful hints on how to grow trees.

But **Bible** is God's saving Word to a sinful world.

- its main purpose is to tell us how we can be saved only by faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners.
- & it tells us how we must live as those who believe and belong to Him.

And yet **Bible** talks a lot about trees.

- it does this in connection with its good news of salvation.
- & how we are to be and live as followers of Christ.

As a matter of fact, when we turn to **Bible's** 1st book, **Genesis**, we see that human history begins in a garden where there are 2 important trees.

- there in Paradise, Gen.2 & 3 says there was the tree of life that symbolized eternal life with God.
 - & the tree of good & evil that God commanded not to eat of it to test man to see if he really would trust & love & obey God & live forever with Him.

But man disobeyed Lord & His Word by eating of that tree.

- so he became a sinner separated from God with the result of eternal death.
- that's what Bible teaches at the end of Gen.3 where Lord drove man out to the garden.
 - & He put an angel at its entrance so man could not eat of the tree of life & live forever in sin.
- that's why all peoples, without Christ, are now sinners separated from God & real life.
 - & destined to do die forever.

But **Bible** doesn't stop there, for already in **Gen.3**, before Lord drove man out of His presence, He gave the promise of salvation.

- He gave us sinners the good news of the Savior who would come to bring us back to God.
- & so, as Jesus Christ, God Himself became human & died on a tree, the cross of Calvary.
 - there He paid for our sins fully & finally.

- th'fore, by faith in Him we are saved from sin & death to once again have free access to the tree of life, & have eternal life with God.

So then, the last book & chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22, says human history will end with a tree.

- for there it says heaven is symbolized as a city of those saved in Christ with the tree of life in its middle.
 - & it says its leaves give healing & life to all who are in the city.
- no wonder Bible often calls or compares Christians to trees.
 - for he was once a sinner because of a tree.
 - now she is a new person saved by a tree, the cross, to obtain the tree of life & live forever with God. .

Now, that's what Jeremiah 17:5-8 is saying.

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- it paints a contrasting picture of a withered bush & a flourishing tree to show the difference between one who trust in man & one who trusts in God.
- th'fore let's consider those CONTRASTING TRUST.
 - 1st, trust in man, & then, 2nd, trust in God.

I. THE TRUST IN MAN

Now these words of Jeremiah are part of the message he preached to Judah, the OT. Church.

- these people had sinned, for they had forsaken God to worship the false gods of their heathen, neighboring nation.
- O yes, they were still try to be religious by putting on a good show of piety with all their rites & rituals of prayer & praise to God.
 - but it was only coming from their lips, an outward show, & not from their hearts or lives.
 - & so on the Sabbath they went to church to worship, but during the week they lived in all kinds of evil & error.

Th'fore, God sent Jeremiah to tell them He was coming to judge & punish them for their sins if they didn't repent & turn from sin in faith & love & obedience to Him.

- & Jer.17 is part of Jeremiah's message of Lord's coming punishment.
- here he tells people just how foolish it is to trust in dumb idols or material things.
 - for that only brings God's punishment of a curse & death.

And in the beginning verses of chapter 17 he also tells the people:

- "Look, you just can't cover up your sins with some pious, religious practices, for sin isn't just outward acts of the hand & feet.
 - "But sin is of the heart too, so that no outward acts of piety, like church going, Bible reading, prayers, sacrifices, will ever take away sin from the heart.

- so God will punish them as long as their hearts are filled with sin & not full of faith & love for Him, no matter how good they look on the outside with all their religion.

And then, **Jeremiah** paints the 2 pictures in our **passage** to show how foolish it is to trust in man.

- for that means God's curse of death.
- & to show how really blessed & beautiful it is to trust in God with all your heart & life.

Now notice: he begins his message with: "This is what the Lord says".

- & that's so important, for it tells us just who says these words.
- they aren't the words of man or **Jeremiah**, but God's Words.
- &, to know who is saying it, that makes all the difference in the world, doesn't it?

Th'fore, to know this is God's Word, then we had better stop & listen & obey, or else.

- He says to us then: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength, & whose heart turns away from the Lord. But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord."

Now the 2 words, "**man**" & "**flesh**", are opposites to the spiritual.

- they refer to all that is temporal & material in this world in contrast to God's eternal, spiritual things.
- so the person, who trusts in man & looks to the flesh for strength, is the person who puts her faith & trust in all the things that are passing & perishable in this life.
 - he thinks that he himself & all that he has & does can help & save him from his sin & misery, his sorrows & problems.
 - & that all these will bring him real happiness & a joy-filled life.

Th'fore, this person lives only for herself & for all the things of this world.

- he wants to do his own thing, & spend all his time & energy & efforts to escape from his fears & frustrations, his problem & pains by amassing lots of possessions & power, popularity & pleasures.
- she tries to find happiness & success & security by having a big bank account & lots of properties.
 - by physical fitness & a fine-tuned body.
 - by having a big house, & buying a brand new car every year.
- he tries to forget his problems & fears by blowing his mind with drugs or by drowning them with alcoholic drinks.
- he tries to find peace in all the physical pleasure of immoral sex, pornographic movies & magazines & books, or with a one night stand.

That's the person who trusts in man & looks to the flesh for help & hope.

- she thinks all these things will help her find the real meaning of life & bring her eternal salvation & security, or genuine peace & joy forever.

- but then, the disastrous results are that these things, even our own selves, become our gods.
 - the most important things in life whom we worship & work for, serve & love with our all.

For note well: the last line of vs.5 says: “His heart turns away from the Lord”.

- you see, that’s way it always goes: you begin to put all your trust in material things to help,--
 - you begin living only to have more & more possessions & pleasures,--
- then your heart will always sooner or later turn away from God to serving & loving these things.

That’s because you can never have 2 gods in life, as Jesus once said.

- only 1 thing or person can rule our hearts & life: either God rules us completely.
 - or we rule ourselves or material pleasures & possessions rule us.
- & too, we cannot be both religious & sinful at the same time.
 - & we cannot cover up sin with a lot of religious acts.

But that’s exactly what **Judah, the OT. Church,** was trying to do.

- they were trying to serve both God & man.
- they were putting their trust in the things of man & their own power.
 - & they thought they were strong & safe & secure forever, because they could save themselves with a lot of possessions & power.
 - & by enjoying themselves with all kinds of sin & evil & error.

And they even thought they could get away with it before God.

- they could as long as they still held on to the religion of their fathers.
 - as long as they observed the Sabbath, performed the necessary sacrifices, observed the required feast days, & all the rest.
- but all of these religious practices did not involve their heart or penetrate & fashioned their living.
 - they were only a nice pious cover-up for their sins & the worship of false gods, with the hope God would be pleased.

Jeremiah 7 puts it this way: “You are trusting in deceptive words by saying, ‘This is the temple of the Lord’ & not changing your ways.

- “Yet you steal and murder & commit adultery & perjury. You burn incense to & follow other gods.
- “Then you come into God’s house & stand before Him & say you are safe to do all these detestable things because all your pious acts will please Him.”

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So **Jeremiah** warns: “Look, Judah, you cannot do this: trust both man & God.

- “For, if you make the things of this world more important in your life that you worship them as your god, & think that will bring you real happiness, you are all wrong.
- “For then really your heart is turned away from Lord, & you are cursed before God & worthy of His punishment.”

Now, let’s be careful that we don’t just look at **Judah**.

- if we are honest, what about you & me? where are we putting our trust & what we are making the object of our love?
 - how are we trying to find real joy? - what’s the most important thing in your or my life?
- upon whom or what are we depending on to find help & hope in the middle of our fears & frustrations?

Are we like so many today who are like those OT people because they are trusting power & possessions & pleasures to save them from the mess & miseries of life?

- with them they think they can save themselves.
- or at least they think the hope & help for a better world of happiness is more & more advancements in science & medicine & technology, in knowledge & education.

And maybe we even claim we are Christians—believe in God & Jesus Christ.

- we go faithfully to church on Sunday, attend Bible study groups, read our Bibles & pray every day.
 - live good, clean moral lives in our community.
- but why? - just to cover up our sins of worshiping false gods & living only for the things of this world with the hope God will still be pleased with us?
 - but really our hearts are turned away from Him.
 - we don’t really trust & love, serve & obey Him with our all, for our hearts & lives are filled with other gods & sin.

Well, **Bible** says in **Jeremiah** if that is true: that we are trying to trust ourselves & human might & material things to help us, and then we are “**cursed**”.

- & Jeremiah goes on to describe this curse, or the person who trusts man & not God.
- he says she is like a useless, little, skinny, stubby, shrub in a hot, dry desert where there is nothing at all.
 - no good thing & no one live.

O, what a terrible, true picture of him who has turned from God to trust & serve the things of this world with the hope of gaining real happiness!

- O to be sure, there is some life in that desert shrub: it exists for awhile, but barely.
- so like that shrub, we exist, thinking we really have it made & all we need.
 - we have a great life with peace & security & happiness with lots of money in the bank, a nice home, fancy car, a beautiful body.
 - but then 1 little thing happens: a fire, an accident, a fatal disease & it’s all gone.

- & we may think we can get rid of all our problems with the sinful pleasures of today.
 - but then what happens tomorrow when it all wears off?
 - the pleasures are gone & things are worse than ever?
 - & there is nothing left but headaches & heartaches, problems & misery?

You see, material things & outward pleasures don't last forever.

- th'fore those who trust & live only for these is like that useless, bleached, baked, barren shrub in a hot, dry desert.
 - or, Ps.1 says, they are like worthless chaff that is blown away in the wind—good for nothing.
- those who trust in everything but God are really nothing & have nothing.
 - no real life & hope & help for their fears & frustrations.
 - no real hope for a real, meaningful, exciting, eternal life & joy.
- all that remains for such a person is death: eternal death, or separation from God forever.

So, you see, there is nothing good in putting our trust in the things of this world.

- they won't ever save us or bring us genuine joy & life.
- so why put our trust in man & human power & achievements to bring us real everlasting life?

II. THE TRUST IN GOD

But now look at the picture **Jeremiah** paints of the one who trust & hope in God & is blessed or happy forever.

- she trusts only in God, & puts her confidence & hope in Him alone, so that she looks only to Him for help & strength & salvation.
- he believes in Jesus as his only Savior, & lets Him be the only Lord to rule his heart & his whole life.
 - God is the only Lord he loves & serves with all his being & behavior.
- this is the one who is really blessed & beautiful.
 - for she finds true, everlasting satisfaction & security, as she experiences real, meaningful, eternal life with Lord right now in this life, & forever in the life to come.

And that's what **Jeremiah** goes on to describe in **vs.7/8**: the blessedness & beauty of the person who trust God.

- of him loves & lives for Him as his only Lord & Savior, & looks to Him only for salvation & strength.
- Jeremiah says: “He is like a beautiful tree planted by the water, sends out its roots by the stream, does not fear the heat, has no worries when drought comes, but its leaves are always green & it continues to bear fruit.”

That is to say, the person who trusts in God is beautiful & blessed because he has everything as the object of God's saving, eternal grace & love.

- notice: our text says she is like a tree that is planted—not a wild tree growing on its own, trying to survive by its own strength.
 - not a weak, little shrub trying to exist on its own.
- but he is a planted tree: one already chosen by God's grace way back in eternity, Eph.1 says.
 - chosen by God to be His so that Lord Himself came, as Jesus Christ, to seek & to save him by Christmas' manger, Calvary's cross, & Easter's empty grave.
 - & then, by sovereign grace, through the H Spirit & His Word, God called him from the way of sin & death, & by faith planted him in Christ, & gave him eternal life.

Th'fore the person who trusts in Lord alone is one who is planted in God's garden of grace.

- & there she is fed by streams of salvation & eternal life through the Spirit's presence & power.
 - here God keeps & cultivates him, blesses him with every good thing, strengthens him to deal with every life's situation, & to bear the fruit of the Christian life.
 - a life of love to Him & to his fellow human beings.
 - & planted in God's garden he is kept safe & secure in all of life & through death & on into eternity.
- & then, as a tree planted & kept by God, those who trust in Him will escape the final punishment of sin when all those not trusting Him will be rooted up & destroyed forever, Matt.15:13 says.
 - but they will live forever in blessed fellowship with Lord.

That's the person who trusts in God & are His by faith in Christ.

- we have all we need to live a full, meaningful life of love & service to Lord & others.
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- &, when the heat or drought of life comes: those messy, miserable situations of suffering & sorrows, trials & tears & temptations, & we Christians have them too,--
 - when they come they will not shatter our peace & joy, for our being & salvation & life aren't based on feelings or material things, but on God.

And so, when we trust in God alone, we don't have become anxious & afraid when our world seems to come crashing down around us.

- for, in Christ, we possess divine strength to overcome them all.
- we have inner peace & real happiness because we know what Christ did for us on the cross.
 - th'fore nothing will ever separate us from God & His love: not life, & not even death.

For, as those in Christ, we are God's beautiful, fruitful tree.

- planted by God, supported by God, growing by God grace & power, & bearing fruit, Ps.1 also says.
- that is, we have everything from God that we need to face & overcome all that life throws at us.
 - we have the fruit of patience in the middle of pain & peril.
 - the fruit of gratitude in prosperity & peace.
 - the fruit of desire & zeal to use every opportunity to serve God & make Christ Lord of all.
 - & the fruit of faith & trust to endure all trials & temptations.
- so no wonder those who believe & belong to God are not anxious or afraid in the middle of a world like ours today that's full of fear & sin, evil & error.
 - for we can just go on living for our Lord & Savior with peace & joy in our hearts because He is with us every step of the way.

CONCLUSION

O, how beautiful & blessed, real & rich this kind of a life really is, isn't it?

- it is exciting & meaningful & eternal when we live for God only.
 - because that brings a real happiness that never fails.
- it's all ours, if we trust in God alone, Bible says in Jer.17.

So stop trusting yourself or material things to get real, eternal joy, for we will never get it that way.

- but we must put our trust in God alone: believe in Jesus as our only Savior & let Him rule our hearts & our whole life so that we love & live for Him as our only Lord.
- then we will be blessed & beautiful—joyful & at peace, like a flourishing, fruitful tree, in this life.

And then, you know, someday at the end of life when we die, or at the end of time when Christ returns, we will be transplanted into God's heavenly garden.

- there Rev.22 says: "We will be planted beside the river of the water of life that comes from the throne of God and the Lamb, Jesus Christ."
- & there we will live forever with our God in perfect peace & joy.

Now that's really beautiful & blessed, isn't it?

- well, are you God's beautiful, blessed, planted, fruitful tree, or person, who trusts & lives for Him only?

AMEN