

# Blessed is the One Who Trusts in the LORD, Whose Confidence is in Him

17: 1-11

**DIG:** Upon what is Jeremiah relying? In what was Judah trusting? What was the evidence of this? How does this contrast with the gods of other nations, their altars and Asherah poles (see Exodus 34:12-14)? In contrast to the cursed drought conditions that prevail, what blessed hope does Jeremiah cling to and hold out to others? Why does Jeremiah call the human heart deceitful above all things? What is the one main point of the parable in verse 11?

**REFLECT:** What times of spiritual "drought" have you experienced? What keeps you going during those dry times? Where are your roots? Are you rooted in Christ? Are you the bridge that leads others to Him? At present, are you feeling more like a bush in the wastelands or a tree planted by the water? Why? What is the relationship between the mind and our actions? Are you eternally secure in Messiah? Why? Why not?

606 BC during the eleven-year reign of Jehoiakim

**Judah's indelible sin:** Y'hudah's wickedness is indelibly engraved with an iron tool or an engraver's chisel, inscribed with a diamond point (*external*). The surface on which such an iron tool operated was normally stone, but here we see a picture of Judah's sin being engraved on the tablets of their hardened hearts (*internal*). Their guilt had penetrated deep into their hearts, their innermost being. But, at the same time, their disgrace was openly flaunted as though they had written it on the horns of their altars (17:1).

The very place that was meant to atone for sin became sin . . . the sin of idolatry. The horns of the altar were set on top of the bronze altar at each of the four corners to hold the wood for the fire and the sacrifice. The blood of the animal was smeared onto the horns of the altar to atone for sin. After being slaughtered, the blood of the bull was then put on the four horns of the bronze altar with the finger of Moshe, and the rest was poured out at the base of the altar. That act purified the bronze altar, because the blood purified that on which it was smeared. It was then ready for sacrificial use (see the commentary on Exodus Gh - Bring a Bull to the Front of the Tabernacle and Slaughter It There). Jeremiah's intent here is to demonstrate that the offerings that were made in his day had no atoning value; they were merely *external*, for show, with no *internal* substance.

Idolatry was so pervasive that even their children remember their altars and Asherah poles erected in honor of the Queen of Heaven (see Cd - [They Knead dough and Make Cakes for the Queen of Heaven](#)). They put those forbidden Asherah poles everywhere, beside the spreading trees and on the high hills (17:2). While the people offered sacrifices to YHVH they continued to be involved in the worship of the Canaanite deities, a clear rejection of the sole sovereignty of ADONAI and their covenant with Him (see the commentary on Exodus Dk - [You Shall Have No Other Gods Before Me](#)). Little wonder that Yirmeyahu saw Y'hudah's guilt as something deeply engraved on their hearts.

The LORD declared: My mountain in the Land (Mount Zion), the location of the Temple in Jerusalem (Psalm 24:3; Isaiah 2:3; Zechariah 8:3) and your wealth and all your treasures I will give away as plunder, together with your high places, because of your habitual sinfulness throughout your country. Through your own fault you will lose the inheritance (the Land, the City, the Temple) I gave you (17:3-4a). This is precisely what happened in 586 BC (see Ga - [The Fall of Jerusalem](#)).

Here Jeremiah is connecting the word inheritance with the Sabbatical Year (let the Land lie unplowed and unused in Exodus 23:11 and Deuteronomy 15:1-2), with the disinheritance from the Land itself. One of the reasons given for the captivity is that Y'hudah failed to observe the Sabbatical Year. Throughout the period that Judah lived in the Land there should have been a total of seventy Sabbatical Years that should have been observed but were not. On that basis, YHVH decided that Babylon's dominance over Judah would last seventy years (see Gu - [Seventy Years of Imperial Babylonian Rule](#)). One year for each Sabbatical Year not observed in the Land. Because Judah refused to obey God's Word, she would receive this judgment: I will enslave you to your enemies in a land you do not know, for you have kindled My anger, and it will burn until (Hebrew: *ad*) My wrath has been satisfied (17:4b).

**Contrast between trust in man and trust in God:** This is what ADONAI says: Cursed is the mighty one (Hebrew: *geber*) who trusts in lowly mankind (Hebrew: *adam*), who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the LORD. People like that will be like bushes in the wastelands that never become full-grown trees because their growth is stunted. They will not see prosperity when it comes because they will never be capable of producing any fruit. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt (Deuteronomy 29:23) land where no one lives (17:5-6).

But, by contrast, blessed is the one who trusts in ADONAI, whose confidence is in Him (17:7). Just prior to His crucifixion, Yeshua told His talmidim that He would be leaving them. Where I am going you cannot follow now, but you will follow later. Such a

statement was bound to stir some questions. Peter spoke for the others and asked: **Lord, why can't I follow You now (Yochanan 13:36-37).** Jesus' reply reflected the tenderness of a parent to a child: **Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust in Me. There are many rooms in My Father's house; I would not tell you this if it were not true. I am going there to prepare a place for you . . . I will come back and take you to be with Me so that you may be wherever I am going (John 14:1-3).** Reduce the paragraph to a sentence and it might read, "You do **the trusting** and I'll do **the taking.**"

The people who live in Cherrapunji, India, have developed a unique way to get across the many rivers and streams in their land. They grow bridges from the **roots** of rubber trees. These "living bridges" take between 10 to 15 years to mature, but once they are established, they are extremely stable and last for hundreds of years. The Bible compares a person who trusts in **God to be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream.** Because this tree is well nourished 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 (17:7-8).** Like a firmly **rooted tree**, people who rely on ADONAI have a sense of stability and vitality despite the worst of circumstances. In contrast, people who place their trust in others often live with a sense of instability. The Bible compares them to living in a **salt land where no one lives (17:6).** So it is with the spiritual lives of people who forsake YHVH.<sup>163</sup>

**The spiritual condition of the human heart:** The heart is **deceitful above all things and beyond cure.** The Hebrew uses the medical term for *incurably sick* (15:18, 30:12). Who can understand it? The answer is in the next verse: **I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct (see the commentary on Revelation Cc - The Judgment Seat of Christ), according to what their deeds deserve (17:9-10).**

The world teaches that we are born "good." Actually Judaism teaches the same thing. This is one area where Christianity and Judaism differ greatly. But the Bible teaches that we are born with a **sin nature/totally depraved (Genesis 6:5; Ephesians 4:18-19; Romans 1:18-32; Titus 1:15).** This does not mean that the unregenerate person is totally insensitive in matters of conscience, of right and wrong (**Romans 2:15**). Further, total depravity does not mean that the sinful people are as **sinful** as they can be. There are lost people who are genuinely humane, who show kindness, generosity and love to others, who are good, devoted spouses and parents. But their actions do not aide in their salvation in any way. Finally, the doctrine of total depravity does not mean that the sinner engages in every possible form of **sin.**

Then what do we mean, positively, by the idea of total depravity? First, sin is a matter of the entire person, such as the body or the mind. Certainly several passages make clear that the body is affected (**Romans 6:6** and **12, 7:24, 8:10** and **13**). Other verses tell us that the mind or the reason is involved (**Romans 1:21-2; Second Corinthians 3:14-15, 4:4**). That the emotions are also involved is amply attested (**Romans 1:26-27; Galatians 5:24 and Second Timothy 3:2-4**, where the ungodly are described as being lovers of self and pleasure rather than lovers of **God**). Finally, it is evident that the will is also affected. The unregenerate person does not have a truly free will because he or she is a **slave to sin**. Rabbi Sha'ul starkly describes **the Romans** as having once been **slaves to sin** (**6:17**).

Sometimes sinfulness is covered with a genteel layer of charm and graciousness. Yet, as the doctrine of total depravity indicates, under that veneer is a **wicked heart** not truly inclined to **God**. Then we have the puzzling problem of "Mr. or Mrs. Nice," the very pleasant, thoughtful, helpful, generous unbeliever. It is at times hard to think of this type of person as sinful and in need of regeneration. How can such a person be a desperately wicked, selfish, rebellious sinner? But it's not a matter of what we think of as unpleasant. It is, rather, a matter of failure to love, honor, and serve **ADONAI**. Consequently, even the likeable and kindly person is in need of the Gospel of new life in **Jesus Christ**, just as much as any obnoxious, crude, and thoughtless person.<sup>164</sup>

**The fate of the unscrupulous:** Like a partridge that hatches eggs it did not lay are those who gain riches by unjust means (**17:11a**). It is likely that **Jeremiah** directed his ire specifically at King Jehoiakim. This verse sounds like a proverb, something like, "Don't count your chickens before they're hatched," and in a way it is. When the eggs hatch and the chicks realize the partridge was not the mother, they leave the partridge. The poor foolish partridge looks all over the place for another bird's eggs, but is never sure of hatching them at all. It is humiliating to be compared to a poor bird that cannot keep the eggs it hatches, the more so if one happens to be king.<sup>165</sup>

When their lives are half gone, their riches will desert them, and in the end they will prove to be fools (**17:11b**). The prosperity of the wicked is merely a passing delusion. Like this bird, the person who amasses riches unjustly, gets nothing in the end. It is soon gone and the one who worshiped the accumulation of wealth is shown to be a fool. The Hebrew word for fools, *nabal*, does not necessarily imply weakness of intellect, but can also mean a lack of moral understanding, or the inability to distinguish between right and wrong. The one main point of this parable is blessed is the one who trusts in **ADONAI** (instead of riches), whose confidence is in Him.