

**Jer. 17:5-18, Jeremiah and the Lord**  
**January 31, February 10, 1990**  
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**Overview**

1. Revise the chiastic arrangement proposed last time. (Don't discuss all the reasons in the sermon.)
  - a) That did not account for the strong connection of 17:5-13, as well as 14-18, with 15:15-21.
  - b) The link between 17:5-13 and ch. 16 on the basis of restoration seems artificial.
  - c) Lack of an IF between ch. 16 and 17:1-4 is embarrassing for such a major break.
  - d) Finally, 17:19ff is not really an oracle of judgment at all, but a command; qualitatively different from the sections to which we had linked it. Even the "fire" reference at the end differs in its basic Hebrew vocabulary from the previous two.

2. New proposed unification: ABAB C

Covenant jdgmnt	14:1-15:14	16:1-17:4
Jer. & the Lord	15:15-21	17:5-18
Final test		17:19-27

We can spell this out verbally. The whole section recaps what we saw in Solomon's prayer in 2 Chr. 6 and the Lord's answer in 2 Chr. 7. It is not enough to pray; one must also obey.

- a) The nation is facing judgment for violating its covenant with the Lord, and no amount of intercession can avert this disaster (in contrast with Solomon's prayer). The two sections end in almost identical language, concerning the coming fire.
  - b) Jeremiah's personal interaction with the Lord shows that the Lord has not abandoned those who truly love him, and who repent and turn from their sin.
  - c) So the Lord offers the nation a chance, not just to pray, but to demonstrate its change of heart by action, corresponding to the Lord's answer to Solomon's prayer. If it does not, the fire will still fall (though the vocabulary is distinctive).
3. This section is again an interchange between YHWH and Jeremiah, and develops the interaction initiated in 15:15-21. There, Jer. began and the Lord responded. Here, the Lord begins, and after a few exchanges, Jer. concludes. (This larger symmetry shows that Holladay's skepticism about the Lord's lack of response is ill-founded.) Specifically:
    - a) In 15:15-16, Jer. cited Ps. 1 as the reason God should protect him. In 17:5-8, the Lord responds from Ps. 1 that he will indeed bless Jer. and curse those who reject his message.

- b) In 15:18, Jer. questioned the Lord's reliability as a fountain of living waters. In 17:13, the Lord affirms that he is such a fountain.
- c) In 15:18, Jer. suggested that his wound is incurable. In 17:14, he recognizes that the Lord can heal him after all.
- d) The mockery of unbelievers against the message in 15:17 is illustrated in 17:15.
- e) Both sections recognize that Jer. must rest in God's sovereign knowledge of the situation, 15:15; 17:16 ("thou knowest," only here in Jer)
- f) Jer. ends in 17:18 where he began in 15:15, asking the Lord to be his vindicator toward his enemies.

**A. 5-8 (YHWH): Faith is blessed, infidelity cursed.**

The Lord begins the conversation with a beautiful little poem, contrasting someone who trusts in the Lord and someone who trust in man. It is based on Ps. 1, as was 15:16,17. Those developed Ps. 1:1,2; this develops v.3, and possibly 4-6 as well (the contrast with the ungodly).

Summary: Jer, you asked for my help on the grounds of Ps. 1. That same Ps. assures you of my blessing to you, if you trust in me, and of my rejection of your enemies who do not trust in me.

*Application:* Jeremiah raised his prayer to God in Scripture, and the Lord answers him in Scripture, even the same passage! Shows us something of the dynamic of our daily devotions.

It is useful to consider the two halves together, and trace four ideas: the *fact, basis, mechanism, and outcome* of God's judgment.

1. The Fact of God's Judgment

"Blessed is the man;" "Cursed is the man." God is the one who dispenses both happiness and sorrow, both curse and blessing. We need to cultivate a spiritual vision that sees his hand in all the affairs of life.

2. The Basis of God's Judgment

Not our works, but where our trust is. "Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness," Gen. 15:6. Note:

- a) trusting in man here is coupled with having the heart depart from the Lord. Can't trust both at the same time. It's one or the other.

b) How about Ps. 1? Doesn't that relate blessing to works instead of trust? Indeed, there the cursed one is the "ungodly," though nothing specific is stated about the form of his ungodliness. But the character of the blessed one is that he delights in the law of the Lord and meditates in it day and night; not his practical righteousness, but the focus of his heart and mind. Our focus in the Word of God will deepen our trust in him; the more we trust in him, the more we will want to be in his Word. Thus the two passages (Jer. 17 and Ps. 1) mutually expound and clarify one another on the source of God's blessing.

### 3. The Mechanism of God's Judgment

The prosperity or discomfort of a person is described as resulting from their environment, first introduced and then amplified.

a) The blessed man is like a tree planted by the waters, spreading out its roots by the river. Cf. trees along the wadis in Israel, like green ribbons stretched across the tawny sands. In Ps. 1, the river appears to be the Word of God; here, it is God himself, who manifests himself through that Word. Cf. John 14, "I am the vine, ye are the branches."

b) The cursed man's environment is described discontinuously, in 6a,c.

1) The word rendered "heath" is of uncertain meaning, occurring only here and in Ps. 102:18, where it also describes a person. If it is a plant, we are to think of a desert weed like the tumbleweed. But the root means "naked, bare," and Keil suggests that it may mean "destitute man," a vagabond without any means of subsistence, wandering through the desert until he drops.

2) The land is described as "parched" (without water), "salt" (so that nothing can grow there), "not inhabited" (thus no one else to help him).

### 4. The Outcome of God's Judgment

Very interesting: not described in terms of superficial benefits, but in terms of ability to cope with the opposite.

a) The cursed man cannot see when good comes. Even if he were to be surrounded by it, he cannot enjoy it.

b) The blessed man is not spared the heat, but he does not fear it (rather than not see it); and though the drought surrounds him, it neither withers his leaf nor aborts his fruit.

## B. 9 (Jer): Who can know man's heart?

Jer. responds that it's all well and good for God to make a

discrimination on the basis of whom one is trusting, but who can know the state of the heart? It is "deceitful" (twisted, treacherous, opposite of righteous) and "desperately wicked" (incurable; medical term). The issue is not only who can know the heart of someone else, but who can know one's own heart: Ps. 19:12; 1 Cor. 4:4. So how can Jeremiah be sure either of God's blessing to him or of God's destruction of the wicked?

**C. 10-11 (YHWH): I can, and I will reward people accordingly.**

1. The Lord searches and tests our innermost thoughts and motives. "Heart" as the seat of reason; "reins" ("kidneys") as the seat of emotion. We may not be able to know ourselves, let alone others; but the Lord can search us.
2. As a result, he will reward us appropriately.
3. The parable of the partridge illustrates this. Because the bird nests on the ground, many of the eggs that it lays are never hatched. So the wealthy sinner will not enjoy the fruit of his wickedness. "He shall leave them in the midst of his days" because he will be taken into exile.
4. *Application*: We must trust the Lord with our hearts! Our faith is not to be in our works; it's also not to be in our faith, since we can't adequately assess our own faith. We find our refuge only in God.

**D. 12-13a (Jer): You are our only hope.**

Jer. is almost back now. He is stating the generic principle from which he needs to draw personal application.

1. Conscious of the people's trust in the earthly temple, Jer. confesses to the Lord that the true sanctuary is the heavenly throne, the one "exalted from the beginning." (Tech. note: perhaps redivide into a bicolon, with two descriptions? See Holladay)
2. Then he acknowledges the one who sits on that throne and dwells in that sanctuary as the only hope, and departure from him as disaster.

**E. 13b (YHWH): Those who forsake me have no hope.**

The Lord's response is a chiastic echo of 13a.

1. "Those who depart from me shall be enrolled in the earth," destined for burial and Sheol, which was seen as under the earth. Corresponds to second half of 13a.
2. The Lord as a fountain of living waters: *miqweh* in 13a is a pun, meaning both "hope" and "pool." Here is the Lord's response to Jer's charge in 15:18.

**F. 14-18 (Jer): Chastened and yielding, I leave my case with you.**

This brings us back full circle to where 15:15 began. Jer. now accepts what he had not before, that the Lord is able to heal him (14). He reaffirms his resolve to serve the Lord, even in the midst of opposition (15-16), and once more casts the problem of his opposers to the Lord (17-18).

1. 14, Jer prays for restoration to the Lord  
The two requests of this verse grow out of 15:18-20. In 15:18, Jer. suggested that his wound is incurable. Now he recognizes that the Lord can heal him after all, and instead of complaining about lack of healing, asks the Lord for it. The Lord promised in 15:20 to be with Jer. to save him, and so Jer. asks the Lord to do just that.

"For thou art my praise," the one whom I praise. One cannot look for help to a god whom one criticizes, as in 15:18. Jer. now resolves to make God the center of his praise and his worship, and on this ground seeks his help.

2. 15-16, Jer declares his willingness to serve.  
His devotion is seen to be even more meaningful in the light of the opposition that he faces.
  - a) In 15:17, he mentioned the mockers. Here in v.15 he illustrates their mockery. "Where is this judgment you keep talking about? Let it come!"  
  
*Application:* Cf. the mockery endured by our Lord on the cross: "You said you could destroy the temple and build it in three days; save yourself, if you are the son of God" (Matt. 27:40); Cf. the doubters in Peter's day: "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Pet. 3:4). But Jeremiah's judgment did fall; the Lord did raise up his temple; and in spite of the mockery of people today, the Lord Jesus will return.
  - b) There are two possible overreactions to such criticism. Jer. now calls God to witness ("Thou knowest," cf. 15:15, which with this is the only other occurrence in Jer.) that he avoids both of them.
    - 1) The first danger is to give up the work to which God has called him, in discouragement and because of the rejection of the people.

AV "from being a pastor, to follow thee" violates the accents. "A pastor after you" is all one unit. God is the shepherd of Israel (Ps. 23:1; Ps. 80:1), and every one who seeks to feed God's people must do so following his example and under his leadership. Thus in 1 Pet. 5, those who feed God's flock are exhorted to look to the return of the LJC, the Chief Shepherd.

Thus what Jer. has not hastened away from is his pastoral

responsibility.

*Technical notes:* Several interpretations have been proposed, addition to that which I advocate.

- a> I have not eagerly given up my job as a shepherd in order to follow you. (AV: But the accents are against this. We should expect a disjunctive on M"/RO(EH, indicating that )AX:AREY/KF is a sentence-level modifier, but we have a conjunctive, showing that the phrase structure is "I have not hastened from being a shepherd-after-you")
- b> I have not been more eager than a shepherd to follow you. (Owen in Calvin. Accents are again a problem; also, what evidence do we have that shepherds are typically in a rush?)
- c> I have not hastened to be a pastor (Calvin, based on the Vulgate, but hard to get this from Hebrew)

- 2) The second danger is to become angry with those who reject him, and take vicarious pleasure in God's judgment on them. This Jer. denies: "I have not lusted after the woeful day." This is not to say that he does not look to God to vindicate him over his adversaries; he will in fact pray for just this in v.18. But the emphasis here is on the verb *ht)wh*, which has the connotation of bodily desire or lust. His desire for their judgment is a reasoned, deliberate reflection on his role as God's spokesman and how they have rejected God, not a venting of his spleen for the personal discomfort they have caused him.

- c) In 15:19, God had admonished him concerning what he let come out of his mouth. Now, using the same root *yc)*, he declares his words open for God's inspection. Note the italics in AV. The point is not that his words are right before God, but that God can see them and judge his motives. Of course, all that we say is in fact before God, but by acknowledging this Jer. shows his willingness to have God examine his words.

### 3. 17-18, Jer requests protection and retribution

This ends where 15:15 began, seeking God's judgment on his adversaries. The section has four couplets. The first prays for God's protection for him, the last for God's judgment on the wicked, and the middle two combine both themes.

Close: Ps. 19:12-14 for v.9; Ps. 23 for v.16.

## **Analysis**

- A. 5-8 YHWH: quote p. Faith is blessed, infidelity cursed.
  - 1. quote f: 5 K.OH )FMAR Y:HWFH
  - 2. quote: contrast p
    - a) text-1: ampl. p
      - 1) text: comment p
      - a> text: )FRW.R HA/G.EBER

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b> comment: ):A$ER
1> YIB:+AX B.F/) FDFM
2> W:/&FM B.F&FR Z:RO(/OW
3> W./MIN-Y:HWFH YFSW.R LIB./OW
2) ampl:
a> 6 W:/HFYFH K.:/(AR:(FR B.F/(:ARFBFH
b> W:/LO) YIR:)EH K.IY-YFBOW) +OWB
c> W:/$FKAN X:AR"RIYM B.A/M.ID:B.FR )EREC M:L"XFH W:/LO)
T"$"B S
b) text-2: ampl p
1) text: comment p
a> text: 7 B.FR.W.K: HA/G.EBER
b> comment: ):A$ER
1> YIB:+AX B.A/YHWFH
2> W:/HFYFH Y:HWFH MI/B:+AX/OW
2) ampl:
a> 8 W:/HFYFH K.:/("C $FTW.L (AL-MAYIM
b> W:/(AL-YW.BAL Y:$AL.AX $FRF$FY/W
c> W:/LO) *YIRF) **YIR:)EH K.IY- YFBO) XOM
d> W:/HFYFH (FL/"HW. RA(:ANFN
e> W./BI/$:NAT B.AC.ORET LO) YID:)FG
f> W:/LO) YFMIY$ M"/(:A&OWT P.ERIY

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B. 9 Jer: Who can know man's heart?

1. 9 (FQOB HA/L."B MI/K.OL
2. W:/)FNU\$ HW.)
3. MIY Y"DF(EN.W.

C. 10-11 YHWH: purpose p: I can, and I will reward people accordingly.

1. text: 10 ):ANIY Y:HWFH XOQ"R L"B B.OX"N K.:LFYOWT
2. purpose: ampl p
  - a) text: W:/LF/T"TT L:/)IY\$ \*K.:/DAR:K./OW \*\*K.ID:RFKFY/W
K.I/P:RIY MA(:ALFLFY/W S
  - b) ampl: explanation p
    - 1) text: comparison p
      - a> 11 QOR") DFBAR W:/LO) YFLFD
      - b> (O\$EH (O\$ER W:/LO) B:/MI\$:P.F+
    - 2) explanation: coordinate p
      - a> B.A/X:ACIY \*YOM/OW \*\*YFMFY/W YF(FZ:B/EN.W.
      - b> W./B:/)AX:ARIY/TOW YIH:YEH NFBFL

D. 12-13a Jer: You are our only hope.

1. 12 K.IS.") KFBOWD MFROWM M"/RI)\$OWN M:QOWM MIQ:D.F\$/NW.
2. 13 MIQ:W"H YI&:RF)"L Y:HWFH K.FL-(OZ:BEY/KF Y"BO\$W.

E. 13b YHWH: reason p: Those who forsake me have no hope.

1. \*YISOWR/AY \*\*W:/SW.RAY B.F/)FREC YIC.FT"BW.
2. K.IY (FZ:BW. M:QOWR MAYIM-XAY.IYM )ET-Y:HWFH S

F. 14-18 Jer: Chastened and yielding, I leave my case with you.

1. request: reason p: Save me, for you alone can.
  - a) text: coordinate p
    - 1) result p

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    a> text: 14 R:PF)/"NIY Y:HWFH
    b> result: W:/)"RFP")
2) result p
    a> text: HOW$IY(/"NIY
    b> result: W:/)IW.F$(FH
b) reason:K.IY T:HIL.FT/IY )FT.FH
2. contrast p: My adversaries mockingly require a word, but I
have served you.
a) text: quote p
    1) quote f: 15 HIN."H-H"M.FH )OM:RIYM )"L/FY
    2) quote:
        a> )AY."H D:BAR-Y:HWFH
        b> YFBOW) NF)
b) contrast: coordinate p
    1) 16 WA/):ANIY LO)-)AC:T.IY M"/RO(EH )AX:AREY/KF
    2) W:/YOWM )FNW.$ LO) HIT:)AW."YTIY
    3) )AT.FH YFDF(:T.F
    4) MOWCF) &:PFT/AY NOKAX P.FNEY/KF HFYFH
3. request: protect and avenge me.
a) 17 )AL-T.IH:Y"H-L/IY LI/M:XIT.FH
b) MAX:ASIY-)AT.FH B.:/YOWM RF(FH
c) contrast p
    1) 18 Y"BO$W. ROD:P/AY
    2) W:/)AL-) "BO$FH )FNIY
d) contrast p
    1) Y"XAT.W. H"M.FH
    2) W:/)AL-) "XAT.FH )FNIY
e) HFBIY) (:AL"Y/HEM YOWM RF(FH
f) W./MI$:NEH $IB.FROWN $FB:R/"M S

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