

Jeremiah 17

Free to Sin?

Read Jeremiah 17:1-4: God uses the hardest things known to man to illustrate how hard the hearts of the people in Judah were. He describes an iron pen with a diamond point scratching letters and words on to a heart of stone. This is the same imagery used in the Exodus account of the giving of the Law. The 10 Commandments were written on stone tablets, to represent men's hearts.

So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people. And Moses turned and went down from the mountain, and the two tablets of the Testimony were in his hand. The tablets were written on both sides; on the one side and on the other they were written. Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets. (Exodus 32)

But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust. (1 Timothy 1:8-11)

God wants to transform us from having impervious hearts to having soft and absorbing hearts with Gods word inside (not just scratched on the outside).

For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. (Ezekiel 36)

These people were preoccupied with their *next stimulating experience*. Idolatry is like self-medication for making bad decisions. It is like forcing happiness into an empty heart. These *happiness experiments* leave us even more lonely and thirsty. They enslave us to do it again and again. There are certain sins that get into your mind like a drug; and they literally own you. Pornography creates mental imagery which can be very hard to erase. Only God can help you get past these enslaving desires and thought patterns. The Jews were *owned* by their own desires for more money, getting drunk and sexual experiences. Idolatry is a shortcut to momentary happiness; without doing anything right. Sinners speak of freedom of personal

expression; but they cannot escape their own cyclical lifestyle. The homosexual lifestyle has a cycle of depression and invigorating experiences to erase that nagging sense of having a real life. It never stops. Once they stop stimulating themselves, they have nothing left but emptiness. We all have to fill our mind with something else. *We are not to chase good feelings.* We confuse ourselves when we compare how we feel to our purpose. God gives us good feelings, when we live according to his purpose for us.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10: 3-6)

Normal concerns for loved ones get ignored when you are in *hot pursuit*. We are restless and confused by our own nature. We try to self-medicate to feel better. Surviving *the heat of the moment* seems to outweigh the ramifications of our decisions. All of this stuff that we chase is a mirage. God is in the process removing our artificial (virtual) substitutes. God is essentially shoving the Jews idolatry down their throat until they want to vomit. It is like forcing a smoker to smoke until he cannot stand it any longer, non-stop.

Read Jeremiah 17:5-8: God compares a man of the world to a godly man. He compares desert shrubs to cultivated trees. One gets help and support. Do we feel more like a well-attended and cultivated tree; or do we feel more like we are just existing alone? The unbeliever is on his own, with nothing to look forward to. It is a bleak existence.

The deceiver was able to get Eve to trade a life of abundance for a life of difficult existence. What a salesman! She traded paradise for a much lower lifestyle. We separate ourselves,

Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. (Psalm 1:1-3)

A man who sets his hopes on others is also like a desert shrub. He has no prospect of improving conditions, it is like an empty cloud over the desert. Nothing changes. It's lonely and really hard to exist. You just keep waiting for the rain, that never really comes. It is disappointing. It is a very lonely place. God is teaching us that this is not a good place to live.



The man of God is known to drink in the water of the word. He is like a well-watered tree that flourishes and becomes fruitful. Adverse growing conditions do come; but this tree weathers tough times very well. He is known to not be overly-anxious. A lot of our anxiety is about worrying what comes next. Faith is more about what has already happened, and what good things are happening now.

Read Jeremiah 17:9-11: The classic response about men's expectations for eternity is usually something about *being a good person*. That is a faulty and biased self-analysis. Our hearts are not always *truth compasses*. People become irate when they are told that their views do not line up with God's.

The bible tells us that *we cannot trust our own heart*. That seems complicated to resolve. I create *imaginary daydreams and scenarios* that can stem from my desires. Many of our tests come when we are tired or rushed or not feeling well or too busy. Will we press the 'easy button' and bail out, or will we give it to God? There will be a bad aftertaste that will haunt us.

God sees these *little movies* that replay in our minds. We are always seeking shortcuts to peace of mind with the vexing realities at hand. We fear that path of light if we have invested in compromises. We might take a loss.

Sometimes we recharacterize things to make ourselves look better. Sometimes we take special privileges if we feel that we have earned a reprieve. It says here that God gives us life scenarios according to expectations and assumptions and choices. Our heart is just waiting for opportunities to taste and experience forbidden things.

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the

inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin. (Romans 7)

Our spirit does not even want to encounter a temptation at all. If I am an ambitious climber it might turn into a game of chutes and ladders. Many people do not find satisfaction in the accomplishment of their life goal. They feel just as much want as when they began their journey.

Satan is described *a sea trader*, who has gotten the better end of his deals. He baits us to trade the things of value (God, family, health) for experiences and status. In the end, we wish that we were back where we started. Our life scenarios are meant to be revelations of reality. They are hard lessons for hard-to-teach and stubborn students.

The comedian Flip Wilson used to have a saying: “*The Devil made me do it*”. According to the bible, this is not true. Our worst enemy is not the devil. He is just an opportunist. Our own heart and hardened hearts are our worst enemy. We can only be tempted by things that we want.

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (James 1:15)

Religion emphasizes the tug-of-war between good and evil. The bible tells us that only God can truly deliver us in the arena of the flesh.

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:12-13)

For me, I need to build fences far away from the temptation. I let alcohol take me places that I did not want to go for too many years during my youth. I had to finally close that door altogether. The few times that I made an exception for special circumstances, I fell again. Don't play with fire.

The bible tells us clearly that if we make compromises to obtain things that they will fly away or rust.

Read Jeremiah 17:12-18: We need to somehow get to heaven. We need to be healed right now by God. He is our life force. God is Jeremiah's shot in the arm and health and purpose and regeneration to live for today. He is his recharging station.

Those who ignore God are really missing out. Heaven is an indescribable place.

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. (2 Corinthians 12:2-4)

God is life and our sense of purpose. Nothing else can give you that.

This is a great saying: “Heal me LORD and I will be healed”. That is what our life comes down to. We try to control the circumstances in our life; and yet we go unhealed.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Read Jeremiah 17:19-27: Jeremiah is told to call out to all of the people treating Saturday (the sabbath) like any workday. They are just not altering their lives one bit to honor God. That will also catch up to them as God’s protections unravel. They are voiding their own protection contract.