

**Jeremiah 17:5-8 “Be Rooted in the Lord” February 16-18, 2019**  
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**Jeremiah 17:5-8**

**<sup>5</sup>This is what the LORD says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the LORD. <sup>6</sup>That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. <sup>7</sup>“But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. <sup>8</sup>They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. 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.”**

**Introduction**

These verses refer to trees and roots. Roots, of course, are those part of plants that are below the soil’s surface. Roots have a number of roles. They anchor trees or plants. They absorb water and nutrients from the soil and get them to the stem. They store moisture and minerals for times when needed.

Did you know that the tree with the deepest root system is the Shepherd Tree of Africa that can have roots that extend over 200 ft.? The plant with the longest root system is a species of rye that if unchecked can extend for hundreds of miles.

Going back to Jeremiah 17, today God encourages us: **“Be Rooted in the Lord.”** As is obvious from our verses, be rooted is to trust. So God is saying, **“Be Rooted in the Lord... not trusting in man ... but trusting in the Lord.”**

**Cursed**

**“<sup>5</sup>This is what the LORD says: “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the LORD.”**

The Lord has in mind people who literally think they are mighty or highly capable and self-sufficient. They literally lean on human strength - that is they trust in human capability. Of them God says, “They’re cursed.”

The Lord very simply and briefly outlines the process of how this happens: He or she **“trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the LORD.”** In other words, they make themselves and other humans the god or gods in their lives. So, they turn away from God. In principle, Jesus commented on this in connection with people making money their god. They inevitably turn away from the true God. **He said, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money (Matt. 6:24).”**

Trusting in themselves or others they no longer trust in God. In so doing they reject God as their Savior God. Therefore, what Jesus said in John 3:18 applies, **“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”**

**Never Trust Anyone?**

Does that mean that we should never trust anyone? That’s not what God is saying. Remember that according to 1 Corinthians 13 **“love always trusts.”** In human relationships it is critical that we can trust one another – husbands and wives, parents and children, workers and co-workers, and many other relationships. When have surgery we trust that those doing the procedure will do the right thing.

What the Lord is talking about is when people think that they are good enough to please God and can earn eternal life. God is talking about the person who puts his hope for the future in something human or looks for ultimate security in himself, herself, or other humans. It’s the person who thinks that there is nothing that he can’t do, no problem that he can’t solve, and no force that he can’t master. Therefore, who needs God?

Isn't this something that we see all around us? Don't we also see some of this in us? For example, when you're facing a serious challenge, do you find yourself at times just diving in and tackling it without praying and asking for God's help and guidance? Or, do you find yourself turning to others but not to God.

### **Results of Not Trusting**

The Lord vividly lays out the results of this kind of thinking and way of life – (Slide) **“That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives (v. 6).”**

Literally the Lord says that they will be like a juniper in Arabah, that dry valley of the southern Jordan River leading to the Red Sea. It's dry and unproductive. Therefore, they will not see prosperity and/or if it comes they won't enjoy it. They will be like the wilderness or the salt flats that are dry and unproductive.

They will lack in holiness, peace, joy, God's love, love for God, love for others, ability to cope with challenges that go beyond human capability, hope for today, hope for tomorrow, hope for eternal life, eternal glory, and resurrection. When loved ones die, they will mourn as those who have no hope. Their security will only be as deep as their own capability, money, science, and technology can take them. All have their limits. Without faith in God and trust in Jesus, they will be forever separated from the Lord.

Therefore, the Lord says, **“Be Rooted in the Lord ... not trusting in man ... but trusting in the Lord.”**

### **Trusting in the Lord**

In Jeremiah 17:7 the Lord contrasts trusting in humans with trusting in the Lord: **“But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him.”** This blessedness is the result of having God's blessing and God's love that comes through our faith in trust in him.

Many years ago I heard Dr. James Dobson describe trust in this way. He said, “Picture yourself at Niagara Falls and on the American side by Horseshoe Falls. A tightrope walker has a cable strung across the falls. Using his balance pole and incredible balance, the tightrope walker walks on the cable across the falls and back. Then he takes a wheel barrow that had a grooved metal wheel that will ride the cable. The tightrope walker turns to you and asks, ‘Do you trust that I can do this?’ Thinking to yourself, ‘I saw him do it once, I trust he can do it again. So you say, ‘Sure.’ Then he says to you, ‘Then get in.’”

That's trust. In the gospel the Lord says to you, “I Love you with an unfailing love. I lived, died, and rose again to save you. I forgive you your sins. I give you eternal life. I am the resurrection and the life. I rule over all things for you and all my people. I am with you always. I will never leave you or forsake you. Nothing can separate you from my love.” Trusting him is believing that all this and the other things he tells us in his word are true. Trusting in him is getting in his wheel-barrow and getting you through whatever it is that you are facing.

### **Blessings**

Note in v. 8 the description the Lord gives of those who trust in the Lord. **“They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. 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.”**

Those who trust in the Lord are well anchored. As we do, we are receiving the water of life and the bread of life that we need to go on and flourish in a life lived for the Lord. We are not immune to problems in life. We become ill. Our loved ones die. Our cars break down and rooves need repair. We get old and face death. But through it all we have stability. We have life. We have the love that only comes through trusting in the Lord. When good things happen and times for joy come, we humbly recognize the hand of the Lord and give thanks.

### **Be Rooted**

Therefore we want to be like the Shepherd Tree or the species of rye that have deep and lone roots.

When I lived in Watertown, WI, my family and I lived close by one of my co-pastors, Myron Kell, and his wife, Faith. Several of their grandchildren and great-grand-children are part of our church family. When we moved to Watertown they had a small blue spruce tree in their front yard. But that tree seemed to grow miraculously fast. Curious as to how this was happening, I asked Mike, "How do you make that tree grow so fast." He replied, "Faith regularly root-feeds it."

Sisters and brothers, we need to feed our roots to be and stay deeply rooted in the Lord. The Holy Spirit strengthens and lengthens our roots as we are into God's Word and sacraments. Pray that God increases and preserves wisdom and awareness that his word and sacraments work in our lives. Weekly take time for worship and Bible study so that the Holy Spirit has the opportunity to deepen your spiritual roots growing your faith and trust. Daily take time for God's word in your personal life. Regularly set aside time as families or Christian friends do talk Jesus talk to reinforce you in God's love and godly living.

Be rooted in the Lord ... not trusting in man ... but trusting in the Lord.