

THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH
LORD OF THE HEART:
JEREMIAH 16, 17



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Lord of the Heart: Jeremiah 16, 17

Lord of the Heart: Jeremiah 16, 17
Copyright 2020 T. M. and Susie Moore
Susie Moore, Editing and Finishing
The Fellowship of Ailbe
www.ailbe.org

Except as indicated, Scripture taken from the New King James Version. © Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. All psalms for singing adapted from The Ailbe Psalter. Except as indicated, all quotations from Church Fathers from Ancient Christian, General Editor Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

Introduction to Jeremiah 16, 17

In Biblical religion, the heart is the heart of the matter. The heart is where love is nurtured, desire abides, and longing stretches out. And God intends that our hearts should be nourished on His Word (Jer. 15.16) and united with fear in love for Him (Ps. 86.11; Matt. 22.34-40).

But the people of Judah and Jerusalem had not guarded their hearts. As a result, they drifted in their affections until they came to all-out rebellion against God. God sent prophets to warn them, but it was to no avail. The people had given in to the wickedness in their hearts, and now they would not return to the Lord.

Judgment was the only remaining remedy.

We're pleased to provide *Scriptorium* studies in PDF format at no charge. We hope you will find them helpful and encouraging as you press on in your journey toward spiritual maturity with the Lord.

Please visit our website, www.ailbe.org, to discover the many other resources available to serve your needs. The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Visit our website also to subscribe to our worldview study *ReVision*, our devotional newsletter *Crosfigell*, and our worldview newsletter *The Week*.

If you find these studies, or any of our other resources helpful, we hope you will consider making a contribution to help support our work. You can do so by using the donate button at the website or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

T. M. Moore, Principal
tmmoore@ailbe.org

1 Evil Hearts

Pray Psalm 33.13-17.

The LORD looks from heaven;
He sees all the sons of men.
From the place of His dwelling He looks
On all the inhabitants of the earth;
He fashions their hearts individually;
He considers all their works.
No king *is* saved by the multitude of an army;
A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.
A horse is a vain hope for safety;
Neither shall it deliver *any* by its great strength.

Sing Psalm 33.13-17.

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

God from His throne looks down on men; He knows our works and made our hearts.
Let not Your Church, let none depend on strength or skill or human arts.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 16.1-13.

Prepare.

1. How did God show His love for Jeremiah?
2. What were the people following instead of God?

Meditate.

The problem Paul faced in dealing with the Church in Corinth was only superficially about all the issues and troubles they presented to him. Their problem was deeper: Misguided affections were leading them astray (2 Cor. 6.12). Put another way, their hearts were in the wrong place.

This is precisely what God was dealing with in the people of Judah and Jerusalem. Their hearts were in the wrong place (v. 12). They had allowed their interest, desire, and devotion to drift from the Lord and become relocated in the false gods of foreign nations (vv. 10-13). And because they had not guarded their hearts, but allowed them to become corrupt, God would now remove His favor from them and leave them to the error of their ways (v. 13).

Surely the hearts of the people of Judah would break with sorrow when they saw the destruction that was to come upon them (vv. 1-8). All the mirth and frivolity they had enjoyed while worshiping the false gods would be removed (v. 9); instead, horror and violence and mourning for the dead would be their lot (vv. 6, 7).

So God warned Jeremiah not to take a wife nor have any children, because they would surely fall under the same wrath the ruthless Babylonians would exact on every other household in Judah and Jerusalem (vv. 1-4). The evil hearts of God's people would be judged by the evil hearts of vicious Babylonian soldiers; and God loved Jeremiah – and his heart (Jer. 15.16) – too much to allow him to fall to this horrible fate.

In our relationship with God, within the covenant of His love, the heart is the heart of the matter. Either our hearts rejoice in the Lord and His Word, or they will stray until His judgment catches up to them.

Lord of the Heart: Jeremiah 16, 17

Reflect.

1. Why were the hearts of the people of Judah wicked? What did these wicked hearts look like in practice?
2. Jeremiah was given a short-term disappointment to spare him long-term grief and sorrow. Explain. What should we learn from this?
3. What was Jeremiah supposed to say to the people when they asked him about why God was judging them? Should we warn people about God's judgment to come?

*The heathens indeed vainly boasted of their idols, and spread abroad many fables to allure unhappy men to false and corrupt worship, but the Jews knew who the true God was. To believe the fables of the heathens, rather than the law and their own experience, was not this the basest impiety? This then was the reason why God complained that foreign gods were worshipped by them. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Jeremiah 16.10-13**

Cleanse my heart, O God, so that today I will...

Pray Psalm 33.18-22.

Ask God to guard and keep you through all temptation and every trial. Put on the full armor of God in prayer (Eph. 6.10-20).

Sing Psalm 33.18-22

Psalm 33.18-22 (Truro: [*Shout for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*](#))

God watches those who fear His Name, who hope upon His grace and love;
He keeps their souls from death and shame who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield; upon us let Your grace descend!
We hope in You; to You we yield; we trust in Jesus to the end.

2 God Sees

Pray Psalm 90.8-11.

You have set our iniquities before You,
Our secret *sins* in the light of Your countenance.
For all our days have passed away in Your wrath;
We finish our years like a sigh.
The days of our lives *are* seventy years;
And if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years,
Yet their boast *is* only labor and sorrow;
For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.
Who knows the power of Your anger?
For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath.

Sing Psalm 90.8-11.

(Landas: [My Faith Has Found a Resting Place](#))

You set our sins before Your face; our secret sins You know.
Our days decline in fury as we sigh to see them go.
And though we live for eighty years, yet hard and sad the time,
For soon it goes when Your great wrath consumes us in our prime.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 16.14-18.

Prepare.

1. What promise did God hold out to His people in this passage?
2. But what must happen first?

Meditate.

Again, God held out hope for His people. Though He would send them into captivity in Babylon, He would not leave them there indefinitely. As He had delivered Israel from Egypt, so, when His judgment had run its course, He would bring them back from their captivity to their homeland again (vv. 14, 15). God is faithful to His covenant; He will not allow His Word to Israel to fail.

For the immediate future, however, judgment must come. God promised to repay His people “double for their iniquity and their sin” (v. 18). Not only had they defiled His land by their idolatrous practices; they had also filled with it dead bodies – those of their children, sacrificed to Molech, and the many abominable idols they had erected on rooftops and high places (v. 18).

God’s judgment would be thorough. His eyes are on every one of His people, and He sees all their sins. He would ferret them out from every hiding place to fulfill His wrath against them (vv. 16, 17). No one would escape the coming judgment of God.

Another approach to verses 16 and 17 sees the grace of God at work, hunting and fishing for His people, to return them from their captivity and restore them unto Him. It may well be that both these meanings – God as hunting down sin and God as capturing lost sinners – are at work here.

God’s eyes are always upon us. He sees everything we do. He guides us with His eyes by illuminating Scripture to us and showing us the way we should walk (Ps. 32.8). But He also sees our secret sins (Ps. 90.8); and if we persist in them, rather than repent, God knows how to hunt us down and fish us out until we turn

from our wickedness and seek Him once again.

Reflect.

1. Does it matter that God sees us at all times? Explain.
2. How can you see that God “hunted” and “fished” to bring you to Himself?
3. Why is it important always to be renewed in God’s hope? How can we do that?

Why fishers? Why hunters? Because, from the abyss and from the depth of the sea of idolatrous superstition, the believers fished with the nets of faith. But why have the hunters been sent? Because those people were wandering through the mountains and the hills, that is, through the pride of humankind, through the worldly obstacles. Augustine (354-430), The Usefulness of Fasting 9

Keep Your eye on me, O Lord, and show me how I must live for You today as I...

Pray Psalm 90.1-7, 12-17.

Pray for the Lord’s cleansing, and that He will show you the work He has in store for you for today.

Sing Psalm 90.1-7, 12-17.

Psalm 90.1-7,12-17 ([Landas: My Faith Has Found a Resting Place](#))

Lord, You have been our dwelling place from generations gone.
Before the mountains came to be, before the earth was born,
before the worlds, and long before men on the earth first trod,
from everlasting long ago, O God, You are our God!

You turn men back to dust and say, “Return from whence you came!”
A thousand years are in Your sight like yesterday the same.
You sweep away our lives with ease, like grass that sprouts and dies.
Your wrath consumes us and we live dismayed amid our sighs.

So teach us all our days to note that wisdom may be ours.
Return, O Lord, have pity on those servants who are Yours.
Each morning let Your love appear that we for joy may sing.
And make us glad for every day You us affliction bring.

Now let Your work to us appear; our children show Your might.
And let Your favor rest on us; show mercy in Your sight.
The work that You have given us, confirm, and to us show,
that we Your chosen path may walk and in Your precepts go.

3 Then They Shall Know

Pray Psalm 76.4-7.

You are more glorious and excellent
Than the mountains of prey.
The stouthearted were plundered;
They have sunk into their sleep;
And none of the mighty men have found the use of their hands.
At Your rebuke, O God of Jacob,
Both the chariot and horse were cast into a dead sleep.
You, Yourself, *are* to be feared;
And who may stand in Your presence
When once You are angry?

Sing Psalm 76.4-7.

(Lauda Anima: [Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven](#))

O resplendent God of glory, mighty in Your majesty,
You abase the proud and wicked by Your Word eternally.
Let men fear You! Who may stand when all Your wrath shall kindled be?

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 16.19-21.

Prepare.

1. What did Jeremiah prophesy in this part of his prayer?
2. How did God respond?

Meditate.

Jeremiah's response to God's promise about "hunters" and "fishermen" was to foresee the day of the Gentiles coming to the Lord, repenting of the sins of their fathers, and acknowledging the foolishness of their ways (vv. 19, 20).

Though the Gentiles would be the rod with which God would chasten His people, they were as much the object of God's hunting and fishing as the people of Israel and Judah. God's plan has always been to bless all the families of the earth (cf. Gen. 12.1-3). Israel was supposed to be the means whereby that would happen. As they obeyed God and kept His Law, their wisdom would shine like a beacon for the nations, who would be drawn to the Lord through them (Deut. 4.5-8).

Of course, God knew they would not succeed, because they did not have a heart for Him – then (Deut. 5.29) or in Jeremiah's day (Jer. 16.12). They would need a new heart if they were going to obey the Lord and realize the benefits of His covenant; but the day of that happening lay in the future, beyond the coming time of captivity in Babylon.

But Jeremiah glimpsed it here, and he prayed it to God – one more spark of hope in a stream of messages about judgment to come.

But first, Israel and Judah and the Gentiles need to know the power of God to carry out His side of the covenant – the sanctions for disobedience. And when He did, if they were paying attention, they would know that their judgment was just, the Lord's Word was sure, and the God of the covenant is alone LORD (v. 21).

Reflect.

1. The day of the gathering of the Gentiles is the day in which we live. What does that mean for you?
2. How can you see in these verses that repentance is important to knowing the blessings of God?
3. How does judgment operate to lead us to know God as the Lord?

Not only do people make gods for themselves from statues, but you will also find people making gods for themselves from their imaginations. Such people can imagine another god and creator of the world other than the divine plan of the world recorded by the Spirit, other than the true world. These all have made gods for themselves, and they have worshiped the works of the hands. Origen (185-254), Homilies on Jeremiah 16.9.1

Keep me from all idols Lord, and use me as Your witness today as I...

Pray Psalm 76.1-3, 8-12.

Pray that you may grow in the knowledge of the Lord, and that He will fill and embolden you to be His faithful witness in your Personal Mission Field.

Sing Psalm 76.1-3, 8-12.

Psalm 76.1-3, 8-12 (Lauda Anima: [*Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven*](#))

God is known among His people; great His Name in Israel!

He is all our peace and glory, as He in our presence dwells.

He has crushed the devil's weapons, cast him down to deepest hell.

Judgment flares from heav'n above us; all the earth in terror waits.

Rising, God will save the humble, each who meekness demonstrates.

Men's proud boasts shall turn to praises when in wrath You show Your face.

Vow to God! Repent and seek Him; keep His cov'nant while you may!

Fear Him, bring Him gifts and tribute; walk within His holy way.

For He's coming soon in judgment: fear Him 'til that glorious day!

Princes proud bow down before Him; He their spirits mortifies.

Kings and rulers fear His glory, Who descends from in the skies.

God is known among His people; loudly Israel testifies.

4 Cursed and Blessed

Pray Psalm 75.1-3.

We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks!
For Your wondrous works declare *that* Your name is near.
“When I choose the proper time,
I will judge uprightly.
The earth and all its inhabitants are dissolved;
I set up its pillars firmly.

Sing Psalm 75.1-3.

(Galilee: [Jesus Calls Us](#))

We give thanks, Lord, we give thanks for Your all-glorious Name is near!
Men Your wondrous works declare, Lord; let all living creatures hear!

When you choose the time of judgment, You will judge with equity.
Then the earth and all within it by Your hand no more shall be.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 17.1-8.

Prepare.

1. What kind of heart departs from the Lord?
2. What blessings redound to those who trust the Lord?

Meditate.

The focus of Jeremiah 16 and 17 is on the core problem vexing the people of Judah and Jerusalem: Their hearts – their affections, love, desire, and longing – had turned from God to man-made gods and false deities. Actually, their hearts had drifted to desire things, security, and licentious living, which they thought would be more readily theirs by turning to false gods rather than the one true God.

As if to emphasize the problem that God will ultimately fix, these two chapters call the people to look within, to examine their values, priorities, and desires, and thus to know that *God* knows those affections, and *God* is determined to *give these people what they have longed for*.

The people’s problem was deeply ingrained: written with a “pen of iron” that had a “point of diamond” (v. 1). These were *hard-hearted* people. They would not be persuaded by God’s prophets to turn from their sinful desires. All the wealth and treasure the people believed their false gods had delivered for them would be taken from them, right along with all their idols and high places (v. 3). And they were going into captivity in a foreign land, where they would realize their desires – to be slaves of false deities and those who worshipped them (v. 4).

Those who trust their own ideas and the ideas of other men will be cursed, because they have preferred the ways of men to the ways of God (v. 5). They will be dried up, withered, and parched – unable to refresh or enrich anyone, because they are totally bereft of life (v. 6). Their land that flourished with milk and honey will be sown with salt and become barren (v. 6).

But people don’t have to live this way. The blessings of God are always available to those who set their hearts on Him. In verses 7 and 8 Jeremiah reminds himself from Psalm 1 of the promises of God to all who seek

Him. Hope in the Lord, and be refreshed in His living water. Let your roots sink deep into Him, and you will bear fruit and fear nothing. The heart that trusts in God will realize all the most important and enduring blessings of God. As surely as God's Word is fulfilled in judgment, so it will be fulfilled in blessing for all those whose hearts are set on the Lord.

These words stand in stark contrast to what the people of Judah and Jerusalem were about to experience. So when they realized the reliability of God's Word *in judgment*, they would be encouraged to turn their hearts to Him and rely on His promises *for blessing and renewal*.

Reflect.

1. What are the promises of God that guide your life each day?
2. What does it mean to be "like a tree planted by the waters"?
3. How can believers encourage one another to keep their hearts focused on God?

Being transplanted on (or by) the waters refers to the various graces of the Holy Spirit. And sending its roots into the water (or by the stream) means that one receives abundance from the Lord. Jerome (347-420), Six Books on Jeremiah 3.73.2-5

Lord, let my heart be set on You today as I...

Pray Psalm 75.4-10.

Seek the blessings of God for this day. Devote yourself to seeking Him and His promises. Set your mind and heart on Jesus, and go forth to serve *Him* in all your ways.

Sing Psalm 75.4-10.

Psalm 75.4-10 (Galilee: [Jesus Calls Us](#))

Warn the boastful, warn the wicked: "Do not boast or raise your horn!
Do not raise your boastful voices; do not speak with pride and scorn!"

Neither east nor west nor desert shall exalting bring to man.
God is Judge, He puts one down and makes another one to stand.

For the cup of judgment foams in Jesus' sovereign, holy hand.
He has mixed it and will pour it out on every wicked man.

As for me, I will declare it: Evermore to God be praise!
He abases all the wicked, but His righteous ones He saves!

5 Eyes on the Heart

Pray Psalm 7.1-5.

O LORD my God, in You I put my trust;
Save me from all those who persecute me;
And deliver me,
Lest they tear me like a lion,
Rending *me* in pieces, while *there is* none to deliver.
O LORD my God, if I have done this:
If there is iniquity in my hands,
If I have repaid evil to him who was at peace with me,
Or have plundered my enemy without cause,
Let the enemy pursue me and overtake *me*;
Yes, let him trample my life to the earth,
And lay my honor in the dust.

Sing Psalm 7.1-5.

(Finlandia: [*Be Still My Soul*](#))

O Lord, my God, in You do I take refuge;
save me from those who my poor soul would tear!
Deliver me from my foes' angry deluge,
lest I be swept beyond all hope and care.
Let not injustice, let not evil stain me,
lest to the dust my glory trampled be.

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 17.9-18.

Prepare.

1. What does the Lord search? Why?
2. How would you summarize Jeremiah's response to God (vv. 14-18)?

Meditate.

Because the people of Judah and Jerusalem were still going through the outward motions of religion, God reminded them that outward religious practices are not what He is seeking (cf. Ps. 50). God is looking for hearts set in love on Him and minds that think His thoughts after Him (v. 10). And the people of Judah and Jerusalem were wanting on both counts.

Because our hearts are suffused with sin, we can easily be deceived, thinking that whatever we desire or whatever we hanker for must be what we need (v. 9). We can't know when our hearts are deceiving us apart from the Word of God (vv. 9, 13). The people to whom Jeremiah preached had departed from the Lord. They let their hearts stray to foreign and false idols, and they gave their minds over to convenience and expediency, rather than the will of God. God was sending a test their way. Then all their wicked ways would be exposed, and judged. The people of Judah and Jerusalem were sitting on a nest egg full of life, but they never brought them to hatch (v. 11). Instead, they turned away from their one true hope and sought refreshment in false gods (vv. 11-13).

Jeremiah understood that these words applied to him as well, so he cried out in prayer to the Lord to test him and see that his heart and mind were where they ought to have been (vv. 14-18). He prayed for healing, if he needed it; and he praised the Lord. The people kept calling for him to declare God's Word to them (v. 15).

He was doing this, of course, but what he was proclaiming was not what they wanted to hear (we'll see a great example of this later on). So when they called for the Word of the Lord, they weren't really wanting to hear the Word of God. But Jeremiah proclaimed it faithfully anyway. He would not allow his heart or mind to stray from God, even under the pressure of the people, prophets, and rulers of Jerusalem.

Jeremiah feared God more than the people (v. 17), and fearing Him, he placed his hope in God alone. God would not allow him to come to shame; but the people who deserted Him were doomed (v. 18).

Reflect.

1. Why is it important to understand that God searches our hearts and tests our minds?
2. What can we do to keep our hearts and minds as God intends?
3. How do you see that Jeremiah's heart and mind were right with the Lord?

*He alone perceives what in our inward conscience each of us thinks and delights in. Delight is the end of care because our whole goal in life is to reach what we think and care about most and attain it. God, who searches the heart, therefore sees our cares.... And when he finds that our cares incline neither to the lust of the flesh, nor to the lust of the eyes, nor to the pride of life ... but to the joys of things eternal, which are spoiled by no change, he provides direction for the righteous. Augustine (354-439), *Expositions of the Psalms* 7.9*

Search my heart, Lord; test my mind: and lead me today as I...

Pray Psalm 7.6-17.

Call on God to protect and guide you as you put all your trust in Him and think on His Word.

Sing Psalm 7.6-17.

Psalm 7.6-17 (Finlandia: [*Be Still My Soul*](#))

Arise, O Lord, rise up in wrath to save me!
Let rage and judgment fall upon my foes!
From all around to You let thanks and praise be.
Rise up on high; the wicked curse with woes.
O Judge of all, observe my just demeanor
And vindicate me by Your grace, O Lord.

Bring to an end the evil of the wicked,
but let Your righteous ones established be.
You are my shield, my soul will not be stricken;
You save the upright; You will rescue me!
You are a righteous Judge in every way;
a God of indignation every day.

Let all repent or know Your piercing sword!
Your bow is bent and ready for the fight!
Take deadly weapons in Your hand, O Lord,
and fiery arrows, aimed against the night.
The wicked fall and stumble in their mischief,
but to my soul Your grace will bring relief.

All praise and thanks to You, O righteous Savior!
My hope, my trust, my confidence are You!
Embrace me with Your kindness and Your favor,

Lord of the Heart: Jeremiah 16, 17

and to Your glory make me ever true.
We sing Your praise and glorify Your Name,
Who brings our foes to judgment and to shame.

6 The Sanctity of the Sabbath

Pray Psalm 92.1-4.

*It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;
To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning,
And Your faithfulness every night,
On an instrument of ten strings,
On the lute,
And on the harp,
With harmonious sound.
For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work;
I will triumph in the works of Your hands.*

Sing Psalm 92.1-4.

(Sweet Hour: [*Sweet Hour of Prayer*](#))

*How good it is to thank the Lord and praise to God Most High accord;
by day to let His kindness ring, His faithfulness by night to sing.
With ten-stringed lute, resounding lyre, and sweetest harp we'll lift You higher.
For You have made our souls rejoice; we sing Your praise with blended voice!*

Read and meditate on Jeremiah 17.19-27.

Prepare.

1. What was Jeremiah's message to the people? Where did he preach it?
2. What did God promise for obedience? What did He threaten for disobedience?

Meditate.

Jeremiah took up his post in a new location – at the gates by which people entered the city of Jerusalem. We can assume that he moved around to each gate and preached the message repeatedly. A good many people would have heard him.

God called His people to “hallow the Sabbath day” by not doing any work on it or burdening themselves in any way (vv. 19-22). God had set the Sabbath aside as a day of rest, for the people of God to meditate on His work of redemption and salvation, and to be renewed in Him.

Keeping the Sabbath was important to God, and He promised abundant blessings to His people if only they would obey His voice (vv. 23-26). Their fathers had not kept the Sabbath, but “made their neck stiff” and would neither “hear nor receive instruction” (v. 23). The judgment that was about to fall on the people of Judah and Jerusalem was in no small part tied to their fathers' refusal to honor the Lord on His day.

So God through the prophet was still holding out hope for His people. All they had to do to know blessings and longevity in the land was hear His Word and obey. If they would not, however, then God would destroy the city and its palaces – including the temple – until all was destroyed (v. 27).

The sins of forsaking God and turning to idols and false gods was made easier by the people refusing to keep the Sabbath as God intended. Leave off the sanctity of the Sabbath, and worse ills will follow. This was true for Judah and Jerusalem; it's true for us as well.

Reflect.

1. The Lord's Day is the Sabbath for Christians. How should we keep it?
2. What are some fruitful and obedient ways to keep the Lord's Day?
3. Why does failing to keep the Lord's Day open the door for other sins?

Hence the profanation of the Sabbath was a proof of their shamelessness, as they thereby shewed that they cared nothing either for God or for his law. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Jeremiah 17.19-22*

Lord, help me today to prepare to keep the Lord's Day, so that I...

Pray Psalm 92.5-15.

Praise God for His mighty and faithful works, and pray that He might cause you to flourish in His Kingdom today.

Sing Psalm 92.5-15.

Psalm 92.5-15 (Sweet Hour: [*Sweet Hour of Prayer*](#))

How sweet Your works, Your thoughts how deep: The fool cannot such knowledge keep.
Like grass the wicked rise each day; in judgment they are swept away.
But You, O Lord, abide on high; Your enemies shall fall and die.
All those who sin shall scattered be, but, Lord, You have exalted me!

My eye my vanquished foe shall see; my ears hear those who threaten me.
Yet in God's house, where he belongs, the righteous like a tree grows strong.
Then let us green and fruitful be and flourish like a mighty tree,
to tell God's righteousness abroad: He is our Rock, our sovereign God!

7 Keep Your Heart

Pray Psalm 86.10-12.

For You *are* great, and do wondrous things;
You alone *are* God.
Teach me Your way, O LORD;
I will walk in Your truth;
Unite my heart to fear Your name.
I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
And I will glorify Your name forevermore.

Sing Psalm 86.10-12.

(Andrews: *Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven*)

For You are great, You wondrous deeds do;
You are the only and sovereign Lord.
Teach me Your way, let me give heed to,
with all my heart, Savior, all Your Word!
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,
praise Your Name forever, Lord!

Review Jeremiah chapters 16 and 17; meditate on Jeremiah 16.10-12; 17.9, 10

Prepare.

1. The people of God had a heart problem. What was it?
2. How can we know when our hearts are turning away from God?

Meditate.

The people of Judah and Jerusalem in Jeremiah's day had ignored Solomon's wise counsel: "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life" (Prov. 4.23). While His people were not careful to watch over their hearts, God was. He saw their love for Him cooling and turning to false idols. He saw their wicked desires elbowing love for Him to the back burner of the soul. He saw them lusting after practices and things which were contrary to His Law.

God did not merely sit by while this happened. In every generation, He sent prophets like Jeremiah to call the people to examine themselves and consider their ways, to see that they had turned from God's covenant and Law to follow the wicked ways of the surrounding nations and the sinful inclinations of their unkept hearts. The prophets called the people to repent, going from city to city, standing outside the temple, accosting their rulers and priests, and preaching in every gate of the city.

But the people would not hear. They were sitting on a treasure of blessings, but they chose to follow the ways of wickedness, and thus they provoked the judgment of God.

It's no wonder God calls us to love Him with all our heart (Matt. 22.34-40). If we don't give *all* our heart to Him – to fear and love and desire and long for Him – that portion we hold back from loving the Lord will become dry rot in our souls, corroding all our thoughts, affections, and priorities, and collapsing our souls into a mire of wickedness and self-interest.

The Word of God continues speaking to us about the condition of our hearts. Keep a close watch on yours at

Lord of the Heart: Jeremiah 16, 17

all times. Let nothing distract you from loving the Lord, for only as we love Him can we realize the fullness of life in His covenant.

Reflect.

1. What can we do to help keep our hearts devoted to God in all things?
2. How can we know when we are drifting from love for God into love for lesser things?
3. How can believers help one another to keep their hearts with all diligence?

Described then is here the character of all mankind, until God regenerates his elect. As then there is no purity except from the Spirit of God, as long as men continue in their own nature, their hearts are full of deceits and frauds. So the fairest splendor is nothing but hypocrisy, which is abominable in the sight of God. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Jeremiah 17.19

Help me to stand firm for You, Lord, and to remain within Your covenant today as I...

Pray Psalm 86.1-9.

Whatever your need today, or whatever your trouble, seek the Lord with all your heart, and resolve to glorify Him in all your ways.

Sing Psalm 86.1-9.

Psalm 86.1-9 (Andrews: [Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven](#))

Bow down Your ear, O Lord and hear me;
I am afflicted and much in need!
Rescue my godly soul, be near me;
save me, O God, all my crying heed!
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,
all day long I pray and plead.

Lift up my soul, fill me with gladness;
Lord You are good, You will soon forgive.
Show me abundant lovingkindness;
let all who call on You ever live.
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,
heed to my poor pleading give.

When in my trouble, Lord, I call You,
You answer me; there is none like You!
There are no works like Yours, and all whom
You have created shall worship You.
Lord, be gracious to me, Lord, be gracious to me,
all shall glory give to You!

Lord of the Heart: Jeremiah 16, 17

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. Why is it so important to keep a close watch on your heart?
2. How would you explain to a new believer how to keep a close watch on their heart?
3. What is the role of God's Word in keeping our hearts focused on the Lord?
4. What can believers do to help one another keep their hearts pure before the Lord?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Jeremiah 16, 17? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 360 Zephyr Road, Williston, VT 05495.

Thank you.