

Fact Sheet for **“Do You Want to Be Like a Juniper
Or a Fruit Tree?”**

Jeremiah 16:1-17:18

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Today we will be looking at the 7th of 13 messages to Judah found in chapters 2-25 of the book of Jeremiah. First take the time and read Psalm 1. You will find very similar words in this 7th message from Jeremiah's prophecy. But let's start by getting a sense of this message. And as we have seen already, Jeremiah's message was one of certain destruction for the people of Judah.

16:1-4 God told Jeremiah not to get married, not to have sons or daughters in this place. The sons, daughters, mothers, and fathers who were there will die of disease, the sword, and famine. They wouldn't even be buried. They would be eaten by the birds and other animals.

16:5-9 And God told Jeremiah not even go to their funerals, not even to console their family members. The reason... God said...

ESV Jeremiah 16:5 ¶ "For thus says the LORD: Do not enter the house of mourning, or go to lament or grieve for them, for I have taken away my peace from this people, my steadfast love and mercy, declares the LORD.

In verse 5 the Hebrew word for "steadfast love" is "kheh'-sed". The Hebrew word for "mercy" is "rakh'-am". Jeremiah also would write the book of Lamentations. Lamentations 3:22-23 were the inspiration for one of our hymns... "Great Is Your Faithfulness". And they are also the inspiration for one of our choruses. These are the same two words God used in Jeremiah 16:5. There God had taken away His steadfast love and mercy from the rebellious people of Judah. But in Lamentations Jeremiah wrote that God's steadfast love and mercy never cease for those who love Him.

16:10-13 Then God told Jeremiah that when the people ask, "**Why has the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?**" then Jeremiah should give them this answer from God... "**Because your fathers have forsaken me, declares the LORD, and have gone after other gods and have served and worshiped them, and have forsaken me and have not kept my law,¹² and because you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, every one of you follows his stubborn, evil will, refusing to listen to me.**"

16:14-15 One of the bright spots in Israel's history that was remembered in Jeremiah's day and is still remembered today was when God brought them out of Egypt. Now God told them He was going to give them another time to remember, when God would bring them back from the nation that was about to conquer them (verse 15). But... not... right... now!

16:16-20 It was God who was sending these conquerors to conquer them (verse 16). Jeremiah, knowing God's firm intent, responded from his own heart this way, "O LORD, MY STRENGTH AND MY STRONGHOLD, MY REFUGE IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE"

16:21 God finished up the words of this chapter with this very ominous statement in verse 21. This was meant to be a condemnation, not a comfort.

17:1-4 Their sin was written with a pen of iron, with the point of a diamond. The record of it was not able to be rubbed off.

17:5-8 And then there are these two illustrations. The first we don't want to be like, the second we do.

ESV **Jeremiah 17:5-6**

⁵ THUS SAYS THE LORD:

**"CURSED IS THE MAN WHO TRUSTS IN MAN
AND MAKES FLESH HIS STRENGTH,
WHOSE HEART TURNS AWAY FROM THE LORD.**

**⁶ HE IS LIKE A SHRUB IN THE DESERT,
AND SHALL NOT SEE ANY GOOD COME.**

**HE SHALL DWELL IN THE PARCHED PLACES OF THE WILDERNESS,
IN AN UNINHABITED SALT LAND.**

The Hebrew word for "shrub" can refer to something like a juniper. They grow where there is very little water. They don't grow big and tall. You can't use their wood for building. They don't grow fruit you can eat. And like many things that grow in the desert they are prickly. The second illustration is very much better.

ESV **Jeremiah 17:7-8**

**⁷ "BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO TRUSTS IN THE LORD,
WHOSE TRUST IS THE LORD.**

**⁸ HE IS LIKE A TREE PLANTED BY WATER,
THAT SENDS OUT ITS ROOTS BY THE STREAM,
AND DOES NOT FEAR WHEN HEAT COMES,
FOR ITS LEAVES REMAIN GREEN,
AND IS NOT ANXIOUS IN THE YEAR OF DROUGHT,
FOR IT DOES NOT CEASE TO BEAR FRUIT."**

This is a well-watered green tree that does not cease to bear fruit. The words of these two illustrations bear a striking resemblance to Psalm 1.

17:9-10 And just as the people of Judah couldn't hide their ways from God, neither can we.

ESV **Jeremiah 17:9**

**THE HEART IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS,
AND DESPERATELY SICK;
WHO CAN UNDERSTAND IT?**

**¹⁰ "I THE LORD SEARCH THE HEART
AND TEST THE MIND,
TO GIVE EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS WAYS,
ACCORDING TO THE FRUIT OF HIS DEEDS."**

What are we to do? 1 – Pay attention to your ways. 2 – Remember 1 John 1:9.

17:11 Here is a single verse that seems to be out of place in Jeremiah's message... unless this was one of the ways people were trusting in riches rather than trusting in God in Jeremiah's day. There are several explanations of this verse, but here is one by a Jewish commentator. "The partridge lays a very large number of eggs, but she has many enemies—man not the least destructive—who hunt for her nest and rob her of her eggs . . . The meaning of the prophet is, that the man who enriches himself by unjust means shall have as little enjoyment of his ill-gotten wealth, but shall leave it as prematurely as the partridge which commences to sit, but is speedily robbed of her hopes of a brood."¹

17:12-18 These verses were Jeremiah's prayer for his own deliverance.

I find it easy to remember this 7th message from the words of **Jeremiah 17:5-8**. Do you want to be like a juniper or a fruit tree? I know what I want to be like! Question 1 – Are you the Lord's? Question 2 – In Who or what do you trust?

¹ The Soncino Books of the Bible, Jeremiah, p.120.