

God Speaks Through Trees and Clay

by Zac Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of faith, trust, and surrender to God, drawing insights from passages in the book of Jeremiah. It highlights the blessings of trusting in the Lord like a tree planted by water, the need to seek God with all our hearts, and the assurance that God has good plans for our future. The sermon encourages believers to yield to God like clay in the potter's hands, to seek Him diligently, and to trust in His protection and guidance even in times of falling.

Scripture: Jeremiah 17:7, Jeremiah 17:8, Jeremiah 29:11, Jeremiah 33:3, Psalms 37:23

Topics: "Faith", "Surrender to God"

Description

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Transcript

There are a few passages in the book of Jeremiah that have been on my heart, and I would like to share them with you. First of all, in Jeremiah chapter 17, verse 5, verse 6, the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord, will be like a bush in the desert. He will not see when prosperity comes.

But verse 7, blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is in the Lord. He will be like a tree planted by the water that extends its roots by a stream, will not fear when the heat comes and leaves them be green, not be anxious in the year of drought nor cease to yield fruit. Now, even though faith is not much emphasized in the Old Testament, faith is something emphasized a lot in the New Testament.

But yet there are some passages like this, which emphasize the importance of faith. Like it says, blessed is the man, verse 7, who trusts, whose trust is in the Lord. And that faith is described, you know, we often think of faith like I've often used the example of the branch in the vine, but here is another picture of faith.

He's like a tree, verse 8, planted by the water, the stream. And in the Old Testament, whenever it speaks about a river or a stream, it's always referring to the Holy Spirit, right from the beginning. You know, the very first mention of it is in the Garden of Eden, where it says there was a river that flowed in Eden and a

number of rivers, two or three rivers in Eden, which is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

And then there are, you know, Jesus himself said, as it is written, rivers of living water will flow out of him. And that's referring to Ezekiel 47, where it speaks about rivers coming out of a temple. And here also, here faith is pictured like a tree planted by the water, and its roots extend by a stream.

So the first thing we learned there is essentially faith is a hidden thing. It's not visible. The fruit of it is visible, like a tree, you think of a tree, you don't see its roots.

And yet the strength of a tree is not in the part that you can see, it's in the part that you can't see, underground. And compared to the other trees around it, this tree is flourishing, because this tree is extending its roots, verse 8, by a stream. And so it's not afraid when the heat comes or when the dry season comes, because even in that season, its leaves will be green.

So if you look at this tree as a picture of you and me, there has to be a hidden part of us, which is completely unseen by men. See, so much of our Christian life is public. In the church, we sing and we share and people see us and we can be so taken up with the external part of our Christian life, because the external part of our Christian life is like the tree.

And so many other trees in this area are all dried up, but this one doesn't because it's got a hidden roots going into a river. And that's what every one of us needs to ask ourselves, quite apart from what other people see in us. Is there in our life a hidden root going into the Holy Spirit? We're in our private life, and even that which your wife cannot see or your husband cannot see, a hidden area of your life where, like the roots of a tree, you know, and the roots keep going out and going out.

In fact, I picture this as a tree whose roots are searching for water desperately. It's almost as though it's alive and has intelligence. It's searching for water and somehow it finds the water.

The other trees around it don't find it and dry up. This one, it says its leaves are green. It never ceases to yield fruit.

The leaves are always green. So do you find some Christians who are always alive, they're never depressed or discouraged? They're always fresh. They're never gloomy.

And they always have a word to either challenge or encourage people with, always, even if you cast them off guard and leave them for five minutes, they can bless you with something. I want to say to you, every one of you, my brothers and sisters, that God's will is that every one of us should be like that. It's not just for some people.

The devil fools us saying this is for some people. It's not possible for everyone. Who said it's not possible for everyone? It's any man who, we speak about faith in the Lord, blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord.

We see so many Christians who just don't enter into this life. And so many of you who are regularly attending these weekly, monthly Wednesday meetings, you must not be satisfied, my dear brothers and sisters, with just attending a meeting and learning something and being excited in this, as you hear this message and say, oh, I was challenged by that. And yeah, that's all great.

But you need to enter into a life where your roots are constantly going searching for water, always looking for a touch with the Holy Spirit so that you're constantly fresh. See this word and take it as a challenge for you. Its leaves will be green.

Verse 8, it will not be anxious in the year of drought. Not at all. There will be no, and I want to read that in another translation.

Jeremiah chapter 17. Let me just point you to another translation in the Living Bible. It says here, first of all, before it comes to that, in verse, Jeremiah 17, verse 8, it's like a tree planted along a river bank and the roots reach deep into the water.

It's going deep looking, we didn't find it, so it still goes deeper. It never gives up seeking and is not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. It keeps on producing luscious fruit all the time.

So the thing that you notice there is its roots are reaching deep into the water. That means it didn't find it immediately. So it keeps on going down, down, down, down until it hits water.

That's the point I want you to see here that when it says it extends its root by a stream, the Living Bible says it goes deep until it finds the water. So I want to ask you, dear brothers and sisters, when you find a lack of freshness in your life, or there's no fruit coming out of your life, do you find a desire to go deeper and deeper and deeper and say, Lord, I have to be filled with the Holy Spirit. I don't care how long, think of this tree.

It doesn't have any brains, it doesn't have any sense, but somehow God has put this desire in a dead, it's not a living, it's living in a sense, it's a living plant, but it doesn't have a brain. It somehow reaches out this tree without a brain, reaches out for water. It's a challenge for us.

We are some levels higher than trees are one level, animals are another level, and we are at the top level, human beings. And this thing, it is two levels lower than us, is an animal reaching is at least something, but this tree reaching out for water. I tell you, think of it, that a tree can put most believers to shame, just this passage.

How many believers reach out for the water like this, reaching deep and say, until I get it, I'm going to keep on seeking. That's what makes this tree green, it's so eager to find it, because somehow it's got a sense, I don't know, I don't understand how a tree functions, but God's put some desire even in a tree to reach out and find the water. That's a great challenge to me.

Animals hunting, I mean, looking for some river or something, I can understand, they've got a brain, but a tree with no brain, reaching out, reaching out, reaching out till it finds water, it puts every believer to shame, who does not seek for the power of the Holy Spirit, constantly. And I want this to be true in my life, and I want to encourage you also to have your leaves always green, which means always fresh. There must never be a day in my life when we are stale, when people find it boring to be with us, when we never have a word to encourage anybody who comes to us, never have a word to challenge somebody who comes to us.

It should not be like that from the beginning of our Christian life. And the answer is, like this tree, to find the water, to go, keep on going, going, going deeper until you find the power of the Holy Spirit coming into you. Never give up on that.

So another thing about this tree, it says, it's almost like a human being, it says it won't be afraid. It will not fear when the heat comes. The main word that Jesus always spoke, if you look at the examples in the Gospels, after the resurrection, every time Jesus appeared to his disciples, they were locked in closed doors, and he always said to them, peace be unto you, fear not.

There were two words that Jesus spoke frequently after his resurrection, peace and don't be afraid, fear not, fear not, fear not, very frequently in his mind. And yet for 40 days, even after they saw Jesus risen from the dead, for 40 days, they lived in fear. I don't know how many times Jesus said to them, fear not, fear not, fear not.

Just like we have also heard so many times, fear not. But something happens and fear comes in. Something happens in our home and say, oh, I wonder what's going to happen next.

Somebody gets sick in the home and we get into a panic, or some other trial comes in, and maybe a trial in a job or some type of situation. And we need that word, fear not. Just like this first thing I told you about this tree, without any brain, it searches for water, and we should be seeking for the Father, the Holy Spirit.

The second thing is without any brain, it says here, the tree is not afraid. I'm challenged by the brainless tree. It will not be afraid.

Why should I be afraid then? There can be drought all around, heat all around, everything is dried up. The tree says, I'm not afraid. I know I will not dry up like that.

I'll always be green. So the other thing that bothers us doesn't bother this tree. It says here, it's free from anxiety.

Can you imagine a tree being free from anxiety? It says, that's the next thing it says here. It will not be anxious. Think if these things were written about us, your brothers, how much better than trees, dead trees we are.

Extending its roots, not afraid, not anxious. The secret of everything is that it's hit the river. It does not stop till it hits the river.

That's what delivers it from all that freedom from fear and freedom from anxiety mentioned in verse eight is all because it did not give up until its roots hit the river. So what I learned from that is that if I don't hit the river inside the Holy Spirit, you can hear many messages on being free from fear and free from anxiety. You will still be here in anxiety when the test comes.

But if you don't give up and say, Lord, I want the power of the Holy Spirit all the time in my life, I believe I can be, God can do that in a tree. He can do that in me. Free from anxiety, free from fear.

And not only that, when it says you're in a year of drought, means everybody around is dried up, but I haven't dried up. Dear brother, sister, think if you can be like that in your church. Even if others are dry, you are not.

Even if others are having bad moods and you are not. Think if you can be like that in your home. Maybe your wife has got bad news or your husband has got bad news.

You never. You never have a bad mood. What a wonderful life that can be.

What an example that can be for your children. That's what I learned from this tree. And it goes on to say the next thing.

There's a lot in just this one verse. It never stops yielding fruit. And we know what the fruit of the Spirit is.

We can read into that. It never stops loving. What does it mean? It never stops from yielding fruit.

Learn from that tree. Apply it to yourself. I will never stop loving others.

No matter what they do, what they don't do, what they tell me, what they don't tell me. They cannot move me out of love. It all depends, as I said, on the root squeezing out of the river.

And if your roots have touched the river, one proof of it will be no one will be able to move you out of love. It's not this visible expressing love, but in your heart, you've got no bitterness against anyone. You've got a forgiving spirit to every human being, no matter what they do in your office, in the place of work.

You don't get agitated with people on the road. If they drive in a crazy way or don't give way to you or nothing. You will continue to love.

Because your roots have gone into the river. It doesn't cease from yielding fruit. What is the fruit of the spirit? Number one is love.

Second, it never stopped having joy, love, joy. Joy is the second fruit of the spirit. It never stopped having joy.

It will not cease from yielding fruit. All the time. I believe that's when the Bible says rejoice in the Lord always.

It means never stop yielding that fruit. At any time. We don't rejoice in our circumstances.

The Bible never tells us to rejoice in our circumstances. It tells us to rejoice in the Lord. And you can change and the Lord has changed.

And the Lord never changes. That's why we never stop rejoicing. If you lose your joy at any time, take that as a mark or a sign that your joy was never in the Lord.

Your joy was in circumstances. It went well, you rejoiced. When it went badly, you lost your joy.

And what the Lord is trying to tell you through that is get rid of that type of joy. Find your joy in the Lord alone. The command is rejoice in the Lord always.

And because he doesn't change, my joy never fluctuates. It never ceases from yielding fruit. Love, joy, peace.

That's the third fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5. Never ceases yielding fruit means I'm never at a time when my heart is at unrest. Now, when you read these things, even when you hear these things, you say it is impossible. That's exactly what the devil wants you to think.

Such a life is impossible. Well, my brothers and sisters learn from a tree. Never ceases yielding fruit.

That's the word of God. And I say, Lord, I want to learn from this tree. That I will never cease yielding the fruit of love.

Never cease from joy and never cease from peace. And you know all the other fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, long suffering. I always spell long suffering with many, many O's.

L-O-O-O-O-O-O-N-G, suffering. That is long suffering. It's a very big long.

Love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness. You can go through the whole list. In case you don't know where it is, it is in Galatians 5, verse 22, 23.

Long suffering of patience, never ceases. stops being patient with other people. The world is full of impatient people.

You can see that on the roads, you can see that in the offices, and in a country where everything is being done fast and on time, you find a lot of impatient people when things don't move as fast as you expect them to. Patience. It's a great test of whether we are walking in the Holy Spirit.

Kindness. Never cease from yielding truth. Remember what the prophet says about the tree? It never ceases from yielding truth.

That means there's never a time when I will not be kind in my attitude towards others. Kind in my speech. Doesn't mean we won't speak the truth.

Jesus spoke the truth once in ways which hurt people because he stood up for the Lord, but he was never unkind. Even when Jesus spoke to the Pharisees, he was not unkind, he spoke the truth because he wanted to save them from sin. And particularly those who are so called to proclaim God's word from the pulpit, sometimes we have to be very firm.

It may hurt people, but we are not unkind. We must never have a lack of kindness in our heart, even when we have to speak sternly. Many times I have to speak sternly to sometimes to individuals who are rebellious or disobedient.

But I say, Lord, I never want to lose kindness in my heart toward this man. And I want to be kind always, and in goodness, always good, always faithful to the Lord, gentle and self-control, always having control of ourselves. Meditate on the fruit of the Holy Spirit one by one and think of what's written here.

Because the tree has reached out its roots to the river, it never ceases to yield fruit. So there's a lot we have seen just in one verse, in Jeremiah 17, verse eight. It reaches out to the river, to the roots of the river, and so it's not afraid, and it's always fresh, never anxious, and never stops yielding fruit.

And it goes on to speak about the heart. In verse nine and 10. The heart is more deceitful than anything else.

That's another thing we have to learn. The next thing the Lord teaches us is, if you don't allow God to give you light, you can absolutely fool yourself that you're a spiritual person. That's the meaning of the heart is deceitful.

I have met numerous people who think they are born again. And I can see clearly that they're not born again. How in the world do they think they're born again then? The heart is more deceitful than anything

else.

The devil is the great deceiver. You know that the Bible calls him a deceiver. He deceived Eve right at the beginning.

He's a deceiver from the beginning. And he's always deceiving people. But he's got an ally in the human being that is the human heart.

The human heart is also deceitful. Don't you see people who imagine they're spiritual and you can see that they're not, but their heart tells them they're very spiritual. I met numerous people.

Think of so many preachers who think they are so spiritual as if they're close to the Lord and they're always begging for money. Always asking for money. Give me money for this.

Give me money for that. I need, I got a car. I'm not happy with that.

I want to buy a plane. Haven't you heard such people over television in the United States? You hear them even in Africa and India, these people exploiting poor people. The heart is deceitful, but they think they're very spiritual, all these preachers.

So when you listen to them and see how they are thoroughly deceived and you can see that clearly, don't just think about them. I mean, they're lost, but say to yourself, Lord, my heart is just as deceitful. I may not be deceiving that area of begging for money like those preachers.

It could be some other area. My heart is also deceitful. I want you to give me light on myself so that I'm not deceived.

I don't want to be deceived because the heart is more deceitful than all else and desperately sick. Who can understand it? It means nobody can understand the deception of their own heart. I want to ask all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, do you really believe that your heart is deceitful? Do you really believe that your heart can fool you into thinking that you're spiritual when you're not spiritual? Fool you into thinking that you're a wholehearted disciple when you're not and make you look down on some of the other people in your church and say, well, they're like that and they're like that.

And your heart says, but you're not like that. It's exactly what the heart wants you to think. The heart is more deceitful.

And the Lord says, I, the Lord, search the heart. I test the mind to give to every man according to his ways. So the thing we have to be most careful about in our life, in our individual lives, our heart, not our mind.

Human beings place a great emphasis on the mind. And it's possible also in the church to come to a meeting like this. And I wanna say this not in a way that makes you feel, feel condemned, but my dear brothers and sisters, when you come to a meeting, listen with your heart, not just with your mind.

What is the difference? You can listen to something, say, ah, that's a clever thought, I never thought of that. And your mind is a clever thought. It's exciting.

When you listen with your heart, you're not thinking of a clever thought. You know, some people can listen to something in a message. If you've ever preached at that, they heard something and say, ah, I can use that somewhere in one message of mine, that thought I got.

Whereas the person who's listening with his heart is not thinking of clever thoughts in his mind. He's thinking of something God can mix in, something in his life, which is unquestionable. You should go into a meeting saying, Lord, I wanted you to show me what is in my heart.

You say, where am I being deceived? Imagining that I'm more spiritual than I really am. Imagining that I'm more Christ-like than I really am. And I'll tell you, especially if you're the type of person who's had a lot of grace in your life and God's been good to you and blessed you in many ways.

And you sit in the church and you look down at other people in the church. Oh, they're like this, and they're like this, and they're like this. You are in the greatest danger.

Now, just stop for a moment before we proceed and ask yourself, don't think about anybody else. Think just about yourself now. You look at other people in your church and say, oh, I'm thankful I'm not like that person.

Thank God I am not that person. Be honest. The heart is deceitful.

I'll give you an example of a person who said that. I thank God I'm not like that person. Do you remember where it is? Go into Luke's gospel, chapter 18.

Here's an example of the deceitfulness of a human heart. There was a man who went into the temple to pray. Okay, think of yourself going to the church for a meeting.

Let me read it like this. Luke 18 and verse 10. Okay, not two people, but 50 people went to a church for a meeting.

And one of them, while he was thinking, he didn't say this openly. That's the important thing. Verse 11, his prayer was silent.

He was not praying publicly. See in verse 11. He stood, but he was praying only to himself.

That means it was a silent prayer in his heart. You would never pray this publicly, no. In his heart, he was saying, oh God, I thank you that I'm not like these other people sitting in this church.

I'm not this, I'm not that, I'm not the other thing. I'm not like that guy sitting over there and I'm not like that other sister there or like the other brother there. You go to a church, my brother, sister, and like that, I guarantee in 25 years, you will not grow spiritually.

You will be defeated 25 years later by the same sins you were defeated 25 years ago. Why is that? I'd be utterly ashamed if I'm defeated by sins I was defeated by five years ago. It's like a student sitting in the same class for five years.

Would you be happy if your child sat in the same class for five years? There are believers who are defeated by the same sin year after year after year after year and they're happy. How long have you been defeated by this in 10 years, brother? 10 years sitting in the kindergarten or 10 years sitting in the first standard, first grade or second grade? You'd be terribly ashamed if your son or daughter was like that. That is the deception of the human heart that you can go so many years to a church and you can still sit in that church and look around and say, like this Pharisee, I thank God that I'm not like that person.

I'm not like this person. I'm not like the other person. You look around and you thank God that you are much better than all those people.

And it says here, this man could not be accepted by God. And sitting in the corner was another person who was sitting far away. He didn't feel he was good enough to be in the front row.

He couldn't be, he didn't even feel like lifting up his eyes to heaven. He said, Lord, I'm a sinner, be merciful to me. And he said, he went home justified.

Never forget the story, because this, you know, we know that God gives grace to the humble. And here is a practical example Jesus gave of humility. In verse 14, this man who came without, he was not sitting in the front row.

He didn't think he was an important person in the church. He felt he was the worst in the church. And he humbled himself by seeing his own sin.

Lord, I need to be holier. Is there a single one of us who does not need to be holier? Then why not we concentrate on that? Instead of like the Pharisee, comparing ourselves with another person there and the other person there is the surest way that you will never grow spiritually. If you compare yourself with this person, that person, the other person.

Like it says in Jeremiah 17, the heart is deceitful about all things and desperately wicked. Wicked, you can understand it. That's the word in Jeremiah 17, you can understand it.

Thank God the Holy Spirit has come to give us light. I'm gonna just go on to one or two other things in the Jeremiah again, come back to chapter 17. In Jeremiah 18, he talks about something else.

He says, the Lord told me, go to the potter's house. He's already told Jeremiah about the heart and the tree. And he said, I wanna teach you another lesson.

Jeremiah 18, go to the potter's house and I'll teach you something there. See, the Lord is teaching Jeremiah from dead objects. One is a tree and the other is a clay.

And I went to the potter's house, Jeremiah 18, verse two, and he was making something on the weave. I mean, we don't see potters and also we're not familiar with it, but I've seen pictures of it. Oh, we have a spinning wheel and the man is putting the clay there to make it.

Make an earthen vessel. And the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter. That means maybe accidentally his hand slipped or something and the whole vessel was spoiled.

And you know how these clay pots and all are made, it's perfect, it's perfect. When you look at it, there's not even a dimple on it. By expert potters, they know how to do it.

And but here in this case, it was spoiled. But because it is clay, you don't throw it away. You can take it and reuse the same clay.

Potter never wastes any clay. That's one thing about it. It's not like other things where if it's damaged, you're gonna throw it away.

This, you don't throw it away. This clay can be remade into another vessel. And he made it another vessel, just as it pleased the potter.

And the Lord is not teaching Jeremiah to teach Israel, the house of Israel. Can't I deal with you as this potter does? Like clay in the potter's hand, so you're in my hand. So the way we can apply that to ourselves is just like we learned something from the tree.

We can learn something from this clay. The clay just submits. The clay is not resisting the hand of the potter.

That's the lesson to learn here is the clay submits. When the Lord is a potter, he never makes a mistake. The unfortunate thing with us is we have the clay, but we've got a will of our own.

And the lesson to learn here is if we can be like that clay and submit completely to the potter, first of all, we recognize from Jeremiah 17 that our heart is desperately wicked. And we have anxiety and fruitlessness and fear and all those things mentioned we saw in Jeremiah 17 and verse eight. And so the Lord now comforts us saying, I can change it.

If you accept, if you're willing to be like the clay in the hands of the potter, even if you're spoiled, nevermind, no matter how many times you're spoiled, I can take you up. The potter never gives up. No matter that clay, it got spoiled once, it got spoiled a second time, a third time.

I mean, think of our lives, how many times we've been spoiled and the Lord still picks us up. He still picks us up. He never gives up.

He is determined to make us into a vessel which is exactly like Jesus Christ. I'm so excited by that, that I don't have to make myself like Christ. To me, this story of the potter is a very great example of all I have to do is submit.

That's the difference between me and the clay. The clay doesn't have a will of its own, but in my case, see, just like that tree, it's an inanimate object. The clay is an inanimate object, but I can learn lessons from it.

I can learn lessons from that tree reaching out for water. I can learn lessons from this clay to just say, Lord, I just want to yield to you. All the mess that has come in my life is because when you prompted me to do something, I would not yield.

And so the vessel is spoiled. And when you think of your life and our life, how many times the Lord has picked up that spoiled clay and said, okay, I'll make it again? Not just once. Here it says once.

He remade it. But in our case, you and me, I know in my case, the Lord had to deal with me numerous times, I can't even count. Something, oh, I'm sorry, Lord, I slipped up there.

I really want to yield to you. Take one area on the matter of the love of money. The Bible says the love of money is the root of all evil.

Many people think sex is the greatest sin, is the greatest temptation. Yeah, for many men it is, but the Bible says in 1 Timothy chapter six and verse 10, the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil. And the more you have of it, no, even people have less love money.

I've never seen a homeless man who doesn't love money. Have you ever seen a homeless man who doesn't love money? Have you ever seen a beggar who doesn't love money? People think it's only the millionaires who love money. No, the millionaires love money and the homeless man loves money.

So what is the difference? Every single, all human beings love money. Even the ones who pretend that they don't, they're just pretending. Every human being loves money.

It's a fact, except those who cleanse themselves from it. It's like sexual sin. Every normal man is tempted sexually in his eyes and thoughts, and except those who cleanse themselves from it, they are free from it.

But if a man doesn't cleanse himself from it, he can be 100 years old and he'd still be lusting after women. Without a doubt, his age doesn't matter. There may be no sexual desire left in him at the age of 100, but he's still lusting after women with his eyes because he's never cleansed himself.

Unless you cleanse yourself of something, it remains and remains and remains there. You can conceal it from everybody, but it's there. And it's defiling you and it's hindering your spiritual growth.

It's the same with the love of money. I'll tell you my own testimony. I fought against the love of money right from the time I was, what, 23 years old when I started earning in the Navy.

I was earning a huge salary as a young Naval officer. And I said, Lord, I don't want to love this. And I want to hate it.

I want to love you. I don't want anything to come between me and you. And I saw that this money can come, so my Lord told me how to fight it and there are different ways you've got to decide how God wants you to.

I don't have to tell you how I dealt with it, but it's something I constantly said, Lord. And even at a time when I think I'm free from it, I say, Lord, I want to be careful. It's just like, you know, supposing you avoided getting COVID.

COVID is a thing that so many people around us got and you didn't get it. And you see again, COVID is coming up in some places. Are you going to be careless? And say, no, no, no.

I survived the last two, three years without it. Well, I tell you, I'm careful. And if I go into an area where COVID is there, I'll see where the mask can go and be careful and avoid getting close to people who have it.

I don't want to prove that I'm strong by going to somebody who's got COVID and getting near them and saying I can handle that. No, I recognize my weakness. I'm very easy to get it.

So recognize that love of money is like that. If I'm not careful, it'll grip me and I can have a good reputation before others, but inwardly, I will not be able to serve God. It's the root of, it's an amazing statement.

Is it really true, Lord, that it is the root of all sorts of evil? All sorts of evil. If something is the root of all sorts of evil, I got to pull out that root. It's the root.

It's deep down. And I got to pull it out. And I want to say to every one of you, even if you don't earn much, I found when I earned very little, I still said, Lord, I believe your word.

Love of money is there no matter how much you earn. You don't have to be a millionaire to love money. Like I said, the homeless man loves it.

And all of us are between the homeless man and the billionaire. And we love it, it's the root of all sorts of evil. And that can spoil the vessel the Lord is making out of me.

I want to make sure there are no, it's like a stone in the middle of the clay. You can put it like that. This love of money is like a little stone or a small rock in the middle of the clay.

And when the Lord is trying to put that on the wheel, this stone comes and spoils the whole thing and then falls down. So we need to ask ourselves, what is this thing that spoiled the clay? Is it sexual thoughts or love of money? Lord, I want to fight it. I want to get rid of that stone, which is coming in and spoiling the vessel.

That's the second message that the Lord gave to Jeremiah. Symbolically, first of the tree and then with the water and the clay. Now I want you to turn to another passage of Jeremiah.

And here he's not using any illustration, but he's speaking in very practical terms. Jeremiah chapter 29. Now related to the clay that the Lord is making a vessel out of, Jeremiah 29.

The Lord says, Jeremiah 29 and verse 11. He says, I've got plans for you. Jeremiah chapter 29 and verse 11.

I have plans for you. They are plans for your good and not for evil. To give you a future and a hope.

That's one of the most wonderful verses to comfort every believer. Always remember this verse. Every one of you brothers and sisters, this is a word to you.

The Lord says, I have plans for you. It doesn't matter how many times your clay got spoiled. The Lord says, I've got a plan for you.

Believe it today. And the plans are for your good, to give you a wonderful future and a hope for the future. I want to believe that even though I'm 84 years old and I've been a Christian for 65 years, I say, Lord, I've still got a wonderful future.

Far better than anything I've experienced so far. I've experienced some wonderful things from the Lord so far. Amazing things when I see what the Lord has revealed to me and made me of some use to other people.

And to hear the Lord saying, I've got a future for you. I've got a wonderful future for you. I say, really, Lord, better than the past? He says, yes.

I want to believe it. Don't be a negative person saying, oh, it won't go well with me. Keep on saying like that, it will not go well.

You say, God's got a future and a hope for me. Never have a negative attitude. Never, never, never.

Let the whole world around you have a negative attitude. But you say, I live in Jeremiah 29, verse 11. The plans for my future, I wish today at least, from today, I hope all of you will live in Jeremiah 29.

I don't care what your past was like. Take this as a word of hope for the future. The Lord says, see, see, see, put your name there.

I have a plan for you. A plan for your good to give you a future and a hope. Will you believe it? Please believe it, my dear brother, sister, at least today.

May this be a turning point today in your life when you start believing the Lord. And that will encourage you to reach out the roots to go into the river. And that'll encourage you, even if you messed up, you believe the Lord will again take up the clay and make another vessel.

He's never gonna give up. Let the clay get spoiled a hundred times. He'll pick it up again.

That's the message in the story of the potter and the clay. You know, the potter's livelihood depends on making vessels. Think of a potter whose entire life he earns his living for his family by making clay vessels and selling them clay vessels.

You think he'll ever give up? His family is dependent on his children to educate him. He's gotta make this vessel. No matter how many times it gets spoiled, he picks it up and I say, my heavenly father's like that.

It's a wonderful lesson. He will never give up on me. And if he finds stones in it, he'll throw away the stones and make a vessel without it.

Just like the potter takes the stones and throw it away. I say, Lord, throw away all the stones in my clay that hinder the vessel from being built, being formed. I wanna be the vessel that is really going to be useful for your glory.

And I believe that you have plans for my welfare, to give me a future and a hope. But then there's something I have to do. It says in the next verse, Jeremiah 29 verse 12.

In those days, you will come and pray and I will listen. Here's another promise that we can take. So many times when you pray, you wonder, is God listening or not? Okay, here's a promise.

Take these words, Jeremiah 29 and verse 12. When you pray, I will listen to you. Can you remember these words? When you pray to me, I will listen to you.

But there is one condition, verse 13. You must search for me with all your heart. That's not difficult.

Say, Lord, I wanna do that. I wanna be totally available to you, and seek you with all my heart, because I know you've got some plans for me, wonderful plans for good and not for evil. I wanna learn a lesson from the tree, all the lessons from that tree, all the lessons from the potter and the clay.

And I wanna believe that every plan you have for me is for my good and not for evil. Let me give you another promise from Jeremiah. You guys, I don't know how many of you read the Old Testament prophets.

You think they are pretty boring. See what a lot you found just in this one book. Okay, let's turn now to Jeremiah chapter 33.

Jeremiah chapter 33, and I want you to turn to verse three. Call to me, and I will answer you. Similar to what we read earlier, you will seek me with all your heart and you'll find me.

And I will tell you some wonderful things which you do not know. Many times when I read the scriptures, I say, Lord, speak to my heart from something new. Not something that I've already heard many times, but something new.

And sometimes in the most unexpected way in the unexpected times, the Lord suddenly shows us some wonderful thing from his word. I'll give you one example that I recently got from a word that I've read. I've read it for 60 years, but suddenly I got something new from it one day.

You know, sometimes the word comes to us in a particular situation when we face a problem. Okay, it was this. The other day I was going somewhere and I slipped and I fell, but I didn't get hurt.

I got up. And this word came to my heart when I got up. Please turn with me.

Psalm 37 and verse 23. Now, you know, there's a promise in the Bible. Maybe you should look at that first.

You know, the promise in Psalm 91. Let's look at Psalm 91 first. Psalm 91 is a promise that says, he will give his angels, that is verse 11, Psalm 91, 11.

He will give his angels charge concerning you to guard you in all your ways. It's a tremendous promise. And I believe that applies to us because there are angels God has appointed for all of us.

And he'll give us charge to angels to guard us in all our ways. And they will bear you up, Psalm 91, 12, they'll bear you up in their hands that you don't strike your foot against a stone, that you don't slip and fall. And I thought of that when I fell and got up.

Oh, God's given his angels charge to protect me and to bear me up that I don't slip and fall and hurt myself. But then the Lord reminded me of Psalm 37. And there I read the step, I mean, I already knew it, it just came to my mind.

The steps of a man, Psalm 37, now we can turn to Psalm 37, 23 and 24. The steps of a man are established by the Lord and he delights in his way. And when he falls, listen to this.

This is the word that came to my heart when I fell. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong. Because the Lord is the one who holds his hand.

And you know how that came to me? It's not the angels. I pictured it like this. The Lord saw me falling and the angels came to hold me.

And the Lord said to the angels, move out of the way, I'm gonna hold him myself. I said, wow. I was so excited.

The Lord told the angels, move out of the way, I'm gonna hold him myself from falling. I had never forgotten that. You know, when the Lord speaks a word to you directly, it's an intimate relationship.

It would not have come to me if I had not meditated on God's word. You know how much you miss by not memorizing God's promises? God's word is an amazing power. Meditate on God's word.

When you slip and fall, the Lord himself holds you and you get intimate with him. I thank God for such a wonderful savior. Every step of our way, he watches over us.

We cannot glory if we have not fallen when others around us have fallen. Don't gloat over it. Be thankful that the Lord has you.

God bless you. Let's pray. The Lord has spoken something to your heart today.

Take that and call the Lord and say, Lord, I want it to be real in my life. And meditate on the passages of scripture again before you forget them. And if you forget them, go back to, and listen to this message again.

Go to the RLCF website and you can listen to this message again. And say, Lord, imprint on my heart what you're trying to tell me to do. Something special, just for you.

Take it from the Lord. He just wants to speak to you personally. Heavenly Father, we thank you that your word has got a word for everyone, according to our name.

Bless every brother and sister who is here today and who has heard your word. Your name be glorified in everyone's life. Strengthen everyone, Lord.

Let no one go away from this meeting discouraged, but encouraged and challenged and believing that you will do mighty things for them beyond their asking and thinking. In Jesus' name, amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/pnKYA4rxp58.mp4>

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