***Jeremiah 17:1-13 The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; With the point of a diamond it is engraved On the tablet of their heart, And on the horns of your altars, 2While their children remember Their altars and their woodenimages By the green trees on the high hills. 3O My mountain in the field, I will give as plunder your wealth, all your treasures, And your high places of sin within all your borders. 4And you, even yourself, Shall let go of your heritage which I gave you; And I will cause you to serve your enemies In the land which you do not know; For you have kindled a fire in My anger which shall burn forever.” 5Thus says the Lord: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the Lord. 6For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited. 7“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, And whose hope is the Lord. 8For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit. 9“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? 10I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind,
Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. 11“As a partridge that broods but does not hatch, So is he who gets riches, but not by right; It will leave him in the midst of his days, And at his end he will be a fool.” 12A glorious high throne from the beginning Is the place of our sanctuary. 13O Lord, the hope of Israel, All who forsake You shall be ashamed. “Those who depart from Me Shall be written in the earth,
Because they have forsaken the Lord, The fountain of living waters.”***

We are back with Jeremiah tonight, as he continues to bring the prophecy of the coming captivity of Judah. The portion of Jeremiah we study tonight applies to Judah, but also applies well to every man and woman’s life. Wisdom to instruct our every day is written here. Like a psalm, Jeremiah speaks the wisdom of God and we do well to listen and heed his words.

 Verses 1-2 *The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; With the point of a diamond it is engraved On the tablet of their heart, And on the horns of your altars, 2While their children remember Their altars and their woodenimages By the green trees on the high hills****.*** The Jewish people continue to live in denial of sin, but Jeremiah says – it is written with an iron pen (an engraving instrument), engraved with a diamond tip. It is undeniable and obvious. The people are choosing to ignore and remain in their sin. It’s not just written outwardly in the way the Jews are living life, but it is written on the heart, engraved. Sin endures, no matter the efforts for the prophet to call for cleansing. Sin is woven into their nature, idolatry into their society. It has grown dear to them and they love it. They even consecrate it upon the altar, especially the altars of their hearts. And their sin flows to their children. They teach children to sin, just as they do.

Verses 3-4 *O My mountain in the field, I will give as plunder your wealth, all your treasures, And your high places of sin within all your borders. 4And you, even yourself, Shall let go of your heritage which I gave you; And I will cause you to serve your enemies In the land which you do not know; For you have kindled a fire in My anger which shall burn forever.* The Temple in Jerusalem stood on a mountain. My Mountain may apply to the Temple or to the Jewish people, as the Bible often refers to peoples and nations figuratively as mountains. The people of Judah were to be above the nations of the world morally and spiritually. Regardless, God tells the nation that He will soon give away their earthly riches and remove them from this lofty place. God will give as plunder the Chaldeans the riches of the nation. Wealth and treasure, food and comfort will be stripped away. The objects of lust and worship, such as the high places, will be captured. All will be spoil in all of Judah. *And you, even yourself, Shall let go of your heritage.* The wording here is similar to the Hebrew in Exodus 23:11, where Moses speaks of land lying fallow. The Jews, at this time, were failing to observe the Law of the Sabbath year, every seven years releasing debts, rotating land, and other requirements of Exodus and Deuteronomy 15. This was more of their covetousness and greed. They did not release the land nor their brothers, so God will take their heritage for a time. Leviticus 26:34, part of the blessings and curses written hundreds of years before this time in Judah bears this curse of the people – *Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies’ land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths.* And so it will not be fulfilled. The people have made slaves of their brothers and sisters, refusing to release them from debts, so now they will serve in a foreign land. They failed to forgive the debts and they were not forgiven by their debtors, sounds like part of the Lord’s prayer. The idolatries, the sins, have kindled God’s wrath and will burn a great while on earth and forever in eternity, for those who die outside of Christ.

Verses 5-6 *Thus says the Lord: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the Lord. 6For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited.* Cursed is the man, the woman, who places confidence in the world – be it faith in wealth, strength, wisdom, power, or any other things that displaces Faith in God. This person will be miserable, leaning on a broken reed, as Isaiah 36 and 2 Kings 18 say, with regards to Judah trusting in Egypt rather than the Lord. Those that trust in the flesh depart from trusting in God. Our trust can only be in one or the other. Often, people draw near to God with their lips, but their hearts are on the world, far from God. Jesus calls this lukewarm and He says we will be spewed out. Those trusting in the world will be weak and useless. Hope will not be found, good will not come, no meaningful, spiritual growth will happen. He or she will inhabit a barren land, unable to grow or be fruitful, as in a salt land.

Verses 7-8*“Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, And whose hope is the Lord. 8For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.* In comparison to the man or woman relying on the world, blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord. Blessed are the obedient. He or she sees reliance on God and trust for everything in life. God shows favor to those that rely on Him for blessing and favor. The blessed man or woman makes God his hope – he trusts God’s power and walks closely with God. He draws near, not just in word, but in heart. This person shall be like a tree planted by the water, living a blessed life and bearing much fruit, unlike a shrub in a salt land. Years of lack will not distress him. Challenge will not depress him. God is to be trusted and we have nothing to fear.

Verses 9-10*“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? 10I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.* The heart is deceitful above all things, both the heart of man, when it comes to trusting him over God, and our own heart. There is the potential for great wickedness in our hearts. We justify sin and accept sin. Romans 1:32 gives is warning *who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.* We love the sinner and hate the sin. We do not approve the sin because we know the righteous judgements of God. Men and women have evil in heart by nature. We are fallen and, as Isaiah says – we call evil good and good evil. How often we deceive ourselves into believing that what we want to do is blessed by God. The heart is desperately wicked, past all human hope of self-rescue. Man cannot hope to search his wicked heart and find the wickedness. It’s like weighing something with a scale that is out of calibration. We cannot hope to get an accurate reading, as the instrument is wrong to start with. But we have HOPE! I the Lord search the heart, I test the mind. God is the perfect scale to weigh our thoughts and intentions. He understands our counsels and sees our blind spots. He knows the wickedness. He passes true judgement. He gives to every man according to his ways. He judges righteously and perfectly, those repenting unto life and those dying in sin to death. God sees our fruit and our ways. He doesn’t listen to the lips that draw near, but to the hearts that stay close.

Verse 11*“As a partridge that broods but does not hatch, So is he who gets riches, but not by right; It will leave him in the midst of his days, And at his end he will be a fool.”* As a partridge that has the baby chicks, but never laid the eggs, so is he that gets rich but not by right. This partridge stole another’s nest. This man stole to line his pockets. It will leave him. He may get rich, but he will never enjoy the riches, fearing that he will have it stolen from him. One day, it will be stolen, just as he fears. He will appear as a fool and he will know in his heart that his dishonesty and greed have made him so. An interesting side note: several theologians translate partridge as a kore. The kore is a bird that steals other bords nests and sits upon them, hatching both their own and the other species eggs. Once hatched, the chicks of the other species deserts the mother kore at the first opportunity, realizing that this kore does not belong.

Verse 12 *A glorious high throne from the beginning Is the place of our sanctuary.* This verse is in clear contrast to verse 11.Here, we are taught that, unlike the man that gets rich by dishonest means, we are blessed when we make a foundation in God our living place. God builds upon our faithfulness and dependence on Him. He blesses and shows favor to those that diligently seek Him. In ancient times, the Temple was where people hid themselves, seeking the face of God. Honor and favor were found in His presence, there in the Temple. Now, we have Jesus, our Temple Eternal, our great High Priest.

Verse 13 *O Lord, the hope of Israel, All who forsake You shall be ashamed. “Those who depart from Me Shall be written in the earth.**Because they have forsaken the Lord, The fountain of living waters.”* Those that forsake the Hope of Israel shall be made ashamed. Disobedience will be punished. Those that depart from God, from His love and goodness and mercy, failing to serve as He calls shall be written in the earth – have no portion in Him. Their name will pass as names written in the sand on a windy beach. They shall not be remembered because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of all that is good and righteous.

And so we leave Jeremiah tonight seeing a clear contrast between those that serve the Lord and those that forsake the Lord. One will be set on a firm, rich foundation of blessings and favor. The other on a faltering foundation of deceit and the world. How we pursue God determines our foundation and future. Let’s pursue Him with our whole hearts, continuously seeking Him while He might yet be found.