



## **Selah: Stop, Look Listen- April 1, 2023**

The Lord be with you.

I have a question for you. How do you and I, as believers in Jesus Christ, how do we not just survive, but how do we actually thrive in what are some admittedly difficult days for our country? What does God's word have to say to us about, about actually being blessed? About leading fruitful lives in a time of uncertainty and upheaval.

Well, I want to read a brief scripture passage and then take a few moments to, to think about being blessed and being fruitful in a difficult time. The scripture passage I have in mind today is from the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah chapter 17. I'm gonna read verses seven and eight. "Blessed are those who trust in the Lord whose trust is the Lord. They shall be like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. It shall not fear when heat comes and its leaves shall stay green in the year of drought. It is not anxious and it does not cease to bear fruit.

Now, the scripture passage. It's talking about heat and drought. It just really speaks to me as, as I live in the Arizona desert where we only get about 7-8" of rain a year. And pretty soon our summer, summer temperatures will soar well into the 100's and we're coming off of a 26 year drought and yet, and yet our cities are growing. Hey, we've got lots of golf courses. We have artificial lakes. We have prosperous farming and it's all because of snow and rain up in the Arizona mountains that flow down into rivers that flow down into canals that flow down into lakes and this Arizona desert, well, it's much like the land in which the prophet Jeremiah lives where, where people are desperate for water. Water for them, like us, water is a matter of life and death. Nothing survives, nothing grows without water. But note that in this dry arid land in which Jeremiah lives notice that he says that the person whose trust is in the Lord that that person is like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the water stream.

Now, if you ever fly into Phoenix, Arizona, I want you to watch how high from the air you can actually see where water flows some of the times of the year. Water flows into the desert, flows down from the mountains. You can see where water flows because you can see cottonwood trees there that are growing and are sending out their roots and flourishing by the water stream. And I often think of this Jeremiah passage when I fly into Phoenix as it says that the person whose trust is in the Lord is like that tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream. And Jeremiah says that that person will not fear when the heat comes, the leaves will stay green in the year of drought because that person is not anxious does not cease to bear fruit.

And this is all possible in the midst of heat and drought in the midst of difficult days because the secret is in the roots. Those whose trust is in the Lord are like a tree planted by water, sending



## water from rock

out its roots by the water stream. And when the heat comes, when the months without rain come, when the painful seasons of life come, the tree sends its roots deep deeper by the water stream.

Let me tell you, I used to see the root system of some of the cottonwood trees around here. They spread out far, going deep and deeper, almost instinctively going to the source of life, drawing more and more strength from the water stream. Jeremiah says that those whose trust is in the Lord well, they're like that. In good times, in bad times, the secret is in the roots going deeper and deeper into God. So that in the year of the drought, in the year of difficult times, it is not anxious, it does not cease to bear fruit.

You know, one day last summer, our temperature reached 118°. But you know what those cottonwood trees they kept right on growing. They kept right on thriving as the roots went deep by the water stream.

Now, I think the key word in this Jeremiah passage, I think the key word is the word Trust. Those whose trust is in the Lord, they're like that tree planted by water streams. The Hebrew word translated, trust is a Hebrew word *batach*, that's B A T A C H and it is translated in various scripture passages as to be confident, to be sure, to trust. *Batach* has a sense of, of well-being, a sense of security, a sense of being at ease and it, it all comes from a person in whom we can place our trust. The reason for our trust and confidence is God. It's not based upon who we are, what we do, what we have done, but our trust is based upon God and who God is, His goodness, his love, His many promises to us.

The American writer Frederick Beuchner tells of a time that he sought retreat in a mountain cabin. It was a difficult time in his life as he was terribly depressed about his daughter's eating disorder and about the various problems that his family was tracing. And then one day out there in the mountains in a cabin out of nowhere, a car shows up, there's a knock at the door and it was a trust officer from a local bank who was, well, he was looking for someone. When that trust officer went and got back into his car and started to drive away, Frederick Beuchner saw the personalized license plate that said simply trust. Trust and Beuchner says that it was a moment of epiphany for him. A moment of revelation from God who in a difficult time, God was saying, trust, trust the Lord for your Children, trust the Lord for yourself, trust God.

And I wonder if today that this might be an epiphany for you, that this might be God's word for you in the midst of difficult times that this might be God's revelation for you. Trust, trust.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.