

# **Pastoral Authority: Cursed or Blessed?**

(A Message to the Ministers of the Lord Jesus of Christ)

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*(Preached on Saturday Evening, July 11, 2020)*

“Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.”

(Jeremiah 17:5)

## **Illustration #1: The Fall of Martin Luther**

- "Luther became increasingly ill in the last years of his life, suffering from various illnesses, including the terribly painful problem of kidney stones. He had also grown frustrated that his reforms had spread no further, and that so many people refused to accept what to him was the clear truth of the gospel. Among those who earned Luther's wrath in these latter years, however, none suffered such vitriol as that which he reserved for the Jews. Earlier in his career, he had entertained some hope that Jews might be converted by his teachings, which he saw as purifying Scripture from the false accretions of the Catholic Church. However, despite a small handful of widely publicized incidents of Jewish conversion, this effort was a clear failure. On the

contrary, Jewish theologians, rather than offering Luther the thanks he expected for his attention and toleration, had pointed to their own understanding of the Old Testament as even purer than that of the Christian reformers, and had attempted to convert Lutherans to Judaism. This infuriated Luther, who turned on the Jews with an unmatched fury. In the following lengthy tirade, which he published in 1543, three years before his death, he now rejected any effort to convert the Jews and focused instead on strengthening the faith of Christians who might be tempted by Jewish arguments. As for the Jews themselves, he recommended that they be violently stripped of their homes, synagogues, books, and possessions, reduced to serfdom or agricultural servitude, exiled, and blocked from practicing their religion. The vitriol is shocking and horrifying coming from a man who often professed himself overcome with divine love and forgiveness, and the document has been difficult for pious Lutherans to accept, especially as it was later used as a justification for Nazi atrocities and mass murder. For scholars and those who sincerely want to understand Martin Luther and his time, however, ignoring reality is unhelpful. The grim truth is that such virulent anti-Semitism as Luther's was not unusual in this era, and that Luther was a man filled with strong biases and passionate emotions, emotions that {285}

occasionally overflowed into boiling frustration and even ugly, murderous rage, as we see below."

- *"What Should Be Done with the Jews?"*
- "Now what should we Christians do with these rejected and condemned people, the Jews? Since they live among us and we are aware of their lying, blaspheming, and cursing, we cannot tolerate them, lest we become complicit in all of their lies, curses, and blasphemies.
- "First, their synagogues or schools should be set afire, and dirt be piled and heaped over whatever will not burn, so that no man will ever again see a stone or cinder of it. This should be done to honor Our Lord and Christianity, so that God may see that we are Christians and have not knowingly tolerated or approved of such public lying, cursing, and blaspheming of His Son and His Christians.
- **"Second,** their houses also should be torn down and destroyed.
- **"Third,** all their prayer books and Talmudic writing should be taken from them.
- **"Fourth,** from now on, their rabbis should be forbidden from teaching, on pain of life and limb.
- **"Fifth,** the Jews' escorts and right to travel on highways should be completely rescinded.

- **"Sixth,** their usury should be prohibited and all of their cash and treasure in silver and gold be taken from them.
- **"Seventh,** the strong young Jews and Jewesses should be handed a flail,<sup>45</sup> ax, fork-hoe,<sup>46</sup> spade, distaff, or spindle<sup>47</sup> and then be allowed to earn their bread by the sweat of their face,
- "Now whoever is inclined to house, feed, or honor such poisonous serpents and young devils ... He thinks himself a perfect Christian, full of works of mercy, but on Judgment Day Christ will reward him along with the Jews in the eternal fires of hell!" (Luther, Martin. "On the Jews and Their Lies (1543)." *The Essential Luther*, edited by Tryntje Helfferich, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.. Kindle Edition, pp. 298-303.)

**Illustration #2: The fall of a once great man of God is common.**

**The end of Martin Luther's ministry exemplifies the tendency, the possibility of *the fall of a once great man of God!*** A man who, although having started out so well, so humble, so successfully surrendered to our Lord's will instead of his own - later, in the declining and especially in the twilight years of his ministry increasingly **begins to trust *himself* instead of God, as...**

- He becomes more established in his church, in his ministries, from the years of his experience and in midst of enjoying the increasing esteem of others toward himself.

- He attempts to expand *his* work (as *it* gradually becomes more his, and less *our Lord's* work).
- He become more and more frustrated, angry and hateful towards those who refuse to work with *him*.

### **Illustration #3: The Fall of others as recorded in Scripture.**

- **Paul** - when he made his mission [to Jerusalem] more important than obedience to God... his mission ended with him wasting away inactive and in prison for three (?) years.
- **Saul** - when he made his congregation [the people of his kingdom] more important than obedience to God... his congregation was taken away [split away] from him and given to another.
- **Moses** - when he made his bitterness against his disobedient people more important than his own obedience to God... the people were allowed to enter the Promised Land [revival] but he was not.
- **Cain** - when his disobedience to God combined with his jealousy of a younger minister [his brother]... he destroyed that young ministers life and was *then* cast out from the presence of God.

**And so we see; and yet we yearn to know... *what does God have to say on this so very vital a subject in understanding the rises and falls faced in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ? He'll tell us, as***

**always, as He always does, from the pages of his own Word. Hear this, now! Hear Him! Hear *God!***

5 Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.

6 For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.

7 Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.

8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

10 I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. (Jeremiah 17:5-10)

**I. Are your people following you into being cursed...**

**“Thus saith the Lord;** Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.”  
(Jeremiah 17:5)

**A. By trusting you instead of God?**

“Cursed be the man that trusteth in man.”

**B. By trusting your ability instead of God’s?**

“Cursed be the man ... who maketh flesh his arm.”

**C. By trusting your desires instead of God’s?**

“Cursed be the man ... whose heart departeth from the Lord.”

➤ **The result:**

“For he [they] shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited.” (Jeremiah 17:6)

**II. Are your people following you into being blessed...**

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.” (Jeremiah 17:7)

**A. By trusting in the Lord, only?**

“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord.”

## **B. By hoping in the Lord, only?**

“Blessed is the man ... whose hope the Lord is.”

### **➤ The result:**

“For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.”

(Jeremiah 17:8)

## **III. Are your people following you into being deceived...**

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)

“The *heart* was considered the center of the immaterial aspects of life such as emotions, thoughts, motivations, courage.” (Ryrie, C., 2012. *Ryrie Study Bible New American Standard Bible*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, p.634.)

### **A. Without knowing that they are being led into deception?**

“The heart is deceitful above all things.”

### **B. Without knowing that they are being led into wickedness?**

“The heart is ... desperately wicked.”



### **C. Without knowing that they are being led into confusion?**

“The heart ... who can know it?”

#### **➤ The result:**

“I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” (Jeremiah 17:10)

### **Conclusion**

“As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.” (Jeremiah 17:11)

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### **OUTLINE:**

#### **Pastoral Authority: Cursed or Blessed?**

I. Are your people following you into being cursed...

II. Are your people following you into being blessed...

III. Are your people following you into being deceived...

“Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.” (Jeremiah 17:5)

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### **WORSHIP:**

[Have Thine Own Way, Lord \(298: Video Performance\)](#)

[Have Thine Own Way, Lord \(298: Piano\)](#)

[I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go \(352:Video w/Lyrics\)](#)

[Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior \(311: Piano\)](#)

[Teach Me Your Way, O Lord \(not 476: Video Performance\)](#)

[O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee \(485: Video w/Lyrics: 1/3/4\)](#)