GREAT IS HIS FAITHFULNESS:

a study of

LAMENTATIONS

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE
SUNDAY SCHOOL | 7 WEEKS
GREAT IS HIS FAITHFULNESS:

a study of

LAMENTATIONS

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

SUNDAY SCHOOL | 7 WEEKS

Dr. Daniel Hinton, author
Great is Your Faithfulness.

Dear Family,

It may seem a little strange to study a song book of laments. This is perhaps among the darkest books in the Bible. And for this reason, it is so right. So appropriate. Our world, our days, and our own hearts are filled with dark places and dark times.

One of the most important things to remember about the Bible is that it is “situational”. Meaning, God wrote his perfect word from people who were in situations, and into the lives of people in situations. Some good. Some bad. And some dark. There is not a dark night of the soul that is not explored in the word of God.

Perhaps the most tragic of all the verses in Lamentations is the first verse: “How lonely sits the city...” The city of Jerusalem was one of the most vibrant places one could ever imagine. Breath taking, stunning. Under the reign of her most dominant monarchs, she was untouchable. And yet while her geography did not changed her majesty did. She is on the hill, and is decimated. She is the city that cannot be hidden, even though she would want to me. How lonely.

Into that loneliness the prophet Jeremiah weeps. He mourns for the loss of innocence, the mourns the loss of blessing, He mourns the loss of victory. And then into this downwards spiral of feeling, comes one of the most breathtaking passages in all of Scripture: Great is your faithfulness.

Church, it is no exaggeration that I am thrilled to study this. We explore deep questions about the existence of pain, the place of God in our pain, and what this means about our view of God and how he loves His children.

Can there be a greater joy than huddling around the Bible and studying it together? I can’t imagine one. I look forward to seeing you each Sunday!

For the Kingdom,

Steven Smith, Senior Pastor
# Table of Contents

## Sunday School Personal Study Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Historical Context: Reference Guide</th>
<th>Reference Guide (This one-page guide highlights the historical context for the entire book of Lamentations.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Literary Context</td>
<td>(Understand the book as a whole.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Redemptive Context: Reference Guide</td>
<td>Reference Guide (This one-page chart most thoroughly describes Lamentations within salvation history. It is important to remember throughout the study, of Lamentations’ connection to the other Old and New Testament books)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>October 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>October 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>October 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>October 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>November 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>November 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>November 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

Lamentations is the prophet Jeremiah’s song book. After all of the destruction Jeremiah witnessed and warned against, it is thought that he penned these poems shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586BC.

Lamentations is considered an Exilic prophetic book meaning it was not written before or after the exile, but during the exile.

After refusing to heed the warnings of the prophets, the Northern Kingdom was taken into exile by the Assyrians in 722BC. In 586BC the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and took the southern Kingdom of Judah taken into captivity. The city was in shambles, its people deported or left desolate. This is the time period in which Jeremiah writes his laments.

LITERARY CONTEXT

TRACING THE MESSAGE

I. PREVAILING THEMES
    a. Sin- disobedience, apathy, idolatry, wickedness and their consequences.
    b. Destruction- the wreckage of sin, the judgment of God and the resulting misery.
    c. Judgment- the wrath of God, the sting of slavery, and Israel’s forfeiture of their initial blessing.
    d. Confession- reckoning, repentance, and a call for rescue.
## II. LITERARY STRUCTURE & ELEMENTS

### Lament Pattern

“A lament was a funeral poem or song written and recited for someone who had just died (cf. 2 Sam. 1:17–27). The song usually emphasized the good qualities of the departed and the tragedy or loss felt by those mourning his death. Jeremiah was lamenting the tragic “death” of the city of Jerusalem and the results of her demise which were being experienced by the people.”

Repetition of particular words along with a “limping meter” give Lamentations its tone of lament.

### Acrostic Arrangement

Evidently Lamentations was written using an acrostic pattern. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet, therefore, each line of Chapter 1, for example, begins with the next consecutive letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Chapters 1-4 follow this pattern. Chapter 3 contains 66 verses, so the first three verses begin with the first Hebrew letter. The fourth, fifth, and sixth lines begin with the second Hebrew letter, and so on. Although Chapter 5 does not follow this pattern, it also contains 22 verses. Scholars have noted that chapters 2-4 actually reverse a couple of the letters, which was apparently common and acceptable during that time period.

Why use an acrostic?

1. Possibility 1: “to help readers remember the words of the lament.”
2. Possibility 2: “to emphasize to the readers the complete nature of their suffering because of sin… The alphabet was used to remind the people that Jerusalem’s judgment was ‘from A to Z.”’

### Structural Balance

“The Book of Lamentations has a definite structural balance. Chapters 1–2 and 4–5 parallel each other and are arranged in a chiasm pattern. Thus chapters 1 and 5 focus on the people while chapters 2 and 4 focus on the Lord. Chapter 3 provides the pivot for the book, pointing to Jeremiah’s response in the midst of affliction.”

See graphic below.

---

### THE CHIASM STRUCTURE OF LAMENTATIONS

1. Jeremiah’s response (Lam. 3)
2. The Lord’s anger (Lam. 4)
3. Remnant’s response (Lam. 5)
4. God’s judgment (Lam. 2)
5. Jerusalem’s desolation (Lam. 1)
III. THE MESSAGE OF LAMENTATIONS

Any discussion of pain and suffering in the contemporary mode triggers a response of entitlement, “We are suffering but we deserve better.” Living a life free of any obstruction to my full enjoyment of all things I want is what I deserve; it is my right.

While the Bible teaches otherwise we as individuals inhale this in the culture, and when we collectively come together we exhale it in church. Like second hand smoke, you don’t have to light the smoke to die from it. Church entitlement presents itself in different ways. For example, it presents itself in a steady flow of “church as entertainment” that insulates us from thinking deeply. Church as entertainment suggests that this is what life is like. But it’s not like this. Students groomed like this are not ready for the reality that awaits them in college.

The idea that we have the right to be happy is facilitated by preachers who will only tell us what we want to hear. We, as preachers, are all tempted there. I know I am. Yet, if I only tell people what they want to hear not only am I abdicating my ambassadorship, I am suggesting to believers that our allegiance to the God of all truth is secondary to our allegiance to a culture that wants nothing but froth. When feeling trumps thinking the enemy is the one who makes us think something unpleasant.

This is why the message of Jeremiah is as unpleasant today as it was then. The book of Jeremiah, and its song book, Lamentations, is a gift to the church in general and the preacher specifically. The gods of pagan nations so attracted the nation of Israel they thought they did not have to think about sin and suffering. And they didn’t. Affections warmed to the distractions of what is thin and fake are repulsed by the cold hand of pain.

Yet, when the judgment came they were given the precious gift of reality. Suffering is as insightful as it painful. With suffering comes sight. Vision comes when we are most blinded. Clear skies obscure reality.

Therefore, again, studying this book corporately is such a gift. It allows pastor and people to think about one of the most significant themes in Scripture – mourning over loss, suffering, and pain.

“It is a mute reminder that sin, in spite of all its allurement and excitement, carries with it heavy weights of sorrow, grief, misery, barrenness, and pain. It is the other side of the eat, drink, and be merry’ coin”  
- Chuck Swindoll

SOURCES

LAMENTATIONS IN REDEMPTIVE CONTEXT

Scholars believe that Lamentations was written by Jeremiah shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586BC. Take a moment to walk the students through some of the studies we have done as a church over the past couple of years.

GOD STORY: Remind the students that the Bible tells one overarching narrative.

PSALMS: Remind the students about the era of the Kings, before the Kingdom split, when David wrote many of the Psalms.

NEHEMIAH: Remind the students where we were in the storyline when we walked through the book of Nehemiah. During the exile, Nehemiah was granted permission by Artzxerses, a foreign ruler, to return and rebuild Jerusalem.

LAMENTATIONS: So where are we now? Well, we have moved backward chronologically. It may be helpful to think of it this way. Remember when Nehemiah and God’s people joined together to rebuild the walls, and re-devote their lives to faithfulness? Rewind the story backward to when the city was first destroyed. This is when Lamentations is written. This is the beauty of the Bible. As disciples of Christ and students of the Word, we can read Lamentations through the lens of Nehemiah. We know what happens next in redemptive history. Jeremiah laments and rightfully so. And not too long after, Nehemiah weeps for the city, repents on behalf of the people and God uses him to do a tremendous work.
The pre-exilic prophets warned of the coming judgment (exile) should God’s people not turn from their wickedness and return to God and his Law. Lamentations, Ezekiel, and Daniel were written during the exile. Remember Daniel and his friends trying to live for God in Babylon? This was when God’s people were exiled, away from the Promised Land. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were written after the exile. This is a helpful chart to understand the circumstances under which the prophets were writing. There are a couple prophetic books which don’t fit as nicely into this chart, but for the sake of simplicity, this is a helpful overview.
Today's Text: LAMENTATIONS 1
1 How lonely sits the city that was full of people!
   How like a widow has she become, she who was great among the nations!
   She who was a princess among the provinces has become a slave.
2 She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks;
   among all her lovers she has none to comfort her;
   all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies.
3 Judah has gone into exile because of affliction and hard servitude;
   she dwells now among the nations, but finds no resting place;
   her pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress.
4 The roads to Zion mourn, for none come to the festival;
   all her gates are desolate; her priests groan;
   her virgins have been afflicted, and she herself suffers bitterly.
5 Her foes have become the head; her enemies prosper,
   because the Lord has afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions;
   her children have gone away, captives before the foe.
6 From the daughter of Zion all her majesty has departed.
   Her princes have become like deer that find no pasture;
   they fled without strength before the pursuer.
7 Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction and wandering.
all the precious things that were hers from days of old. 
When her people fell into the hand of the foe, and there was none to help her, 
her foes gloated over her; they mocked at her downfall. 
8 Jerusalem sinned grievously; therefore she became filthy; 
all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; 
she herself groans and turns her face away. 
9 Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her future; 
therefore her fall is terrible; she has no comforter. 
“O Lord, behold my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!” 
10 The enemy has stretched out his hands over all her precious things; 
for she has seen the nations enter her sanctuary, 
those whom you forbade to enter your congregation. 
11 All her people groan as they search for bread; 
they trade their treasures for food to revive their strength. 
“Look, O Lord, and see, for I am despised.” 
12 “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see 
if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me, 
which the Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger. 
13 “From on high he sent fire; into my bones he made it descend; 
he spread a net for my feet; he turned me back; 
he has left me stunned, faint all the day long. 
14 “My transgressions were bound into a yoke; by his hand they were fastened together; 
they were set upon my neck; he caused my strength to fail; 
the Lord gave me into the hands of those whom I cannot withstand. 
15 “The Lord rejected all my mighty men in my midst; he summoned an assembly against me 
to crush my young men; the Lord has trodden as in a winepress 
the virgin daughter of Judah. 
16 “For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears; 
for a comforter is far from me, one to revive my spirit; 
my children are desolate, for the enemy has prevailed.” 
17 Zion stretches out her hands, but there is none to comfort her; 
the Lord has commanded against Jacob that his neighbors should be his foes; 
Jerusalem has become a filthy thing among them. 
18 “The Lord is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word; 
but hear, all you peoples, and see my suffering; 
my young women and my young men have gone into captivity. 
19 “I called to my lovers, but they deceived me; 
my priests and elders perished in the city, 
while they sought food to revive their strength. 
20 “Look, O Lord, for I am in distress; my stomach churns; 
my heart is wrung within me, because I have been very rebellious. 
In the street the sword bereaves; in the house it is like death. 
21 “They heard my groaning, yet there is no one to comfort me. 
All my enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that you have done it. 
You have brought the day you announced; now let them be as I am. 
22 “Let all their evildoing come before you, and deal with them 
as you have dealt with me because of all my transgressions; 
for my groans are many, and my heart is faint.
(1) Where are we?

Look at the opening lines of Lamentations.

How lonely sits the city that was full of people!
How like a widow has she become, she who was great among the nations!
She who was a princess among the provinces has become a slave.

Look at how far Jerusalem has fallen. Evidently, there are a few things here that Jeremiah is drawing the reader’s attention to. The city once was bustling. And now it sits empty. And it was not just a crowded city in its day. It was a city knows for its greatness around the world.

And now? The text says she has become like a widow. Jerusalem has gone from royalty (ruling over others) to a slave.

*Have you seen the equivalent of this type of spiritual carnage? Would you be willing to share about a time when sin brought forth such destruction is was hard to watch?*

Many times, it seems, people would choose to move past the laments of Jeremiah and on into happier territory of the Gospels or the Epistles. But if we have read the Gospels and the Epistles we know that there is in fact no hope without lament. There is no salvation without a reckoning with our personal destruction. There is no rescue without a weeping over our lost estate.

Ironically, Jeremiah says there is no one to comfort Jerusalem. She lays hopeless. Her enemies prevail. And God’s people are scattered throughout the world. God asked his people to walk in humble obedience with Him, but God will not force wicked people into his presence. In this sense, the Israelites got what they wanted. Life without God. Life with foreign gods.

(2) How did we get here?

V5 Her foes have become the head; her enemies prosper, because the Lord has afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions;
V8 Jerusalem sinned grievously; therefore she became filthy;
V9 Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her future; therefore her fall is terrible; she has no comforter.
Why do you believe this has happened to God’s people? Who is responsible for this?

It is immediately clear how they got into this situation. They sinned. There is no doubt in Jeremiah’s mind what is happening here. In fact, a review of the book of Jeremiah would highlight all the areas in which God was calling his people to repent. God’s judgment shall not be restrained forever. Let the wicked be warned. This truth remains. An ultimate and unthinkable payment for the wickedness of mankind will come due. If you have not thrown yourself at the mercy of Christ, the acceptable payment for your sin, a judgment far greater than Jerusalem’s awaits.

(3) How do we get out of here?

Look at V14-18.

14 “My transgressions were bound into a yoke; by his hand they were fastened together; they were set upon my neck; he caused my strength to fail; the Lord gave me into the hands of those whom I cannot withstand.

15 “The Lord rejected all my mighty men in my midst; he summoned an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord has trodden as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah.

16 “For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears; for a comforter is far from me, one to revive my spirit; my children are desolate, for the enemy has prevailed.”

17 Zion stretches out her hands, but there is none to comfort her; the Lord has commanded against Jacob that his neighbors should be his foes; Jerusalem has become a filthy thing among them.

18 “The Lord is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word; but hear, all you peoples, and see my suffering; my young women and my young men have gone into captivity.

Jeremiah recognizes they are under the judgment of God. In that sense, there is nothing they can do to escape it. They’ve earned it. And now they must taste the bitterness of God’s wrath.

The remainder of the book will speak more to Israel’s response to this judgment. But Chapter 1 simply laments the facts. The shining beacon of light to the world (Jerusalem) has been ransacked. A vibrant and holy people, set apart for God’s glory worships no longer in the holy of holies.

CONCLUSION

Sin brings ruin.

FROM THE PASTOR:
“Suffering is inevitable. We think obedience is too much of a hardship. We don’t want to obey and resent God for asking us to do so. And following God is not easy. But the price of obedience is a bargain compared to the price of judgment. Prevention costs less than destruction. Anticipating sin costs less than repenting of sin.”
-Dr. Steven W. Smith
When you survey your life circumstances at this moment, would you say you are suffering? Suffering is sometimes corrective (discipline from God as a result of our sin), and it is sometimes instructive (simply God using suffering to teach us something). Do you ever wonder why you’re going through what you’re going through? Is there a way to know?

Is there a common denominator for those who have experienced this type of ruin in their lives? In your opinion, what leads to the tragic falls of seemingly honorable friends, colleagues, leaders, celebrities, and even pastors? Is there a warning there for us to heed?

What part do believers play in warning brothers and sisters in Christ of the ruin that comes from sin? Have you ever had to confront a friend, speaking the truth in love? Is it possible that friends who were willing to speak might have sparked a turning away from sin?

“Real faith grows out of honestly expressed doubt: What you’ll find is that God’s grace and love don’t cloud over the doubt; they go deeper than the doubt. Until you have deep questions and deep pain you’ll probably not have a deep experience of God. So God lets you have some of those so you can encounter a God whose love and wisdom and glory are deeper than the pain.”

-JD Greear
HOME 22:6

SING | “Come as You Are”


READ | A helpful devotional on Lamentations:

In the 18th century, silhouettes (shadow profiles traced and cut from black paper) were a popular alternative to costly portraits. The word took its name from the French controller general of finance, Étienne de Silhouette. During the Seven Years War against England, he tried to raise revenues by heavily taxing the wealthy. Victims of his high taxes complained and used the word silhouette to refer to their wealth being reduced to a mere shadow of what it once was.

With the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah lamented over the shadow of what once was a great city and center of worship now devastated by war. “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow” (Lam. 1:12).

But Jeremiah did not remain in despair. He recognized God’s sovereignty in suffering. Later in this book of sorrow, the prophet reflected: “I have hope. Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning” (3:21-23).

Has sorrow or suffering made your life feel like a dark silhouette of what it once was? Remember, God’s mercies are new every morning. He is compassionately working in your life for His glory and your blessing.

Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,
But His smile quickly drives it away;
Not a doubt nor a fear, not a sigh nor a tear
Can abide while we trust and obey. —Sammis
To see beyond earth’s shadows, look to Christ the Light.¹

PRAY | Thank God for sparing you from utter ruin because of your sin. Ask God to keep you from a perpetually sinful life which can destroy your soul and your life.

FROM THE PASTOR:
“What we know, reading the Bible as a whole, is that this is the city to which Christ will return. This is the city which will be made new and come down from heaven. She will ultimately be the opposite of loneliness and despair. However, that coming reality was a million miles away.”
-Dr. Steven W. Smith

SOURCES

¹ http://www.preceptaustin.org/lamentations_devotionals
Today’s Text: LAMENTATIONS 2
1 How the Lord in his anger has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud! He has cast down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel; he has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger.
2 The Lord has swallowed up without mercy all the habitations of Jacob; in his wrath he has broken down the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; he has brought down to the ground in dishonor the kingdom and its rulers.
3 He has cut down in fierce anger all the might of Israel; he has withdrawn from them his right hand in the face of the enemy; he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob, consuming all around.
4 He has bent his bow like an enemy, with his right hand set like a foe; and he has killed all who were delightful in our eyes in the tent of the daughter of Zion; he has poured out his fury like fire.
5 The Lord has become like an enemy; he has swallowed up Israel; he has swallowed up all its palaces; he has laid in ruins its strongholds, and he has multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.
6 He has laid waste his booth like a garden, laid in ruins his meeting place; the LORD has made Zion forget festival and Sabbath, and in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest.
7 The Lord has scorned his altar, disowned his sanctuary; he has delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces;
they raised a clamor in the house of the LORD as on the day of festival.

The LORD determined to lay in ruins the wall of the daughter of Zion; he stretched out the measuring line; he did not restrain his hand from destroying; he caused rampart and wall to lament; they languished together.

Her gates have sunk into the ground; he has ruined and broken her bars; her king and princes are among the nations; the law is no more, and her prophets find no vision from the LORD.

The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth; the young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground.

My eyes are spent with weeping; my stomach churns; my bile is poured out to the ground because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, because infants and babies faint in the streets of the city.

They cry to their mothers, “Where is bread and wine?” as they faint like a wounded man in the streets of the city, as their life is poured out on their mothers’ bosom.

What can I say for you, to what compare you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What can I liken to you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is vast as the sea; who can heal you?

Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles that are false and misleading.

All who pass along the way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem: “Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?”

All your enemies rail against you; they hiss, they gnash their teeth, they cry: “We have swallowed her! Ah, this is the day we longed for; now we have it; we see it!”

The LORD has done what he purposed; he has carried out his word, which he commanded long ago; he has thrown down without pity; he has made the enemy rejoice over you and exalted the might of your foes.

Their heart cried to the Lord. O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears stream down like a torrent day and night! Give yourself no rest, your eyes no respite!

“Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the night watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint for hunger at the head of every street."

Look, O LORD, and see! With whom have you dealt thus? Should women eat the fruit of their womb, the children of their tender care? Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord?

In the dust of the streets lie the young and the old; my young women and my young men have fallen by the sword; you have killed them in the day of your anger, slaughtering without pity.

You summoned as if to a festival day my terrors on every side, and on the day of the anger of the LORD no one escaped or survived; those whom I held and raised my enemy destroyed.
(1) The Reality: God’s Judgment (v1-9)

Look at verses 1-9. Jeremiah gives the reader a clear picture of reality. God’s judgment has come. God is the initiator of the actions in chapter 2. Take a look at the 22 actions verbs Dr. Smith has extracted below from the first 9 verses of Lamentation 2.

He has thrown down Israel’s glory v.1
He did not acknowledge his footstool v.1
The Lord has swallowed up v.2
He has demolished v.2
He brought them to the ground v.2
and defiled the kingdom and its leaders.v.2
He has cut off every horn† of Israel withdrawn his right hand v.3
He has blazed against Jacob like a flaming fire v.3
He has strung his bow like an enemy v.4
He has killed everyone who was the delight to the eye v.4
He has swallowed up Israel. V.5
He swallowed up all its palaces and destroyed its fortified cities v.5
He has multiplied mourning and lamentation v.5
He has wrecked his temple v.6
The LORD has abolished appointed festivals and Sabbaths in Zion. v.6
He has despised king and priest v.6
The Lord has rejected his altar repudiated his sanctuary v.7
he has handed the walls of her palaces over to the enemy. V.7
The LORD determined to destroy the wall v.8
He stretched out a measuring line and did not restrain himself from destroying. v.8
He made the ramparts and walls grieve;
He has destroyed and shattered the bars on her gates. v.9

The judgment of God is as real as the air we breathe. There is a two-fold warning here for New Covenant believers. First, the Old Testament provides a clear picture of the righteousness which God’s character requires and the type of wickedness he will not tolerate. What type of people does God deal with in this way? This is a proud, disobedient, idolatrous people who have a habit of forgetting the mighty and faithful acts of their covenant God. This is a “may it never be said of us” moment for the church. Secondly, it is a clear reminder that God’s patience will not extend for eternity. A real, final, and painful judgment awaits those who refuse him. Look again at the verbs above. New Testament Christians recognize that to be decimated and taken from your land would be considered a light sentence compared to eternal judgment.

(2) The Reaction: The Silence of Judah (v10-17)

10 The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence;
they have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth;
the young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground.
It is quite astounding what has happened here. The text paints a picture of devastation, utter disappointment.

Have you ever had a quiet moment like this in your life? A moment when everything has come crashing down and there’s nothing more that can be done? It’s over. And you sat in the quiet?

The quiet sobering reality of the moment must have been too much to bear. Their children were now starving (v10-12). Their devastation was so great that they were beyond comforting (v13). They had listened to the false prophets, who sought to weaken the seriousness of their sin. (v14). Though God had clearly dismantled the nation by his own hand, their enemies boasted among them. (v15-17).

(3) The Response: Prayer (v18-22)

As has been true throughout Israel’s history, they are evidently mindful enough of God that in times of trouble they cry out. In slavery in Egypt, they called out for a deliverer. In their servitude, they cried out to God and God provided judges. And while it seems quite tardy considering God’s thorough warnings, here in their exile they cry out.

CONCLUSION

There is a dark night when the discipline of the Lord falls on us. When tragedy happens, we respond humbly because we don’t know why it happens, and soberly examine ourselves.

“Believers suffer consequences for their sin, and sometimes God uses those consequences to discipline them, but they never suffer punishment, because Jesus was punished fully in our place so all that is left for us is mercy. God is molding your character in love, not punishing you in judgment.”
- JD Greear

“For God to use you greatly He must first wound you deeply.”
- A. W. Tozer
Reflect on the Text (5-10 Minutes)

Have you ever experienced a time as a believer when you felt strongly that God was disciplining you? How did you know this was God bringing correction and not simply a challenge brought about by the brokenness of the world?

Hebrews 12:7-8 says, “It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons…” So when God brings corrective measures into our lives, how should this encourage us? And what does it mean if a person lives in perpetual sin and hears not the corrective nudging of the Holy Spirit? And continues unaccountably in sinfulness?

Can you think of a time when God allowed your life to be disoriented? If you are on the other side of this experience, can you see more clearly now how God was working in your life? How so?

From the Pastor:
“The paper thin veneer of a perfect Christian life is a modern invention crafted with the tools of Western consumerism. It’s not in the Bible, nor in the long history of the church.”
-Dr. Steven W. Smith
HOME 22:6

SING | Pass Me Not O Gentle Savior

*lyrics*: https://hymnary.org/text/pass_me_not_o_gentle_savior

*video*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mCQkJcGVh5s

READ | Lamentations 2

PRAY | Survey the sin and destruction in your own life, repent, be grateful for God’s loving correction, and cry out for his forgiveness and daily guidance.

---

**SOURCES**

1 Smith, *Exalting Christ in Jeremiah and Lamentations*, Lamentations 2, p.277
Though we will discuss Lamentations 3 this morning, for the sake of time we will read a selected portion of Lamentations 3 and not the entire chapter.

13 He drove into my kidneys
   the arrows of his quiver;
14 I have become the laughingstock of all peoples,
   the object of their taunts all day long.
15 He has filled me with bitterness;
   he has sated me with wormwood.
16 He has made my teeth grind on gravel,
   and made me cower in ashes;
17 my soul is bereft of peace;
   I have forgotten what happiness is;
18 so I say, "My endurance has perished;
   so has my hope from the Lord."
19 Remember my affliction and my wanderings,
   the wormwood and the gall!
20 My soul continually remembers it
   and is bowed down within me.
21 But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:
22 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
   his mercies never come to an end;
23 they are new every morning;
   great is your faithfulness.
24 “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,
   “therefore I will hope in him.”

**REVIEW THE TEXT**

**CONTENT**

In week three of our study of Lamentations, you might think to yourself, “What more is there to say?” It is clear by this point what Lamentations is all about. And it may be obvious why believers don’t readily choose Lamentations as the next book of bible study. The situation is bleak. The writer does not soften the pain. When the patient and forbearing God finally drops his gavel against his stiff-necked people, it is nearly unbearable.

Chapter three continues this theme. But unlike the other chapters, Jeremiah begins to reveal how he will respond to this situation. Are these circumstances beyond redemption? Does all hope and progress and faith disintegrate in the face of punishment? Since much will be made of the hopeless estate in the other weeks, this week we will focus in on Jeremiah’s response, a glimmer of hope in a dark book.

What is interesting is the contrast between v18 and v21. Look at how this progresses.

16 He ground my teeth with gravel
   and made me cower in the dust.
17 I have been deprived of peace;
   I have forgotten what prosperity is.
18 Then I thought, “My future is lost,
   as well as my hope from the Lord.”

The thing that comes to Jeremiah’s mind is that there is not future, no hope. And yet in v21,

21 But this I call to mind,
   and therefore I have hope:

Here we see the importance of the mind and the will. This is the power of thoughts. Remember the old saying “what goes down the well will come up in the bucket”? In times of desperation, whatever we have hidden in our hearts and minds will come to the forefront. When it seems as though God is all-anger, all-justice, all-punishment, will Jeremiah remember that God loves him? That God loves his people?
(1) In times of desperation, remember.

Jeremiah calls something to mind. It brings him hope.

*When all hope seems lost, is there some truth to cling to in your heart? Are there passages of Scripture that you call to mind to reorient yourself?*

*Is this what would be said of you in your times of desperation? “This is not going well. This is incredibly painful. I feel alone and afraid. It feels hopeless. But, this I call to my mind and I have hope.”*

(2) In times of desperation, remember God’s character.

*What exactly does Jeremiah remember?*

22 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;
23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
24 “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”
### THE TEXT

- **The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;**
- **his mercies never come to an end;**
- **they are new every morning;**
- **great is your faithfulness.**

### THE QUESTION

(From Hopelessness)

- Has God finally removed his love from us after all we have done?
- Even God must have a breaking point. After all of this, have we finally exhausted all of our second chances?
- There is no evidence here of God’s mercy. Has his mercy departed from us permanently?
- The promises of old have expired. We didn’t uphold our end. Has God rightfully canceled the contract?

### THE ANSWER

(To Hope)

- No. His love for you will never cease.
- No. His grace and mercy toward you endures.
- No. As certainly as the sun rising tomorrow, his mercy will come for you.
- No. God’s promises never fail. When we cling to him, he will never fail us. Even in this bleak moment, the surety of his character stands.

---

Jeremiah remembers that God loves them, that God has a track record of compassion and mercy for his people. He remembers that God is faithful.

---

### Now, having read Lamentations, do you have a richer appreciation for Nehemiah?

---

### What did Nehemiah do when he saw the destruction of Jerusalem?
Do you remember what he prayed?

On this side of history, we already know that God is not done with Israel. He promised them land, seed, and blessing. One day soon, God will raise up Zerubbabel, Nehemiah and Ezra to rebuild and restore the land, but most importantly, restore the hearts of the people. They had to go through Lamentations to get to Nehemiah.

(3) In times of despair, remember that God is all you need.

The fact is, whether we are facing the consequences of our sin, fallout from the sinful and broken world in which we live, God’s corrective discipline on our lives, or some combination of all, we are not guaranteed earthly rescue. The cancer may not disappear. Your marriage may not ultimately reconcile. Those whom you have harmed may not forgive you. On this side of heaven, the pain may not subside. But the message of the Gospel is that we have everything we need in Christ. So in times of desperation, we don’t hope because we’re sure things will turn out the way we draw it up. No. We hope because regardless of how things turn out, Christ is with us. We hope because the one who sustains us through the pain holds the world in his hands.

“The Lord is my portion, therefore I will hope in Him.”
Jeremiah says,
55 I called on your name, Lord,
from the depths of the pit.
56 You heard my plea:
Do not ignore my cry for relief.
57 You came near whenever I called you;
you said, “Do not be afraid.”
58 You championed my cause, Lord;
you redeemed my life.

Is this not the prayer of the redeemed? Look at the shadows of the Gospel in this passage.

We recognized our sin, our wretched state and our status as enemies of God. We were at the depths of the pit. But God came near. Jesus left heaven to ransom the slaves. He said, “Do not be afraid.” He championed my cause. He redeemed my life. In the truth of the Gospel, regardless of circumstance, there is always hope.

CONCLUSION

In times of despair, call to mind God’s faithfulness and there you will find hope.
REFLECT ON THE TEXT

Have you ever heard someone say that the whole Bible is about Jesus? What in the world could Lamentations have to do with Jesus? If you and a friend were walking through Lamentations together, how would you say Lamentations 3 reminds us of the Gospel?

Let’s try to be as honest as we can. Do you resonate with Jeremiah’s statement-the Lord is my portion? If all you had was Jesus would you be ok? Would you have hope? If you were completely honest, are there things in your life that you suspect, if you were to lose them, you’d lose all hope?

Would you be willing to share with the group just how you manage to battle against the hopelessness we sometimes experience in this life? When you begin to think like Jeremiah writes (my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; My endurance has perished; so has my hope…) share with us your journey back to thinking clearly about God and returning to hope in him.

HOME 22:6

SING | Great is thy Faithfulness

lyrics: https://hymnary.org/text/great_is_thy_faithfulness_o_god_my_fathe
modern version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXEYool1lyl

READ | Lamentations 3 along with Psalm 103 and look for the parallels

PRAY | Imagine you were at the pit of despair. As a family, talk about the things that you face, or may face some day that will bring about this kind of hopelessness. Talk about the destruction of sin, the consequences of our sin and others’ sins. Talk about the brokenness of the world. Now list the things that are true about God that would remind you of the hope you have even in difficult times. Pray and thank God that come what may in this life, we have all we need in him.
Today’s Text: LAMENTATIONS 4
1 How the gold has grown dim, how the pure gold is changed!
The holy stones lie scattered at the head of every street.
2 The precious sons of Zion, worth their weight in fine gold, how they are regarded as earthen pots, the work of a potter’s hands!
3 Even jackals offer the breast; they nurse their young; but the daughter of my people has become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.
4 The tongue of the nursing infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst; the children beg for food, but no one gives to them.
5 Those who once feasted on delicacies perish in the streets; those who were brought up in purple embrace ash heaps.
6 For the chastisement of the daughter of my people has been greater than the punishment of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, and no hands were wrung for her.
7 Her princes were purer than snow, whiter than milk; their bodies were more ruddy than coral, the beauty of their form was like sapphire.
8 Now their face is blacker than soot; they are not recognized in the streets; their skin has shriveled on their bones; it has become as dry as wood.
9 Happier were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger, who wasted away, pierced by lack of the fruits of the field.
10 The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children; they became their food during the destruction of the daughter of my people.
11 The Lord gave full vent to his wrath; he poured out his hot anger and he kindled a fire in Zion that consumed its foundations.
12 The kings of the earth did not believe, nor any of the inhabitants of the world, that foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem.
13 This was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed in the midst of her the blood of the righteous.
14 They wandered, blind, through the streets; they were so defiled with blood that no one was able to touch their garments.
15 “Away! Unclean!” people cried at them. “Away! Away! Do not touch!” So they became fugitives and wanderers; people said among the nations, “They shall stay with us no longer.”
16 The Lord himself has scattered them; he will regard them no more; no honor was shown to the priests, no favor to the elders.
17 Our eyes failed, ever watching vainly for help; in our watching we watched for a nation which could not save.
18 They dogged our steps  
   so that we could not walk in our streets;  
our end drew near; our days were numbered,  
   for our end had come.
19 Our pursuers were swifter  
   than the eagles in the heavens;  
they chased us on the mountains;  
   they lay in wait for us in the wilderness.
20 The breath of our nostrils, the Lord’s anointed,  
   was captured in their pits,  
of whom we said, “Under his shadow  
   we shall live among the nations.”
21 Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom,  
   you who dwell in the land of Uz;  
but to you also the cup shall pass;  
   you shall become drunk and strip yourself bare.
22 The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter of Zion, is accomplished;  
   he will keep you in exile no longer;  
but your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will punish;  
   he will uncover your sins.

REVIEW THE TEXT

CONTENT

(1) The Result of the Siege

In verses 1-11 of chapter 4, Jeremiah depicts the misfortune of the city by comparing it to its former glory and also by using various word pictures. Note the parallelism in v1-6 with v7-11.

Parallelism in Lamentations 4:1–11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VERSES 1-6</th>
<th>VERSES 7-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The value of the sons of Zion has become despised. (v1-2)</td>
<td>The value of the princes has become despised. (v7-8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The little children and adults suffer. (v3-5)</td>
<td>The little children and adults suffer. (v9-10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: The calamity is God’s punishment. (v6)</td>
<td>Conclusion: The calamity is God’s punishment. (v11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now take a look at the way in which Jeremiah juxtaposes the old glory of Jerusalem with the current state.
### Pictures of the Destruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE REALITY</th>
<th>THE PASSAGE</th>
<th>COMMENTARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jackals (v3)</td>
<td>Even jackals offer the breast; they nurse their young;</td>
<td><strong>Jackals</strong>, found throughout the Mediterranean area, traveled in packs. They were associated with areas of desolation and destruction (cf. Isa. 35:7; Jer. 9:11; 10:22; 49:33; 51:37; Mal. 1:3). Yet even jackals nourished their offspring while the cries of <strong>the children</strong> of Jerusalem <strong>for bread</strong> and water went unheeded by their parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostriches (v3)</td>
<td>but the daughter of my people has become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.</td>
<td>Mother ostriches seem unconcerned about their young, for they lay their eggs in the sand where they may be trampled…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infants (v4)</td>
<td>the children beg for food, but no one gives to them.</td>
<td>Infants and children were dying of <strong>thirst</strong> and starvation (cf. Lam. 2:19).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princes (v5)</td>
<td>those who were brought up in purple embrace ash heaps.</td>
<td><strong>those who used to eat well were now destitute</strong>, and princes (<strong>those nurtured in purple</strong>, royal clothing) were lying in <strong>ash heaps</strong>, probably in sickness (cf. Job 2:8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodom (v6)</td>
<td>greater than the punishment of Sodom</td>
<td>But Jerusalem’s <strong>punishment</strong> was worse than Sodom’s because (a) Jerusalem’s punishment was protracted while Sodom’s was short (<strong>in a moment</strong>), and (b) Jerusalem’s came despite assistance from Egypt while Sodom had no assistance (<strong>without a hand … to help</strong>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princes (v7-8)</td>
<td>Now their face is blacker than soot; they are not recognized in the streets;</td>
<td>Their fine complexions and healthy bodies did not escape the ravages of Babylon. They too saw their skin darken (<strong>become blacker than soot</strong>) and grow taut (<strong>shriveled</strong>) as their bodies became <strong>racked</strong> by <strong>hunger</strong> and emaciated (cf. 5:10).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (v10)</td>
<td>The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children;</td>
<td>The gnawing pangs of hunger (cf. 1:11, 19) finally drove <strong>compassionate women</strong> into cannibalizing their <strong>own children</strong> (cf. comments on 2:20).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger (v11)</td>
<td>The Lord gave full vent to his wrath; he poured out his hot anger…</td>
<td>Jerusalem was experiencing God’s <strong>wrath</strong> (cf. 2:2, 4; 3:1) and <strong>fierce anger</strong> (cf. 1:12; 2:3, 6) for her sin.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(2) The Reason for the Siege

Why was the wrath of God being poured out on Jerusalem and Israel?

(a) First… This was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed in the midst of her the blood of the righteous. (v13)

Corruption and sin had permeated the land through its leaders.

(b) Second… in our watching we watched for a nation which could not save. (v17)

Evidently, instead of trusting God, they trusted Egypt as a close ally against Babylon. This is depicted here as a major mistake.

(c) Third… The breath of our nostrils, the Lord’s anointed, was captured in their pits… (v20)

The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter of Zion, is accomplished; he will keep you in exile no longer; but your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will punish; he will uncover your sins. (v22)

The closing lines of Lamentations 4 show Jeremiah’s unwavering hope in God’s promises. Remember Lamentations 3? “This I call to mind and I have hope.” Jeremiah seems to hold so tightly to his belief in God’s faithfulness to his covenant (Deut. 28-30) that he declares that this is not the end of the story. It is as if Jeremiah says, “Edom, you rejoice now, but your time will come.” And, “Israel, you weep now, but God will restore you in his time.”

CONCLUSION

When leadership falls, the people are aimless.

REFLECT ON THE TEXT

Jeremiah mentions Israel’s King as the Anointed One. What does this reveal about their misplaced trust? (see Psalm 2:2) Are we guilty of making our earthly leaders functional saviors? How so? Can anyone give an example of this?

Dr. Smith says that sometimes we cannot immediately see the consequences of our disobedience. Can you think of a time in your own life when disobedience felt right, felt gratifying in the moment, but it came back to haunt you? How does the delayed nature of consequences make it even harder to obey in the moment?
Some people have a high level of trust for leaders. They think, “This person is top notch. They have it all together. If I stick with them and try to be like them, I’ll be in good shape.” Others have been ‘burned’ by poor leadership. They think, “Everyone has their secrets. If we only knew what happened behind closed doors in this person’s life, we probably wouldn’t follow.” What’s your view toward leaders, in general? How does this text inform us about our own view of leaders?

HOME 22:6

SING | As you listen to the song “Divine Exchange” by Charity Gayle, glance at the lyrics. This would be a great new song to learn as a family.

On the cross hung my pain  
And the guilt and the shame  
Jesus bore my suffering  
To the grave to make me free.

Oh the blood that was shed  
It now flows to cover sin  
It washes clean, and purifies  
In its healing crimson tide.

Jesus, He took my place in divine exchange  
Hallelujah!  
Grace is mine.  
Now I live by faith for the One who saves  
He gave all to give me life.⁴

Here’s a great video of the song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kOapFgudVY4

PRAY | Pray for the leaders in your life. And pray for your personal leadership. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we lead to the glory of Christ.

READ | Lamentations 4

SOURCES

1 Dyer, “Lamentations,” in The Bible Knowledge Commentary, 1219
3 Smith, Exalting Christ in Jeremiah and Lamentations, Lamentations 4, p.294
Lamentations

Great is His Faithfulness:
a study of
Lamentations

November 4

Read the Text (2-5 Minutes)

Today's Text: Lamentations 5
1 Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us;
   look, and see our disgrace!
2 Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,
   our homes to foreigners.
3 We have become orphans, fatherless;
   our mothers are like widows.
4 We must pay for the water we drink;
   the wood we get must be bought.
5 Our pursuers are at our necks;
   we are weary; we are given no rest.
6 We have given the hand to Egypt, and to Assyria,
   to get bread enough.
7 Our fathers sinned, and are no more;
   and we bear their iniquities.
8 Slaves rule over us;
   there is none to deliver us from their hand.
9 We get our bread at the peril of our lives,
   because of the sword in the wilderness.
10 Our skin is hot as an oven
   with the burning heat of famine.
11 Women are raped in Zion,  
    young women in the towns of Judah.  
12 Princes are hung up by their hands;  
    no respect is shown to the elders.  
13 Young men are compelled to grind at the mill,  
    and boys stagger under loads of wood.  
14 The old men have left the city gate,  
    the young men their music.  
15 The joy of our hearts has ceased;  
    our dancing has been turned to mourning.  
16 The crown has fallen from our head;  
    woe to us, for we have sinned!  
17 For this our heart has become sick,  
    for these things our eyes have grown dim,  
18 for Mount Zion which lies desolate;  
    jackals prowl over it.  
19 But you, O Lord, reign forever;  
    your throne endures to all generations.  
20 Why do you forget us forever,  
    why do you forsake us for so many days?  
21 Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored!  
    Renew our days as of old—  
22 unless you have utterly rejected us,  
    and you remain exceedingly angry with us.

**REVIEW THE TEXT**

**CONTENT**

At this stage, readers of Lamentations might still be tempted to think, “So, what’s the point of Lamentations?” It is awfully depressing in points and quite thorough in its depiction of despair. Is it only here to teach us the horrors of God’s judgment? The hopelessness that comes as a result of hard-hearted people resolved to go their own way? Look carefully at Chapter 5. It is actually lament that leads to restoration.

(1) Remember us.

In verse 1, the writer beckons God to see. “Look at this situation.” Of course, God sees and knows all things (Prov. 15:3). Jeremiah calls out to God on behalf of his people not just to see what is happening, but of course to intervene.

Most of verses 1-16 contain more of what readers of Lamentations have become accustomed to: the desperate state of things. God is more than aware of their situation.

But notice v7 and v16. The people recognized this as both the expected result after their forefathers led corruptly and dealt sinfully with foreign nations. But they did not blame their forefathers alone. In v16, “woe to us for we have sinned.”
It cannot be overstated how important this progression is. Confession comes before the cure. Repentance comes before revival. Brokenness before beauty. This is the gospel. A person cannot be saved, who knows not that he is lost. Our story is not that we were moderately sinful, wobbling on the line between heaven and hell. And Jesus did just enough to move us over the line. No. You see, we are like the Israelites. Our sin has brought forth all sorts of pain, evil, and consequences. We are the people without a home. We are the hopeless ones afflicted on every side and imploding in despair. And with the same gusto in which we cried out to Jesus, “Take my life, make me whole,” the desperation of Israel has driven them to the same place.

(2) Restore us.

V19- they will appeal to God on the grounds of his very nature.

Notice they do not seem to think that God is dead. They do not believe that God has been conquered by pagan gods. They know that they have experienced the painful justice of God, which in a strange way reminds them that he reigns.

V21- they ask God to restore them.

21 Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored!
Renew our days as of old—
22 unless you have utterly rejected us, and you remain exceedingly angry with us.

Look at Lev. 26:44. “Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am the Lord their God.” God had already promised not to utterly (ultimately, finally) abandon them. So, on the grounds of God’s character and God’s promises, they ask.

“There may be some in our class who have never experienced the hope of salvation. The hopelessness and despair present here don’t depict your previous life but your current life. Did you know you can say a similar prayer today? “God who is rich in mercy, I have sinned. God who sent his very son to save the world, You reign. God who has declared that everyone who calls upon you will be saved, restore me.”

- JD Greear

There may be some in our class who have drifted from God, losing touch with the vibrant faith they once possessed. The hopelessness and despair present here don’t depict their previous life but their current one. The sin and the brokenness of the world have brought forth a period of discipline. Did you know they can say a similar prayer today? “God who indwells me by his Holy Spirit, show me the areas of my heart which are hardened toward you. God who never leaves me, grant me a greater sense of your presence. God who promises that forgiveness awaits those who confess their sins, forgive me. Restore me.”
CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of a believer is not marked by how little he sins, but how quickly he repents.¹

REFLECT ON THE TEXT

How is regret different from repentance? How can a person move from regret to repentance? How does regret work in your own life? What are its effects?

As we draw Lamentations to a close, how would you answer this question: Is Lamentations just a book of complaining? What makes lament different and helpful in the life of a believer?

How is your life different as a result of going through Lamentations? What is one idea you will take away from Lamentations that will strengthen your faith?
HOME 22:6

SING | The Classic Hymn, “Come Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy”

  * lyrics: https://hymnary.org/text/come_ye_sinners_poor_and_needy_weak_and
  * modern version: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlpoO0wYOXk

READ | Check out this Prayer of Confession given at Capitol Hill Baptist in Washington D.C. Perhaps it will stimulate your own prayers of confession.

  https://www.9marks.org/article/but-a-portion-of-our-transgressions-a-model-prayer-of-confession/

PRAY | Use the progression we have seen in Lamentation to develop your prayer time.

  Lament: Tell God about the state of things, especially things that are challenging or painful. Tell God about the things that are burdening you.

  Repentance: Regardless of why these things are happening, be sure to confess your sins. Declare to God the areas of your hearts that have gone cold toward him.

  Restoration: As God to make you whole. Ask God to make things new.
SOURCES

1 Smith, *Exalting Christ in Jeremiah and Lamentations*, Lamentations 5, p.306
Today’s Text: HEBREWS 12:26-29

26 At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” 27 This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of things that are shaken—that is, things that have been made—in order that the things that cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire.
CONTENT

(1) THE WHY (Therefore)

Many who have grown up in church have heard a pastor or teacher explain a simple yet insightful tip for students of the Bible. When the word “therefore” appears ask, “What is the therefore there for?” Since the word therefore represents a change in idea, when it appears in the text, Christians ought to explore the text leading up to the therefore. After all, therefore simply means “in light of what was just explained.” So truly it is nearly impossible to determine the meaning of a text containing the word therefore without exploring what’s on either side of it.

V28 begins with the word “therefore.” Because of something, something else is true. In this case, “Therefore, let us be grateful.” For some reason, believers should be grateful. So, what is the therefore there for?

Look at v26-27.

a. God (referring to the time of the giving of the Law in Exodus) shook the earth. (v26)
b. But a time is coming when God will shake both the heavens and the earth. (v26)
c. The shaking of the heavens and the earth will evidently bring destruction to all things that have been made. (v27)
d. The shaking of the heavens and the earth will leave only the things that could never be shaken (eternal things). (v27)

So why is the author telling you (the believer) to be grateful?

In summary, the author reminds us that a time is coming when the temporary things of earth will be destroyed and only the eternal things will remain. The same God that shook the earth in the Old Testament will shake the heavens and the earth and (in the context of Hebrews 12) those who refuse God will not stand.

God in his justice will not allow the wicked to remain. No amount of riches on earth, success in business, social connectedness, or name recognition will insulate the world from this judgment from God. Only those who are in Christ shall remain.

So, what? Therefore, what? Therefore, be grateful.

(2) THE WHAT (Be Grateful)

In light of the fact that no one outside of Christ will stand in the judgment, be grateful for you are in Christ.
The kingdom that the believers have received, the kingdom of Jesus, the saving Gospel message cannot be shaken. It will not be moved.

*Are you grateful that because of Christ, you will not face God’s judgment in the end?*

Often around Thanksgiving, we consider all the tangible blessings we possess. It is certainly a noble exercise to recount all of the things God has given us. But we often forget to recognize the greater eternal possessions we’ve been given in Christ.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPICAL THINGS WE THANK GOD FOR</th>
<th>SOME ETERNAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A nice home to live in</td>
<td>We need not be anxious about anything because God supplies our every need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wonderful friends</td>
<td>We need not fear death because our eternal destination of hope and flourishing awaits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our physical health</td>
<td>Though God knows the darkest most sinful places in our hearts, nothing can separate us from his love.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A promotion at work</td>
<td>The Holy Spirit indwells us, changes us, convicts us, guides us, comforts us, and reminds us of our full inheritance one day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our children and families</td>
<td>Though the wrath of God will fall on the wicked hearts of the world, I am eternally spared from God’s wrath through the blood of Christ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) **THE HOW (Worship with Reverence and Awe)**

First, we recognize that God the just will shake the earth and nothing will remain except that which is eternal. Next, we are grateful because in Christ, we will not be shaken, nor destroyed. Finally, gratitude leads to worship.

*What is the believer to do in response to his gratitude?*

This is depicted as the natural response. The greater the rescue, the greater the gratitude. The greater the gift, the greater the gratitude.
Why do you suppose we sometimes tend to be so tremendously grateful when our bodies are healthy or when someone experiences complete healing from cancer?

But why aren’t we so quick to express deep gratitude regarding our salvation?

Notice the progression here.

**Know the Truth:** God is just and will judge the wicked. You will not experience this judgment because you are in Christ. ➔ **Feel the Weight:** I am so grateful for the sacrifice of Christ on my behalf. ➔ **Respond Accordingly:** I will worship him by giving him my life.

**CONCLUSION**

Although God will rightfully judge sinners and destroy the material things of earth, I am hidden with Christ and free from the wrath of God and am therefore wholly grateful and honored to worship the Savior.
REFLECT ON THE TEXT

How does this text reinforce the Gospel of salvation by grace through faith and not by works? If our salvation is in any way accomplished by our own merit, then what is there to be grateful for? Grateful to ourselves? Of course not.

During this Thanksgiving season, how can you be intentional to focus not just on temporary, earthly blessings but on eternal ones?

Take a moment to survey your own life. Are you a grateful person? How do you know? Have you ever caught yourself being an ungrateful person? What tempts you to go down the road of discontentment?

HOME 22:6

READ | Try reading one of these Psalms as a way to stir the gratitude of your heart. Perhaps incorporate one of these into your family prayer time.

“O Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; Let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.” Ps. 95:1-3

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.” Ps. 100:4-5

“Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love endures forever.” Ps. 118:29

“I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.” Ps. 9:1

“I will give to the Lord the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High.” Ps. 7:17
SING  | “Before the Throne”

Here is a Music Video with Lyrics:  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9JqhYTjHI0

Pay special attention to the last stanza. “One in Himself, I cannot die… My soul is purchased by His blood… My life is hidden with Christ on high… With Christ, my Savior and my God” This is the message of Hebrews 12:26-29.

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea
A great high priest whose name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart
No tongue can bid me thence depart
When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin
Because a sinless Savior died
My sinful soul is counted free

For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me
To look on Him and pardon me
Hallelujah, Hallelujah
Praise the One, risen Son of God
Behold Him the risen Lamb
My perfect spotless righteousness
The great unchangeable I am
The King of glory and of grace
One in Himself, I cannot die
My soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hidden with Christ on high
With Christ, my Savior and my God
With Christ, my Savior and my God

PRAY  | Pray that God would bring forth in you and your family a deep and rich gratitude rooted not just in temporary circumstances but in the work of Christ.
READ THE TEXT

Today’s Text: COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

12 Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
REVIEW THE TEXT

CONTENT

Last week, we discussed personal gratitude. We asked ourselves about what is going on in our individual hearts that leads to gratitude. This week, we will look at the same topic from a corporate perspective.

(1) WHO WE ARE

God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved. (v12)

Before Paul exhorts the church at Colossae to “put on” these Godly attributes, he reminds them who he is addressing. He is writing to believers, to the church. It is almost as if he intends to tell them to act in accordance with their identity. You, who are the church, the chosen ones, the ones justified because of the work of Christ, and the beloved… put on these things.

For the believer, this brief reminder in v12 means a great deal. When we gather on Sunday mornings for worship, for Sunday School, to serve others within the body, we look around and see God’s chosen ones. We share something in common which is more powerful than a biological connection. Each of us was once alienated from God, dead in our sin. But because of God’s mercy to us in Jesus, through his sacrifice on the cross, we have been made new. Our sin was transferred to Christ, and his perfect life was credited to us. In this way, we are holy ones, as Christ has wiped away every blemish before God. Further, we are holy ones in that we are called out to be separate from the world, to dedicate our bodies to Christ for his service, putting off the sinful nature and walking according to the Holy Spirit. When we look around, we are surrounded by those who will live with Jesus forever. We are gathered with the church, to whom death has no sting. This is who we are.

And God says here through Paul that he expects certain attitudes and behaviors from his children.

(2) HOW WE ACT

This is quite an extensive list.

As you work through verses, can you identify the action verbs here?

Notice that some verbs are more active than others. To forgive, to teach, to admonish are things that can be completed. And then notice the attitudes. To be and to allow. These commands direct the believer to have a certain attitude or yield to something. Now let’s look at all he calls us to be and do.

“...life change comes when we receive life with thanks and ask for nothing to change.”
-Ann Voskamp

“A child of God should be a visible beatitude for joy and happiness, and a living doxology for gratitude and adoration.”
-Charles Spurgeon
### LESSON 7

**READ • REVIEW • REFLECT • RESPOND**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| V12   | Put on a compassionate heart  
Put on kindness  
Put on humility  
Put on meekness  
Put on patience |
| V13   | Bear with one another  
Forgive each other |
| V14   | Put on love |
| V15   | Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts  
Be thankful |
| V16   | Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly  
Teach one another  
Admonish one another in all wisdom  
Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankfulness |
| V17   | Do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus  
Do everything, giving thanks to God |

**3) THANKFULNESS**

_Do you see a repetitive quality here? Is there anything mentioned more than once?_

V15- Be thankful.  
V16- ...singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts  
V17- ... do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God

One of the distinguishing marks of the church is thankfulness. When someone in our city comes across an IBC member, they should come across someone who is thankful (v15). When we gather together for worship, we should be known as a church who sings songs to the Lord with thankfulness in our hearts (v16). And as we go about our daily lives, there is a sense of thankfulness about us knowing that everything we produce, everything we receive, every good thing we experience comes from God (v17).
What is the opposite of thankfulness? How do you know when a person is ungrateful?

“When you lack gratitude, not only do you rob someone of the glory that belongs to them; you also convince yourself that you could have gotten on fine without them.” -JD Greear

CONCLUSION
Gratitude is an important distinguishing mark of the church of Jesus Christ. We are, as Gospel-driven people, thankful for both eternal and earthly good gifts given by God.

REFLECT ON THE TEXT
We rarely consider that one of the reasons for a particular spiritual struggle is a lack of gratitude. How do you suppose thankfulness could be a solution that can help us experience God’s best in our situations? Can you think of a personal example?

Some say that kids in the next generation are so ungrateful and it’s sort of an epidemic. Do you think this is accurate? If so, why do you think this is the case?

Romans 1:21 says, “For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Evidently, one of the marks of those who are unbelievers is that they refuse to thank God for his blessings. Why is it so important that believers are known as a grateful people? What does this have to do with the gospel?
HOME 22:6

SING | The Classic Hymn, “To God be the Glory”

To God be the glory, great things he has done;
so loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
and opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord, praise the Lord; let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord; let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
and give him the glory; great things he has done.

O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood,
to every believer the promise of God;
the vilest offender who truly believes,
that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,
and great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
but purer and higher and greater will be
our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.

READ | Read this Puritan Prayer from The Valley of Vision.

O my God,
Thou fairest, greatest, first of all objects,
My heart admires, adores, loves thee,
For my little vessel is as full as it can be,
And I would pour out all that fullness before thee in ceaseless flow.

When I think upon and converse with thee
Ten thousand delightful thoughts spring up,
Ten thousand sources of pleasure are unsealed,
Ten thousand refreshing joys spread over my heart,
Crowding into every moment of happiness.

I bless thee for the soul thou hast created,
For adorning it, sanctifying it, though it is fixed in barren soil;
For the body thou hast given me,
For preserving its strength and vigour,
For providing senses to enjoy delights,
For the ease and freedom of my limbs,
For hands, eyes, ears, that do thy bidding;
For thy royal bounty providing my daily support,
For a full table and overflowing cup,
For appetite, taste, and sweetness,
For social joys of relatives and friends,
For ability to serve others,
For a heart that feels sorrows and necessities,
For a mind to care for my fellow-men,
For opportunities of spreading happiness around,
For loved ones in the joys of heaven,
For my own expectation of seeing thee clearly.
I love thee above the powers of language to express, for what thou art to thy creatures.
Increase my love, O my God, through time and eternity.

*The Valley of Vision*, pp. 26-27

**PRAY** | Try using this short format as a way of expressing gratitude to God for who we are as a church.
1. God, we were once a people…
2. God, because of you, we now we are a people…
3. We give you thanks for what you have accomplished for us spiritually…
4. We give you thanks for how you have blessed us with good gifts in this life…
5. Help us to stay ever mindful of your loving hand which is responsible for the goodness and blessing in our lives.
6. Help our church be a church filled with songs of thankfulness which flow out of hearts abounding with gratitude.

**SOURCES**
