

At the start of the Reformation of the Church in Scotland in 1557, John Knox wrote to his congregation before going into exile and said,

*“You are bishops and kings; your wife, children, servants, and family are your bishopric and charge. Of you it shall be required how carefully and diligently you have instructed them in God’s true knowledge . . .*

*And therefore I say, you must make them partakers in, exhorting, and in making common prayers, which I would in every house were used once a day at least.”*

# Let’s Worship God

2nd-7th January 2017  
Lamentations



Let's Worship God is a ministry of



Airdrie Reformed Presbyterian Church

[airdrierpcs.org](http://airdrierpcs.org), 01236 620107  
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**Family worship, a joy to be experienced every day!**



# Let's Worship God

**Verse To Learn**  
But this I call to mind, and  
therefore I have hope:  
Lamentations 3:21

## reading

Lamentations 1:1-4 - An Ordered Grief

## notes

We are going to be looking at Lamentations using notes written by Rev. Kyle Borg. From the very first verse it is obvious that Lamentations is true to its name. It is a "lament." Simply defined, a lament is an expression of grief or sorrow, and here the Holy Spirit-through the Prophet Jeremiah-teaches us about sorrow and grief. To grieve and sorrow is a part of the Christian life. We must never forget this. It is true that as Christians we are to be a people who are filled with joy (see Romans 15:3, Galatians 5:22, and Colossians 1:11), but we are also to be a people who sorrow. We sorrow over sin (2 Corinthians 7:10), over the tragedy of death (John 11:33-35), and when we witness persecution (Acts 8:2). This is where Lamentations can be very instructive.

The first word of Lamentations is the word "How. It is not as a question, but an exclamation of desperation. But that exclamation does not give way to uncontrollable grief. In fact, in Lamentations we find what might be called an ordered grief. The book has five laments which our English translations have divided into five chapters. The structure of each of these laments is precise. Laments one, two, four, and five each have twenty-two verses, while the third lament is three times as long with sixty-six verses. Laments one, two, and four are arranged as acrostics where the first letter of each verse corresponds to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet-verse one begins with aleph, etc. In the third lament the sixty-six verses are split up into twenty-two sections of three verses each. The beginning letter of each line in those sections is also an acrostic-verses one through three begin with aleph, etc. Though hidden from our translations this is why Lamentations has been called "the A-Z book of sorrow."

Even this simple structure teaches us something about sorrow. As a Christian our sorrow is not aimless and chaotic. Like each lament-inspired and ordered by the Holy Spirit-the grief and sorrow we endure is ordered by the God of all order (1 Corinthians 14:33).

## questions

### praise pray

Ps. 4:all

1. Pray for people in your church who may be hurting or grieving.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
3. Pray for family matters.



# Let's Worship God

**Verse To Learn**  
But this I call to mind, and  
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Lamentations 3:21

## reading

Lamentations 1:18-22 - Grief's Admission and Appeal

## notes

What God does can never be separated from who God is. The Presbyterian theologian B.B. Warfield, once concluded that it is because God is wise, holy, just, and good, that all he does is "wise and holy, just and good." Who He is is expressed in what He does. It is a wonderful thing when our faith, in times of sorrow and grief, can come to rest in the character of God and His wisdom, holiness, justice, and goodness.

That is what we see in Jeremiah's admission: "The LORD is in the right" (v 18). For a brief moment the Prophet breaks from his sorrowful wails to give us a theological intermission. He wants all peoples to look upon the suffering of the city and see it as an expression of the righteousness of God. That is a powerful statement. Since Jerusalem rebelled against God's Word, the afflictions so vividly described throughout this lament and which have been the source of his unutterable grief have not, in the slightest, compromised who God is. God is still God, still He is I AM.

But notice that though God is right in punishing Jerusalem for their sins it does not exclude Jeremiah's appeal for mercy: "Look, O LORD, for I am in distress." Can you imagine a man guilty of the worst crime imaginable asking a judge to show him some compassion? That is what the Prophet does! God's justice does not have to contradict his mercy. That is the wonder of the gospel! Because of what Jesus has done on behalf of sinners, God does not need to substitute His justice for mercy or His mercy for justice. Rather, He is the "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26). What Jesus has done allows us to go to God and, "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). In our sorrow God remains who He is-a God who is righteous and abounding in mercy.

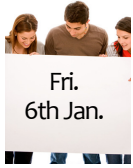
## questions

### praise pray

1. What God does is always an expression of what?
2. How can God be both just and merciful to us?

Ps. 57:1-4

1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
3. Pray for family matters.



Fri.  
6th Jan.

# Let's Worship God

**Verse To Learn**  
But this I call to mind, and  
therefore I have hope:  
Lamentations 3:21

**reading** Lamentations 1:12-17 - The Purpose of Grief

**notes** When you look outside on a cold winter day what do you see? Bare trees, empty gardens, and snow covered grass. The winter usually is not a season of life and growth. This is not true when we think of spiritual growth. Contrary to what we might think and our emotions might tell us, Samuel Rutherford was right when he said: "I see grace groweth best in winter." It is often not times of the warm sunshine of spring and summer that do the most spiritual good for us, but the difficult times of grief and sorrow.

The grief in these verses seems, if it was possible, intensified with metaphors. A metaphor is a comparing of two things. Here the Prophet compares the way God has dealt with his people with a number of things: fire (v 13), a trapper's net (v 13), a yoke (v 14), and a winepress (v 15). If that is what God is doing who is there to comfort? The pain is real and intense, and so Jeremiah says: "For these things I weep; my eyes flow with tears; for a comforter is far from me, one to revive my spirit."

Yet, even here we see the faintest glimmer of grace. Our afflictions are not without a purpose. First, by casting his net God is allowing no way of escape to the people except by returning to Him (v 13). Second, by the heavy yoke he is making them feel the great weight of their sin so as to humble them (v 14). Finally, like a winepress God is bruising and crushing them in order to bring forth wine (v 15). In all of this affliction the Lord is forcing them to despair that they might go to Him.

Humility is not easily learned. Our pride and self-sufficiency are hard masters to break. Yet, they must be broken because humility is a characteristic of the citizens of the kingdom. It was Jesus who taught the blessedness of being poor in spirit, of mourning, and of meekness (see Matthew 5:3-5). And faith will yearn and long for such humility even if it must grow in the coldest of all winters that we might come to the eternal spring of heaven's joy.

**questions**  
1. What is "humility"?  
2. How does God make us humble?

**praise** Ps. 131A:all  
**pray**  
1. Ask God to humble you by his grace.  
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.  
3. Pray for family matters.



Tue.  
3rd Jan.

# Let's Worship God

**Verse To Learn**  
But this I call to mind, and  
therefore I have hope:  
Lamentations 3:21

**reading** Lamentations 1:5-7 - The Loneliness of Grief

**notes** The history behind the book of Lamentations is the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians (see 2 Chronicles 26:15-20 and Jeremiah 52:1-11). This was one of the most significant Old Testament events for the nation of Judah. What is explained and described elsewhere as historical fact is emotionally communicated through these laments of the Prophet as he surveys the destruction.

That destruction is first looked at through the lens of loneliness. In verses 1-7 the Prophet personifies the city of Jerusalem (v 1-2), the nation of Judah (v 3), and the dwelling place of God, Zion (v 4-7). To personify something is to attribute human-like qualities and we see that here (e.g. "tears on her cheeks"). As Jeremiah does this he emphasizes the great losses that have accompanied the destruction-the loss of prosperity (v 1), friends (v 2) a resting place (v 3), happiness (v 4), status (v 5), courage (v 6), and refuge (v 7). No wonder he compares it to that of a widowed woman in verse 1.

Loneliness often makes grief even worse. People can endure a lot if they have the comfort of others. But a lonely grief is an intolerable grief. In Lamentations the Spirit gives words that correspond to that sense of loneliness often felt in the heart of believers. But is a believer ever truly alone? No. In fact, even as Jeremiah laments, who is he pouring out his heart to? Yes, to God. Even when we feel all alone we should be directed to God who has not left us alone. Rather, he gave us the Man of Sorrows who was abandoned by his friends and forsaken by his Father on the cross of Calvary. He died alone on that tree so you would never have to be alone. He lives and has promised to never leave or forsake though my prosperity, friends, rest, happiness, status, courage, and refuge should all be lost.

**questions**  
1. What are some of the things that made the Prophet lonely?  
2. Why is a Christian never really alone?

**praise** Ps. 38:1-5  
**pray**  
1. Pray for those in your church who may be lonely.  
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.  
3. Pray for family matters.



Wed.  
4th Jan.

# Let's Worship God

**Verse To Learn**  
But this I call to mind, and  
therefore I have hope:  
Lamentations 3:21



Thur.  
5th Jan.

# Let's Worship God

**Verse To Learn**  
But this I call to mind, and  
therefore I have hope:  
Lamentations 3:21

**reading** Lamentations 1:8-12 - Grief In Its Causes

**notes**

"Why?" That is a question that often passes the lips of those who are sorrowful. They want a reason or explanation as to why they are filled with grief. Of course, we must be very careful in trying to find the root cause of our sorrow (see Luke 13:1-5). Faith must sometimes say with Job: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Nevertheless, our sorrows should drive us to a measure of self-examination because sometimes the Lord does bring grief in response to our sins.

The Prophet knew that this was true of Jerusalem: "Jerusalem sinned grievously" (v 8). The destruction of the city was not simply the result of an invading army, but it was caused because Judah did not live according to the covenantal standard of the Lord. The result of her sin is graphically observed by Jeremiah and in terms that likely, when understood, make us blush a little-shame (v 8), defilement (v 9), desecration (v 10), and weakness (v 11). Just like you turn your eyes away when you see something gross, so dirty and filthy had the covenant community become by sin that it was as if all the world turned their eyes (v 12).

Notice, however, what the Prophet says twice: "O LORD, behold my affliction," and "Look, O LORD, and see." While the world turns its eyes from this hideous woman, the Prophet asks the Lord to look with a gracious and merciful eye. No matter how stained and filthy we are by sin, the Lord is rich in grace (Ephesians 2:7). This gives us confidence to honestly confess the sins that may have brought us sorrow. It is not always the case that our suffering is the result of sin, but if it is, we will have no peace until we go to the Lord and confess our sin. Remember, we can always ask that He would look and see.

**questions**

1. What was the real cause of Jerusalem's destruction?
2. Does sin ever make us so filthy we can't go to God?

**praise  
pray**

- Ps. 89:18-25
1. Pray that the Lord would show you your sin.
  2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
  3. Pray for family matters.

**reading** Lamentations 1:12 - A Sympathetic Appeal

**notes**

"Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?" This short question is an important one. Up to this point we have heard of the mass destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple. Now we are invited to actually participate in the sorrow as the Prophet appeals to us to feel his grief alongside of him. We cannot come to Lamentations only as an observer, but we must also come as a participator.

As Christians we are called to mourn with those who mourn (Romans 12:15). This is especially true in our life together in Jesus Christ. In one of his favorite analogies of the church being a body, Paul reminds us that when one member suffers we all suffer together (1 Corinthians 12:26). That is not always easy. Part of the difficulty in fulfilling that law of love is that the Bible gives no qualifications. We are never asked to sit in judgment upon the sorrow of others to determine whether their grief is warranted or unwarranted. We are simply commanded to mourn with those who mourn.

In a similar way, while Jeremiah is upfront about the sin that was the root cause of Jerusalem's sorrow (see v 8) he never invites us to judge Jerusalem and say, "Well, you got what you deserved!" Rather, he invites those who pass by to "look and see." Those two words are synonyms and mean not simply a passing glance, but to pay close to attention to his sorrow and feel along with him as their own experience might allow. It should remind us of the amazing sympathy of Jesus Christ. Rather than sitting in judgment upon grief and sorrow caused by our sin he left his heavenly habitation and in becoming man identified himself with us. As the Prophet Isaiah said, he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4).

**questions**

1. What is "sympathy" and how is it different than being "judgmental"?
2. Why should we mourn with those who mourn?
3. Why does the Prophet Isaiah call Jesus the "Man of Sorrow"?

**praise  
pray**

- Ps. 56:all
1. Express thanks to God for the sympathy he has shown us in Jesus.
  2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
  3. Pray for family matters.