

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

30th Jan - 4th Feb. 2017
Lamentations



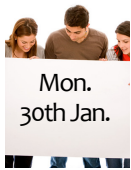
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Airdrie Reformed Presbyterian Church

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Family worship, a joy to be experienced every day!



Let's Worship God

Verse To Learn

The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. Lamentations 3:25

reading Lamentations 5:1 - The Mourner's Prayer

notes This final lament is unique in its character. It is not in the form of an acrostic though it retains the twenty-two verse structure. More unique, however, is that this whole lament is a prayer. That is fitting not only because the fourth lament did not end with the usual prayer, but because Jeremiah, representing the people of God, brings to a close this book of excessive mourning with a long sustained prayer - he concludes by bringing us before the face of God.

As we survey this prayer three things need to be set before us. First, Jeremiah comes urgently to the Lord: "Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us; look, and see our disgrace!" (v 1). He is not simply asking God to think about the past, but it is a plea for his interest and intervention. Our needs ought to drive us to our knees again and again. Second, Jeremiah comes unassumingly: "Woe to us, for we have sinned!" (v 16). Prayer is not a time to hide behind pretenses, but to come openly and humbly before the Lord who searches and knows all things. Finally, he comes uncertainly: "Why do you forget us forever, why do you forsake us for so many days?" (v 20). Faith can go to the Lord in prayer despite confusion, frailty, doubt, and perplexity - and, in fact, it should discover through prayer the storehouses of God's abundant grace.

It cannot be said better than how Charles Spurgeon said it: "The fox hides to its hole for protection; the bird flies to the wood for shelter; and even so the tried believer hastes to the mercy seat for safety. Heaven's great harbor for refuge is All-prayer; thousands of weather-beaten vessels have found a haven there, and the moment a storm comes on, it is wise for us to make for it with all sail."

questions 1. In what three ways did Jeremiah pray?

praise pray Ps. 4:all
1. Ask God to help you pray.
2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
3 Pray for family matters.



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reading Lamentations 1:16 - A Conclusion

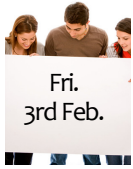
notes Today we come to the end of our thirty-day study in the book of Lamentations. This book focuses on a part of the Christian life that we usually do not think about - sorrow and grief. But these things are very much present as we journey by faith to that land where there is no more grief and sorrow. In the meantime, Lamentations teaches us how to work through our suffering in a mature and Biblical way.

Let us review some of the things we have learned: a) Our grief is ordered by the God of all order; b) Our sorrow is sometimes, though not all of the time, a direct result of our sin and so encourages self-examination; c) Sin never gains us anything but costs a lot; d) God is right to inflict punishment on us for our sins; e) God's anger is his holiness directed at sin; f) We are to sympathize with those who are grieving; g) The discipline of God is painful but it is for our good; h) God's gracious-love does not cease in our sorrow; i) We have freedom to honestly express our hearts to God; j) God's covenant promises in Jesus will never fail, and k) We are completely dependent on the grace of God.

Though Lamentations is a response to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, the desire of this study has been to show you the continuing value of this precious book to the people of God in all ages. We will weep and mourn until Jesus dries our eyes forever, so let us learn to weep and mourn well.

questions 1. Can you remember some of the things that Lamentations taught?
2. What surprised you the most about Lamentations?

praise pray Ps. 30:all
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.



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reading Lamentations 5:20-22 - Restore Us Again

notes James tells us: "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray" (5:13). Jeremiah's sorrowful words have concluded. His complaints have been made. He has poured out his heart before the Lord. Only one thing is left, and that is a final prayer: "Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored!"

Judah had lost so much. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed, the temple was demolished, the people were slaughtered or led into exile, and all their joy, cheer, comfort, and strength had been stolen away by the Babylonians. This was not because God had turned away from his people, but because they had turned away from him in sin and rebellion. Jeremiah knows that and takes responsibility for having turned away. What they needed most was to turn back to the Lord and be restored to him. But even this was beyond their own strength. They needed God to restore them so that they could be restored. That is what Jeremiah is saying - "Restore us so we can be restored!"

The book of Lamentations ends with the sovereign grace of God. It brings us to humbly see our complete dependence on him. We cannot turn to him, love him, serve him, or glorify him unless he gives us the grace and strength to do so. As Paul would later say: "It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). The prayer of every believer is "Restore me to yourself, O LORD, that I may be restored," as we cast ourselves upon the grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

- questions**
1. Had God turned away from his people?
 2. Why did Jeremiah ask the Lord to restore them?
 3. What is the sovereign grace of God?

- praise pray**
- Ps. 85A:1-3
1. Pray that the Lord would work deep repentance in your heart.
 2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
 3. Pray for family matters.



Let's Worship God

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reading Lamentations 5:2-14 - An Honest Prayer

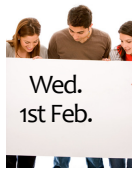
notes In his closing prayer Jeremiah appeals to the Lord and holds nothing back. That should not come as a surprise since he had previously encouraged: "Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord!" With unhindered freedom he takes all his sorrow, grief, and heartbreak from the previous laments and casts them in a pile before the throne of God. That is to say, what before was mournfully described and observed is now turned into an appeal and petition.

There is an honesty to this prayer that is worth our reflection. Jeremiah says: "Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us." What has befallen them? As he goes on to clarify, it is their: abandonment, loss, hardship, weariness, hunger, exhaustion, physical afflictions, sexual abuse, torture, and torment. Jeremiah does not hide behind cliches, platitudes, forms, or pious vocabulary. He pours out his heart like water before the Lord.

When is the last time you heard a prayer that was that honest? Or, rather, when is the last time you prayed like that? John Bunyan defined prayer as a "sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength of the Holy Spirit." Though we may not always be aware of it, it is a common temptation for believers to lack honesty in prayer - the pouring out of the heart. It is too easy to cover ourselves with right sounding words, pretenses, or feel constrained in not pouring ourselves out. In its own way that is a kind of self-righteousness that depends on outward appearances and not on the truth. What we need are more realistic prayers! After all, Peter wrote that we should "[cast] all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

- questions**
1. What is prayer?
 2. Why can we cast all of our anxieties on God?

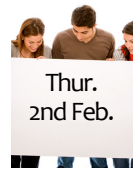
- praise pray**
- Ps. 55:1-5
1. Pray for some of the burdens you have.
 2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
 3. Pray for family matters.



Wed.
1st Feb.

Let's Worship God

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Thur.
2nd Feb.

Let's Worship God

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Lamentations 3:25

reading Lamentations 5:15-18 - The Heart's Sickness

notes There is a peculiar grace to our sorrow. As Paul wrote: "Godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret" (2 Corinthians 7:10). That does not mean, however, that the Christian life is to always be lived under a storm cloud empty of happiness, cheer, and joy. But there is a place for mourning and weeping especially as it brings you and holds you all the more to Jesus Christ.

The devastation that had visited Jerusalem had a profound effect on the emotions of the people: "The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning." We are reminded of the Psalmist's own lament: "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres" (Psalm 137:1-2). But their grief did not end in the circumstance and situation they now found themselves in. Rather, there is a deeper confession: "Woe to us, for we have sinned! For this our heart has become sick." Jeremiah is praying with a heart broken for sin and that makes all the difference. As the Lord had said: "I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me" (Hosea 5:15).

Sorrow had its profound effect as it led to the acknowledgement of sin and, in that, the seeking of God's face. Let us remember to not waste our sorrow but to use it as a means to bring us to the pardoning grace of God. "I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover up my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and your forgave the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm 32:5). Grieve for your sin and rejoice for your grief!

questions

- 1. What is godly sorrow supposed to do in our lives?
- 2. Do you have a broken heart for sin?

praise pray

- Ps. 32:1-7
- 1. Pray that God would give you a greater sorrow for sin.
- 2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
- 3. Pray for family matters.

reading Lamentations 5:18-19 - The Lord Remains

notes One of the inevitable results of true prayer is that it provides us with a rock when all around is as quicksand. It does that by elevating us out of our ever-changing circumstances and setting us on the unchanging God. We see this dramatic yet wonderful shift in Jeremiah's prayer.

What was his present circumstance? In his own final words of description: "Mount Zion lies desolate; jackals prowl over it." The city lies in ruins, the temple is destroyed, the throne is empty. All that was once beautiful and splendid has become a veritable wasteland. What, however, is his rock? He says: "But you, O LORD, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations." It is as if Jeremiah is saying, "Your dwelling place has been ruined but you have not changed."

What allows Jeremiah to say that? It is nothing less than a very big picture of who God is. The Prophet was well acquainted with the one who reigns forever. To a believer there is nothing as comforting as this truth. It is repeated so often in the Bible it would be impossible to reproduce it in short order. "Our God reigns!" is the answer to every sorrow, grief, and mournful thought. You can hear it in light of Jeremiah pouring out his heart in this lament. "We are abandoned," but "Our God reigns!" "We have lost so much," but "Our God reigns!" "We endure hardship," but "Our God reigns!" "We are weary and exhausted," but "Our God reigns!" "We are hungry and wasting away," but "Our God reigns!" "We are afflicted and tormented," but "Our God reigns!"

Is your conception of God too small to fit him into your grief and sorrow? What we desperately need in our own day are churches and Christians who have a much bigger - a much more Biblical - view of who God is.

questions

- 1. What is the present experience of Judah?
- 2. What is the Jeremiah's great confidence?
- 3. How do we get a bigger view of God?

praise pray

- Ps. 102A:10-20
- 1. Think on the attributes of God and spend time praising him.
- 2. Pray for a member of your church as per the congregational list.
- 3. Pray for family matters.