

(Through the Bible) Lamentations

by Chuck Smith

The Book of Lamentations is a poetic expression of Jeremiah's lamentation over the destruction of Jerusalem and a call to repentance and prayer.

Duration: 1:17:09

Scripture: Jeremiah 4:7, Jeremiah 10:10, Jeremiah 10:20-22, Lamentations 3:39-42, James 1:8, James 3:11-12, Revelation 6:1-2

Topics: "Faithfulness Of God", "Repentance And Restoration"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of being double-minded and unstable in one's ways, as mentioned in the book of James. He emphasizes that God does not speak both good and evil, and encourages listeners to search their ways and turn back to the Lord instead of complaining about their punishment. The preacher also references a passage from Lamentations, describing the despair and hopelessness of the people of Jerusalem. He then transitions to the book of Revelation, specifically the events of the great tribulation, highlighting the importance of being in Christ Jesus as the only safe place. The sermon concludes with a reminder of God's faithfulness and a plea for the Lord to consider the suffering and affliction of the people.

Transcript

Shall we turn now in our Bibles to the Book of Lamentations. The Book of Lamentations in the Hebrew Bible does not appear in the same place that appears in our Bibles. In the Hebrew Bible it appears with a group of books, Esther and Ruth, Job and Ezra.

It was written by Jeremiah and that is why in our Bibles they inserted it after the Book of Jeremiah because it is almost sort of an epilogue to the Book of Jeremiah in that it follows the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. There is on the side of Golgotha a cave that is called Jeremiah's Grotto. This cave known as Jeremiah's Grotto comprises a part of the face of the skull, hence the name Golgotha because as you look at the cliff with these caves that are there in the cliff they take the appearance of a skull.

One of these caves is called Jeremiah's Grotto. It is interesting that from those caves there on the side of Golgotha you have a tremendous view of the city of Jerusalem. For Golgotha is actually the top of what was once Mount Moriah and it looks down over the city of Jerusalem.

Tradition declares that Jeremiah sat in this grotto when he wrote the Book of Lamentations and there he wept and cried over the desolation of the city of Jerusalem as he saw its ruins, as he saw the walls destroyed, as he saw the buildings leveled and from this vantage he wrote this book. In the Septuagint, which is a translation of the Scriptures into Greek that was done by 70 Hebrew scholars about 200 B.C., they prefaced the Book of Lamentations with these words and it came to pass that after Israel had been carried away captive and Jerusalem made desolate, Jeremiah sat weeping and lamented this lament over Jerusalem and said, how doth the city sit solitary? So, they have that as a prologue to the Book of Lamentations and it was picked up and put in the Vulgate. The Book of Lamentations is a favorite style of Hebrew poetry in four of the chapters.

They are known as an acrostic and they were written in order to facilitate the memorization in that you'll notice that in the first three chapters there are 22 verses in each chapter. In the original Hebrew poetry these 22 verses were actually 22 lines of the poem and each line began with a succeeding letter of the Greek alphabet. So, the first line began with Aleph and then with Beth and then with Gimel and then with Deleth and on through the Hebrew alphabet each line with a succeeding letter of the Hebrew alphabet in the first three chapters.

In the first two chapters, in the third chapter, you'll notice that there are 66 verses. The first three lines began with Aleph, the next three with Beth, the next three with Gimel and so it was in triplets actually, thus the 66 verses. The fourth chapter, again, each line beginning with a succeeding letter of the Greek alphabet and even though the fifth chapter has 22 verses, it is not in an acrostic.

It doesn't follow this same pattern of each line beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. But they would often write their poems that way in order to help you in memorizing the poem because you knew that the next line began with the next letter of the alphabet in succeeding order. This is a funeral dirge.

It is a lament of Jeremiah over Jerusalem after the destruction and the book of Lamentations is read each year in the synagogue on the fourth day of the ninth month. So, around August the fourth, this particular lament or book is read in the Jewish synagogues as they commemorate the anniversary of the destruction of Solomon's temple in 586 BC. With that as a background, let us go into the first chapter as Jeremiah declares, How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people? How is she become a widow? She that was great among the nations and the princess among the provinces, how is she become a tributary? The city is empty.

It is now sitting solitary. The inhabitants have either been slain or carried away captive. There is a weird silence over this once prosperous, beautiful city as it lies there now in rubble.

She weepeth sore in the night and her tears are on her cheeks. Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her. All of her friends have dealt treacherously with her.

They are become her enemies. Jerusalem was once as a princess. Actually, tribute was paid to Solomon and to his kingdom, but now Jerusalem has become a tributary paying tribute to others.

Those that she trusted in, Egypt and others, have now become her enemies. Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction and because of great servitude. She dwells among the heathen.

She finds no rest and all of her persecutors overtook her between the straits. The ways or the paths on the way to Zion do mourn because none come to her solemn feast. It must be a weird, awesome feeling to look over the ruins of a once great and prosperous city.

Can you imagine, say, sitting on Mount Wilson and overlooking the Los Angeles basin and nobody living there? No freeways jammed with cars. No industries belching out their smoke. Just everything with a deathly silence.

Imagine how you'd feel, you know, having seen all of the activities and all that go on in that great basin and suddenly to look at it and see the whole thing silent and empty. It must be an awesome kind of a feeling to see such a thing. That's what Jeremiah... He had grown up in this city.

He had seen the streets full of people. He had watched the worshipers at the temple and all. He had seen the pilgrims gather for their feasts.

But now it's all silent. Now it's empty. And the ways or the paths on the way to Jerusalem are mourning because no one is coming to the solemn feast anymore.

All of our gates are desolate. The gates of Jerusalem are interesting places because there's always so many people passing in and out the gates. A lot of times in Jerusalem, if you don't have anything to do, it's interesting just to go at the gates of the city and just watch the people come and go through the gates.

They're always just bustling with activity. And now it's silent. The gates are desolate.

Her priests sigh. Her virgins are afflicted. She is in bitterness.

Her adversaries are the chief. Her enemies prosper. For the Lord hath afflicted her.

And then He gives the reason for the multitude of her transgressions. Her children are gone into captivity before the enemy. And from the daughter of Zion, all of her beauty is departed.

Her princes are become like hearts that find no pasture. They are gone without strength before the pursuer. Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and her miseries all of her pleasant things that she had in the days of old when her people fell into the hand of the enemy.

And none did help her. The adversaries saw her and did mock at her Sabbaths. Jerusalem has grievously sinned.

Therefore, she is removed. Again, not blaming God, which is so often our mistake when calamity comes. Why did God allow this to happen to us? But recognizing that the blame was upon the people because of their transgression and because they had grievously sinned against God.

Therefore, she is removed. All that honored her despise her because they have seen her nakedness. Yea, she sighed and turned backward.

Her filthiness is in her skirt. She remembered not her last end. Therefore, she came down wonderfully.

She had no comforter. O Lord, behold my affliction for the enemy has magnified himself. The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all of her pleasant things for she hath seen the heathen entered into her sanctuary whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation.

And so the heathen came right into the temple, into the Holy of Holies, and they destroyed the temple of God. A stranger wasn't to come within the sanctuary and yet they have seen them come in and destroy it. All of her people sigh.

They seek bread. They have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul. See, O Lord, and consider for I have become vile.

They've spent all of their money actually and given all of their treasures for bread. Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. From above hath he set fire into my bones and it prevailed against them.

He hath spread a net for my feet. He hath turned me back and he hath made me desolate and faint all the day. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand.

They are wreathed and come up upon my neck. He hath made my strength to fall. The Lord hath delivered me into their hands from whom I am not able to rise up.

The Lord hath trodden underfoot all my mighty men in the midst of me. He hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men. The Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, as a winepress.

For these things I weep. And thus the lamentation, the weeping of Jeremiah, as he sees the destruction that has come. The mighty men destroyed.

The virgins ravished by the enemy. The young men crushed and the young girls trodden. For these things I weep.

My eye runs down with water because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me. My children are desolate because the enemy prevailed. Zion spreads forth her hands and there is none to comfort her.

The Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob that his adversaries should be round about him. Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them. The Lord is righteous for I have rebelled against his commandments.

Here I pray you all the people and behold my sorrow. My virgins and my young men are gone into captivity. And so He sort of personifies Jerusalem and lets Jerusalem cry out declaring the righteousness of God in judgment.

The Lord is righteous for they were guilty of having rebelled against God. The Lord is always righteous in judgment. And yet it seems that that is an area in which we always want to fault God.

And we always hear sort of insinuations that God is unrighteous in judgment. How can a God of love condemn a man to hell? You know, and you heard the rest of it. And the idea is that God is not really righteous when He judges.

But that's one thing you can be certain of and that is the righteousness of God in judgment. In the book of Revelation, as God is bringing His judgment upon the earth, there are voices that come from the altar saying, Holy and true are Thy judgments, O Lord. And then in one place where God turns the fresh water

upon the earth to blood, there are voices that declare, Oh, that's great.

They shed the blood of your saints so you've given them blood to drink. And testifying of the properness of that particular judgment that God brings upon the earth at that time. But God will judge.

God has declared He will judge. And thus you can be sure that God is going to judge this world. God is going to judge the wicked.

But God, when He judges the wicked, will be absolutely righteous in His judgment. People may complain about it now. But when God makes His judgment, there can be no complaint for the Lord is righteous.

They had rebelled against the Lord. They had rebelled against His commandment. He said, I call for My lovers, but they deceive Me.

My priests and My elders gave up the ghost in the city while they sought their meat to relieve their souls. They died of starvation while they were looking for food. Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress.

My bowels are troubled. My heart is turned within Me. For I have grievously rebelled.

Abroad the sword bereaveth. At home there is as death. They have heard that I sigh.

There is none to comfort Me. All My enemies have heard of My trouble. They are glad that You have done it.

And Thou will bring the day that Thou hast called and they shall be likened to Me. Let all their wickedness come before Thee and do unto them as Thou hast done unto Me for all My transgressions. For My sighs are many and My heart is faint.

The second lamentation, How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in His anger? And He has cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel and remembered not His footstool in the day of His anger. The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob and hath not pitied. He hath thrown down in His wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah.

He hath brought them down to the ground. He hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof. He has cut off in His fierce anger all of the horn of Israel.

He has drawn back His right hand from before the enemy. He has burned against Jacob like a flaming fire which devours round about. He has bent His bow like an enemy.

He stood with His right hand as an adversary and slew all that were pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion. He poured out His fury like fire. It must have been an awesome and a very traumatic experience to have seen the destruction that was wrecked upon Jerusalem by the Babylonian army.

When after 18 months of siege they finally broke into the city and began to slay with a sword. Even before they broke the walls and came in, people were already starving to death within the city. It was a horrible scene.

Jeremiah can't get it out of his mind the thoughts and the sights that he saw. They were imprinted in his mind. And now as he sees it lying desolate, he reflects over these things.

And he tells some of the things that were happening. And they are so horrible that they would make those kind of impressions in your mind that cause you to shudder whenever you think of them. And they are those mental images that you just can't seem to remove.

As you see the people starving to death, falling on the streets. Faint, weak, once mighty people, once a proud people. But now, so defeated and destroyed.

The Lord was as an enemy. He swallowed up Israel. He has swallowed up all of her palaces.

He has destroyed the strongholds. He hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. He hath violently taken away the tabernacle as if it were of a garden.

He hath destroyed his places of the assembly. The Lord hath caused the solemn feast and the Sabbath to be forgotten in Zion and hath despised in the indignation of His anger the king and the priest. The Lord has cast off His altar.

He has abhorred His sanctuary. He has given up in the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces. They have made a noise in the house of the Lord as in the day of the solemn feast.

That is, the enemies were in there cheering and yelling and all as they were destroying it. Much as the voices and cheers and all that once went up in the days of their solemn feast. The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion.

He has stretched out a line. He has not withdrawn His hand from destroying. Therefore, He made the rampart and the wall to lament they languished together.

Her gates are sunk into the ground. He has destroyed and broken her bars. Her king and her princes are now among the Gentiles.

There is no more law. Her prophets also find no vision from the Lord. The elders of the daughters of Zion sit on the ground and keep silent.

They have cast dust upon their heads. They have girded themselves with sackcloth. And the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.

And my eyes do fail because of the tears. My bowels are troubled. My liver is poured out upon the earth for the destruction of the daughter of my people because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.

It's almost more than he can bear. He sees these little children and little nursing babies fainting because of the lack of food. He sees them as they are swooning, just staggering through the streets.

Young girls, their heads bowed down to the ground. The old men just sitting there staring blankly in sackcloth with dust, dirt. They've just covered themselves with dirt.

And there's no place to go. There's no hope. It's all gone.

The little children say to their mothers, Where is the corn and the wine when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city when their soul was poured out into their mother's bosom? What things shall I take to witness for thee? What things shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I

equal to thee that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion? For thy breach is great like the sea, and who can heal thee? Your prophets have seen vain and foolish things for you, and they have not discovered your iniquity to turn away your captivity, but they have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment. All that pass by clap their hands at thee. They hiss and they wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem saying, Is this the city that men called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth? Desolate, destroyed, ravaged city.

Once the perfection of beauty. Once the joy of the whole earth. And now it's being hissed at as people walk by clapping their hands and shaking their heads.

All of your enemies have opened their mouth against thee. They hiss. They gnash the teeth.

They say, We have swallowed her up. Certainly this is the day that we have looked for. We have found and we have seen it.

The Lord has done that which He had devised. He has fulfilled His word that He commanded in the days of old. God was faithful to His warnings.

He had told them if they did not turn from their wickedness, if they did not turn from their idolatry, that He was going to bring their enemies against them and they would be destroyed. God has done that which He had purposed. He has fulfilled His word that He commanded in the days of old.

He has thrown down. He's not pitied. He has caused your enemies to rejoice over thee.

He has set up the horn of your adversaries or the power of your adversaries. Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night. Give thyself no rest.

Let not the apple of thine eyes cease. He's calling them for intercession. To weep before God until God does a work again.

Arise. Cry out in the night in the beginning of the watches. Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord.

Lift up your hands toward Him for the life of thy young children that faint for hunger in the top of every street. Isn't this enough, Jeremiah is saying, to challenge you to seek God? To seek God all night long. Look at your little children swooning in the streets.

Pray for them that God will somehow work His work again among the people. They were living in an extremely desperate time. But they were not yet really desperate before the Lord.

They were just plain desperate, but really not seeking God. You wonder what will it take to cause men to really seek God. To really cry out.

The Bible says, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. My mom tells me how that one time when I was a little kid, and I was sick, and she came in to the bedroom and laid hands on me, and I was running a fever, and she prayed, Oh Lord, touch Charles, you know, and heal him. And when she was through praying, I said to her, Mom, now pray like you really mean it.

And I wonder how many times our prayers aren't just sort of perfunctory type of activities, you know. There's no real heart behind it. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

God said to Jeremiah, And in the day that you seek Me with your whole heart, in that day I will be found of you. And Jeremiah is saying, Hey, go for it. Cry in the night.

In the beginning of the watches, pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift up your hands toward Him. At least for the life of the young children that are fainting for hunger on every street.

Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom Thou hast done this. Shall the women eat their fruit? That is, the women eat their own little babies, which they were doing. Shall children be born who are only a span long? That the women were so malnourished that as their children were being born, they were only seven or eight inches long at birth.

Horrible. Shall the priests and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord? The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets. My virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword.

Thou hast slain them in the day of your anger. You have killed and not pitied. You have called as in a solemn day my terrors round about me so that in the day of the Lord's anger none escape nor remain.

Those that I have I swaddled and brought up hath my enemy consumed. In this third lamentation, he begins from the depth of depression and despair. He begins with hopelessness and hopelessness is always the experience behind depression.

Depression is the loss of hope. No way out. Nothing I can do.

Hopelessness leads to depression. I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He has led me and brought me into darkness but not into light.

It seems like God has turned against the prophet. I have seen the wrath of God. God's brought me into darkness not into light.

Surely against me is he turned. He's turned his hand against me all the day. My flesh and my skin hath he made old.

He hath broken my bones. He's built against me and encircled me with gall and travail. He has set me in dark places and they that be dead of old.

He's hedged me about that I cannot get out. He has made my chain heavy. Also when I cry and shout, he shuts out my prayer.

God isn't listening to my prayer. God seems to have closed every door of escape. There's no way out.

I'm in the hole and there's no place to go. I'm in this darkness and God isn't listening to my prayers. It's like he has enclosed me with hewn stone.

That is, he's built a wall around me. He's made my paths crooked. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait and as a lion in secret places.

He has turned aside my ways and pulled me in pieces. He has made me desolate. He has bent his bow and set me as a mark.

I'm a target for God's arrows. He has caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins. I was a derision to all my people and their song all the day.

He has filled me with bitterness. He has made me drunken with wormwood. He has also broken my teeth with gravel stones.

He has covered me with ashes. You have removed my soul far off from peace. I forgot prosperity and I said my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord.

Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance and is humbled in me. Boy, that's about as low as you can get. That's the bottom.

That's the pits. He's down just the bottom. And out of the depths of his despair and depression, suddenly there is a dramatic change.

That dramatic change is explained, the reason for it is explained in verse 21. In the midst of his hopelessness, in the midst of his despair, when it seems that all is forsaken, there is no way out, that God isn't even listening and God isn't ready to help me. In the midst of this place of total despair, he said, this I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope.

He changed his whole mindset. The Bible speaks about our renewing our minds. The Bible speaks about our bringing every thought into captivity unto the obedience of Jesus Christ.

And we can think ourselves into a miserable mood. We can think ourselves into despair and hopelessness. You can think yourself into the grave.

Or by setting your mind upon the Lord, renewing your mind in Him, you can come into a whole new state of consciousness. No longer one of total despair and hopelessness, but one now of victory and hope. And that's what Jeremiah did.

He changed the thought patterns from, oh, woe is me. Oh, this is the end. Oh, there is no hope.

Oh, I've had it. Oh, there's no one to help. Oh, I'm boxed in to thinking about the Lord.

As we think about ourselves, we often become depressed. Because none of us are all of what we would like to be. We each of us have a divergence between our ego and our super ego.

The real me and the ideal me. All of you see yourself in an ideal way. This is what I really am.

Providing everything is, you know, all right. It's only because of these other factors that you see me like this. This nastiness isn't the real me.

I'm very sweet and generous and kind and benevolent and loving and marvelous and a very lovable person. The person that you see is what has happened to me because of you know, what you've done. But that's not the real me, you see.

And so, there is this idealization. The ideal me, the super ego and then there's the real me. Now, if there is a vast difference between your super ego and your ego, then you're going to have real problems of mental instability.

The more well adjusted a person is is in measure to the distance between his ego and super ego. If your ego is close to your super ego, then you're a well adjusted person. If there's a wide divergence between your ego and super ego, then you're very maladjusted in your life.

Now, the psychologist says bring your super ego down. You've got too high of ideals. You've got too high of standards.

No one can live to those. You got to lower your ideals. The Lord says bring your ego up through the power of the Spirit, through my help.

Become the person that I want you to be. Receive my strength, receive my ability and I will make you that person that is pleasing and glorifying unto God. That person who is loving, who is kind, who is compassionate, who is filled with joy.

So, he came to a change of mental attitude. No longer thinking about himself but now thinking about the Lord. It made such a great difference.

Oh, if we could only get our minds off of ourselves and onto the Lord. In the times of discouragement, in the times of defeat, in the times of depression. If we could only get our minds off of ourselves and onto the Lord.

That's the secret of the way out. Rather than wallowing in this self-pity, just get our minds and hearts. Thou will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.

Keep your mind stayed on the Lord and God will keep you in perfect peace. Get your mind on yourself and you're gonna have all kinds of turmoil and depression. So, when I recall to my mind, this I recall to my mind.

What does he recall to his mind? First of all, it's the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed. Things are bad but they could be worse. It's God's mercies that we're still here.

The fact that I wake up in the morning is proof that God is merciful. You see, God's under no obligation to keep me around. It's only by His mercies that I've not been consumed.

Secondly, because His compassions fail not. In 1 Corinthians 13, as Paul is describing Agape, he said, Love never fails. God's love never fails.

God has never stopped loving you. God does not love you when you are good and hate you when you are bad. God's love for you is unchanging.

It doesn't fail. God's love is continually being poured out upon your life. God's love is not contingent upon what you are but upon what He is.

His compassions, they fail not. Love is not love that alters when it alteration finds. Oh, I love you.

You're my dream come true. I'd swim the Pacific to be by your side. I'd fly to the moon to be close to you.

Yikes, you have bad breath. I changed my mind. That's not true love.

Love is not love that alters when it alteration finds. We have in our minds again an idealization, the perfect man, the perfect woman. And we meet someone and fall in love not with them but with our idealization.

And when it comes that they don't meet up to the standards of our idealization, then we're no longer in love. That's ridiculous. You never were in love to begin with.

Love is not love that alters when it alteration finds. Therefore, true love is hard to find among men. And that's using it in a generic sense, talking of the homo sapien.

True love can only really be found with God. You see, he isn't deceived by an idealization. You haven't fooled him with your smooth suave manners, the opening of the doors and the genteel gallant ways.

Hasn't deceived him at all. He knows what a rat you are from the beginning. But he loves you.

That's the amazing thing. His compassions, they fail not. And God knowing me as well as he knows me, still loving me is one of the great miracles.

God's compassions fail not. He never stops loving you. And you need to remember that.

Now, Jeremiah was thinking that God had forsaken him completely. God's hedged me in. He's not listening to my prayers.

But when he really adjusts his thinking, he knows that God's love is unfailing. God continues. Never stops his loving me.

They are new every morning. The mercy and the love of God, fresh every day. Oh, great is thy faithfulness.

God is so faithful. As Jeremiah was looking at this devastated city, that desolation was a testimony of God's faithfulness. God had said to those people, if you continue in your wickedness, if you continue in your idolatry, I am going to bring the Babylonian army against you and they are going to destroy you.

They are going to break down the walls of this city. And those that aren't killed by the famine will be killed by the sword. Those that aren't killed by the sword will be killed by the pestilence.

But I'm going to destroy you out of this holy mountain. And now God has kept His word. And Jeremiah is looking at the faithfulness of God to His word.

Oh, great is thy faithfulness. God, you said you would do it, and you did it. Now, the faithfulness of God can be a glorious thought and blessing, or it can be a horrendous thought.

It all depends on what side you are. If you're a child of God, then God's faithfulness to His promises of that which He is going to do for His children. A believer in Jesus Christ, all that God has promised us, oh, and we can rest and hope for God is faithful.

He will do what He said. If you're not a child of God, then the faithfulness of God is an awesome prospect because you can be sure that God will do exactly what He said He is going to do to all of the sinners. Those that reject Him.

Great is thy faithfulness. God is faithful in keeping His word. The Lord is my portion.

Now, he's thinking upon the faithfulness of God, the love of God, the mercies of God. And now the Lord is my portion. Everything else has been taken away.

My house is destroyed. All of my possessions are gone. I've been stripped.

But I have the Lord. And if I have the Lord, that's all I really need. The Lord is my portion, saith my soul.

Therefore, will I hope in Him. Those who do not have the Lord as their portion have very little hope. But my hope is in Him.

The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, the soul that seeks Him. If you'll wait upon God, if you'll seek God, God is good. So good to those that wait upon Him and seek Him.

It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. What else can I do? It is good for a man that he bears the yoke of his youth. He sits alone and keeps silence because He has borne it upon him.

He puts his mouth in the dust if so be there may be hope. He giveth his cheek to Him that smiteth Him. He is filled full with reproach.

A prophecy of Jesus Christ in the midst of this. Even as Christ always is there in the time of suffering to bear the burdens and the reproach that we bear for Him. The Lord will not cast off forever.

This judgment isn't going to last forever. This forsaking of the people by God isn't going to last forever. But though He has caused grief, yet He is going to have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.

God will change in His actions towards us. For He does not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. In other words, it doesn't really please God to have to deal in such stringent ways with His children.

I've often said you can make it easy on yourself or make it hard on yourself. And any time you fight God you're making it hard on yourself. That's the lesson that Jonah learned.

He fought God and ended up in the belly of a whale in a miserable condition. Three days and three nights in that hot mammal. Ninety-eight degrees with high humidity.

He talks about the waves rolling over his head and the seaweed twined around him. Probably stinky at that. And when he came out of that horribly miserable experience, he shared the lesson that he learned.

They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies. If you think you can run from God or hide from God, you're only making it hard on yourself. You're heading for trouble.

You're heading for misery. He thought he could hide from God. He thought he could run from God.

That he could escape the call of God. It's a lie. There's no way.

You're just going to be miserable, friend. Try to fight God. You're heading for misery.

He doesn't afflict willingly. He doesn't want to lay the rod on you. But he gets no delight in the chastising of his children.

But because he loves us, he is faithful and will chastise. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth. To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the Most High.

To subvert a man in his cause the Lord approves not. Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commanded it not? Out of the mouth of the Most High proceeds not evil and good. God doesn't talk out of both sides of his mouth.

James speaks about the double-minded man, unstable in all of his ways. Jesus speaks of how the same fountain cannot bring forth bitter and sweet waters. God doesn't speak both good and evil.

Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Rather than complain because of the chastisement, let us search and try our ways and turn again unto the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto the God in the heavens. For we have transgressed and have rebelled and you have not pardoned.

You have covered with anger and persecuted us and you have slain and you have not pitied. And now he goes back into the dirge. You see, he came out for a while into the light.

You have covered yourself with a cloud that our prayers should not pass through. It seems like, you know, people say, well, it seems like the, you know, ceilings were of brass. But Jeremiah sees the, you know, like the prayers are just being closed off by a cloud between God and me.

Thou hast made us as the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people. All of our enemies have opened their mouths against us. Fear and a snare has come upon us, desolation and destruction.

My eye runs down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. My eye trickles down and ceases not without any intermission till the Lord looks down and beholds from heaven. My eye affecteth mine heart because of all of the daughters of my city.

My enemies chased me sore like a bird without cause. They have cut off my life in the dungeon and cast a stone upon me. Waters flowed over my head.

Then I said, I'm cut off. And I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon and you have heard my voice. Hide not your ear at my breathing, at my crying.

For you drew near in the day that I called upon thee and you said, Fear not. O Lord, Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul. Thou hast redeemed my life.

O Lord, Thou hast seen my wrong. Judge Thou my cause. For Thou hast seen all their vengeance and their imaginations against me.

You have heard their reproach, O Lord, and all of the imaginations against me. The lips of those that rose up against me and the device against me all the day. Behold, they're sitting down, they're rising up.

I'm their music. Render unto them recompense, O Lord, according to the work of their hands. Give them sorrow of heart.

They curse, thy curse unto them. Persecute and destroy them in the anger from under the heavens of the Lord. Here again is sort of a David type of a prayer against his enemies.

Jeremiah doesn't ask God to bless his enemies, but to really do them in. It is in the New Testament that Jesus taught us to bless those that curse you. Bless and curse not.

The fourth lamentation, how has the gold become dim? The most fine gold changed. The stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers? The work of the hands of the potter.

Even the sea monsters draw out the breast and they give suck to their young ones. The mammals in the sea nurse their little ones. The daughter of my people has become cruel like the ostriches of the wilderness.

Now the ostrich totally forsakes its eggs. It lays its eggs and leaves them. Has nothing to do with the raising of its kids.

Just has no concern. Doesn't even know if the eggs ever hatch and doesn't really care if the eggs ever hatches. Just lays its eggs in the sand and that's it, forgets all about them.

If they make it, they make it on their own. The mother ostrich has no mothering instincts. But the mammals in the sea nurse the little ones.

But the daughter of my people, the young mothers in Jerusalem have become like ostriches in that they weren't concerned with their offspring anymore. The tongue of the nursing child cleaves to the roof of his mouth for thirst. The young children ask for bread and no man breaks it unto them.

They that did feed delicately, those that used to dine at Gulliver's, are desolate in the streets. They that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills. For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom.

Because at least they were overthrown in a moment. They were destroyed. No hand stayed on her.

Theirs was an instant death. That is much better than death by starvation. Her Nazarites were purer than snow.

They were whiter than milk. They were more ruddy in body than rubies. Their polishing was of sapphire.

The young men who had made their commitments, their Nazarite vows to God. But now their visage is blacker than a coal. They are not known in the streets.

Their skin is cleaving to their bones. They are like walking skeletons. It is withered.

It has become like a stick. They that are slain with the sword are really better off than those that are slain with hunger. For these pine away, stricken through for the want of the fruits of the field.

The hands of the pitiful women have boiled their own children. And they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people. The Lord has accomplished His fury.

He has poured out His fierce anger. He has kindled a fire in Zion and it has devoured the foundations thereof. The kings of the earth and all the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.

It was thought to be impregnable. It sits there on the hill with the walls around it. They thought that the city was impregnable.

The inhabitants of the earth would never have believed that Jerusalem could be taken. And yet it is now destroyed. For the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her.

They have wandered as blind men in the streets. They have polluted themselves with blood so that men could not touch their garments. They cried unto them, Depart ye, it is unclean.

Depart, depart, don't touch. When they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn there. The anger of the Lord hath divided them.

He will no more regard them. They respected not the persons of the priests. They favored not the elders.

As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help. In our watching, we have watched for a nation that could not save us. They hunt our steps that we cannot go in the streets.

Our end is near. Our days are fulfilled, for our end has come. Our persecutors are swifter than eagles of heaven.

They have pursued us on the mountains. They have laid wait for us in the wilderness. The breath of our nostrils, the anointing of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under His shadow we shall live among the heathen.

Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom. That is their perennial enemy that dwells in the land of us. The cup also shall pass through unto thee.

Thou shalt be drunken and shalt make thyself naked. The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion. He will no more carry thee away into captivity.

He will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom. He will discover thy sins. So, Edom is rejoicing, but just wait, yours is coming.

Fifth Lamentation. Remember, O Lord, what has come upon us and consider and behold our reproach. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens.

We are orphans, fatherless. Our mothers are as widows. We have drunken our water for money.

We had to pay for a drink of water. And our wood is sold to us. Our necks are under persecution.

We labor, we have no rest. We have given the hand to the Egyptians and to the Assyrians to be satisfied with bread. Our fathers have sinned and are not.

And we have borne their iniquities. Servants have ruled over us. There is none that doth deliver us out of their hand.

We got our bread with the peril of our lives because of the sword of the wilderness. Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine as a result of the starvation that the skin just turning black and leathery. They ravished the women in Zion and the maids in the cities of Judah.

The enemies had come in. It must have been a horrible thing, the fathers to see their wives and their young daughters ravished by the enemy, raped and all, and murdered. Princes have been hung by their thumbs.

The faces of elders were not honored. They took the young men to grind in bondage and the children had to carry the wood. The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their music.

The joy of our heart is ceased. Our dance is turned into mourning. The crown has fallen from our head, woe unto us that we have sinned.

For this our heart is faint, for these things our eyes are dim. Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it. Thou, O Lord, remains forever, Thy throne from generation to generation.

Wherefore dost Thou forget us forever and forsake us so long a time? Turn Thou us unto Thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned. Renew our days as of old. Therein is the answer.

O God, turn our hearts to Thee. Renew that relationship that we once had with You. You remember Jesus said to the church of Ephesus, I have this against Thee, in that You have left Your first love.

Remember from whence You have fallen and repent and do Thy first works over. O God, return us to that first love. Lord, return us unto Thee.

But He ends with a sad note of dejection. But Thou hast utterly rejected us. Thou art very angry against us.

What a sad, tragic book that never needed to be written had the people only hearkened unto the voice of God. This whole black period of history needed not to be. God warned them over and over and over again.

He sent His prophets warning them over and over of the destruction that was going to come. But they would not give heed to the word of God or to the warnings from God. But God is faithful.

And that which God declared, He did. And today, God is warning this world of His judgment which is going to fall. And that which happened to Jerusalem is going to happen to this whole godless world.

There is coming a devastation, a holocaust such as the world has never seen before or will ever see again. Jesus, in describing the days that are coming, said, And in that day there shall be a great tribulation such as the world has never seen before or will ever see again. The only safe place for you to be is in Christ.

If you are in Christ, He will keep you from that hour that is coming upon the earth. But if you're outside of Christ, as in Hebrews, there remains only that fearful looking forward to the fiery indignation of God's wrath which will devour His adversaries. For if he who despised Moses' law was put to death, of how much worse punishment do you suppose he is accounted worthy who has trodden underfoot the Son of God and has accounted the blood of His covenant wherewith He was sanctified an unholy thing and has done despite to the Spirit of grace.

For we know Him who has said, It is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of a living God. God has promised His judgment is going to come upon this wicked world. God is faithful and will keep His promise.

But Jesus said, Pray ye always that you'll be accounted worthy to escape all of these things and to stand before the Son of Man. And I am praying and believing God to answer my prayer that I will escape this great time of tribulation when the wrath of God is poured out upon the earth and I expect to be standing before the Son of Man when it all happens. Book of Revelation chapter 5 And there was in the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne a scroll with writing within and without and sealed with seven seals.

And I heard the angel say with a great voice, Who is worthy to take the scroll and loose the seals thereof? And I, John, began to weep, sob convulsively because no one was found worthy to take the scroll or to

loose the seals. And the elder said unto me, Weep not. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed to take the scroll and to loose the seals.

And I turned and I saw Him as a Lamb that had been slaughtered. And He came forth and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne. And the twenty-four elders brought forth their golden vials full of odors, which were the prayers of the saints.

And they offered them before the throne of God, and they sang a new song, saying, Worthy is the Lamb to take the scroll and loose the seals, for He was slain and has redeemed us by His blood out of every nation and tribe and tongue and people. And He has made us unto our God kings and priests, and we're going to reign with Him on the earth. You see, that's where I plan to be.

Standing before the Son of God, singing of the worthiness of the Lamb who died for me, who has redeemed me from among the families of the people on the earth. Only the redeemed church can sing that song. Angels can't sing that song.

They haven't been redeemed by the blood of Jesus. That's not the song of Israel because they come from all of the nations and family of people on the earth. That's the song of the redeemed church before the throne of God.

Angels can sing the chorus. They do. A hundred million join in, plus millions of others as they say, worthy is the Lamb to receive glory and honor and dominion and might and power and authority.

They join the chorus, but they can't sing the verse. That's yours. And when He loosed the first seal, I heard a voice that said, Come, and I saw a white horse and his rider going forth upon the earth conquering and to conquer.

There begins the great tribulation. And He begins then from chapter 6 on through to chapter 18 describing the events that are going to take place upon the earth when God judges man for their wickedness and for their sin. God is faithful.

He's going to do it. There's only one safe place for anyone to be. That's in Christ Jesus.

I'm glad I'm there. I don't expect to be any place else. I don't want to be.

Why should I be? I'm so happy here in Christ. Shall we pray? Father, we thank You for that secret place abiding in the presence of the Almighty, dwelling in Christ. Oh, Father, how we thank You that You have provided for us a place of refuge, safety in Christ.

Lord, I pray for those that are here tonight who are not in Christ. Oh, God, may they seriously consider the faithfulness of God. Even as He kept His word and destroyed Jerusalem, so will He keep His word and judge this world.

For God is faithful. And Lord, may we turn from our sin, from our idolatries, from our wicked ways, and may we serve the Lord with our whole heart. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. Jeremiah, if you're not sure that you're a child of God, I wouldn't leave this place tonight until I was. I mean, I'm serious.

We're living in desperate days. And really, as Jeremiah exhorts, it's time really that we just not cease in prayer unto God for the people round about us. We will make intercession for our nation, for each other.

For these are truly the last days, and Satan is going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. And he's ripping off an awful lot of those from the church, leading them into life, a life of sin, life of self-seeking, living after pleasure and living and walking after the flesh. And the mind of the flesh is death.

I wouldn't leave tonight until I had a deep assurance that things are square between God and me. You can go back to the prayer room as soon as we're dismissed. Some of the pastors will go back there to pray with you.

God bless. God keep. And may God lay upon your heart the awareness of the day and the hour in which we live and the need of an all-out effort in our service for Jesus Christ.

And may the Lord use you in a very special way as His instrument to bring His love to this needy world. In Jesus' name.

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