

THE FRIENDS OF ISRAEL TODAY

August 8, 2015

Chris Katulka, Lamenting Leads to Light, Part 2
Lamentations

Last week as we were studying Lamentations we tapped into the idea of Biblical Lamenting... that often overlooked part of our faith that most people tend to run from. Yet, lamenting is a crucial part of being a Christian, as I said last week, “lamenting becomes that bridge that leads us to the light of God’s truth for our lives.”

Lamenting is usually a sign that we’re ready for God to work and act in our lives.

Specifically last week, we looked at how Biblical lamenting, this idea of lamenting over our sin, opens our eyes to the fact that the Lord is in the right. When we recognize that God is right and we are wrong, it forces us into a state of lamentation.

Last week I brought up one of Rembrandt's famous paintings, it's called “Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem” a very literal title to a beautiful paint. It was painted in 1630, and in this painting Rembrandt paints Jerusalem off to the side and it's burning brightly, Rembrandt pulls the brightness from the burning city of Jerusalem to cast a sharp light on the hunched over prophet, whose elbow rests on Bible, and his countenance is numb and

empty. Rembrandt captures the book of Lamentations in one glance.

Now in Rembrandt's painting Jerusalem is off in the distance burning. Jerusalem is almost an afterthought in Rembrandt's painting, the focus is on Jeremiah's lamenting. Yet, I want to stop for a moment and zoom into that burning Jerusalem, because that's what at the heart of Jeremiah and all of the Jewish people who are lamenting.

I want to pan into the burning city of Jerusalem because that's where Jeremiah takes us in the book of Lamentations. Listen to the words of the prophet Jeremiah in Lamentations 2:7-9,

“The Lord has spurned His altar,

He has abandoned His sanctuary;

He has given up the walls of her palaces

Into the hand of the enemy.

They have made a noise in the house of the LORD

As on the day of a set feast.

8 The LORD has 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He has not withdrawn His hand from destroying;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 has caused the rampart and wall to lament;

They languished together.

- 9 Her gates have sunk into the ground;
He has destroyed and broken her bars.
Her king and her princes are among the nations;
The Law is no more,
And her prophets find no vision from the LORD.

Here we see how Jeremiah is literally watching the holy city of Jerusalem fall, and it was the Lord whose was in the process of dismantling Jerusalem, piece by piece. Notice... even the sacred places find God's judgment, look what Jeremiah says here, "The Lord has spurned His altar, He has abandoned His sanctuary;" the idea is that even the most sacred places in Jerusalem find no refuge from God's judgment.

The people of Israel have sinned and in order to get them to a place where they can recognize that God is right, that the Lord is in the right, in order to get them to that place - first He had to dismantle the thing that was most precious to them, first He had to dismantle the place that the Jewish people thought could never be destroyed. The Jewish people doubted the Temple could be destroyed because God's presence was there. Yet instead, it was God who purposed to destroy Jerusalem, why? To force the Jewish people to recognize as we talked about last week, that God is in the right.

God's dismantling of Jerusalem brick-by-brick will become the impetus for the grace of God to go to work.

By God's grace He won't leave Israel to wallow in their sin. Instead, though lamenting, the Lord's mercy will provide them the space to turn back to Him.

[Wait!]

I believe there are times in our lives when God dismantles us, sometimes you can almost feel Him as He's deconstructing you brick-by-brick, when even the sacred or important things to us that we thought could never be moved have been upended, much like our story here in the book of Lamentations.

When God breaks us down it's easy to feel as though He's left us completely, or that He's cast us away or removed us from His presence. This feeling that comes so naturally is a lie from Satan, the idea that God has written us off.

Think about this... even when Israel was exiled to far away countries, punished for their sins of leaving God, God never left them. God was still speaking to His people through His prophets Ezekiel and Daniel. God still desired to communicate with His people in their total ruin and brokenness.

Even when we feel in our lamenting we are being dismantled, God is still speaking to us in our time of need. His Word is relevant - even in our time of lamenting - and it drives us to latch on to His grace and mercy.

The thrust of the book of Lamentations can be found in the middle of the book. The structure of the book of Lamentations forces you to the center... to one of the most memorable passages in the Bible, "Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."

Step back for a moment and think about the power of this verse. In the midst of one of Israel's most upsetting moments their history, when they lost everything they held dear, the Temple was destroyed, the city burned, family and friends were lost, in the middle of all that pain stands this verse... "Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."

My friends - in the middle of our pain and our suffering... In the middle of those times when we feel as though we are being destroyed and dismantled, in all of our lamenting that can happen in life remember... the Scriptures force us to this verse, "Through

the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.”

God does not dismiss and destroy those who at the center of His promises. While He may dismantle the things we might think are sacred and holy, He doesn't destroy those who are at the center of His promises. He does this to get our attention... He does this to draw us close to Him... He does this so that we will say, “Lord you are in the right!” So if you are in the middle of trying times, and you are lamenting... remember to place your hope in God and your trust in His Son, Jesus the Messiah.

So even though everything was falling down... literally... around Jeremiah... the city of Jerusalem was burning, temple destroyed, his people exiled... He could still say “I have hope in Him!”