

Message #8**Lamentations 5:1-22**

When we introduced the book of Lamentations, we brought out the fact that chapters 1-2 and chapters 4-5 each contain 22 verses and chapter 3 contains 66 verses. Now chapters 1-2 and 4 contain a Hebrew alphabet acrostic, which each verse beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 3 is a triple acrostic with every 3 verses beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. But chapter 5 is different. I misspoke in the introduction. Chapter 5 is 22 verses as the other chapters, but it is not a Hebrew acrostic.

This may be due to the fact that this is a prayer. In chapters 1-4 Jeremiah has been talking to the people and in chapter 5 he is talking to God.

Jeremiah does not sugarcoat anything in this prayer. What he says is this:

SIN BRINGS HORRIBLE CONSEQUENCES ON THE PEOPLE OF GOD, AND OUR ONLY HOPE IS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRUTH AND TO CRY OUT TO GOD FOR HIS GRACE AND MERCY.

Most commentators observe that even though this book does not end on a happy note, it does end on a somewhat hopeful note. So God's chastising judgment does not have to exist forever. There can be a new, fresh start in the relationship.

The best thing we can do when sad and depressed is to talk to God. The best thing we can do when we are chastised and discouraged is talk to God. That is what Jeremiah does. There are two main parts to prayer:

PART #1 – Jeremiah asks God to remember His people. **5:1-18**

In **verse 1**, the writer asks God to Personally look at their pathetic situation. Jeremiah asks God to look at 21 realities: This is not hyperbole. This is the actual way life really was for the people of God.

Reality #1 - We are a reproach. **5:1b**

No one looked at God's people and said there are the blessed people of God. They were a reproach to people.

Reality #2 - Our inheritance is gone. **5:2a**

Their Promised Land inheritance that they once had, in the days of Joshua, and in the days of David and Solomon, was completely gone. It had been taken by foreign troops and aliens.

Reality #3 - Our houses are gone. **5:2b**

Think of what is said here. Aliens from other countries had come into the homes of God's people and were now living in them. This was a judgment of God. When God allows aliens to come into a country and take it over, it is a judgment from Him.

Reality #4 - Our family members are gone. **5:3**

God's people were nothing more than defenseless orphans without a father and their mothers were like widows without a husband. God's people were defenseless to stop it.

Reality #5 - We have to pay for water to drink and wood to cook and heat. **5:4**

These are God's people and they have to pay for the basic necessities of life. Babylon was permitted by God to completely take advantage of and exploit God's own people.

Reality #6 - We are hounded and pursued. **5:5a**

There was no end to the negatives. There was no letup in life. Enemies surrounded them and pursued them.

Reality #7 - We are worn down and have no rest. **5:5b**

These people could remember a time when they were enjoying life, now there was no moment of joy ever. They were worn down and they had no rest.

Reality #8 - We submitted ourselves to foreign powers to get bread. **5:6**

They had made alliances with Egypt and Assyria to try and get enough to eat, but that hadn't worked.

Reality #9 - Our fathers who sinned are now gone and we are paying the price for their sin. **5:7**

The contextual connection between this verse and **verse 6** is that the previous generation looked to Egypt and Assyria for help and sinned in not turning to God and now we are paying a price for that sin.

There is an important point that needs to be seen here. There is a difference between being punished and chastised for another person's sin and being punished and chastised for one's own sin.

In the N.T., there is a warning to the church of Corinth that if they did not get the immoral person out of the church, the church would be leavened.

In other words, God would not bless that church but view it as leavened. There is a difference between corporate guilt and individual guilt.

Reality #10 - We are being ruled by slaves and there is no deliverer. **5:8**

Some of the people who had been permitted by the Babylonians to rule over the people of God had been slaves to some of the people of God before this happened. The roles had been completely reversed.

Reality #11 - We must risk our lives to get food. **5:9**

They would go into the forests and wilderness to try and get some food and realize we are in danger doing this. They literally could get killed if they were discovered. These are the people of God.

Reality #12 - There is no relief from the burning sun. **5:10**

The sun was not only scorching them physically, but it was also causing a famine. The dehydration the people were experiencing was so bad that they equated it to being “as hot as an oven.”

Reality #13 - Jewish women are ravished in the sacred cities. **5:11**

God is judging His people for their refusal to turn to Him and turn from their sin and when He judges, He permits horrible things to happen.

Reality #14 - Jewish princes are mistreated. **5:12a**

High-ranking princes were tortured and executed publicly.

Reality #15 - Jewish elders are not respected. **5:12b**

There was no respect given to elders. No respect to who they were or what they said.

Reality #16 - Young men are overworked in slave labor and stumble under the loads. **5:13**

The young men and boys were given to slave labor that was so strenuous that they stumbled under the load and could not even cope with all the work.

Reality #17 - Elders are gone from the gate. **5:14a**

The elders should be sitting and ruling, but they were not. Had they been interested in the word of God, they would not be in this predicament. They were supposed to sit in the gate and administer God’s justice.

Reality #18 - Young men do not sing or play any music. **5:14b**

When God's people lose joy, it is a judgment of God.

Reality #19 - There is no joy in the heart. **5:15a**

This is where real joy is found; in one's heart. It was gone.

Reality #20 - There are only times of mourning. **5:15a**

There was no happiness, just times of sadness and mourning.

Reality #21 - The crown of glory is gone. **5:16a**

Jeremiah says to God, look and see this and remember, please, what we are going through. Our lives are bad:

Jeremiah says we know the reason for this—"Woe to us, for we have sinned." 5:16b

(Result #1) - Our heart is faint. **5:17a**

(Result #2) - Our eyes can't see. **5:17b**

(Result #3) - Our place of worship is desolate. **5:18**

Foxes and predator animals were now free to prowl in a city and Temple that at one time had been filled with the presence of God. This place was now a rundown, depressing ruin.

The people had lost all joy, all happiness, all hope. But we come now to the final verses:

PART #2 – Jeremiah asks God to restore His people. **5:19-22**

There are five critical acknowledgments that Jeremiah makes about God. These acknowledgments are based on his knowledge of the fact that God is a merciful God:

Acknowledgement #1 - God is the sovereign ruler who rules forever. **5:19**

God rules from heaven over all on earth. If one wants to quibble about the sovereignty of God, one will not see God intervene and deliver.

Acknowledgement #2 - God is the One who has forsaken and forgotten His people. **5:20**

This is important, God does chastise His people and He does permit negative things to hit His people.

Jeremiah asks God not to forget them forever and asks God why He has forsaken them so long. This book has shown that God permitted every bad thing that could happen to happen to His people. Jeremiah realizing this, appeals to God to end the judgment.

Acknowledgement #3 - God is the One who can restore His people. **5:21a**

Carefully notice what Jeremiah prays, “Restore us to You, O LORD.” The restoration of the relationship must first be a restoration with God, and only God can grant that restoration.

Acknowledgment #4 - God is the One who can renew His people. **5:21b**

God can renew so that things will be like they were before. God has the power to renew and revive His people.

Acknowledgement #5 - God can renew and restore unless He has totally rejected His people.
5:22

God never totally rejects His people. He may get angry with them, but not to an exceeding level of total rejection. However, the people experiencing the judgment may not sense any hope whatsoever. They certainly are not studying God’s word.

When this book of Lamentations is read by the Jews today in synagogues, they read **verse 21** and then **verse 22** and then repeat **verse 21** because they don’t want the book to end on a negative note.

Now we can understand that in view of many other passages of Scripture. For example:

In Psalm 94:14 we read “For the LORD will not abandon His people nor will He forsake His inheritance.” In the New Testament we read in Hebrews 13:5 “I will never desert you nor will I ever forsake you.”

God may chastise His people; in fact, Psalm 94:12 says, “Blessed is the man whom you chasten O LORD,” but He will not completely reject His people.

The thing that is often neglected is He will not reject them if they turn to Him and turn from their sin and confess it. This is why Jeremiah ended Lamentations the way he did. So if His people are suffering His chastisement, they need to turn from the sin and turn to God and cry out to Him. He does stand ready to hear and answer. His mercies are new every day.

As people of God, we also need to realize that unconfessed sin will have devastating results in our lives. When we turn away from God and His word and get into sin, God will see to it that we will not be happy. Our life will fall apart.

Sin will affect us emotionally, spiritually, financially, occupationally. Sin will not lead us to prosperity, but to poverty. It will not lead us to a life that flourishes, but a life that is a famine.

There will be exhaustion, humiliation and disaster.

If there is a lesson to be learned from Lamentations, it is to keep our relationship with God always in check. Jeremiah warned these people to turn from their sin and turn back to the Lord and confess it and obey the Word of God. They would not do it and we have seen what happened. Let us make certain we do not make the same mistake.