

Process Your Pain at the Throne of Grace

Studies in the Book of Lamentations

Lamentations 2:1-22

“The Alphabet of Affliction: A Biblical Response to Suffering”

Introduction: Laments were writings/songs that were used as part of ancient-near eastern mourning rituals (2 Samuel 1:17-27; 2 Chronicles 35:25). Lamentations chapters 1-4 have a unique literary structure called alphabetic acrostic in which each verse corresponds to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This lament was designed to function as a liturgical resource for the surviving remnant of Judah.

I. The Day of the Lord’s Righteous Indignation (Lamentations 2:1-10)

- A. Verses 1-3. Lamentations is a poetic reflection on the divine chastisement that came upon the ancient kingdom of Judah in response to violation of the Mosaic covenant (Deuteronomy 28). Righteous indignation is the justified moral response to injustice. The day of the Lord’s anger is the fulfillment of prophecy and God’s faithfulness to His covenant (Deuteronomy 29:24-28).
- B. Verses 4-10. The king and princes were taken captive to a foreign land, the Levitical priesthood was shut down, the prophets received no visions, the elders are silent and covering themselves with sackcloth and ashes (ancient mourning ritual), and the unmarried young ladies are in a posture of defeat.

II. Aftermath of Divine Chastisement (Lamentations 2:11-17)

- A. Verses 11-13 contain graphic images of the terrible consequences of sin. The narrator speaks in the first person and uses exaggeration to express emotional reality. One specific instance of extreme suffering the narrator witnessed was starving children in the streets of ancient Jerusalem. Passages that invoke strong unpleasant emotion serve a significant purpose in Scripture – to instigate deep reflection, stir up empathy for the sufferer, and drill home the seriousness of sin. The narrator asks a series of rhetorical questions.
- B. Verse 14: In the historical context of Lamentations, the false prophets provided false and deceptive instruction. They did not expose sin, and they did not exhort the people to repent (Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:5). The false prophets led the people astray, reinforced their rebellion against God, and supported covenant unfaithfulness.
- C. Verses 15-17: The narrator describes the response of the spectators and the gloating of the enemy. The calamity was the fulfillment of the word of the Lord.

III. Cry to the Lord (Lamentations 2:18-22)

- A. Verses 18-19: What is the biblical response to deep overwhelming suffering? Their heart cried out to the Lord– they cried out from their innermost being. Extreme

emotional expression is encouraged. The narrator exhorts the sufferers to lift your hands to God for the life of your young children.

- B. Verses 20-22 records the desperate prayer of the sufferer. The day of the Lord's anger, the execution of the curses of the Law, and the consequences of covenant unfaithfulness are comprehensive and devastating.
- C. Lessons learned:
 - a. Sin is serious – the Lord God Almighty is the final authority on morality, and we are subject to submitting to His rule.
 - b. People in covenant with God are not exempt from chastisement – judgement begins at the house of God
 - c. Beware of false prophets – they will lead you astray – know the word of God, believe the word of God, and live the word of God.
 - d. Corrective discipline is a benefit of relationship with God.
 - e. If you are experiencing unimaginable suffering cry out to God, express your emotions in a healthy biblical way.

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:14-16)

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