



**The Oaks
Baptist Church**
Grand Prairie, Texas

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

Christ makes all things new

COMMENT FOR THE WEEK:

If you feel that your life is just an accumulation of junk, remember that God has always been in the restoration business

SCRIPTURE FOR THE WEEK:

Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ

(Phil 3:8 NKJV)

(from "Our Daily Bread", May 01, 2016)

**Series: Prophets Faithful
to God's Covenant**

**UNIT 3: Courageous
Prophets of Change**

NEXT WEEK

Offering Hope for the Future
(Isiah 29:13-24)

A Plea for Restoration Lamentations 5:1-22

Lesson Background and Introduction

In the midst of our suffering, we know that God is still trustworthy and faithful. However, there are times when we do not feel that He is still trustworthy or faithful. We do not know where God is when we confess and repent of our sins but do not experience mercy in the consequences. We find that worship and praise lag behind the mourning and lament. Like those left in a destroyed Jerusalem, all we can see is devastation; the only thing we want is to make sure God sees and knows what we are experiencing. Lamentations helps us find language to tell God the very deep, very real pain that we remember or still experience. The writer of Lamentations, commonly taken to be Jeremiah, had warned Judah for many years that God's judgment was coming (Jeremiah 25:2-11). As instruments of God's wrath, the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 586 BC (2 Chronicles 36:15-20). Many who were left alive were carried into exile; the weak and the poor were left behind to contend with foreign settlers (2 Kings 25:1-21). The five chapters of Lamentations do not shy away from describing that devastation and its aftermath. Lack of food resulted in starvation (Lamentations 2:12; 4:4-5) and cannibalism (2:20; 4:10). Those who did not die by the sword were weak with hunger and disease (4:9). The book serves as an invitation to take those things to God. As Paul wrote, "Neither death, nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). Though the inclusion of Lamentations in the Bible may seem odd, it gives evidence of the truth of Paul's assertion. No siege, no famine, no cannibalism, no destruction, no forced labor, no exile could separate God's people from His love. God demonstrated this love in Jesus Christ, making a way for all people to turn to the Lord and experience His blessings. Through Jesus' great suffering, we have been added to those people who will be freed from all suffering (Revelation 21:4).

(Adapted from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary)

The Tears - Jeremiah warned the nation of Judah of God's coming judgment. He continued to speak God's messages as he watched the Babylonians savagely conquer their land. In the Book of Lamentations, Jeremiah cried out to the heavenly Father as the Babylonian soldiers laid siege to Jerusalem. Jeremiah compared the depth of their pain to that of an abandoned orphan or to a grieving widow who's just lost her husband. As the Babylonian siege strangled the city, a person's life could be taken just for attempting to get food or looking after their livestock. Many had blackened skin, indicating starvation. Jewish women endured rape. Officials were strung up. Strong young men did tasks once assigned solely to women and slaves. Children labored so hard they passed out under the heavy loads. Silence lingered at the city gates because the elders disappeared. Once filled with festive music and dancing on celebration days, Jerusalem's streets were now filled only with grief and mourning. Judgment had fallen because of the people's sin.

The Hope - Jeremiah made a plea before the Lord for restoration, that their present suffering would not be their sentence forever. The prophet knew God is faithful and steadfast, sincerely desiring to show His people mercy. After about 70 years in Babylonian captivity God did restore His people to Jerusalem. God still answers the cry of His children amid their afflictions, no matter when or what. He is a compassionate God, ready to respond to signs of repentance from His people.

(Adapted from the Echoes Commentary)

NOTES AND CROSS-REFERENCES

Plea for Remembrance (Lam 5:1-7)

Remember their inheritance (1-2)

- An inheritance of God's kingdom (Luke 12:32)
- An inheritance because of being an heir (Rom 8:17)
- An inheritance of the crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)
- An inheritance for those who are poor in the eyes of the world (James 2:5)
- An inheritance that can never perish (1 Pet 1:3-4)

Remember their needs (3-4)

- Remember needs because God knows them better than we do (Luke 12:29-31)
- Remember needs because God is able (2 Cor 9:8)
- Remember needs through spiritual blessings (Eph 1:3)
- Remember needs through the power of Grace (Titus 2:11-12)

Remember their oppressors (5-6)

- Oppression of the weak (Ps 12:5)
- Oppression that has no comfort (Eccl 4:1)
- Oppression that brings destruction upon the wicked (Isa 30:12-14)
- Oppression of the widows, fatherless and aliens (Zech 7:9-10)
- Oppression brings the judgment of God (Mal 3:5)

Remember not their sins (7)

- Not remember because God is faithful (1 John 1:9)
- Not remember because Jesus redeemed us (Titus 2:14)
- Not remember because of God's mercy (Heb 8:12)
- Not remember because of Jesus' blood covenant (Matt 26:28)

Plea for Relief (Lam 5:8-16)

Relief from evil rulers (8)

- Rulers who prey on helpless people (Prov 28:15)
- Rulers who rebel against God and don't defend the helpless (Isa 1:23)
- Rulers who scatter and hurt their people (Acts 20:29-30)
- Rulers who devour their people (Ezek 22:25)

Relief from famine (9-10)

- Famine that causes a move (Gen 12:10)
- Famine should cause one to seek God's face (2 Sam 21:1)
- Famine that God's relieves for those who fear Him (Ps 33:18-19)
- Famine however cannot separate us from God's love (Rom 8:35)

Relief from abuse (11-13)

- Relief from abuse because there is a reward in Heaven (Matt 5:11-12)
- Relief from abuse because the future glory outweighs temporary suffering (2 Cor 4:17-18)
- Relief from abuse because of the greater value of suffering for Jesus (Heb 11:25-26)
- Relief from abuse because of looking forward to a better resurrection (Heb 11:35)
- Relief from abuse because of a genuine faith (1 Peter 1:6-7)

Relief from mourning (14-16)

- Relief from mourning through God's comforting (Matt 5:4)
- Relief from mourning because of God's compassion (2 Cor 1:3-4)
- Relief from mourning because of God's favor (Isa 61:2)
- Relief from mourning because of being near God (James 4:8-9)
- Relief from mourning because of God turning grief to joy (John 16:20)

Plea for Restoration (Lam 5:17-22)

Restoration of joy (17-18)

- Joy through the refreshing of God (Acts 3:19)
- Joy through liberation (Rom 8:19-21)
- Joy through reconciliation (2 Cor 5:17-20)
- Joy because of God's refuge (Ps 5:11)

Restoration of God's presence (19-20)

- Restoration because of God's unfailing love (Ps 119:76)
- Restoration because God is the God of comfort (2 Cor 1:3-4)
- Restoration because of God's compassion (Isa 49:13)
- Restoration because God is the only one who provides comfort (Isa 51:12-13)

Restoration through returning to God (21-22)

- Returning to God brings restoral (Deut 30:2-3)
- Returning to God brings answered prayers and forgiveness (1 Kings 8:47-50)
- Returning to God brings healing (2 Chron 7:14)
- Returning to God could bring blessings from Him (Joel 2:13-14)
- Returning to God is a sign of growth in faith (Luke 17:17-19)