

## Nobody's Fault But Mine Lamentations 1:1-22

### Intro:

- **Illst:** Saturday, a week ago, Jan. 13<sup>th</sup>, the state of Hawaii accidentally sent a text message and a message on TV that said, "BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII, SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL." If you kept up with the story as it unfolded this past week you learned that it was a false alarm.<sup>1</sup> I am sure someone lost their job over that mistake. How would you like to be the guy who sent that message? How would you like to have that on your resume?
- **The only thing that is worse than doing that would be if the attack were real and no one sent the message and even worse than that would be if the warning was sent and no one listened.** That would be really bad BUT this is what people do. People ignore warnings. It is like the Geico commercial, "*It's what you do.*"
- We have the book of Lamentations because the people of Judah ignored the warnings that were given all the way back in **Leviticus 26:14-33** and **Deuteronomy 28:15-68**. Yahweh warned them 1000 years earlier that if they broke covenant with Him, He would become an adversary to them. God gave them prophets and priests to teach and preach the importance of faithfulness to God. Yet because false prophets, corrupt priests, evil kings and the general depravity of Israel to love sin, God's people violated their covenant with Him. Yahweh forgave them many times but finally His patience ran out. They ignored the warnings.
- **Jeremiah, the author of Lamentations, was the last prophet to warn the people before the nation was destroyed.** Listen to his words in **Jeremiah 6:10-11, 16-17**, <sup>10</sup>*To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ears are uncircumcised, they cannot listen; behold, the word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it.* <sup>11</sup>*Therefore I am full of the wrath of the LORD; I am weary of holding it in. "Pour it out upon the children in the street . . ."* <sup>16</sup>*Thus says the LORD: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'* <sup>17</sup>*I set watchmen over you, saying, 'Pay attention to the sound of the trumpet!' But they said, 'We will not pay attention.'"*
- **The day finally came when Yahweh judged the nation of Judah.** All the curses promised in **Deuteronomy 28:15-68** to fell on them. The covenant had been broken for the last time and now the people would experience the consequences for their disobedience.
- This morning we will be looking at **Lamentations 1:1-22**. This is Jeremiah's lament of the pain of breaking covenant with God.
- **Big idea of the sermon:** We must run into the arms of the One who is sovereign over our suffering for comfort even when it may feel like there is no comfort.
- **My points are really observations about the experience of the people in the poem.** These points really help us walk through the passage. I will make application with each point and then at the end of the sermon as well.
  - I. Abandonment (Lamentations 1:1-7, 10-11)
  - II. Affliction (Lamentations 1:12-17)
  - III. Admission (Lamentations 1:8-9, 18-22)

### I. Abandonment: Sin leads to suffering which leads to grieving over all that has been lost (Lamentations 1:1-7, 10-11)

<sup>1</sup> <https://albertmohler.com/2018/01/16/briefing-1-16-18/>.

- As we begin to read **Lamentations 1** we need to remember that Jerusalem has been destroyed, her inhabitants have been taken into captivity, and carried to Babylon. Yet it is not as cut and dried as I just made it sound and the truth is much more graphic and carries deep theological significance for the Jews.
- **Let's walk through vv. 1-7, 10-11:**
  - **I want you to notice the language of abandonment and loss in these verses.** Suffering often produces the experience of abandonment and loss. People will feel isolated and lonely.
  - **One more thing to note is the powerful effect of memory used in Lamentations.** The poet often draws on memory in Lamentations in order to deepen the effect of sin, the need for repentance and the cry for mercy because of God's faithfulness. God has wired this way as people. He uses our memories to awaken us and to teach us. We often remember former days and compare them to the current time and lament change or loss.
- **Loss of Abundance: Verse 1** sets the tone for the language and experience of abandonment and loss in all of **Lamentations 1** but we are going to focus on **vv. 1-7, 10-11. This loss has left the people humiliated.**
  - **The loss of all the abundance of people: "How lonely sits the city that was full of people" (v. 1a)** – The poet brings the city to life with his words while in the midst of death. He has a painful memory of how things used to be. Jerusalem was a city that used to be filled with joyous, happy people but now it is empty and filled with death.
  - **The loss of the abundance of status, wealth and family:**
    - **"How like a widow has she become" (v. 1b)** – He personifies the city as a widow who is grieving the loss of her husband. The life of a widow is a life that has been completely turned upside down. Her heart is broken because her spouse is dead and this is how the city feels.
    - **"She who was a princess . . . has become a slave" (v. 1c)** – the imagery here is of a loss compounded. It is the loss of status, loss of wealth and loss of family. As a princess, Jerusalem was the prince of cities but now it is decimated and destroyed, its walls have been torn down and the temple, the place where God dwelled has been torn down and stripped of all its treasures. Jerusalem no longer has a place among the nations and now has no God.
- **Loss of Intimate Friends: Verse 2:** The operative phrase in **v. 2** is the key theme that runs through this poem: *"she has none to comfort her."* Lady Zion weeps bitterly as a grieving widow and no one comes to comfort her. The ones to whom she was closest betrayed her. *This is not only abandonment but also betrayal. We call it being stabbed in the back. Have you ever been abandoned by friends in the middle of your suffering? There is no lonelier a feeling than this.*
- **Loss of Rest: Verse 3:** In **v. 3** she has gone into *exile*. When it says *Judah has gone into exile* it is referring to when the people were carried off to Babylon. The Promised Land was supposed to be the place where the people rested in the salvation Yahweh had given to them but now it is gone. *Since they have lost their rest they are consumed with anxiety. Have you ever been there?*
- **Loss of Joy: Verses 4-5:** Again, *"none come"* to celebrate. Those who should be leading out in joyous celebration: the priests, the young women and the children (v.5) do not come to the city. They have been carried off into captivity or killed. Instead it is their enemies that prosper and who are happy. *Think of it this way, you have experienced a significant loss, death of a loved one or loss of job and then Thanksgiving or Christmas hits. Everyone wants to celebrate but there is just no joy for you in this holiday. Have you ever been there?*
- **Loss of Strength and Courage: Verse 6** tells us that the young men who were supposed to be the strength and courage of Judah are gone. They have fled before the enemy. *This is the loss of the future generation.*

- **Loss of Physical Resources and Physical Strength: Verse 11** depicts how the loss of food has led the people to lose their physical strength. *They cannot provide for themselves or their families.*
- **Loss of Worship: Verses 7, 10:** In v. 7, the Poet is remembering the former glory of Jerusalem. The phrase “*all the precious things*” is referring to the precious things of worship of Yahweh and the Temple. In former times, the people would return to Yahweh and He would deliver them—but not this time. In v. 10 we hear the story of **2 Kings 25:13-17** in poetic form how the Babylonians entered the temple and stripped it of all its treasures and carried them to Babylon. *The final straw is the loss of God. God has left them and left them to the consequences of their sin. The loss of God is the worst thing that could happen.*

#### Application:

- **Here are a couple of things to remember as we apply vv. 1-7:**
  - **Jeremiah experienced the consequences of sin although he had been faithful to God.** Jeremiah is The Poet and The Man of Constant Sorrows in these poems but he is not simply observing the suffering and grief of the people of Judah/Jerusalem but he suffered right along with the people. He suffered and grieved the abandonment and loss of all things right along with the people of God. He had to go through it with them and continue to point people to the great need to lament and repent. They needed to lament their sin and repent of their sin.
  - **Secondly, Lamentations is like a two-edged sword that cuts both ways.**
    - It teaches us that sometimes we suffer loss and abandonment because of our own sinful choices.
    - It also teaches us that sometimes we suffer loss and abandonment because of the sin of others.
    - The world is broken and we contribute to its brokenness because of our own sin or we suffer for the sins of others. This brokenness has been with us since the Garden of Eden.
- **So what we learn from these verses?**
  - **We learn how to lament; we learn how to spill our guts to God.** We learn that the poet is digging around in his heart and life to list out the things he has lost and he takes them to God. *Do you pray that way?*
    - **This prayer is almost like a journal entry where the poet writes everything down he has lost and is grieving it.** Have you ever done that when you are grieving? This is a good thing to do. You don't have to be a person who journals regularly but if you are struggling with grief, loss and the emotion of abandonment, you might want to pick up a pen and begin to pray with your pen. You might want to list out before the Lord all that you are lamenting the loss of in your life or due to the situation.
  - **Faithfulness sometimes results in suffering.** Jeremiah lost everything even before Babylon invaded. He stood alone to proclaim God's warnings and because he did he was persecuted and put in prison by the king. Sometimes we have to stand-alone but we are not alone for God does not leave us.

The Apostle Paul gives a similar account in **2 Timothy 4:16-18**. He said Demas had abandoned him and Alexander the coppersmith had done him great harm in his opposition to the gospel. Paul goes on to say that everyone deserted him, <sup>16</sup>*At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them!* <sup>17</sup>*But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.* <sup>18</sup>*The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*”

Sometimes although we are faithful to God, people and even friends will abandon us but the Lord never abandons us. What Jesus did on the cross ensured that. Jesus was abandoned on the cross because He took our sin so that God would not abandon us. Jesus took our abandonment.

- **Let me make one more application about loss and abandonment.** Today is *Sanctity of Human Life Sunday*. Often when we speak of sanctity of human life we default to protection of the unborn and certainly that is a problem in our nation. We must protect the baby that is in the womb. Yet sanctity of human life covers a broad range of issues we must give attention to for there is nothing we need to lament more than our how our government sanctions the discarding of lives they deem worthless or too much trouble with which to deal.
  - **Consider the abandonment of the elderly.** Often our elderly are tucked away in care facilities only to be cared for by those who work in the facility. Now I thank God for those who work there and I pray for those people that do but we cannot abandon those who need full time care in order to live. These are people who have lost their ability to care for themselves, provide for others and some even lose their mental abilities. Their loss is great but they should not be abandoned. If your small group is looking for a good ministry perhaps going and serving at a care facility and holding hands with or reading to those in the facilities is what you can do.
  - **Consider the abandonment of those who are in a crisis pregnancy situation.** This is a situation where the person feels all-alone with no one who will not judge them or help them. Many times family and friends abandon them or the girl is so scared she will not tell anyone. So she will secretly try to go to Planned Parenthood for an abortion in order to not face, what she thinks, is the loss of her future. It is at this moment the young lady, who may have made a mistake or is a victim of sexual abuse, needs the love and support of others. Can we give it in some way?
  - **What about the abandonment of those who have had an abortion.** If the young lady does follow through with the abortion the emotional baggage that comes with that is tremendous. What she learns is that the abortion only complicated matters and now she is in a worse situation because she has taken the life of her child and now she certainly cannot tell anyone. Her loneliness is compounded. Her womb that was full is now empty. She feels like a slave and she weeps bitterly and feels like there is none to comfort her. Will you be the one who will do that?
  - **Finally the abandonment of those who are handicapped for whatever reason . . .**
  - **What can we do as a church to address those who suffer abandonment and loss?** Is there something your small group might do to comfort those who have been abandoned even if it is because of their sin? Men and women in these situations have lost everything: family, friends, their future, their strength and they think they have lost God. How can we help?
    - Pray
    - Informed Choices
    - Ask God to show you how to reach out to them in the name of Christ for the sake of the gospel.
  - **Why would we do this?** We give comfort to others even in their sin because that is what Christ did for us.

## II. Affliction: Sin leads to pain and suffering which leads to grief, which gets our attention (Lamentations 1:12-17, 5, 8-9)

- **Read v. 12:** we now hear the poem from the lips of Lady Zion who is consumed with grief. The day of God's anger has come. It was warned against for years and now it is finally here and there is no sorrow like Lady Zion's sorrow. We have already heard

the Poet lament her abandonment, which he observed first hand. The consequences of sin are now in full bloom and the LORD has kept His word to punish His people for breaking covenant with Him.

- **Read vv. 13-14** these are frightening verses. It is a punishment that is so severe and so complete that it destroys her. There are Hebrew metaphor used to describe the affliction that has destroyed the people of Judah:
  - *Fire in the bones:*
  - *Spread a net for my feet:*
  - *Left me stunned:*
  - *My transgressions were set as a yoke upon my neck: (wiping out my strength and lost control of my life)*
  - *My strength failed:*
- **Verse 15:** *The Lord rejected [Judah] and trodden [Judah] as in a winepress:* To be trodden in a winepress is imagery of judgment by God who is the Divine Warrior. God is fighting against His people. He has become their enemy because of their sin. Babylon is the nation He has used to judge His people.
- **Verse 16:** We are now back to the grief that sin and affliction has brought and we hear the theme of **Lamentations 1** again: *For a comforter is far from me. She cries out for a comforter to revive her spirit.*
- **Finally, in v. 17,** she stretches out her hand as one reaching for the surface because she drowning in grief, pain and affliction and *there is none to comfort her, there is no Rescuer.*

#### Application:

- **Illst: C. S. Lewis in his book, *The Problem of Pain*,** says that pain is God's megaphone and sometimes it is murmuring and sometimes shouting that something is wrong. Just as physical pain is an early warning sign in the brain, pain is also an early warning sign in the soul.
- **Illst: Likewise Dr. Paul Brand studied leprosy and worked with patients for most of his medical career.** He said if there was one gift he would give people with leprosy, it would be the gift of pain. Leprosy numbs the extremities and because they cannot feel pain there they injure themselves. They cannot experience the sensation of cutting a finger, twisting an ankle or putting their hands on something too hot. For years doctors thought leprosy destroyed the tissue but instead what it does is merely remove the warning sensors that something is wrong and alerts them to danger. Without the warning signs people with leprosy that they have perhaps turned an ankle or torn a tendon or muscle.<sup>2</sup>
- **When we read these verses we need to remember that pain is a gift!** Pain reminds me that this world is broken and that there is something wrong with this life. What if you went through your whole life and never had anything bad happen to you or someone you loved. You got everything you ever wanted and there was never any abandonment or affliction in your life but instead you always succeeded and then you died and went to Hell? That would be horrible. The pain in this world, whether it is due to your own sin or someone else's sin, is God's megaphone to warn you and wake you up that the world is broken and you need Jesus.

**I realize that pain, God's megaphone, can drive some people away from faith in Jesus.** Some people actually hate God because of the pain and suffering that comes into their lives. They blame him for all that has happened to them. However, it can also drive you to God. For many, the need to be rescued causes them to reach out for the Rescuer—Jesus Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> Nancy Guthrie, *Be Still My Soul: Embracing God's Purpose and Provision in Suffering*, 23-26.

**If you are suffering today, listen to the megaphone of God calling to you to find your rescue in Jesus.** It may be that He heals you and takes your pain away for right now. Sometimes He does but His promise is that one day He will fully and finally personally wipe every tear from every eye of His children. There will be no more pain and no more sorrow. This is the ultimate message of the call to trust in that Jesus suffered on the cross for you and paid for your sins, was buried and on the third day He rose from the dead, defeating death and all those who come to Him in faith and repentance will find life everlasting. Have you listen to the message of your pain today?

### III. Admission: Sin leads to Suffering, which hopefully leads to Godly Grief and a good confession of faith in God (Lamentations 1:18-22)

- **In v. 18, we learn that abandonment and affliction have had a good effect.** Pain is a gift but not everyone responds to pain with faith in God. It is a hard thing to turn to the One who has inflicted the pain but this is what has happened in these verses.
  - **Having God's perspective on things is so important.** We do not always have that but we find it here. Most often we do not know why we suffer, we do not know why the tragedy or calamity has occurred.
  - **Sometimes our suffering is a result of someone else's sin.** This is the case for Jeremiah. He is writing Lamentations but he was not the cause of the suffering he was experiencing. It was the sin of the people that caused his suffering. Their disobedience had brought calamity and tragedy into his life.
  - **Yet He faces it with faith.** He realizes he is part of the covenant community and instead of jumping ship he simply faces the suffering with the people of God as if he was part of the problem.
  - **His words also teach the people of Judah how to repent.** They must own their sin and here are the words to help them confess their sin. Are you ever at a loss for words and do not know how to pray? The liturgy in Lamentations helps us learn how to pray.
  - **Four times in 5 verses there is an admission of guilt for the sin of breaking covenant with God.**
    - **Verse 18:**
    - **Verse 20**
    - **Verse 21**
    - **Verse 22**
- There is a God-centeredness about this grief in these last verses that is very obvious. It is a perspective that we need.

#### Application:

- **What we learn from vv. 18-22 is that we must own our sin.** It is nobody's fault but mine. Jeremiah, although he had been faithful to God because he was part of the people of God, simply confessed and owned it.
  - We need to confess the Lord is right (**v. 18a**)
  - We need to confess we have sinned against His word (**v. 18b**): He says, *"I have reveled against his word."*
  - We need to proclaim a warning to those who witnessed our sin (**vv. 18c-19**): *"but hear, all you peoples and see my suffering . . ."* He is warning those who witness his suffering to not make the same mistake he has made.
  - We must agree with the word of God: *"You have brought the day you announced"* (**v. 21c**)
- **It is grace from God that allows us to see our sin and confess it.** God would be just even if we never confessed our sin and we simply died in them and went to Hell but in His kindness, He screams to us in our pain to show us the world is broken and that we need Jesus. Paul says as much in **Romans 2:4**, *"Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"*

- **It is the kindness of God that leads us to confession.** Have you come to the point of admission of your sin before God? Have you admitted your need of Jesus? God is warning you in your pain to turn to Him and admit your sin and need of Christ to save you today. Find a member of our church and let them help you know how to turn to Christ today.

#### IV. Final applications:

1. **Lamentations teaches us how to pray in our abandonment, affliction and admission of sin.** The beauty of liturgy is that sometimes you need someone to put the words in your mouth for you. We do this every Sunday as we read Scripture together in confession of sin, remembering the gospel and thanksgiving.

Sometimes when you read the confession you might be reading something that is not your sin. Like Jeremiah, you had not actually committed that sin but the beauty of corporate confession is that we learn to live, love and confess our sin as a body. It takes humility to do this. If you are bristling at confession of sin then you have much to learn. Examine your heart to see why this is so hard for you.

2. **Lamentations teaches us how grieve abandonment, loss, and affliction by faith.** There is a way to lament and complain to God and it is in complete faith and trust of Him. Let Lamentations teach you this as we work through it. Learn how to spill your guts to God in faith and this gives us hope.
3. **Lamentations is a call to the church to grieve and suffer together instead of individually.** American life and culture is so individualistic that we have never learned how to be a communal people who suffer well together. This should give the church opportunity to be a witness as to how to be people who live, love and suffer well together.

#### Conclusion:

**Finally Lamentations is hope for those who have broken covenant with God.** Lamentations is the answered prayer of the ones who agree with God that the Lord is in the right and that they have rebelled against His word.

**The Lord's Supper is the answer to those prayers.** For we are reminded in the Lord's Supper that The Covenant Keeper, Jesus Christ, paid for the sins of the covenant breakers. The Lord's Supper represents the restoration of the covenant of God's people by the One who judged them.

When you read Lamentations 1, we must remember that Israel was God's son and as God's son they rebelled against God. The prayer in **Lamentations 1** is a prayer of coming to terms with their sin.

Yet when you read **Lamentations 1** what you hear is the language that echoes the suffering of Christ on the cross. Jesus was God's Son who never broke covenant with God and yet the abandonment and affliction that is rightly ours for sinning against God laid on Him.

**Verse 14 could read,** *"the transgression of my people were bound into a yoke; by your hand Father and they were fastened together; they were set upon my neck; Father you have caused my strength to fail because of the sins of my people; Father you have given me into the hand of those who will kill me. You have trodden me in the winepress of your wrath and fury, my eyes follow with suffering tears for a comforter is far from me."*

**The Lord's Supper reminds us of this sacrifice made by Christ for us.** It reminds us that the Covenant Keeper, Jesus Christ, died for the covenant breakers, us. This is what we remember this morning in the Lord's Supper, that the brokenness, abandonment and affliction of Christ, He kept covenant with God for us on our behalf so that we may be in covenant with Him. This morning we celebrate what He has done for us on our behalf.