

Talk It Over

Lamentations

Week #3 - "Me"

June 15-16, 2019



Background

Lamentations is a historical book in the Old Testament which, technically, is anonymous; however, ancient Jewish and early Christian traditions believe it to be authored by the prophet Jeremiah. Lamentations is a poem made up of five chapters. Chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5 are laments that contain 22 verses, one for each of the 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 3 or the third lament is distinctive in that it is made up of each letter of the Hebrew alphabet used three times in a row for a total of 66 verses. It is believed that the poem may have been written by Jeremiah after the destruction of the temple and the city of Jerusalem during the Babylonian exile around 560 BC. The prophet and his fellow Jews lament the devastation of their beloved city at the hands of the Babylonians. It is important to note that the author of these laments understands clearly that God allowed the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem. God, in his power, could have, at any time, saved Jerusalem yet He didn't.

Read Lamentations 3

Questions

1. For whom is the poet speaking in the opening verses? How has God treated him (vv. 1-18)? How is he feeling?
2. How does the poet stem the tide of grief and despair (v. 21)? Is this an easy or natural thing to do during sorrow? What is the secret to redirecting one's focus this way?
3. What attributes of the Lord are recalled in verses 22-33? How does this picture contrast with that in verses 1-18? Why is it necessary to balance both feelings (vv. 1-18) and faith (vv. 22-33)?
4. To whom does the poet address his rhetorical questions in verses 34-39? What attributes of God do they establish?
5. To what logical conclusion is the poet brought (vv. 40-42)? Why does the poet list the sufferings of the people (vv. 43-54)? For what does the poet pray (vv. 55-66)?

Application

1. Is lamenting about me/myself the same as self-pity? If not, how are they different?
2. Is there a right or wrong way for me to lament? Does God care what my laments look like? Is it possible that I may panic about how I lament because I want to control the outcome? Discuss this in more detail.
3. What does this phrase mean to you:
 - “‘Yet’ means that even if it doesn’t go well with you, Jesus is still enough”?
4. Can you worship God with deep sincerity for who he is, not for a desired outcome? Is it easier to worship God in the goodness of life?
5. What if someone told you that all laments lead to the truest form of worship — the worship of God alone. Explain your thoughts.

Closing Prayer

If in a group, pray the following together before doing your regular prayer time.

“Oh God, sometimes you seem absent. I don’t feel or hear you. I want so desperately to be in your presence. What is it about me that can more easily feel your presence and your power when things are going well? I want to and I need to feel you in my pain. Help me to allow myself to stop trying to control the outcome and rest in your presence. It is exhausting to try to be you when you don’t want me to do that. You’ve got me God. Please help me to see that.”

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