

Lamentations Chapter 3 v 19 - 33

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Preacher: Graham Hilton

[0 : 00] If you look on the board there, you've got 2 Kings 25, and when you turn to it, which is if you've got a church Bible, is on page 397, you'll think, well, what encouragement can there be in the reading of this Word?

But I hope as we go through the evening, we will see that there is great cause to be encouraged from God's Holy Word. 2 Kings 25 is one of four accounts of the fall of Jerusalem.

There are two in Jeremiah, and those who are with us regularly on Wednesday evening will know that we're going through the book of Jeremiah. And what I want to do this evening is actually look at the book of Lamentations, which we won't touch in our studies, and try and dovetail that into what Jeremiah has been saying to us in our Wednesday meetings.

But the four records are just an emphasis, I think, of just how important and significant this is, this event was. We're going to ring 2 Kings 25.

The other one, apart from Jeremiah, the two in Jeremiah, is found in 2 Chronicles 36. Let's just read the first 12 verses.

[1 : 20] Now, Zedekiah, that's the king of Judah, rebelled against the king of Babylon. So, in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, marched against Jerusalem with his whole army.

He encamped outside the city and built siege works all around it. The city was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. By the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people to eat.

Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled at night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city.

They fled toward the Arabah, but the Babylonian army pursued him, that's the king, and his officials, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho.

All his soldiers were separated from him and scattered, and he was captured. He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was pronounced on him.

[2 : 32] They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles, and took him to Babylon.

On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, the commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.

He set fire to the temple of the Lord, the royal palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down, the whole Babylonian army under the commander of the imperial guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem.

Nebuchadnezzar, the commander of the guard, carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the rest of the populace, and those who had gone over to the king of Babylon.

But the commander left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and the fields. And then we skip down to the last part of verse 21.

[3 : 43] We read, So Judah went into captivity away from her land. Well, may the Lord bless that word as we connect it with Lamentations later on.

Verse 7, 827. Lamentations chapter 3. And we're going to begin at verse 19 and read through to verse 33.

This is Jeremiah speaking. And he says this, I say to myself, The Lord is my portion, therefore I will wait for him.

The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him. It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. Let him sit alone in silence, for the Lord has laid it on him. Let him bury his face in the dust, that there may yet be hope.

[5 : 17] Let him offer his cheek to the one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. And though he brings grief, he will show compassion.

So great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.

Amen. You might want to keep your finger in lamentations this evening.

And I'm sure that you'll find that helpful. The Exodus and the exile of the children of Israel are like two bookends when reviewing their history.

The Exodus is a picture of deliverance and salvation. When God led his people through the Passover out of captivity and into the freedom of the promised land.

[6 : 25] The Exodus. Often referred to through the Old Testament, it was the great moment of liberation and freedom. But almost equally is the exile, which marks the end of the reign of the kings.

Which marks the beginning of a 70-year exile, which marks God's judgment on over 800 years.

About 850 or even more, but let's say 800. The exile is the definitive account of God's judgment and the intense suffering when Jerusalem was laid waste.

And God allowed the people to be led into Babylonian captivity. There's a commentary which I came across that says this in his introduction.

It says, It is impossible for us to overstate the intensity or complexity of the suffering that came to a head in the two-year siege and ultimate devastation of Jerusalem and continued on into the 70 years of exile in Babylon.

[7 : 46] The loss was total. Famine, thirst, rape, slaughter, and even cannibalism of a type unimaginable were the horrors that stalked the ruined streets of Jerusalem.

The worst that can happen to body and spirit, to person and nation, happened in Jerusalem in 586 BC.

The prophetic seeds of Jerusalem's destruction were in fact sown, as intimated by Joshua, 800 years in advance.

Latterly, over the last 40 or so years, Jeremiah had been faithful in preaching to the people, and though he was scorned, although there were attempts on his life, he was imprisoned and beaten, and very, very badly treated.

Even so, when the doom actually came to Jerusalem, instead of him saying, Well, I told you so. It's all your own fault. We find that he has a great love and a great concern for the people.

- [9 : 05] Jeremiah responded still, as he did throughout the whole of the prophecy, with great sorrow and compassion towards his suffering and obstinate people.
- Now, the five chapters of Lamentations are in fact five separate poems. They are in fact five separate laments. They are all, each have what they call an acrostic pattern.
- In other words, each mini section is dedicated or linked to the Hebrew alphabet, which has 22 letters. So each chapter has 22 sections, and we won't go much into that, but even chapter five, which looks like it's just a bit of poetry, is in fact acrostic in its structure.
- And so the writing of Lamentations was a great undertaking, because it required great skill to actually put these things together.
- And each of the chapters has a separate word, a message, or lament that it focuses on. And what I want to do this evening is to really just look, give a helicopter view of what Lamentations is all about.
- [10 : 24] I think inevitably we dash into chapter three, which we did just there, but that's useful because we'll see the context of what chapter three is about.
- Naturally, we want to shrink away from sad things, but there are valuable lessons for us to learn, and I want us to try and get a grasp of what is going on.
- Now the first lament, which is chapter one, is divided into two sections. The first 11 verses are all about Jeremiah's sorrow, and the next 11 verses are all about Jerusalem's sorrow.
- And as we've noted already, nothing can compare to the tragedy that befell the people in 8.56, around about July, August, 8.56.
- So significant was the fall that when they returned from Jerusalem, that they celebrated, as it were, they commemorated this disastrous day on the day that Jerusalem fell, the 9th of Ab, I think it is.
- [11 : 35] It falls between July and August. And interestingly enough, that when Herod's temple was burned in AD 70, when a similar thing happened, the destruction of the Jewish people, the Jewish people since then have marked both those days on the same day.
- The exodus and the destruction of Herod's temple are synonymous to God's judgment upon the Jewish people. Verses 1 and 2, let me just read them to you.
- How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave!
- Bitterly she weeps at night, tears are upon her cheeks. Among all her lovers there is none to comfort her. All her friends have betrayed her. They have become her enemies.
- The first two lines begin, How? It's not what has happened, but how has it happened. That's the question. It's a cry of despair and dismay.
- [12 : 48] Utter abjection. And we'll see it again in chapter 4, where the same pattern is repeated. And the book is translated in the Greek version of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint.
- It's translated Book of Tears. And you can see it right at the beginning. Lamentations is a book of tears. Bitterly she weeps at night, tears are upon her cheeks.
- Among all her lovers there are none to comfort her. How the city had fallen. And yet the fall of the city is actual, is plain to see. Verse 8 says, Jerusalem has sinned greatly, and so has become unclean.
- All who honoured her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness. She herself groans and turns away. She has sinned. Her filthiness clung to her skirts.
- She did not consider her future. Her fall was astounding. There was none to comfort her. Look, O Lord, on my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed.

[14 : 01] Could there be anything sadder and more poignant than that? Jerusalem has sinned. Jeremiah's sorrow is intense.

He's looking over the ruins of the city. He's one of the few people who survive. He gets taken off to Babylon, and then he's released and sent back. And there's a whole history of Jeremiah's life after that.

But here he's just looking at the utter devastation. And there's a sense in which he's been prophesying this for 40 years.

And yet he sees what happens, and he thinks, well, that's far worse than even I ever prophesied. You know, the graphic detail of the destruction of Jerusalem was just broke his heart.

He uttered the words and said, this is going to happen. But when it happened, there was nothing that could prepare him for the shock to his system. Jerusalem's sorrow is taken up in the last, in the second half of the chapter one.

[15 : 06] And here we have Jerusalem is personified. It's she who is speaking. And how pathetic it is. How pathetic it is.

Verse 12, is it nothing to you, all you who pass by, look around and see, is any suffering like my suffering that was inflicted on me, that the Lord brought on me, in the day of his fierce anger.

How pathetic, how sad it is. From on high, verse 13, he sent fire. He sent it down to my bones. This is reminiscent of Sodom and Gomorrah, that here is a great burning.

And of course, there was a literal burning of the temple and of the walls of Jerusalem. They were destroyed. And here is this pathetic city crying out.

Is it nothing to you? Or you were walking by, look at me. And yet, the acknowledgement of sin, even there was seen.

[16 : 12] Verse 18, it says, the Lord is righteous, yet I rebelled against his command. So there is an acknowledgement that Jerusalem has rebelled against God's command.

But look what happens. Look at the reaction to that. Listen, all you peoples, look upon my suffering, my young men and maidens have gone into exiles.

You know, it's, look at the suffering. I've sinned, the Lord is righteous, but oh, look at me. Where does Jerusalem turn to? It turns to the people. It doesn't turn to the Lord.

And here is the early days of the destruction of Jerusalem, and there is no turning to the Lord. There's been two years of famine and utter wasting, and they can barely breathe.

Now, I hope that's not too harsh on them, but there is no sign of turning to God at this point in the book. So this is what chapter one is about.

[17 : 16] The first lament is Jerusalem's tragedy, and it's described in poetic terms. The second lament is chapter two, which is where the Lord's judgment is explained.

The Lord's judgment is explained in chapter two. This is what the main thrust is all about. Now, in his prophecy, Jeremiah mentions Babylon more than 150 times.

Significant mention of Babylon. But in Lamentations, neither Babylon nor Nebuchadnezzar, the king, are explicitly mentioned.

And it's as though God is showing through his word that although Babylon was God's instrument of destruction, to punish Judah's sin and rebellion against him, it was the Lord who was behind it.

There is no, God does not hide and say, oh, well, it's, oh, Babylon my instrument, and they carried things a bit too far. We say did. It says the Lord who's behind it, he identifies himself as the one who is dealing with Judah's sin.

[18 : 26] And that's a significant omission of Babylon in Lamentations because God is saying, yes, they've gone through a terrible time, but you need to know it was me that has brought this about because of their sin.

Just look at the way in which these sections open up. Chapter two, verse one. And you can see in your Bible that there's, each verse is quite a long verse.

But chapter two, verse one, how the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud of his anger. How the Lord has covered. You notice that? The daughter of Zion with the cloud of his anger.

Verse two, without pity, the Lord has swallowed up all the dwellings of Jacob. Verse three, in fierce anger he has cut off every horn of Israel.

Verse four, like an enemy he has strung his bow. Verse five, the Lord is like an enemy he has swallowed up Israel. Verse six, he laid waste his dwelling like a garden.

[19 : 31] He has destroyed the place of his meeting. Verse eight, the Lord determined to tear down the wall around the daughter of Zion. So there is no mistaking here that it is God that has done it.

And there's no sort of trying to get around it and say, well, God allowed it to happen. This chapter says, no, it is God that has done this. Yes, he used Babylon as an instrument, but, you know, remember, it is me.

That sounds really hard, doesn't it? And we grapple with the God of the Old Testament, as it were. But there is another aspect of God which we need to remember.

We need to remember that, I don't know if you, well, you will recall the disgrace at the golden calf. When Moses pleaded to the Lord to be merciful and to forgive Israel's idolatry, we read that God listened to Moses' plea, and we withdrew his hand.

And later, Moses asked the Lord to show him his glory, and the Lord's response was this, and this was like a mantra that was taken throughout Judaism. It says, Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord.

[20 : 47] And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin, yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished.

He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents, to the third and fourth generation. What's that about? Well, for 800 years, God had been true to his word.

He had been faithful. He had been patient. He had been compassionate. He had forgiven. He had been gracious. He had been merciful. But now, time had run out, and his judgments would come into effect, and they would reach the third and fourth generations because they went into exile.

Everybody went into exile, and all those who went into exile never came but, but the children of the exiles did. But they suffered along with their parents.

And we don't want to coldly minimize the terrible suffering of the people by saying they deserve what they got. Jeremiah cares for his sheep.

[22 : 01] In verse 11, he says this in chapter 2, my eyes fail from weeping. I'm in torment within. My heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city.

Here's a man who loves his people, and even though they try to kill him time and time again and scorn him over and over again, his heart is poured out to the ground for them.

He loves his people. Now how much is Jeremiah like God? When we apply it to ourselves, when we look at our own sin, when we look at the way in which we rebel, it is just such a gracious God that he hasn't wiped us off from the face of the earth.

Now, what happened to Judah is a warning to us, and we're not to play fast and loose with God to test his patience or think laments doesn't apply to us.

It does. This is what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10. He says, these things referring to the Exodus and to all the other terrible things that Israel did, he says, these things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings to us on whom the culmination of the ages has come.

[23 : 26] We are living in the last days. The culmination of the ages has come. Christ has been, he's died, he's been resurrected, and descended, and he will come again. That's when the end is, but we are in the culmination of the ages.

So, he says, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. Don't fall into the same trap as the children of Judah and of Jerusalem did.

We're skipping through this, but the third lament, the third lament is Jeremiah's griefs, and the cures that are found. Now, up until now, it seems that we've been descending deeper and deeper into a hopeless and unending pit.

But I would put it to you that, in a sense, the opposite has been happening. And I say this because of this. Chapter one dealt with a real situation.

situation. It was what it was, as we often will say. It is what it is. You know, a real situation, and it was a disaster. And chapter two tells us why it was what it was.

[24 : 42] It was because of sin, because of people's rebellion. Now, chapter three shows us that humanly speaking, perception is not reality.

Anybody know the phrase, perception is reality? Oh, blank faces. Well, we're discussing this at the elders during the week, but there is a phrase that says, perception is reality.

What you see, well, that's it. Well, here, perception is not reality, because we come to chapter three. But before we get to the main point, let's just look at where Jeremiah is.

Let's just look and see where he is. Chapter three, verse one, I am a man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. Chapter four, he has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones.

Chapter seven, he has walled me in so I cannot escape. He has weighed me down with chains. That literally happened to him. Verse 13, he pierced my heart with arrows from his quiver.

[25 : 45] Verse 16, he has broken my teeth with gravel and he has trampled me in the dust. Wow, whoa, Jeremiah, whoa.

So when we began our reading we started with verse 19, I remember my afflictions and my wandering. The bitterness and the gall, I well remember them and my soul is cast down within me.

Jeremiah is a cast down man. He has had a terrible, terrible life because he has had a terrible, terrible task to do that the Lord told him to do.

And his soul is downcast within him because everything is black. But then a light shines. A light shines because we come to verses 22 and the following verses.

And we read this. Yet this, verse 21, this I call to mind. Therefore I have hope. Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed.

[26 : 48] For his compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, the Lord is my portion. Therefore I will wait for him.

Now I mentioned earlier on that there are five chapters. Each one is an acrostic poem. These verses are the very center, the literal center, the literary center of laments.

Everything up until now has actually been ascending to that point. Yes, things are really bad. Yes, it's all because of what you've done that has got you there.

But it is because of the Lord's great love that we are not consumed. That's the very pinnacle of lamentations. After that we'll see that it tails off to a different level.

But here we have the very center of the book and they're meant to turn our eyes to the Lord. They're meant to strengthen our faith. They're meant to hold on to the reality that no matter how bad things are God is in control.

[27 : 56] Verse 22. I don't know how many translations you've got here but we'll cover them all. Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed for his compassion has never failed.

Now the word great love is translated essentially into two or three different ways. It's great love in the New International Version. In the New Living Testament it's faithful love.

In the ESV it's steadfast love. In the New American Standard it's loving kindness. And in the Authorized Version it's because of the Lord's mercies.

Thank you. So that's the Lord's great love. And the other part of that is his compassions never fail. Again NIV compassions.

The Living New Testament his mercies never cease. The ESV his mercies never come to an end. And the New American Standard for his compassions never fail.

[28 : 55] And the Authorized Version because his compassions fail not. So which is right? Well the answer is all of them are right. And there's none of them wrong. Because what they're trying to do is to express something which is ultimately inexpressible.

It is because of the Lord's great love that we're not consumed. Israel, Judah, deserved to be obliterated from the face of the earth like an ancient nation like the Incas or something like that were virtually non-left.

That's what they deserved. But it was because of the Lord's great love that he took them into the exile. That he separated the remnant. That he cared for them in Babylon. And that he brought them back and established them once more.

It's because of the Lord's great love that we're not consumed. His compassions never fail. They are unending. Nothing will stop God from being compassionate. And this is the great hope that we have isn't it?

That we live in a world that's upside down and in turmoil. But when we look to the Lord here we see the great anchor to our soul don't we? In regarding the verses 22, 23, and 24 Matthew Henry says this.

[30 : 08] He says about Jeremiah having stated his distress and temptation the prophet shows how he was raised above it. Bad as things are it is owing to the mercy of God that they were not worse.

We should observe that what makes for us as well as what is against us. God's compassions fail not. Of this we have fresh instances every morning.

Portions on earth are perishing things but God is a portion forever. It is our duty and will be our comfort and satisfaction to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

Just read the next three verses verse 25. The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him. To the one who seeks him it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Good for a man to bear the yoke whilst he is young. What he's saying is if you're young and you get into a really really bad situation actually if you're a believer that's good for you because God is training you at an early age to always have resort to the living God the God who can pull you out of difficulties and will make the way tolerable and bearable.

[31 : 37] Matthew Henry again says this afflictions do and will work very much for good. Many have found it good to bear this yoke in their youth. It has made many humble and serious and has weaned them from the world who otherwise would have been proud and unruly.

If tribulation will work patience and that patience will work experience and that experience a hope that makes us not ashamed. Thoughts of the evil of sin and of our own sinfulness will convince us that it is of the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed.

Will convince us that it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed. We cannot say with an unwavering voice the Lord is my portion. You can't say that. If you're in such a situation you can't say the Lord is my portion.

You say may we not say I desire to have him as my portion and my salvation. And he says happy shall we be we learn to receive affliction as laid upon us by the hand of God.

I hope that's helpful. I hope that helps us to see that there is nothing that can say for us is from the love of God which is found in Christ Jesus.

[32 : 58] Verses 31 and 30 to 33 show us that the discipline of God comes from a loving heavenly father. We might ask the question why but here is part of the answer for men are not cast off by the Lord forever and though he brings grief he will show compassion.

So great is his unfailing love for he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men. Here's a gracious God isn't it? Here's a God that weeps over our sin isn't it?

Just as Jeremiah wept over the people and their terrible distress. Here we see that the greatest demonstration of God keeping a man in the midst of great upheaval and torment we find that he's found in the darkest day when the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified.

His dying on the cross provided the ultimate and lasting cure for sin. And the cross is the clearest example how even moral evil fits into God's grand design.

So Babylonians were morally evil. They were a pagan nation but God used them. They fitted into his grand design. And who would deny that the betrayal of the Lord by Judas was anything other than plain evil?

[34 : 30] And yet Peter in Acts 2 says this this man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge. Wow. So Judas is part of God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge.

And you with the help of wicked men put him to death by kneeling him on the cross. Yes it was God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge but you did the deed. And that's where we have the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man.

We are responsible for our deeds. Look at Herod's conspiracy and Pilate's imposing the death sentence on an innocent man. And the merciless cry of the people saying crucify, crucify, that cannot be anything but an immeasurable sin.

But again in Luke we read this, indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed.

They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. So this is God's will being worked out. It was worked out in Jerusalem in the people of Judea.

[35 : 43] It was worked out in the exile but it's God who was bringing it all about. The condition that the people found themselves in was bad. The suffering was bad.

The future was bad yet God is still there. He's still the compassionate and gracious God. The God who is slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness who maintains his love to thousands and forgives wickedness and rebellion and sin.

God is still like that and yet to the people at that time God was hidden behind the cloud of his judgment and yet the writer finds hope and he finds hope in verse 40 of chapter 3.

He says this, let us examine our ways and test them. Let us return to the Lord. Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven and say we have sinned and rebelled and you have not forgiven.

That last phrase I think is best to understand well we've sinned and rebelled you've not forgiven because we've not repented but here the call is to examine your ways and to return and to lift up their hands to God in heaven.

[37 : 01] Where there is true repentance there is forgiveness. So let's get back to Jerusalem. Perception was not reality.

What you could see was utter destruction and human suffering but in that there were those who were being weaned from the world.

There were those who will be taken into exile. Well that was hard had to be but God was going to preserve his remnant and was going to fulfill his promises.

The fourth lament are you with it? Am I taking too much time? Yes. Okay let me just move on quickly. Lamentations now moves to the consequences of rebellion. You think we might have covered that already but it is different.

It moves away from the pinnacle of God's grace and moves to detailing the consequence of Judah's rebellion. And there are always consequences. Whatever we do there are consequences aren't there?

[38 : 04] The chaos theory of a butterfly flapping its wing in South America and a tornado happening in Japan. There are always consequences and we never know where they're going to end.

Lamentations four shows this. It says how the gold has lost its luster. The fine gold has become dulled.

The sacred gems are scattered at the head of every street. How precious the sons of Zion. Once worth their weighting gold are now considered as pots of clay the work of a potter's hand.

This is this cry of dismay again. How? How the gold has lost this lustre. Judah had ceased to be the model nation that God wanted them to be.

He wanted them to be a separate people holy and pleasing to him but now they were dull they were worthless they were like pots of clay. They were something to be trampled on.

[39 : 00] And the lesson I think to us is that as Christians we are called to be shining gold and sacred gems. We are called to be salt and light aren't we?

And we're to stop the rot that the sin brings into the world and show people the gospel light. And we sow what we reap is what Paul says.

Let's move on to the last chapter to the last lament which is what I call the prayer of the exiled remnant.

The prayer of the exiled remnant. The first 18 verses is really a reiteration of all that has fallen Jerusalem. It's shaped in the form of a community prayer.

It's the remnants prayer really. The remnants have gone and been separated and they're looking back and they've seen all that's happened and they're part of it.

[40 : 02] There are over 30 references to we and us and our in those 18 verses. But in verse 15 we read this.

Joy is gone from our hearts. Our dancing has turned to mourning. The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us we have sinned. Because of this our hearts are faint. Because of these things our eyes grow dim.

Actually what's happening here is the transition. There's a transition from the details of their woes to a heartfelt recognition of their sin. Joy has gone from our hearts.

There's a recognition that they had something better once. And I wish I could get it back again. The crown has fallen from my head. We once were the princes of all the peoples.

But it's fallen to us. Woe to us for we have sinned. It's not like saying we saw earlier on in chapter one about sin.

[41 : 01] No here is repentance the seeds of true repentance coming to these people. Verse 19 you oh lord reign forever your throne endures from generation to generation.

It recognizes that God has been sovereign in this and that the cry for restoration for a return to Jerusalem follows doesn't it?

Why do you always forget us? Why do you forsake us so long? Restore us to yourself oh lord that we may return renew us as of our days of old.

And then we come to verse 22 which to me is one of the most plaintive verses in the whole of the Old Testament for sure.

I think it parallels in some ways the desolation that the lord knew. and here we have the desolation of the people and he says this it says unless restore us to yourself oh lord verse 21 that we may return renew our days of old unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure.

[42 : 19] You see how the writer just leaves everything hanging there unless you restore us unless it really really really is too late.

Now what kind of question is that? What kind of statement is that? Is it rhetorical? Is it really sort of saying unless you've utterly rejected us but somewhere at the back of the mind in the heart there's that yeah but God hasn't done that.

God wouldn't do that because he'll restore the repentant. No unless you've utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure yeah but restore us to yourself oh lord that there's this there's this recalling of God's promises.

Think back in Jeremiah 29 chapter 29 this is what God is saying and we all know this this is what the Lord Almighty the God of Israel says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon build houses and settle down plant gardens and eat what they produce marry and have sons and daughters find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage so that they too may have sons and daughters increasing number there do not decrease also seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I've carried you into exile pray to the Lord for it because if it prospers you too will prosper there's the instruction just don't go there and just be a slave go there and work and build and then he goes on and says this is what the Lord says when the 70 years are completed for Babylon I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place for I know the plans I have for you declares the

Lord plans to prosper you and not to harm you plans to give you hope and a future then you will call on me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart I will be found by you declares the Lord and I will bring you back from captivity to me it just seems that the writer is looking back at those promises and he's saying restore us to yourself oh Lord unless you've utterly rejected us there's an argument going on here God are you really that faithful to not restore us to not bring us blessing to not bring us back to the land and there's this echo of Jeremiah 29 and other promises too well let's just draw to a close shall we on

[45 : 17] Thursday over half of the people of this country voted to leave the EU while just under a half voted to remain and if you listen to the news today it's brought speculation financial turbulence resignation of the prime minister half of the shadow cabinet have now gone and there's a possibility we might see anarchy and violence who knows and some here are feeling downcast others perhaps are pleased that their vote made a difference but I think all of us expect have concerns about how things will work out certainly what we are seeing is that the politicians and spin doctors are reaping the reward for such a shameful and vitriolic campaign that's a political statement but it's been sad hasn't it but even though we are in the same boat as the rest of the nation for we are it doesn't matter how you vote whether you

Brexit or remain Christians must rise above where we are we have to rise above it rise above the doom and the gloom no matter how it affects us whether our pensions are impacted or our job goes away we have to rise above that and we've got to rise above the manipulation of the financial markets well how do we do it well lamentations teach us about the nature of sin and its consequences on individuals and nations we all know that Proverbs 14 34 verse godliness makes a great nation but sin is a disgrace to any people who can argue that the need for us is to pray for the nation for gospel freedom for the with that comes with power and effectiveness for bold witness where we are to say to people well yes I voted this or I voted that and you weren't right and I wasn't wrong whatever it is but there is something that is way way more important and significant than this and that's my relationship with god and the god whom I trust and how many of us are brave enough I'm talking to myself now that to actually go and do that and to say there is a difference there is another dimension the religious leaders of our land have failed us utterly by talking about this all that and finance and what have you they haven't spoken about the gospel they haven't spoken about this great god who is full of kindness and mercy this god who has demonstrated his love to us in the death of the lord jesus christ and the other thing we can learn is surely that the lord holds the future he held the future for this these exiled people these exiled people lived and died and the children came back and jerusalem was rebuilt and things were never quite the same but the main core of the problem had been fixed by god and that was there was no idolatry anymore and our calling is to be holy to be faithful be holy because he is holy and then we will find real joy and real blessing i just want to read some very familiar verses in matthew and we'll close with this matthew 6 verse 25 says therefore i tell you do not worry about your life what you will eat or drink or your body what you will wear is not life more important than the food and the body more important than clothes look at the birds of the air they do not sow or reap or store away in barns and yet your heavenly father feeds them are you not much more valuable than they who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life and why do you worry about clothes see how the lilies of the field grow they do not labor or spin yet i tell you that not even

Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these if that is how god clothes the grass of the field which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire will he not much more clothes you or you of little faith so do not worry saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear for the pagans run after all these things and your heavenly father knows that you need them but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well therefore do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself each day has enough trouble of its own sufficient unto the days the evil thereof the ab says let's pray shall we oh gracious god we thank you for the very solemn lessons that we've tried to learn this evening through your dealings with your people in the book of lamentations we thank you that even though the backdrop is so dark and so difficult for us to really really grasp your lord we do thank you that what shines through in all of this is your care for your people we do thank you that it is because of your great love that we're not consumed for your compassions never fail they are new every morning and your faithfulness is great lord help us to make you our portion and to wait upon you we pray and help us to see that even though we may go through difficulties and challenges that we will never be cast off by you forever and that you do not willingly bring affliction but you do bring affliction so that we might learn of your goodness and your mercy thank you for being the compassionate and gracious

God slow to anger and abounding love and faithfulness help us to go home with that truth ringing in our ears and to be blessed in the days that lie ahead for the glory of your name amen