



“A Tale of Two Cities”

Lamentations 3:55-66

February 28, 2021

Lam 3:55-66

55 I called on Your name, O Lord,
Out of the lowest pit.

56 You have heard my voice,“

Do not hide Your ear from my prayer for relief,
From my cry for help.”

57 You drew near when I called on You;
You said, "Do not fear!"

58 O Lord, You have pleaded my soul's cause;
You have redeemed my life.

59 O Lord, You have seen my oppression;
Judge my case.

60 You have seen all their vengeance,
All their schemes against me.

Every book in the Bible demands
a response.

55 I called on Your name, O Lord,

Out of the lowest pit.

- Jeremiah is at the lowest point. He has been descending since the start of Lamentations.
- Now at his lowest point he calls to the Lord.
- What do you do at your lowest point?
- God may wait until we are at the bottom. Then we will listen to Him. Then His Word will speak to us.
- Notice: “I call on your name” – Lord = Yahweh – the covenant keeping God. Here is the assurance that Jeremiah has – that God is in covenant with Israel.
- But are we in covenant? And is the Church in covenant?

• New Covenant –

Jer 31:31-34

31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord.

33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

Luke 22:20

20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.

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- But are we in covenant? And is the Church in covenant?
- Praying backwards – "In Jesus name . . ." – use at the beginning of a request when praying.

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If God is

FAITHFUL

in His judgment of sin,

He will be

FAITHFUL

in keeping His covenant promises.

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8 realities Jerusalem faced before and after the siege:

#1 – "I know you are listening, just don't cut me off"

- Jeremiah needs God to act and deliver.

Lam 3:8

8 Even when I cry out and call for help,
He shuts out my prayer.

Lam 3:44

44 You have covered Yourself with a cloud
So that no prayer can pass through.

Ps 66:18

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart,
The Lord will not hear.

What did sin do to Adam and Eve? The nature and effects of their sin hindered their relationship with God – they hid. Now God must do the seeking.

Do you ever feel like your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling? Maybe time for a sin check.

57 You drew near when I called on You;

You said, "Do not fear!"

#2 – "You heard and you answered."

- Now God answers and speaks.
- God knows and decides when He will answer. Are we broken, do we have a contrite heart?
- The most comforting words you can hear – "Fear not"
- It is a wonderful thing when the God of the universe says to a believer "Do not fear."
- Here are 3 times in Scripture the words "Fear not" are used:

Isa 35:4

4 Say to those with anxious heart,
"Take courage, **fear not.**"

Isa 41:10

10 **Fear not**, for I am with you;
Be not dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you,
I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

Jer 30:10-11

10 'Fear not, O Jacob My servant,' declares the Lord,
'And do not be dismayed, O Israel;
For behold, I will save you from afar
And your offspring from the land of their captivity.
And Jacob will return and will be quiet and at ease,
And no one will make him afraid.

11 'For I am with you,' declares the Lord, 'to save you;
For I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you,
Only I will not destroy you completely.
But I will chasten you justly
And will by no means leave you unpunished.'

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#3 "You are my defender and redeemer."

- God defends us in the courtroom where we are being prosecuted for our sin.
- God is both the prosecutor and the defender.
- How can that be? Because He has provided a redeemer for the forgiveness of our sin – Jesus Christ.
- The only way that God would be able to plead the case of His people was if He Himself paid for and redeemed them from their sin.

Col 1:13-14

13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,
14 in whom we have **redemption**, the forgiveness of sins.

1 John 2:1

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an **Advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

59 O Lord, You have seen my oppression;

Judge my case.

#4 – "You see how I have been oppressed from the enemy, therefore I know you will be just when you take up my case."

- Has Israel been oppressed? Yes.
- Does the Lord keep track of it all? Yes.
- Will He judge rightly? Yes

Gen 18:25

25 "Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?"

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#5 – “You know exactly all of the enemy’s plans to destroy Jerusalem and me.”

- Jeremiah knows that God is aware of every move, every action of the Babylonian army.
- God has seen the vengeance in them; their wrath and fury, and how they burn with a desire to destroy Jerusalem.
- In other words God knows what is in their heart. He will not be fooled.

61 You have heard their reproach, O Lord,

All their schemes against me.

62 The lips of my assailants and their whispering

Are against me all day long.

63 Look on their sitting and their rising;

I am their mocking song.

64 You will recompense them, O Lord,

According to the work of their hands.

65 You will give them hardness of heart,

Your curse will be on them.

66 You will pursue them in anger and destroy them

From under the heavens of the Lord!

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#6 – “You have heard it all, Lord – blaming the Jews and seeking to destroy them.”

“reproach” - **חֶרְפָּה** *cherpah* - to give blame, discredit, disgrace, to shame.

• Essentially the Babylonian army had “trashed” the people of Jerusalem, and schemed and plotted how to destroy them.

• Their taunts, and scoffs, and jeers brought mental anguish, besides the starvation they were experiencing.

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#7 – “You heard every word spoken by the enemy against Jerusalem.”

• Jerusalem could see the army from their walls, talking, planning how they are going to overtake Jerusalem.

• So difficult to deal with.

• Israel says, “You know they are plotting to destroy us. What are they saying? When will they make a move?”

• The frightening thing - it is inevitable.

• The anticipation is nerve-wracking.

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#8 – “Lord, you see when they sit down and when they rise up and you hear them making a mockery of us.”

- Jeremiah is asking God if He really wants Israel, His people, to be mocked.
- Jeremiah says, “We are their music. Doesn’t this bother you Lord?”

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Suddenly there is a turn here -

“recompense” – to pay back

3 things Jeremiah is confident God will do to Babylon:

1. Give them what they deserve.
 - That is biblical.
 - Judgment for sin will be according to the degree of the sin.
- Luke 12:47-48**
47 "And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes,
48 but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few."
Heb 10:29
29 How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?

**65 You will give them hardness of heart,
Your curse will be on them.**

- Jeremiah believes God will give the Babylonians 2 things:
 1. **Hardness of heart** – unable to repent and be saved. This is blindness, callousness, stupidity of heart.
God does harden hearts -
Ex 4:21
21 The Lord said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders which I have put in your power; but I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go."
Rom 9:17-18
17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH."
18 So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.
 2. **The curse of God** - will be upon them and they will perish in their sin.
Prov 3:33
3 The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked,
But He blesses the dwelling of the righteous.

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- God will not allow the Babylonians to go unpunished.
- Jeremiah doesn't know how it will happen, and probably doesn't care, but he wants them destroyed as they destroyed Jerusalem.
- 2 wrongs don't make a right. Both, the people of Jerusalem for their idolatry, and the Babylonians for their hate and envy of the Jews, were both wrong and deserving of judgment.
- Jerusalem got hers, Babylon will get hers.
- Jeremiah dealt with the Jews in the first 2 chapters and now he is dealing with the Babylonians at the end of chapter 3.
- Everything is under the heavens. Therefore Jeremiah is asking God to obliterate any trace of them in the universe.
- Notice that Jeremiah is not taking revenge into his own hands.
- Rather he is leaving it with the Lord.

- God will deal with evil and wickedness in all who commit such vile acts.
- Our responsibility is to restrain ourselves (self control - Gal. 5:23)
- God will do an infinitely better job with revenge than we could ever do – because He is God.
- Always remember – our punishment for sin may be severe but nothing compared to the unleashing of God's wrath on the unbeliever.

**Never take your own
revenge, beloved, but leave
room for the wrath of God,
for it is written, "VENGEANCE
IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says
the Lord.**

Romans 12:19

How does all of this apply to us?

1. Sin must be confessed.
2. Sin brings punishment and suffering and is proportional to the severity of the sin.
3. God will decide the length of suffering.
4. It is appropriate to pray for God to relieve the suffering caused by sin.

James 5:13-16

- 13 Is anyone among you **suffering**? Then he must **pray**. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.
- 14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;
- 15 and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, **they will be forgiven him**.
- 16 Therefore, **confess your sins** to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.
5. It is also appropriate to pray for God to punish those who may have caused the suffering by their evil acts. Sin is sin and all sin deserves to be punished.