

Maria Revilla Candedo

Dr. David Emanuel

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Lamentations

The Book of Lamentations describes the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylon army and the destruction, desolation, hunger, poverty, depravity, annihilation, humiliation, sadness, and emptiness that Israel experienced as a result. These events and its consequences were brought about by human pride, sinfulness, and unfaithfulness to God and his commandments. Lamentations is an expression of sorrow, a protest; a denial of personal responsibility at first, which gives way to the admission of sinfulness and guilt that precipitated the fall of the chosen nation, and all the suffering that followed; It is a contemplation of how things used to be in the past when God inhabited the Temple and it's people's hearts, minds and lives, and how things turned out when men decided to deviate from God's way and follow their own proud and sinful ways as expressed in Verse 1:18: "The Lord is righteous, yet I rebelled against his commandment". It is a confession of sin followed by repentance, a cry for God's mercy and forgiveness, and a desperate but hopeful prayer for God's presence and blessings to be restored. The last verse ends with the plea: "Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we may return; renew our days as of old, unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure" (5:21-22). This is oftentimes the feeling that comes over us when we are humbled by the bad decisions we make, and the terrible consequences we create for ourselves time and time again, and we wonder if we are even worthy of God's forgiveness. Yet, as Christians, we know

our salvation is in the Lord, and if nothing else, we must have hope: “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness” (3:2-23). And: “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”. (3:25-26)

The Book of Lamentations is an accurate depiction of the times of loss in the life of a Christian individual or a community; it very much echoes the phases of human reaction to loss and destruction of a place where God used to be present and is no more. This is also in the wider context of our world, a cycle that keeps repeating every time we break the covenant with God. We only have to look at the state of our world to see the story keeps repeating itself, and we end up going through the same phases of pain, loss, and experience the void that comes with the separation from the Spirit of God when we choose wickedness over godliness.

Nevertheless, suffering is part of human life, not only do we suffer from the consequences of our iniquity, but we suffer the consequences of original sin and other sins that were brought about by our ancestors. Suffering cannot be avoided by prayer; it is an innate part of the human condition, but we Christians find consolation for our pain and the injustice we suffer by bringing our afflictions and lamentations to God in the same way Israel did. In God, we find consolation, solace, peace, and rest. He is our defender and our protector. He is kind, he is merciful, and continues to shower us with blessings. He gives us beauty for ashes. In times of difficulty, pain, sickness, exhaustion, desperation, He walks with us. He does not forsake us. When we go through trials and tribulation, there are lessons to be learnt; we cultivate strength of character; we become more resilient; we are humbled and become more compassionate to other people’s pain and suffering. We come closer to God in times of darkness; we learn to love, trust and rely on Him more and more. Sometimes we find ourselves at the bottom of the pit and we

think God has abandoned us, but it is in those times that we must be of good courage and have faith in knowing God is working behind the lines to deliver us and that there must be a blessing in disguise for every situation. We must learn to thank God for the good and the bad in our lives.

The Book of Lamentations teaches us that He has continued to deliver us from our own sinfulness all throughout the ages; God sent his only son Jesus Christ to show us the way and to save us.

Finally, as for suffering and enduring, it was Jesus who told us to take up our cross and follow him. That is the way of the Christian walk, never alone in our suffering, pain is not the end result; there is life after death, light after darkness; joy after sorrow; by God's grace and the blood of Jesus Christ we are delivered, healed, redeemed, and blessed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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