

Dear Heavenly Father,

Praise

My own eyes filled with tears as I listened to the broken words of Jerusalem: “In the dust of the streets lie the young and the old; my young women and my young men have fallen by the sword; you have killed them in the day of your anger, slaughtering without pity” (Lam 2:21). Yet as I read, I realized that these words came from you. You have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and you mourned the fact that you had to destroy the city you loved. That’s the kind of God you are—Praise the LORD!

Today in Your Word

Today you shared with me the first part of your lament over the destruction of Jerusalem. Lamentations consists of five poems, one for each chapter. The first four poems are acrostics, and the last poem is unique in that it has 22 lines (the number of letters in the alphabet), but the alphabetic structure is not used. Throughout the poems, several voices speak. The prophet serves as narrator for the journey through grief, and Jerusalem, personified as a woman, acts as an eyewitness of the terrible things that have happened to the city. These two voices take turns speaking until finally the people of Jerusalem offer their collective lament (Lam 4:17–20). They close the book in prayer, asking you to remember and restore. As a whole, Lamentations answers this question: ‘How should your people respond to the terrible judgment that had fallen on them because of their wickedness?’ First, they should realize how low they had fallen. In the past, Jerusalem had been “full of people,” “great among the nations,” “a princess among the provinces,” “the perfection of beauty,” “a joy to all the earth,” filled with “precious things,” and mighty in its “strongholds.” This greatness had not come from their own strength or power; it had come from your blessing. Second, they should recognize what had brought about their destruction: “the LORD has afflicted her *for the multitude of her transgressions*” (Lam 1:5). The city’s devastation was not due to the sin of one generation. It was the result of generation after generation of wickedness, where children embraced their parents’ legacy of idolatry, murder and perversion. Third, they should own the pain of your judgment. This was not a punishment to be shrugged off. This was a grief to be felt, a grief that should cause their eyes to run with weeping (Lam 1:16). ‘Remember this pain,’ Lamentations cries, ‘Let it soak into your hearts. May the memory of the anger of God for your sin be always in your minds!’

Reflection

The prophet said, “the LORD has afflicted her” (Lam 1:5). That phrase caught my eye, and I meditated on its truth. You are a God who deals out pain in your anger and grief in your wrath. Yet you never hurt me for hurt’s sake alone—the pain you give is always meant to punish me for sin and turn me from the path of destruction. More than many other things, this shows how much you love me!

Request

Father, impress the lessons of Lamentations deep on my heart. Help me to forsake sin before it destroys me—keep me from bringing such judgment on myself.

Thanksgiving

Thank you for loving me enough to discipline me for sin! I welcome your rebuke and cherish your rod!

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Suggested Hymn: “[With Tears of Anquish I Lament](#)” – Samuel Stennett.

Meditation Verse: Lamentations 1:18.