

The Faithfulness and Righteousness of the Lord in Our Suffering

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Date: 30 June 2019

[0 : 00] Please open your Bibles to the book of Lamentations. Again, if you're looking for Lamentations, it's in the Old Testament. It's Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, then Ezekiel and Daniel.

And tonight we're looking at Lamentations verses 1 through verse 22. So Lamentations 1, beginning in verse 12, if you'll look there with me.

Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there's any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me, which the Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.

From on high he sent fire into my bones. He made it descend. He spread a net for my feet. He turned me back. He has left me stunned, faint all the day long.

My transgressions were bound into a yoke. By his hand they were fastened together. They were set upon my neck. He caused my strength to fail. The Lord gave me into the hands of those whom I cannot withstand.

[1 : 23] The Lord rejected all my mighty men in my midst. He summoned an assembly against me to crush my young men. The Lord has trodden as in a winepress, the virgin daughter of Judah.

For these things I weep. My eyes flow with tears. For a comforter is far from me. One to revive my spirit. My children are desolate, for the enemy has prevailed.

Zion stretches out her hands, but there is none to comfort her. The Lord has commanded against Jacob that his neighbors should be his foes.

Jerusalem has become a filthy thing among them. The Lord is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word. But hear all you peoples and see my suffering.

My young women and my young men have gone into captivity. I called to my lovers, but they deceived me. My priests and elders perished in the city while they sought food to revive their strength.

[2 : 28] Look, O Lord, for I am in distress. My stomach churns. My heart is wrung within me because I have been very rebellious. In the street the sword bereaves.

In the house it is like death. They heard my groaning, yet there is no one to comfort me. All my enemies have heard of my trouble. They are glad that you have done it.

You have brought the day you announced. Now let them be as I am. Let all their evil doings come before you. And deal with them as you have dealt with me.

Because of all my transgressions. For my groans are many, and my heart is faint. Together. Together. Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your word.

And though, as we have seen before, this is a difficult book even to read. Lord, yet we know it is your word. And we pray that you would teach us from your word. That you would feed us. That you would instruct us.

[3 : 27] Lord, even that you would sanctify us by your word. So we pray that your spirit would work now as your word is open. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Now just to remind you all, this is our third sermon in Lamentations.

And Lamentations is what we've called a communal lament. Or we could call it a national lament. Where the whole nation, this is Judah. In particular, the capital of Jerusalem.

But Judah has been carried into captivity. And it's lamenting. It's sadness for the destruction of Jerusalem. The destruction of the temple. The carrying off of Judah into exile that happened in 587 BC.

By the Babylonians. And so as we look at this passage in particular. It focuses on two parts of that broader message that we looked at. When we did the introduction to the book of Lamentations.

A few weeks ago. When we looked at the introduction of the book. We said that the message is. Calamity has come. Sin has caused it. God has ordered it.

[4 : 29] Yet there's hope. So again calamity has come. Sin has caused it. God has ordered it. Yet there's hope. And so this passage focuses in particular. In particular on what God has done.

And what his people have done. And so if we were to put it in terms of the categories that we saw in our message. We'd say that this section of the book in particular. Is focusing upon the idea that God's people have sinned.

And that God has brought calamity. So at least two of the things we saw. Sin has caused it. God has ordered it. Really in a reversal of the order we're going to look at today. But sin has caused it. God has ordered it. And to some extent. What we're looking at is. What has God caused. Which is the calamity. Which really brings in the third point. And I've said. All throughout the book. There's a hint of hope.

We're going to see the greatest expression of hope in chapter three. Which is really at the center of the book. And is meant to emphasize. That this is where we need to hope. And so while hope isn't primarily expressed in this passage.

[5 : 28] We do see several points to our message from a few weeks ago. And I'm going to be talking about how God has dealt with his people. I just thought I better define my terms very carefully.

Just to avoid confusion. When I refer to Judah as his people. I don't mean that all of Judah are elect. I don't mean that all that were in Judah were Christians.

In fact. What God's word tells us. Is that there were very few in Judah that were Christian. Which is why this calamity has come upon them. Because of their sin. But there were some that were Christians in there. And so when I say God's people.

You understand that I mean. In the broad sense of the word. God had identified himself with the nation of Israel. Even after the division. In particular. God identified himself with Judah. Even more so than Israel.

And Israel at this point. Has already been carried off in that south. So Judah were. Outwardly speaking. The people who identified as God's people. And that's what I mean when I say. The people of God. I don't mean. Necessarily that they're all Christians.

[6 : 26] So even as we look at that. And I'm going to say. God's people have done this. Or God has brought this upon his people. We cannot make a one-to-one correlation. Between. This is what God does to Christians today.

Or what God does to. The invisible church. We might say. So just want to clarify that. But I want us to look at those two parts. The passage is really grouped into two points.

What God has done. And what his people have done. And that's really what I want us to look at today. So. What God has done. If you were to look again at verses 12 through 18.

That's seven verses there. But as you look at those verses. Look at how many times God's name is used. Or a personal pronoun. Referring to God. As you scan those verses.

And look for God's name. You'll see. Just how. The emphasis is upon. God. And his work. When I went through. I counted at least. 14 times.

[7 : 23] With five of those times. Occurring in verse 13 by itself. So at least 14 times. God. Or a pronoun referring to God. Is mentioned in. In these seven verses.

So the emphasis here. Is definitely on God. In verse 5. Which is going further back. Something we looked at last time. In Lamentations. But look at verse 5. In the second sentence we read.

The Lord has afflicted her. For the multitude. Of her transgressions. And so. What we see here. In this passage. Is really an expansion.

Of that comment. In verse 5. The Lord has afflicted her. For the multitude. Of her transgressions. That really gets into. The two parts. The first part is. The Lord has afflicted her. And the second part. Is because. Of her transgressions. And so. I want us to see. In this first section. What exactly it is. The Lord has done. And. I've said before. Some of Lamentations. Is difficult to read.

[8 : 19] And so. We're going to see. How the Lord has. Inflicted. Afflicted. His people. And what that means. And so. First. In verse 12. We see. He has inflicted. Remarkable suffering.

Upon his people. Is it nothing. To you all. Who pass. Who. You who pass by. Look and see. If there's any sorrow.

Like my sorrow. Which is brought upon me. Which the Lord inflicted. On the day. Of his fierce anger. So I said. First. He has inflicted. Remarkable suffering. Upon his people. I mean. Remarkable in the literal sense. Judah's asking here. Personified. Is there any suffering. That compares to my suffering. Now. A lot of people.

Have taken this. And applied it to Jesus Christ. Jesus doesn't say this. At the cross. But we can definitely see. How Jesus is. Suffering. Is unlike any suffering. That any of us will ever face. [9:12] Any human being. Has ever faced. There's a spiritual dynamic. To. God becoming flesh. And then being separated. From. The father. Because of sin. That we can't comprehend.

But I just want to say. That I don't see this passage. Primarily. Speaking of Jesus. Though. We could say. This would affirm. Something that's true. Of Jesus's life. But they're acknowledging. That they're going through.

A suffering. That's. Somewhat unique. They're inflicted. In a. Very. Harsh way. It's even referred to. As a day. Of the Lord's. Fierce anger. Just let that sink in.

For a minute. That God. The father. Had fierce anger. Against his own people. What do we mean. When we speak of. His anger. I think God's anger. Or God. We might call it.

His wrath. That God's wrath. Is his holiness. That stirred. Into activity. Against sin. It's the natural response. Of God's holiness. To sin. God responds.

[10:05] With anger. Against sin. We have. We have. We may have. An association. In our minds. Between fierce anger. And sin. Right. If I were to tell you. That. This afternoon.

I had a. A period. Of fierce anger. It's not one of you. That probably wouldn't think. Oh. He sent. Right. We tend to associate. Fierce anger. With sin. But we know.

That that's not the case. With God. It's precisely. Because. He's holy. Because God. Is without sin. That he. In this instance. Responds. With fierce anger.

Because he's responding to. His people's sin. And God. Of his very nature. Must hate sin. God. In holiness. Has to be opposed to sin. Even as we.

Consider the subjects. Of holiness. Just imagine. One reason. That we. Are not always. Opposed to sin. Is because we're not. Fully holy yet. It's our lack of holiness.

[10:59] That allows us. To. Play with sin. To entertain sin. There's none of that in God. God's completely. Opposed to sin. And so. When his people. Are continuing.

To rebel against him. When his people. Continue in sin. The natural response. The inevitable. The only response. That God can have. Is one of anger. Against his sin. So it's wrong.

To assume. That God's goodness. Precludes his wrath. We talked a little bit. About this this morning. With the idea of universalism. That how can a good God. Send anybody to hell. We have to understand.

That part of God's nature. For God to be good. Would necessitate. That he not. Ignore sin. That he not. Just think of. If you could imagine a judge.

I remember. Not long after I got here. There was a. An investigation. To some of the judges. In Luzerne County. Being corrupt. You may remember. The kids for cash.

[11:54] Controversy. Right. None of us would assume. That a good judge. Is one who always declares. Everyone innocent. Right. What if they. Caused harm to you. And you're going to the trial.

And you're testifying. Against someone. And you get the judge. That always declares. Everyone innocent. Right. No one mistakes. That for goodness. A good judge. Is one who rightly. Assesses the situation.

And gives. The proper verdict. Right. God's holy. All sin before him. Must be judged. And so God. Responds to that. In wrath.

And. I think as Christians. We have to realize. By the grace of God. If we've trusted. In Jesus Christ. That it's not so. God doesn't respond. To our sin. With anger. And wrath.

Do we sometimes. Imagine as Christians. Well. That may be true. Of an unbeliever. But when I sin. God doesn't respond. In wrath. I think that's not true. At all. The reality is. That in our trusting. In Jesus Christ.

[12:48] God has poured out. His wrath. On the son. That we so rightly deserved. All of our sin. Demands from God. A response of wrath. But if we trust.

In Christ Jesus. That wrath. Has been poured out. In the son. So though we may not. Directly face a wrath. That is God's. Inevitable response. To sin. And we have to understand.

That his wrath. Is a terrifying reality. The people here. In Jerusalem. Saw firsthand. What does it mean. For the Lord's. Wrath to be poured out. And sometimes.

We're so far removed. That we don't take seriously. The Lord's wrath. But it's a terrifying reality. Secondly. We see. That the Lord. Has turned against. His own people.

We see this in verse 13. From on high. He sent fire into my bones. He made it descend. He spread a net from my feet. He turned me back. He has left me stunned.

[13:41] Faint. All the day long. So. We. Just to start with. It says in verse 13. From on high. He sent fire. I think the expression. From on high. Highlights. The divine origin.

And the nature. Of the punishment. Right. I said all along. This section. Is pointing us to. God's the one. If I can say this. To blame. In some way. We're going to say. That man's the one to blame. But God's responsible.

For what's happened. It's not ultimately Babylon. That's judged God's people. It's God. Who's judges people. And so. We see the emphasis. That. The fire has come. Not from Babylon. Not from. A foreign nation. But the fire has come. From on high. It's come from God. Likewise. The nature of the fire. Heavenly fire is more. Fierce. It's not so. Easily quenched. As earthly fire.

I thought of. The fire that fell. On Elijah's sacrifice. That consumed. All the sacrifice. And the water. And the rocks. I mean. This is an intense fire. And the fire has. Gone down. Into the bones.

[14:38] And. The idea of going. Into the bones. Just means it's penetrated. The innermost parts. There's nowhere in our body. That could hide from it. He's feeling it. He. This is in some ways. Jerusalem.

Or Judah. Personified. But God's people. Are feeling it. To the innermost parts. Of their being. There's no part of them. That doesn't know. The pain. Of God's judgment. Upon them.

And so. We're. We're. Told here. That God. Did not deal with his people. In some light. Or superficial way. You can imagine. That the parent. That threatens. Great punishments.

That their kids. Disobey. And then. Basically like a. Pat on the back. Well. You know. You shouldn't have done that. Right. God. Hasn't threatened. Judgment upon his people. And then not carried it through.

What we're seeing. As we've talked about before. Is. God's carrying out. Exactly what he promised. From the prophets. For 300 years. They had been warned. If you don't repent.

[15:34] This is what's going to happen. And now God. Has it superficially. Dealt with his people. But he's. He's very much. He's turned against them. I think as well. One of the themes. That we're going to see. In the book of lamentations.

And we talked about this. In our survey of the Bible. If you remember. In Sunday school. But in the Old Testament. There's much that said. About the warrior of the Lord. And that the portrait. That's portrayed. Of the warrior of the Lord.

Is that. God is a warrior. For his people. And so there's times. And you guys are familiar with this. There's times in the Old Testament. Where Israel. Is encouraged. Don't trust in your horses.

Don't trust in your chariots. Or your strong man. The Lord is your warrior. And so the Lord's going to go to battle for you. The Lord's going to fight for you. And so almost always. In the Old Testament.

The concept of the warrior of the Lord is. God is a protector of his people. And so what's remarkable. In the book of lamentations. Is we see a reversal of the role. Of the warrior of the Lord.

[16:30] I think we're getting a touch of that. Already here. God is not. Now standing in defense of his people. The arrow as it were. Is turned around. You remember the idea of the rainbow. It's pointed away from God's people.

It's is. This is as it were. God's. Flipped it back around again. God has pointed his wrath upon his own people. Now he. As a warrior. Has turned against his own people.

And so. Again. This is really powerful. For God's covenant people to think. God's always going to protect me. God's always going to take care of me. And is there a point.

Where we can sin so far. That God turns against us. I think we as Christians know the. Doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. We know that if we've trusted in Jesus Christ.

That nothing can snatch us out of God's hand. And that's not what I'm arguing here. But here we have outwardly. A people who have identified as God's people. Who have been told to repent. Who don't. And God's patience runs out.

[17:28] The long suffering of the Lord. Goes too far. And so then he turns. Even against his own people. And we see this expressed here. In verse 13.

Not only from the fire that he set on high. But also he spread a net for my feet. He turned me back. He has left me stunned. Faint all the day long. And the picture here. Is almost of one of a hunter. And we're going to see that again.

In the book of Lamentations. Where in the reversal. It's almost as if God's drawn a target. On the back of his own people. He's pursuing them. He's hunting them. They've become the prey. And so now God has turned against them. And they're feeling that. And so the more they tried to free themselves. From this net that he spread for the feet. The more they tried to free themselves. By their own efforts. By their own wisdom. By their own self-justification. The more entangled they became. In the net that he had spread. But I think isn't that always the case.

[18:24] When we try to stretch ourselves away from the Lord. That we try to get away from. What the Lord has laid upon us. That we only. Especially as we try to justify ourselves. That we only find ourselves more entangled.

And then we see. Thirdly. That the Lord has bound them with their sins. And so continuing this idea. Of him setting a net for their feet. Verse 14 says. My transgressions were bound into a yoke. By his hand they were fastened together. They were set upon my neck. He caused my strength to fail. The Lord gave me into the hands of those. Whom I cannot withstand. And so the Lord has bound them together.

As it were. With their sins. He's used their sins to become a yoke. To bind them. And again we see an emphasis upon the Lord doing it. By his hand they were fastened together.

The Lord gave me into the hands of those. And so we see again. The focus upon the Lord's doing this. You guys are probably familiar. With the concept of a yoke. Even if. Probably most of us in this room.

[19:22] Haven't used a yoke. But the idea of a yoke. Is it would bind together. A pair. Of Oxen. Or horses. And no matter how angry they would get. No matter how they would buck and fight.

They can't get out of it. It keeps them. In line. And where they want to go. It's a way of controlling them. And so we see. White wise and spiritual matters. That no.

No matter how angry we get. No matter how much we rebel. We can't escape the yoke. And here in particular. God has fastened. Their sin. Into a yoke that they cannot escape. Matthew Henry says of this.

That the yoke of Christ's commands. Is an easy yoke. References Matthew 11 30. Where. My yoke is light. But the yoke of our transgressions. Is a heavy one.

God is said to bind this yoke. When he charges guilt upon us. And brings us into those inward. And outward troubles. Which our sins. Have deserved. When conscious.

[20:20] Conscience. As his deputy. Binds us over to his judgment. Then the yoke is bound. And wreathed. By the hand of his justice. And nothing but the hand of his pardoning mercy.

Will unbind it. I thought. Maybe what. Matthew Henry is expressing. What I think. He's rightly discerning from God's word. Is a picture that probably. We're more familiar with. The pilgrim's progress. You remember when pilgrim's.

Making his way to the cross. And that load. That's upon him. That. That burden. That he bears on his back. He's saying. God now. Has taken their sin.

And they thought. They could shake their sin off. They thought their sin. Was a light thing. They thought their sin. Didn't really matter. God's bounded around their neck. And they feel the weight of it. They feel the burden. They know they've been enslaved.

As it were. To sin. To obey its commands. And now. Even too late. They're realizing. The consequences of the sin. And. I think. Matthew Henry.

[21:16] Also. Well says. That the only thing. That could. Free them from. The Lord's justice. And from this yoke. Is nothing but the hand. Of his pardoning mercy. That will unbind it.

And so what they need. Is God's mercy. That's. Where freedom is found. From the show. Fourthly. The Lord has judged. And rejected his own people. Verse 15. The Lord rejected.

All my mighty men. In my midst. He summoned an assembly. Against me. To crush my young men. The Lord has trodden. As in a winepress. The virgin daughter. Of Judah.

So the Lord has. Judged. And rejected his people. The winepress. Is used throughout the Bible. For the execution. Of divine judgment. The. Winepress.

Of the Lord's wrath. And the picture. Represented to us here. Again. Regardless of how gruesome. What's being portrayed here. Is the pouring out. Of the red wine. As you imagine the grapes. Being

crushed. It's giving.

[22 : 12] An illustration for us. Of God's people. Being crushed. And the wine. That's pouring out. Is their blood. That God. Has poured out. Has wrath upon his people. And the blood. Is just pouring forth. And so the Lord.

Has judged. And even. Rejected his people. The Lord. Rejected all my mighty men. Fifthly. The Lord has. The Lord has left his people.

Without comfort. Verses 16 and 17. For these things. I weep. My eyes. Flow. With tears. For a comforter. Is far. From me.

One to revive my spirit. My children are desolate. For the enemy has prevailed. Zion stretches out her hands. But there is none to comfort her. The Lord has commanded against Jacob. His neighbors should be his foes.

And so we see. That the Lord has left his people. Without comfort. They are without anyone. To comfort them now. Look at. Again. Verse 21. Has the same concept there. They heard my groaning.

[23 : 07] Yet there is. No one to comfort me. All my enemies have heard of my trouble. They are glad that you have done it. And so. God has. Left his people. Without comfort.

The lack of comfort. In fact. Is expressed five times. I've shown you. Three of those. Verse. Verse 16. 17. And 21. But we see it also. In verses 2.

And verse 9. That we looked at last time. And so. What does it mean. For the Lord. To leave his people. Without a comforter. What's the significance of that? Well. I think probably. The most helpful way. To understand this.

Is in light of Psalm 23. In Psalm 23. A psalm that. You guys are. Likely familiar with. In particular. Verse 3. The psalmist says. Of God. He restores my soul.

The idea of Psalm 23. Almost is the idea. Of a comforter. For the soul. And so. Ultimately. What we're speaking of here. Is that God. Is our comforter. And so. What God's people.

[24 : 02] Are truly lamenting. Is the absence of God. Who alone. Can comfort his people. By his word. And his spirit. God has left them. Without comfort. God's no longer. Coming to them.

To comfort them. They are. Have an absence. As it were. Of his word. And spirit. That truly. Give comfort. To anyone. And now. God has left them. Without that. And though.

Verse 17. And 19. Lead us to believe. Judah still sought comfort. From their pagan neighbors. Instead of God. Verse 17. Zion stretched out her hand. But there is none to comfort her.

The Lord has commanded. Against Jacob. That his neighbors. Should be his foes. And so. We see there. Where is it. That they are looking for comfort. I think it's. To their neighbors still.

Again. Verse 19. I called to my lovers. But they deceived me. Who are the lovers. That were Judah's lovers. I think. Judah's lovers.

[24 : 56] Are. All these nations. That they were committing adultery. Against God with. All these other gods. That they've gone after. And so. They're crying out. To these other nature. These other nations.

Seeking for comfort. Instead of crying out. To the Lord. They've been unfaithful to God. And now. They found that. Their lovers. Weren't faithful to them. Either. So where do we go. For comfort. When we face affliction. I think. Maybe an application. Of this for us. Is. Do sometimes. In the face of affliction. Do we go.

To. Other unbelievers. Or to unbelievers. For comfort. Do we talk to people. Who don't know the Lord. And seek their counsel. Do we seek their comfort.

Instead of going to the Lord. I think. How often. When we're afflicted. Do we just. Plop ourselves down. In front of the television. And just whatever the TV. Says. We're just taking stuff in. And to me. I think. This is a lot like.

[25 : 49] Going to the nations around them. They're seeking counsel. As it were. Support. Comfort. For something. That can give no comfort. They're seeking it from unbelievers. That's the Lord alone. Who can comfort their hearts.

But God. It says. Has commanded. That Judah's neighbors. Should become her enemy. And so it is. And so it's not just that. The surrounding nations. Have. Sided with the Babylonians.

Because they're a stronger army. God has commanded it. It's God who's done it. God's turned. Even these pagans. Against his own people. That he might judge his people. We see also.

At the end of verse 17. It says. Jerusalem has become a filthy thing. Among them. So. I think this is. Our sixth point. That the Lord has left. His people filthy. Literally. This means. Unclean.

As we could think of. The ceremonial law. God's left his people. Unclean. So God has commanded his people. As he who called you is holy. You also be holy.

[26 : 45] In all your conduct. Since it is written. You shall be holy. For I am holy. This is what God's commanded. Of his people. He's called us. To holiness. And. In particular. As we think of. Judah.

Israel more broadly. But particularly Judah. God has set. Them apart. From all the other nations. To be holy to the Lord. If there's any people. In the face of the earth. That were to be holy to the Lord. It was to be Judah. And in some ways. We could stand this even further down. We could say. That identity today. Is not a nation. But it's the church today. It's the Christians today.

But they were set apart. Judah was set apart. Amongst all the nations. To be. Alone for the Lord.

They were to be holy. To the Lord. Set apart. From all the other nations. But now we read.

That they are filthy. Amongst their neighbors. Jerusalem has become. A filthy thing. Among them. I think. What's even being implied. Is that. The surrounding nations. Are looking upon. Judah. And thinking.

[27 : 41] Or Jerusalem. Specifically mentioned here. And saying. That they have become filthy. So. Now the pagan nations. The ones that lack.

Any sense of morality. Sacrificing their children. To idols. Worshipping. Sexual idols. Now they're looking upon. Jerusalem. And saying.

You're filthy. You're dirty. You're less moral. Than we are. And so. We see that. Far from being holy. God's left his people. Unclean. And again. They're responsible. For the sin. But God has. Seen fit. Not to cleanse them. Maybe we could even say. In some ways. As we know. The exile.

Is the cleansing. He's purging them. As it were. By fire. To bring back. A remnant. That would be holy. For him. And then. Sitsly. Well this isn't a point.

[28 : 36] Of something God's done. But I want to ask the question. Has God wronged his people. In treating them this way. Has God somehow. Done wrong. I mean. This is. Brutal. We talked before about.

Well we saw a little bit about. The priest even here. The leaders. Those who. Might be well taken care of. Normally. Are starving. They're going around. Looking for food. And they're dying in the streets. We've talked.

Again. I won't bring up. Some of the instances. And lamentations. But there's. Severe cases of. Of how the famine. Affected people. And what they had to do. To survive. Is the Lord wrong in this? Has he done wrong? Let me put it this way. What would you conclude. If you had faced this? So. Some survived. The siege. And were carried off.

In exile. So just imagine yourself. In that scenario now. You've seen. Your city under siege. For well over a year. People starved to death. Cannibalism.

[29 : 34] In the city. You saw. Your leaders in the army. Flee. Trying to get away from the army. And they get. Mown down. And then you're carried off. As a slave. How do we respond.

In that situation? Do we ever. Shake our fists at God. And think. That the Lord's treated us unfairly. My guess is that. Most of us in this room. Have at some point. Felt like.

The Lord's dealt with us unfairly. And for something. Far less than this. Right. Something's going wrong. In our life. We face some kind of suffering. And we think. It's not right. Why would God do this?

Maybe the questions. Run through our head. Is God good? Does God really love me? What does this mean? And I think. We have to understand. That the Lord has done.

The wrong in this. Look at verse 18. Verse 18. Really transitions. Into the focus. On what God's people have done. But.

[30 : 28] Excuse me. Yeah. Transitions into the focus. Upon what God's people have done. But not before. First declaring that. The Lord is in the right. Literally. This means. The Lord is righteous. Is what's being declared.

And so. Here's Judah personified. Speaking. And saying. The Lord has inflicted us. In all these ways. 14 times. The emphasis upon. God has done this to us. God has done this to us.

But. The Lord is in the right. The Lord is righteous. The Lord has done no wrong. We must remember.

In affliction. That the Lord is righteous. Right. Maybe we can take this even. As a major point. And my message today. Is to say. We must remember. That the Lord is righteous. When we face affliction. No matter how intense it is.

We have to remember. That the Lord is righteous. Absolute justice. Fairness. Wisdom. Righteousness. And perfection. Characterize all God's ways. God never acts contrary.

[31 : 25] To any of those attributes. In all that he does. He is just. He is fair. He is wise. He is perfect. He is righteous. Now I want to briefly look at. What have the people done.

We have already expressed. That a major theme is. God's people have sinned. And that is exactly what we see. In this passage. The Lord is right to judge. Because. His people have rebelled. I said earlier.

But the prophets. Had warned God's people. 300 years. To repent. To turn away. We saw. Two brief periods. Of repentance. That were led by certain kings.

Only to see. Their children lead them back. Into the idolatry. That was before. And it wasn't enough. God decided that. He would judge them. For their continued. Rebellion. Their idolatry.

Their infidelity. To him. So the judgment of God. Articulated in the preceding verses. That we saw. Expresses a price. For playing with sin. What does it cost us.

[32 : 24] To play with sin. How does God view. Our. Toying with. Sin. And the answer is. That God's people. Have no ground.

For complaining against God. There's nothing they can say. The same reality. Is going to be true. As hard as this is. For us to think about. The same reality. Will be true. In the final day of judgment. All people. Will be judged. Before God. There's not. One person. Who will be condemned. To hell. Who will say. God did me wrong. I shouldn't say. That they won't say that. Assuming they're still sinners.

They may say. All kind of blasphemous things. But there's not one. That can rightly have a charge. That God has done me wrong. God will be seen. For what he is. As righteous. And justice. And just. So God's people. Have reaped. What they have sown. They have rebelled. Against God. And they thought. They presumed. Upon God's grace. They imagined. They were untouchable. That God would always. Overlook their sin.

[33 : 19] And now. He's judged them. And so we see. In the passage. It's Judas rebellion. It's their disobedience. Which has led. Directly to all the suffering. Described in this book. Look at verse 20.

There's this crying out. Look oh Lord. For I'm in distress. My stomach churns. My heart is wrung. Within me. Because I have been. Very rebellious. So the reason. Behind it all is.

My own rebellion. I've been very. Rebellious. So rebellion. Against God. Will not go unpunished. I think that's another thing. We must remind ourselves. That. God's not.

God will not allow himself. To be mocked. We can't rebel. Against God. And I think. Maybe we think of rebellion. In very strong terms. And I think Israel. Had some very strong rebellion.

They worshipped. Other idols. But isn't all sin. A form of rebellion. Against God. God has commanded. This is what we ought to do. And we say. But I want to do this.

[34 : 15] Instead. Instead. And what we're seeing here. Is that. God won't be mocked. In what he commands. God will not allow. Rebellion. To go unpunished. And so we saw.

Back in verse 14. That illustration. That the Lord had. Bound them. In their sins. Though it was the Lord's work. In binding them. In their sin. It was their sin.

That's to blame. Proverbs 5. 22. Says. The iniquities. Of the wicked. Ensnare him. And he is held fast. In the cords. Of his sin. This is always. The consequence of sin.

That it binds us. It traps us. And so. Judah has become. The victim. Of her own sinning. As is always the case. And so again.

And again. In this passage. We're reminded. We can't play around. With sin. We can't imagine. That we're going to sin. And it not have consequences. In our life. That we won't get caught up in it.

[35 : 10] We won't be. Bound by it. Can we play with sin. And expect God's blessing. Can we imagine. That we will somehow. Avoid becoming ensnared in sin.

Don't we often times think. I can just. It's just this one time. Right. It's not really going to affect me. And we don't know. At what point it is. That the sin. Will actually ensnare us. And maybe we don't. Ever break free from it. Do we imagine. That we can keep on sinning. And grace will always abound. Can we walk in sin. And still imagine ourselves. Fit for the Lord's service. That we could continue.

Serving him. Can we befriend sin. And imagine. We will remain unharmed. By such friendship. I won't expand any further.

On the fact that. It's their sin that's caused it. I think we've seen that already. As we've gone through the passage. I want to make some points. Of application. As we close. Our message tonight. First. To remind you all.

[36 : 05] That we're called to holiness. I read earlier. The passage from first Peter. Be holy. As I'm holy. But we see the same theme. Throughout God's word. First John 5 21. Says little children.

Keep yourself from idols. We know that. That's not just speaking of. Those wooden carvings. Gilded with gold. We know it's also speaking of. Whatever it is.

That our hearts tend to worship. Other than God. And so we have to be careful. Not to run to our lovers. That we be faithful. To the Lord. That we keep ourselves from idols. James.

1 27. Keep oneself unstained from the world. Again. In terms of holiness. That we not conform ourselves to the world. One of the great sins. That Judah committed.

Was. They stopped being set apart for the Lord. They were jealous of the other nations. And so they went after their gods. They live like the other nations around them.

[36 : 57] They pursued. Worldliness. Instead of holiness. Again. We read in 1 Thessalonians 4 7. For God has not called us for impurity. But in holiness.

And so we're reminded that this is what God's called us to. Secondly. We see. That God has warned that he would judge his people. If they continued in their sin. And rebellion.

And idolatry. And God was faithful to his promise. I think when we sing of the faithfulness of God. When we speak of the faithfulness of God. We always think of it in positive terms. I appreciated. Ted led us this morning in worship. And he pointed us to the faithfulness of God. That we'll get to heaven if we're Christian one day. God's faithful in what he's promised. God's faithfulness. But we also understand that God's faithfulness means that.

He'll always do everything he says. Paul read earlier that. The Lord doesn't change. God is faithful.

[37 : 56] So. Why do we so often imagine God will be unfaithful to us? And I don't just mean that we doubt that he will keep his promises in terms of blessing for us. Which oftentimes we do that don't we?

We really wonder now. Is heaven real? Are we really going to? Is God really going to do that for us? But how often do we doubt the faithfulness of God? In judgment.

That God really opposes sin. Do we imagine that the promises that he makes. In regards to punishing sin. Or judging sin. Don't apply to us. God's not really going to do that.

I think one of the messages that we're told in Lamentations. Is that God is faithful. And God's faithfulness sometimes means that God judges us. God judges sin.

I would even be so bold. And now I'm making the distinction again. I'll be so bold as to say that. That's even true for God's people who are Christians. Not the broad national sense that they were identified with God's people.

[38 : 56] But those who are truly Christians. That God oftentimes will punish sin in the believer. Not condemning us. Our condemnation has fallen on Christ. But there are natural consequences that happen with sin.

And there are times that the Lord allows those consequences to happen. That we may see the consequence of it. And that he may draw us back. God's goal for the Christians never ultimately can condemn us.

But just think for a second that there was the remnant that were within Judah. When the siege happened. Some of the remnant probably died in the siege.

But there are some who are carried off into exile. Who know the Lord. They love the Lord. And 70 years later. They're returning with Ezra. Right? We read about that in Ezra and Nehemiah.

How they return. They're rebuilding Jerusalem. But God's purified them. He's wiped out so many who were opposed to him. And in all this God has proved himself to be faithful.

[39 : 57] Thirdly. How often do we need to acknowledge and confess our sin to God. Instead of attempting to justify or defend ourselves. Do we sometimes. I should say do we.

I imagine we all sometimes. When we're faced with our own sin. Either by someone else. Or even when we feel convicted about it internally. We try to justify it sometimes. Well this has been hard on me lately.

Work's been hard. I've been really tired. I wouldn't normally do this. But this is what's going on. Lord I was provoked. Did you see what so and so said to me? Did you see what they did? Maybe even. Going back to our past.

Do you know what I've gone through? That it's only natural for me to respond in this way. I think the reality is. And what we see in this passage even. Is that. Often we just need to confess our sin to God.

We need to repent. Hypothetical I know. But. How might things have looked different for Judah. If they would have repented. 299 years before the.

[40 : 54] Before the exile. Before 587. Right. What if they would have repented. When the first prophets came and said. Repent. What if they would have taken seriously. Their own sin.

And repented. And so often. I think. We just have to acknowledge. That sin is what it is. And we need to repent of it. We need to confess it before God. That we might move away from it. What Judah needed.

And what we need today. Is repentance and forgiveness. And obedience to God's word. Look at verse 18. The Lord is in the right. For I have rebelled against his word. Maybe we need to.

Stop our rebellion against the word of God. To repent and turn back to the word. Fourthly. I want to encourage you. That in your affliction. That you not deny.

That God has done it. Now. I know. That this is probably. One of the harder points. From the message. But. In the midst of affliction. Are we ever tempted. To blame our affliction.

[41 : 51] On something else. I remember. One time. Discussing in my. Bible class. When I taught in high school. So. Teaching my high school students.

Bible. And. We were talking about 9-11. And that God's sovereign. Even over natural. Excuse me. National disasters. Here's a. A communal lament.

A national lament for us. Over 9-11. And I remember a student who. Vehemently. Said. God had nothing to do with it. Satan did that. And I think. How often do we sometimes imagine that.

The Lord's not behind affliction. No matter what the affliction is. No matter. Even if it's our sin. That's brought upon us the affliction. God's still sovereign over this. God's still working these things. God still has purposes in the midst of affliction.

And so. Step one is that we acknowledge. That God's sovereign. Even over our suffering. God's sovereign over our affliction. Step two is. Yet.

[42 : 47] We must remember. That God is righteous. The Lord is in the right. And so. We have to keep that balance. Always in hand. The Lord is sovereign. And he's righteous.

I may feel like I've been wronged. But I haven't been. God is doing what's right. And so. We have to understand those two things. He is not now.

Nor can he ever wrong. His people. As I said before. He can never wrong anyone. He's working all things together. For his glory. And our good. Even in the midst of our suffering.

Even in the midst of our affliction. As I said before. There are some. There in Judah today. Or in this day. That this is happening. That are going to return one day. Who are the remnant.

Who love the Lord. And so. God's purifying them as a people. And they return. Back to. Jerusalem. As a stronger people. I would add to that.

[43 : 44] That God not only is preserving his line. In the midst of the punishment. That came upon them. But he's also. Preserving the light of the Messiah. Ultimately. This is about.

Jesus coming. And so. Before the whole nation. Turns away from him. He brings judgment upon them. To purify them. That he might bring a remnant back. And ultimately. From that remnant.

Would come the Messiah. That would redeem us all. From our sins. Fifthly and finally. I want to ask you. How is God using. Suffering. And affliction. In your own life.

I imagine that. All of us have faced. Some form of suffering. Or affliction. Maybe we're not all going through it now. But if you are going through suffering now.

How is God using that in your life? I think that's an important question to ask. Often God brings a person. Through suffering in this life. That he might deliver them. From the far greater suffering. Of eternal damnation.

[44 : 40] After death. And so. Maybe we could put it in terms. Of what we read. In Corinthians. That this light and momentary affliction. Is working for us. In eternal weight of glory.

By comparison. What is the suffering we're facing to hell? And maybe God's using this. To draw us into himself. I thought of two examples. In God's word. One is in the gospel of John.

Of the man born blind. The fact that he was born blind. He was there begging. When God came. And remember the disciples said. Whose sin was it this man? Or was it his parents that sin? That he was born blind?

Jesus said. No. It's neither of these. But it's so that. God's glory might be revealed. And so the man suffered his whole life. As a blind man. Why? That he might not go to hell.

How glorious is that? That God would redeem him. Through suffering. Maybe one other example. Which is really. A story. By Jesus. But the story of the prodigal son.

[45 : 37] The prodigal son is another one who. Who when things were going well. Was in open rebellion against God. But it's not until he suffers. That he realizes. Things were good with the Lord.

Things were good. I want to return to my father. And so. Is it that God's using suffering to draw you into himself? That you might trust in him? Is God using the suffering you're facing to bring you to repentance.

Toward God. And to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. I think there are many Christians today. Who can pray. Psalm 119. 71. For themselves. And say. It is good for me that I was afflicted.

That I might learn your statutes. That's true. Many of us have gone through that. That we can say. It's good that I was afflicted. If I had not been afflicted. Where would I be now? It's only through the affliction.

That God has. Taught me to love. His statutes. And learn his statutes. And so we have to always remember. That first comes the suffering. And then the glory. I taught this morning about false prophets.

[46 : 38] And false teachers. I think the false teaching is often times a reversal of that. Right. It's now's when you're supposed to be having glory. Don't worry about tomorrow. Now's glory. And the reality is. That the suffering comes before the glory.

And so. How is God using suffering in your life? And if you're not facing suffering today. Equip yourself with his word. That when you do face suffering one day. You're not left shaking your fist at God's face.

You're not saying to your husband. Or to your spouse. Curse God and die. You're saying. The Lord is blessed. And the Lord is judged.

I just completely forgot that. The Lord is given. The Lord is taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. And so. We want to have that kind of response. And it's God's word that equips us for that. Let's pray together. Dear Heavenly Father. We thank you for your word. Lord. We pray for those in this room.

[47 : 37] Who are facing suffering. Now. Facing affliction. In various ways. Lord. That you would help them. To rest in you. To know that you. Are the one who afflicts.

But Lord. You also are faithful. That when. When there's repentance. That you also. Are forgiving God. Lord. We thank you for Jesus Christ. Who has taken upon himself.

The wrath. That we. So rightly deserved. And we pray for all in this room. That their hope and trust. Would be in Christ. And in Christ alone. May they. Trust in him. And believe in him.

And Lord. We pray that. They would be delivered. From that final destruction. And Lord. We thank you. For affliction. And for suffering. Because we know that.

You're working. Even our affliction. And our suffering. For our own good. And for your glory. And Lord. Though we may not see it now. Though we may die. Never seeing how.

[48 : 31] It was working for our good. We trust in you. Lord. Grow that trust in us. We pray. In Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

Amen.