



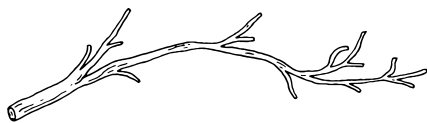
**WEEK 10**

# LAMENTATIONS

**FALL READING GUIDE**

# LAMENTATIONS

**GOD MEETS US IN OUR SUFFERING**



**WEEK 10**  
**NOVEMBER 7, 2022**



**CHURCH** IN THE **SQUARE**

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**EVERY DAY ...**

**... A PASSAGE TO READ,**

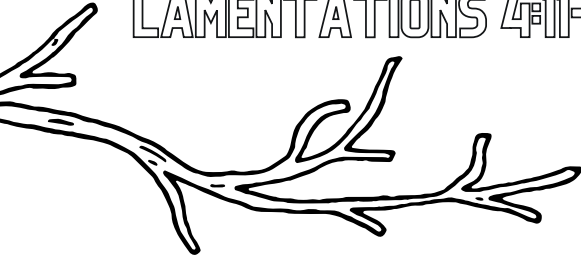
**... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,**

**... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,**

**... A PRAYER TO PRAY.**

WEEK 10

LAMENTATIONS 4:11-22



**DAY 1**

OUR WALLS FAIL

P.5

**DAY 2**

OUR LEADERS FAIL

P.7

**DAY 3**

OUR MORALITY FAILS

P.9

**DAY 4**

OUR VISION FAILS

P.11

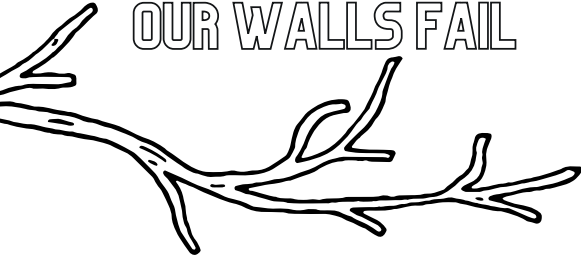
**DAY 5**

OUR SUFFERING FAILS

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DAY 1

OUR WALLS FAIL

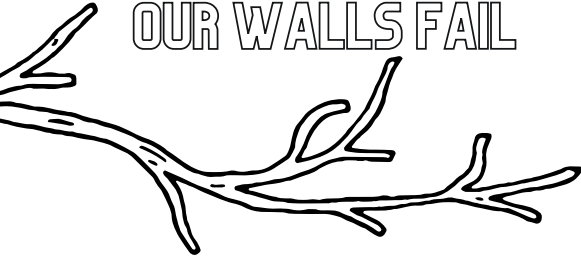


First read **Lamentations 4:11-12.**

Paradoxically when we see God’s wrath, we’re looking at his love. God is love even when he’s angry. Scholar N.T. Wright goes as far as to say, “If God was not wrathful against [historic evils] ... he is not loving” (*Lent For Everyone: Mark, Year B*). Most people consider darker emotions like anger and sadness as problems to solve. But righteous anger is love expressed amidst the brokenness of or injustice toward a beloved. God has extended recurring invitations to repent, open their eyes, and return to him. But over and again Israel has chosen to build walls of self-assurance and self-protection. Jeremiah tells us, **“The Lord gave full vent to his wrath, he poured out his hot anger”** (v.11). God consumed the foundation of the city and to the surprise of everyone, **“foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem”** (v.12). What was previously an impenetrable city is now vulnerable and exposed. Our walls always fail to keep us safe. God seems more than willing to tear down whatever we wrongly trust for security and peace, ultimately for our protection and good. He destroys what destroys us. That’s angry love. That’s loving anger. While we lament that sin leads to consequence, we also rejoice that God is more concerned with our holiness than our comfort. We hope not in our walls but in the cross of Christ, where the fullness of God’s anger and love meet for our good (see 1 John 4:10).

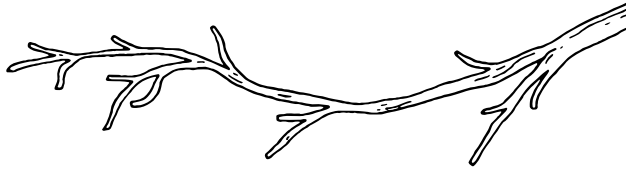
DAY 1

OUR WALLS FAIL



1. What do you find uncomfortable about God's anger?
2. What walls do you think God may want to tear down in your heart?
3. How does the gospel tear us down and rebuild us?

Heavenly Father ...



*Though I'm afraid of the cost, tear down whatever keeps me from trusting you more, hoping in you completely, or loving you more than this world.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

## DAY 2

## OUR LEADERS FAIL



First read **Lamentations 4:13-14**.

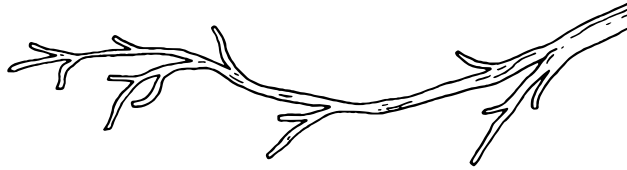
Everyone is guilty. But Jeremiah makes it clear leadership is particularly culpable for Israel's plight. The city fell ***"for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests"*** (v.13). Those who were called to give direction to Israel are wandering aimlessly (v.13b). Those who were tasked to purify God's people have blood on their hands (v.14a). This reversal demonstrates the devastation of idolatry. Paul tells his Roman readers that idolatry is the act of exchanging ***"the truth about God for a lie"*** (Romans 1:25). Even the most religious people make this exchange. Prophets speak their thoughts rather than God's Word. Priests point to their piety rather than God's holiness. Our leaders always fail at being our gods. Humans are awful at doing God's job. When we build our lives around our leaders we never find our way. We're aimless like them. When we venerate our leaders we're never washed clean. We're defiled like them. The good news is that the true prophet only speaks God's Word (John 12:49). And the true priest purifies with his own blood (Hebrews 9:14). Jesus never fails.

DAY 2

OUR LEADERS FAIL



1. Why is God worthy of building our lives around him?
2. In what ways have you trusted in worldly leadership more than Jesus?
3. What does it mean that Jesus is the true prophet and the true priest?



*Heavenly Father ...*

*You ordain all things. You ordain all leaders. But help me to always trust in you and build my life upon you and not earthly leaders. Remind me to respect and pray for them, but not to give them my heart.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*



## DAY 3

## OUR MORALITY FAILS

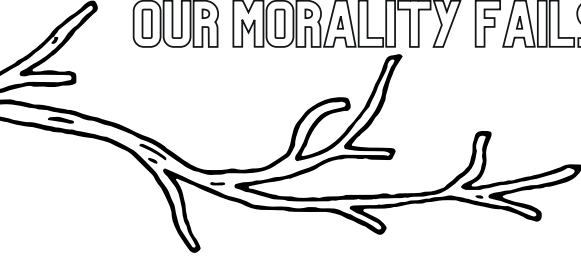


First read **Lamentations 4:15-16**.

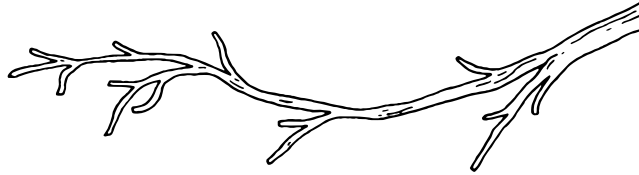
The tragic theme of reversal continues in the next two stanzas. Israel was a nation built on laws of purity. Israel was a nation with a home. Israel was a chosen people. But now even the pagan nations shout, **“Away! Unclean!”** (v.15a). They also, **“became fugitives and wanderers”** (v.15b). Other nations would not take them in and **“no honor was shown to the priests, nor favor to the elders”** (v.16b). They are unclean, homeless, and dishonored. What’s more, it’s actually the Lord who has let this all happen (v.16a). We’ve wrestled with this idea throughout our study. The grief is caused by divinely orchestrated consequence. The Apostle Paul put it this way, **“since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done”** (Romans 1:28). Our morality always fails to make us clean. One of the ways God often chooses to reveal this truth to us is by “giving us up” to our own morality, idols, and sin. He allows us to have our way so that we will experience it’s devastation and folly. Our way always leaves us unclean, homeless, and dishonored. Graciously our Heavenly Father doesn’t just give us up, he also gives us his Son. In him we are washed clean, welcomed home, and exalted (see 1 Peter 5:6).

DAY 3

OUR MORALITY FAILS



1. How have you been reminded this week that God is always in control?
2. In what ways have you been prone lately to go “your own way” and fail to consider God’s love and direction?
3. How does Jesus make us clean, welcome us home, and exalt us?



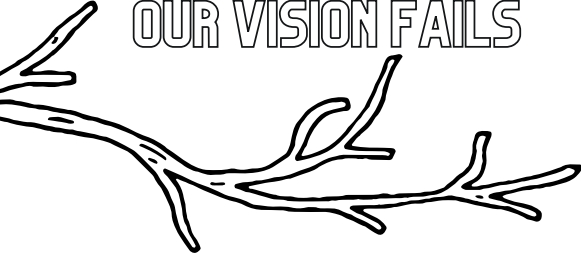
*Heavenly Father ...*

*Your will is good. Your way is life-giving. Your love never fails. Forgive me for going my own way. It’s a strange blend of pride and shame that keeps me from trusting you. Thank you for Jesus, through whom you make me holy and remind me I’m loved, and I’m yours.*

*In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

## DAY 4

## OUR VISION FAILS

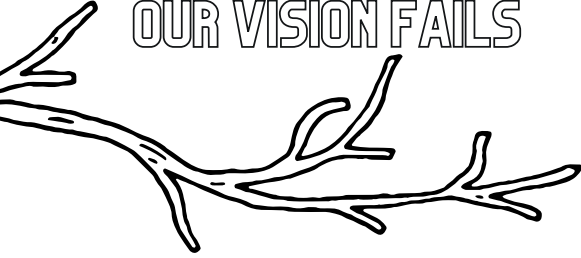


First read **Lamentations 4:17-18**.

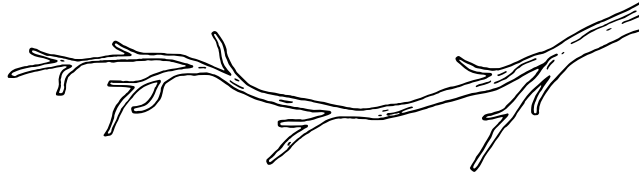
Professor Douglas Groothuis once said faith is a vision of the future where God is present and victorious. The people of God now seem hopeless. As they look into the future ... for some hope ... for rescue and peace ... they look in vain for help (v.17a). No one is coming. The tense even shifts. We're all invited to lament, as **"we watched for a nation which could not save"** (v.17b). What we see, or rather what we don't see, squeezes out any vestige of hope. **"Our days were numbered, for our end had come"** (v.18b). Our vision of the future is absent of God and his victory. But, *did you notice?* We were watching for a nation, not for God. Our vision always fails because we watch for the wrong things. When our hope runs dry and our days seem numbered, we look for hope in our current day. But, *where do we look? Money? Romance? Work? Adventure? Status? Government?* If we're honest we are prone to watch for the presence and victory of earthly powers to rescue us. But trusting in them only darkens our vision more. And so the writer of Hebrews encourages us to look to Jesus, **"the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God"** (Hebrews 12:2). By grace we always have a hopeful future with Christ our victor.

## DAY 4

# OUR VISION FAILS



1. What does this lesson teach us about God?
2. Where are you prone to look for hope?
3. How ought the future hope we have in Christ change the way we live today?



Heavenly Father ...

*Keep my eyes on you. It's so easy to trust visible power and immediate gratification. Calm my hurried heart and renew my mind. Empower me to live with a clear vision of the future where you never fail.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

## DAY 5

## OUR SUFFERING FAILS



First read **Lamentations 4:19-22**.

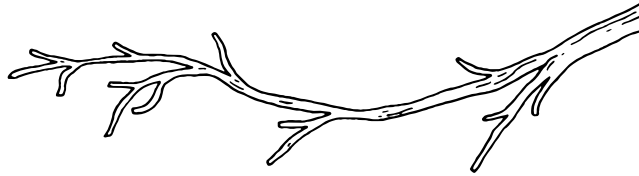
The fourth poem ends with a whisper of reprieve through another reversal. Though her **“pursuers were swifter than the eagles”** and they were **“captured in their pits,”** the cup will finally pass to someone else (vv.19,20,21). Specifically to Israel’s Gentile enemies, Edom--those who pursued and captured them to destroy them. Biblically “the cup” is a metaphor for God’s wrath. Israel is suffering and Edom is wryly invited to **“Rejoice and be glad”** (v.21a). But Israel’s **“punishment ... is accomplished”** and Edom’s iniquity is about to be punished. God is about to uncover their sins (v.22). The cup is being passed. Jesus drank this cup. Unlike Israel, he drank it willingly and innocently (see Matthew 26:39). When a pair of his disciples approached him about seating in places of authority in his kingdom, Jesus asked them, **“Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?”** (Matthew 20:22). Jesus conceded that they would endure suffering, but God’s Son would drink the full dose of God’s anger. The cup passed from us to Jesus. He is our propitiation or wrath-bearer, **“whom God put forward ... to be received by faith”** (Romans 3:25). Our suffering always fails to destroy us because Jesus takes our suffering.

## DAY 5

# OUR SUFFERING FAILS



1. Why is God angry?
2. How are you suffering right now?
3. How does Jesus' ultimate suffering comfort and empower us?



*Heavenly Father ...*

*Help me. Help me to repent when suffering is caused by my sin. Help me to show love when suffering is caused by someone else. Help me to be patient when suffering is simply part of this fallen world. Help me to find hope and power in the suffering of your Son, Jesus.*

*In Jesus' Name, Amen.*

GOD IS WITH US  
IN SUFFERING.

