

WEEK 3

LAMENTATIONS

FALL READING GUIDE

LAMENTATIONS

GOD MEETS US IN OUR SUFFERING



WEEK 3

SEPTEMBER 19, 2022



CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A PASSAGE TO READ,

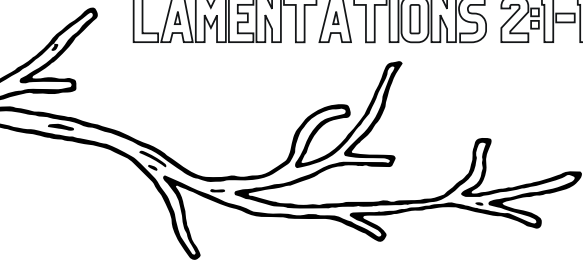
... SOME COMMENTS TO CONSIDER,

... THREE QUESTIONS TO ASK,

... A PRAYER TO PRAY.

WEEK 3

LAMENTATIONS 2:1-10



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DAY 1

DIVINE ANGER



First read **Lamentations 2:1.**

God is angry. And in his anger he takes action. He sets the city **“under a cloud”** and casts down **“the splendor of Israel”** (v.1). Though God is acting in anger, Israel is reaping what they’ve sown through sin. The Apostle Paul explains, “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap” (Galatians 6:7). Even still, God is the one doing the destroying. That’s hard to fathom. “In a strange twist on the Old Testament motif of the divine warrior, God was not fighting for his people but against them,” observes Philip Ryken (Jeremiah and Lamentations, 749). God’s anger is uncomfortable. We much prefer his love, grace, and mercy, don’t we? But his anger is not unrelated to his love. His anger is kindled when his glory is disregarded and our good is compromised. Sin makes God angry. You see, we are so uncomfortable with God’s anger because we are so comfortable with our sin. Only when we understand the cross will we understand God’s anger. After all, Jesus is sent by the love of the Father to absorb the anger of the Father (see John 3:16 and 1 John 2:1-2). In the words of Psalm 30, we take solace knowing **“his anger is but for a moment”** but this should not dissuade us from weeping for the night (Psalm 30:5).

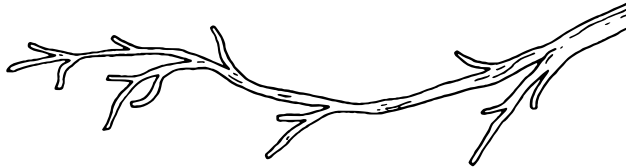
DAY 1

DIVINE ANGER



1. What does God's anger tell us about his love?
2. Why ought sin make us angry and sorrowful?
3. What does the fact that Jesus absorbed the wrath of God teach us about God's love and anger?

Heavenly Father ...

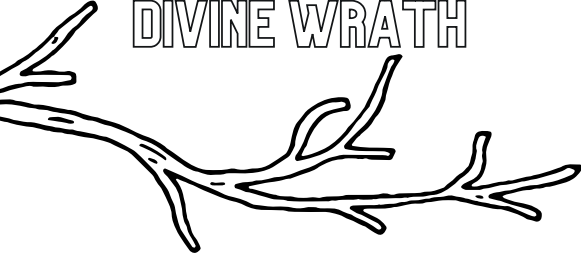


Your anger reveals your truth and love and glory. Forgive me for being so passive toward sin and foolishness. Forgive me for judging your anger and dismissing my sin and the sins of my neighbors. Forgive us. Thank you for Jesus. By the power of his death and resurrection, give me joy to live in accordance with your will and word.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 2

DIVINE WRATH

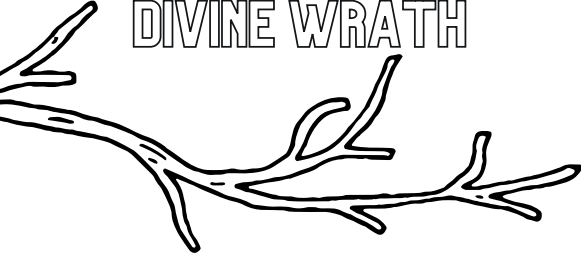


First read **Lamentations 2:2.**

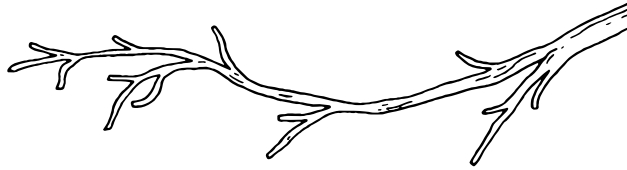
Destruction by God’s hand continues. No one is unaffected. The writer says, **“all the habitants of Jacob”** face a new reality without God’s gracious intervention. You see, righteousness is a cosmic safeguard. Though we are never immune to the sufferings of this broken world, in God’s will we are safe. Or as Paul says, **“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair”** (2 Corinthians 4:8). But in Israel’s sin (the rejection of righteousness) these protections are removed. Imagine a world without mercy. Imagine a life without protection. Imagine a community without honor. God’s care and grace are so pervasive it’s likely impossible for us to conceive of such a world. It’s like imagining a world without air or water. They are so fundamental and we are so dependent. Yet when we sin we function as if God’s mercy, protection, and honor are unnecessary. Fortunately, Jesus came to establish a kingdom in which these would never be in doubt because God’s righteousness would be like an ever-flowing stream (Amos 5:24).

DAY 2

DIVINE WRATH



1. Why are God's mercy, protection, and honor so fundamental to your life?
2. In what ways do you take God's mercy for granted? What behaviors come to mind?
3. How does Jesus embody ultimate mercy, protection, and honor?



Heavenly Father ...

In you we are safe, because you are sovereign and because you love us. Cause us to trust you more today. Even though we'll face challenges and pain and frustration today, we know that because of Jesus your mercy, protection, and honor are secure.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 3

DIVINE WITHDRAWAL



First read **Lamentations 2:3-5.**

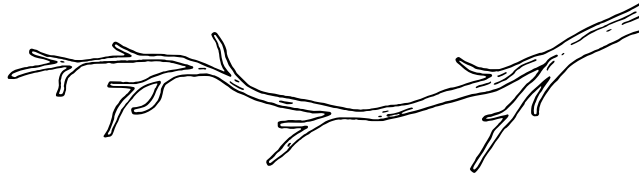
Israel loved God's blessings, but they did not love God. And as those blessings continue to be removed we now see why--God is removed. The writer says, God **"has withdrawn from them his right hand"** (v.3). God's right hand is a place of power, pleasure, and glory. Moses sang that, **"Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy"** (Exodus 15:6). The psalmist writes of God, **"at your right hand are pleasures forevermore"** (Psalm 16:11). Peter tells us that Jesus **"has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him"** (1 Peter 3:22). The blessings of God come in relationship with God. That means when God withdraws, so do all his gifts and mercies and joys and protections. God's blessings are not divine commodities, to be doled out like spiritual high-fives. God's blessings are the benefits that come from knowing him and being with him. In other words, God's blessings can not be divorced from God. And so when he withdrew from Israel he **"became like an enemy"** and **"he multiplied ... mourning and lamentation"** (v.5).

DAY 3

DIVINE WITHDRAWAL



1. What stands out to you about God's character and nature in this passage?
2. How have you divorced God's blessing from God?
3. Why do you think Jesus is the most vivid display of God and God's blessings?



Heavenly Father ...

In your right hand is an endless universe of blessing. You have all power, pleasure, and glory. Forgive me for often loving what you have more than I love you. Renew my heart to see the joy of knowing you and being with you.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 4

DIVINE INDIGNATION



First read **Lamentations 2:6-7**.

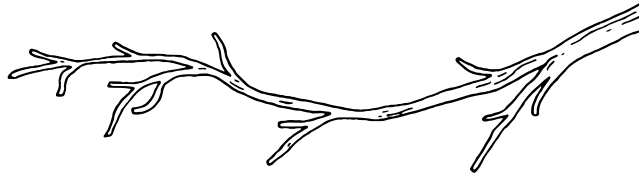
Admitting our failures is necessary for restoration. As the rapper JAY-Z put it, “you can’t heal what you never reveal.” Being exposed in the light of God’s holiness and judgment is hard, but it eventually frees us. Again the poet laments, “***I am in distress ... I have been very rebellious***” (v.20). Lament indeed is the willingness to come face-to-face with deep sorrow. Lament slows us down. Because healing from the suffering of sin takes time. Lament retrains the heart and mind about what is true and beautiful. This is perhaps one of the primary reasons many American churches don’t make regular the practice of lament; lament does not promise a quick and repeatable process by which seats are filled and budgets are met. Lament, like maturity, takes time. Perhaps that’s why Shawn Carter wrote his wise lyrics, not in his first project at 26, but in 2017 when he was almost 50. Time has a way of teaching us the power of walking in the light. Late in his life, the Apostle John taught his readers, “***if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin***” (1 John 1:7).

DAY 4

DIVINE INDIGNATION



1. Why ought we only worship, love, and trust the Lord?
2. How are you tempted to treat people and places as if they were special? What does this reveal about your heart?
3. How does Jesus restore us when we exchange the truth of God for lies?



Heavenly Father ...

Help me to love and trust you. Help me to know the difference between worshiping places and people, and worshiping you. Grieve my heart for anything less than building my life on your promises.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 5

DIVINE RUIN



First read **Lamentations 2:8-10**.

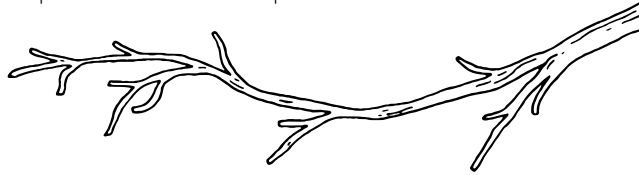
Israel's lament reaches a new low. The poet turns attention away from the structures and institutions of the city to the people. Physical bodies begin to mimic ramparts, gates, and walls ... they are all languishing (v.8). People are mourning. It's like someone has died. They're not dead, but death feels right around the corner. They slowly sink into the ground. Kings and princes are scattered. The law is gone. Vision is gone. Their elders sit in the dirt with nothing to say. Those who once spoke God's word with joy and hope now ***"sit on the ground in silence; they have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth"*** (v.10). Women have their faces in the ground. They're not dead, but it feels like with each stanza they inch closer to being overtaken by God's wrath; pushing them beneath the soil. Though this seems overwhelming, it's fitting. Sin devastates. Sin crushes. Sin buries us. In our own languishing we ought to be drawn to lament, overwhelmed by the cost of our sin. Yet we ought also be drawn to worship, knowing Christ paid that cost and by his grace the funeral procession will not end in our demise. Because he wore our grave clothes for us, he languished for our sin, and God's wrath pushed him beneath the soil.

DAY 5

DIVINE RUIN



1. How does this passage give you a better understanding of the nature of sin?
2. What fears arise in you about sitting in silence, contemplating the cost of your sin?
3. How does this passage change your understanding of the cross; that Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sins?



Heavenly Father ...

*In the silence bring to mind how I have sinned against you ...
what cost my sin has wrought ... what pain my sin has caused
... what hope I have in Christ, who saved me from wrath and sin
and death.*

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

GOD IS WITH US
IN SUFFERING.

