

# Why sin will not go unpunished

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[ 0 : 00 ] Lamentations, Chapter 4 How the gold has grown dim, how the pure gold is changed.

The holy stones lie scattered at the head of every street. The precious sons of Zion worth their weight in fine gold. How they are regarded as earthen pots, the work of a potter's hands. Even jackals offer the breast they nurse their young, but the daughter of my people has become cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.

The tongue of the nursing infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst. The children beg for food, but no one gives to them. Those who once feasted on delicacies perish in the streets.

Those who were brought up in purple embrace ash heaps. For the chastisement of the daughter of my people has been greater than the punishment of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment, and no hands were wrung for her.

[ 1 : 12 ] Her princes were purer than snow, whiter than milk. Their bodies were more ruddy than coral. The beauty of their form was like sapphire.

Now their face is blacker than soot. They are not recognised in the streets. Their skin has shriveled on their bones. It has become as dry as wood.

Happier were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger, who wasted away, pierced by lack of fruits of the field. The hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children.

They became their food during the destruction of the daughter of my people. The Lord gave full vent to his wrath. He poured out his hot anger, and he kindled a fire in Zion that consumed its foundations.

The kings of the earth did not believe, nor any of the inhabitants of the world, that foe or enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem.

[ 2 : 15 ] This was for the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed in the midst of her the blood of righteousness.

They wandered blind through the streets. They were so defiled with blood that no one was able to touch their garments. Away, unclean, people cried at them.

Away, away, do not touch. So they became fugitives and wanderers. People said among the nations, They shall stay with us no longer.

The Lord himself has scattered them. He will regard them no more. No honour was shown to the priests, no favour to the elders. Our eyes failed, ever watching vainly for help.

In our watching, we watched for a nation which could not save. They dogged our steps so that we could not walk in our streets. Our end drew near.

[ 3 : 16 ] Our days were numbered, for our end had come. Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles in the heavens. They chased us on the mountains.

They lay in wait for us in the wilderness. The breath of our nostrils, the Lord's anointed, was captured in their pits, of whom we said, under his shadow we shall live among the nations.

Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom. You who dwell in the land of us, but to you also the cup shall pass.

You shall become drunk and strip yourself bare. The punishment of your iniquity, O daughter of Zion, is accomplished. He will keep you in exile no longer.

But to your iniquity, O daughter of Edom, he will punish. He will uncover your sins. The second reading is from Lamentations 5, which is page 835 in the Church Bibles.

[ 4 : 18 ] Lamentations 5. Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us. Look and see our disgrace. Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to foreigners.

We have become orphans, fatherless. Our mothers are like widows. We must pay for the water we drink. The wood we get must be bought.

Our pursuers are at our necks. We are weary. We are given no rest. We have given the hand to Egypt and to Assyria to get bread enough. Our fathers sinned and are no more, and we bear their iniquities.

Slaves rule over us. There is none to deliver us from their hand. We get our bread at the peril of our lives because of the sword in the wilderness. Our skin is hot as an oven with the burning heat of famine.

Women are raped in Zion, young women in the towns of Judah. Princes are hung up by their hands. No respect is shown to the elders. Young men are compelled to grind at the mill, and boys stagger under loads of wood.

[ 5 : 26 ] The old men have left the city gate, the young men their music. The joy of our hearts has ceased. Our dancing has been turned to mourning. The crown has fallen from our head.

Woe to us, for we have sinned. For this our heart has become sick. For these things our eyes have grown dim. For Mount Zion, which lies desolate, jackals prowl over it.

But you, O Lord, reign forever. Your throne endures to all generations. Why do you forget us forever? Why do you forsake us for so many days? Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored.

Renew our days as of old, unless you have utterly rejected us, and you remain exceedingly angry with us. The Ebola epidemic in West Africa in 2013 to 2016 was one of the deadliest of its kind. It spread around multiple countries, including Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and it devastated communities all over Africa. There were over 28,000 suspected cases worldwide in those years, and over 11,000 deaths.

[ 6 : 43 ] And in its deadliest form, the Ebola virus leads to uncontrolled bleeding and death, and even those who survive often have long-term disability. If you'd asked people in 2012, how serious Ebola was, they wouldn't have known what you were talking about.

I mean, they'd never even heard of Ebola, let alone thought it was a serious, deadly disease. Part of the criticisms of international aid efforts and governments was that they didn't really take enough notice of it.

They didn't take it seriously enough until it had got out of control. You might have seen the news just this week that in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ebola continues to cause a number of deaths and continues to spread.

And aid workers have even met people there who still don't believe it exists. The problem is, initially, Ebola didn't seem that serious. But it turned out that it was, and still is, absolutely deadly.

For the past few weeks, we've been looking at the book of Lamentations in the Old Testament in the Bible. And as we've seen, some of the devastation that the Jews faced when the Babylonians overthrew Jerusalem in 587 BC.

[ 7 : 57 ] Remember, Jerusalem, it was supposed to be the joy of the whole earth. But now it lay in ruins. God's prophets have warned his people, prophets like Jeremiah, time and time again, that their sin was serious.

But they didn't believe him. They didn't think sin was serious. But like the Ebola virus, their sin got completely out of control. And it led to God's judgment.

It turned out that sin was very serious. It was absolutely deadly. Now I wonder, as you sit here this morning, how serious you think sin is.

Now sin is a bit of a jargon word, isn't it? But it's a name that the Bible gives to describe ignoring the God who made you, rejecting his rule over your life and going your own way. And I guess it's what all of us do, isn't it?

All of us sitting here do. We all want to be in charge of our own lives. We all want to be king. Well, what's wrong with that? I mean, it's not that serious, is it?

[ 8 : 57 ] Everyone else is doing it. Eight million Londoners, if you go out of here and ask anyone on the street or on the tube, everyone is going around living with themselves as king. Nothing really bad is going to happen, is it?

We'll ask that question to the writer of Lamentations. You'd get a very different answer, wouldn't you, to the eight million Londoners today. Because if you'd been there, if you'd seen the walls of Jerusalem torn down, if you'd seen your family starving to death during the Babylonian siege, if you'd witnessed the massacre of your own people, you would never doubt that sin was serious ever again.

And I guess a bit like the Ebola virus, you'd want to know what causes it, how does it spread, how can it be controlled, and how can we eliminate it? Because it's absolutely deadly.

So if you're here and you've never even heard of the word sin, or perhaps you're not quite sure what it is, or you don't think it's that serious, then let's have a look together at the book of Lamentations, chapters four and five.

Have a look at chapter four, verse one with me. And the first thing I want to see from Lamentations is that God punishes sin. If you've got a service sheet, you can follow on the back.

[10:08] God punishes sin, and that's in verses one to 20 of chapter four. Remember, we said a couple of weeks ago how all of the chapters of Lamentations, the first two, start with the word how.

How? How could this terrible thing happen to Jerusalem? One verse one, how lonely sits the city full of people? Two verse one, how the Lord in his anger has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud?

God's done this in judgment. And then chapter four returns to our main themes of how. Have a look at chapter four, verse one. How the gold has grown dim.

How the pure gold is changed. How Jerusalem has fallen. Verse two, the precious sons of Zion, worth their weight in fine gold. They're regarded as earthen pots, the work of a potter's hands. It's like a golden wedding ring. For those of you who have a wedding ring, you probably remember the day that you got it. It's all sparkling and shiny. And it doesn't take very long, does it, before it fades. Over time it fades, and it looks just kind of like brass, and nothing particularly special.

[11:14] It's something so precious that it's become despised, that the author's saying that they were worth their weight in fine gold, but they're just clay pots. And God's people who were gold have become dirty clay pots.

The following verses, verse three to ten, talk about the awful famine which had affected God's people. Have a look at some of these verses with me. Verse three, he says, even jackals offer the young, they nurse, offer the breast, they nurse their young.

He's saying that even animals feed their young. Pretty much every single mammal, as far as I'm aware, feed their young in some way or another, most of them.

But God's people have become cruel to their young. They're like ostriches in the wilderness that don't really care about their young. He says that God's people are worse than animals.

In verse four, he says that those who are nursing their children do so without giving them, being able to give them anything to eat. The children beg for food, but no one gives it to them.

[12:17] Verse five, those who once feasted on delicacies perish in the street. And have a look at verse eight. Their skin has shriveled on the bones like dry wood.

Imagine that, seeing someone who's completely skin and bone. Verse nine, he says, happy were the victims of the sword than the victims of hunger. In other words, he says it would have been better to be killed by the Babylonians than to be left here to starve to death.

And have a look at verse 10. It's not a verse we like. I'm thinking about, but it says that the hands of compassionate women have boiled their own children and they became food during the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Mothers with children have become so desperate for food and that they've killed and boiled their own children to prevent themselves starving to death. You can see why he says it would have been far better to be killed by the sword.

We've seen each week, haven't we, the horror of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. But remember again that the writer never blames the Babylonians. I'm sure he thought it was absolutely their fault, but he never for a moment tried to explain it away as if God took his eye off the ball or the Babylonians have done these things.

[13:30] No, as we saw in chapters one and chapter two, the writer's absolutely confident that God has done it in judgment for their sin. Have a look again just to remind ourselves for verse six.

He says, for the chastisement of the daughter of my people has been greater than the punishment of Sodom. Remember Sodom in Genesis 18 which we'd be looking at in growth groups.

Sodom has been punished in a huge way for its sin, its rejection of God. But the author here says this is far worse. So he says in 4 verse 11, the Lord gave full vent to his wrath.

He poured out his hot anger. He kindled a fire in Zion that consumed its foundations. Now why has God done this? Why has God caused this horrific thing to happen to Jerusalem?

Well we've seen, haven't we, because of the people's sin. But the thing is they never thought it was serious. They never thought it would happen. Have a look at 4 verse 12 with me.

[14:34] They didn't think sin was serious. The kings of the earth did not believe or any of the inhabitants of the world that foe or enemy could ever enter the gates of Jerusalem.

I guess it's a bit like Ebola isn't it? No one thought it was serious. Initially people didn't even know what it was called. Some people thought it was a myth and still do today. No one thought it would kill thousands of people, devastating communities and causing untold suffering.

And just in case we're in any doubt, the author reminds us in 4 verse 13, this was for the sins of her prophets, the iniquities of her priests who shed in the midst of her the blood of the righteous.

In other words, as we saw last week and the week before, God's people had turned their back on him. They'd completely turned their back on him. They'd led the people, the leaders of the people, they'd led them into sin.

They'd murdered righteous people in cold blood. So verse 16, the Lord scattered them among the Babylonian empire. He scattered them in exile.

[15:43] The final days of God's people are told in the final verses of this chapter. If you have time, you can read Jeremiah 39 or 2 Kings 25 about the final days before Jerusalem was taken.

Have a look at verse 17 for me. He says, our eyes failed ever watching vainly for help. They were longing for another country like Egypt to come and save them. But they wait in vain.

They tried to run to the mountains in a last bid for freedom. And verse 19, he says, our pursuers were swifter than eagles in the heavens. They chased after us into the mountains and they lay and wait in the wilderness.

And what happened to their king, Zedekiah, the king that they looked to for salvation, to rescue them? Well, verse 20, the breath of our nostrils, the Lord's anointed, that's God's king, the earthly king that they'd hoped in was captured in their pits.

The one that we said, under his shadow, we shall live among the nations. They trusted in their own king, they trusted in Egypt to save them in vain. Now, it's important to say, as we said each week, isn't it, that not all suffering is the same.

[16:55] The Ebola virus is absolutely not the same as the suffering of the people in Jerusalem in 587 BC. And the Ebola virus is not a specific judgment for sin.

Ebola, as I guess many of you will know, is a result of God's general judgment on the world, just like any disease or virus or anything that's broken with the world. Since Genesis chapter 3, it's a sign of God being cut off from his people and the world being broken.

So it's not a direct result of anyone's individual sin. But the fall of Jerusalem was because God tells us that it was. Now, perhaps you're sitting here and you've been the last couple of weeks as well and you just feel that God is completely overreacting.

I mean, you're sitting here and you're thinking, well, how is it that God thinks this is the right thing to do? I mean, destroying a whole city of people, mothers boiling their children, why does God care so much about sin?

everyone's doing it. Everyone is living with themselves as king and ignoring their creator. What's the big deal? I mean, why does God punish sin with such absolute destruction?

[18:09] I guess it's hard for us to get our heads around it, but it's because there's nothing worse than rejecting your creator. Imagine the pain that a child feels, a parent feels, sorry, when their child turns their back on them, not just, you know, for five minutes when they're having a tantrum or for a day or a week, but forever.

Imagine a child who rejects their parents forever. They run away from home, they renounce being part of the family, they despise the love and care that their parent has given them over years. They declare war on their parents, war against the one who's given them everything and given them life. I guess in a much, much greater way, God is cut to the heart when the children that he has created despise him, rebel against him, wishing he were dead, declare war on him.

We saw last week that God is a compassionate father who has open arms longing for his children to come back, but his patience will not last forever. God is righteous and holy and cannot tolerate willful rebellion.

So I guess however much a respectful member of society you are, living in London, in Dulwich, wherever you live, however much money you give to charity, however kind you are to those around you, the world will say you're doing great, you're doing fantastic, nothing is going to happen.

[ 19 : 37 ] But if you reject the God who made you, the God who gave you everything, the God who gave you life, you will face his anger and his judgment. I guess the reason sin doesn't feel that serious is because we've forgotten that God is our creator, haven't we?

We've kind of just lived life ignoring him. He's the God who's given us everything we enjoy. So if we turn our backs on him, we're turning our backs on the source of life.

And we saw a couple of weeks ago that the judgment in Lamentations points us forward to an even greater judgment. When Jesus returns, the Bible uses the language of fire both in Lamentations here but also when Jesus returns in God's judgment.

Listen to these words from 2 Peter 3 verse 7. Peter says that by the same word that God created the world, the heavens and the earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of destruction and judgment of the ungodly.

The Bible says that when Jesus returns, God's judgment will be complete, not just on a city like Jerusalem or London but on the whole world. And God will make a new world.

[ 20 : 50 ] Well I hope you can see from Lamentations chapter 4 that sin really is serious. Like the Ebola virus, it's deadly. And the writer of Lamentations wouldn't need any convincing, would he? Imagine talking to him as he's looking around Jerusalem.

He would need no convincing at all. But what about you? Do you need convincing of the reality of God's judgment? Well the good news is that God is a compassionate father and he's provided a way for us to avoid his judgment in the person of Jesus Christ.

So we've seen firstly from chapter 4 that God punishes sin. But the last couple of verses of chapter 4 we see that in Christ our sins are completely paid for.

Fantastic. Have a look at chapter 4 verse 21 1 with me. In Christ our sins are completely paid for. The writer finishes the chapter on a slightly different note.

He finishes with a warning and a glimmer of hope. So have a look at 21. He warns the Edomites that they're God's enemies living in the land of us.

[ 21 : 57 ] And he says to them although it's the Jews that face destruction on this occasion that the Edomites too will face God's judgment for sin. He says rejoice and be glad O daughter of Edom you who dwell in the land of us at the moment you're safe but to you also the cup shall pass.

You will become drunk and strip yourself bare. I guess the imagery of a cup is a quite common theme in the Bible isn't it as some of you will know.

It is often used as an imagery of God's wrath God's judgment against sin. Listen to how Jeremiah describes it in Jeremiah 25 verse 15 he says take from my hand this cup of the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it they will stagger and be drunk and be crazed because of the sword I am sending among them.

So the writer of Lamentations uses the imagery of a cup as well to warn other nations like Edom against being complacent. But then he says something incredible to Jerusalem.

I wonder if you noticed it as the chapter was read. Have a look at Lamentations 4 verse 22. He says the punishment of your iniquity a daughter of Zion is accomplished.

[ 23 : 15 ] He will keep you in exile no longer. Isn't that amazing? The writer has seen untold misery. He's seen the full force of God's wrath against Jerusalem for their sins and somehow he can say their punishment is accomplished and even that they'll be brought back from exile.

I mean how can we say that? It's been a bit of a puzzle hasn't it as we've gone through Lamentations he's got all this despair and lament and God's wrath and he has these glimmers of hope. How can he say that?

How can he say that Jerusalem's sin that he's just seen been punished? How can he say it's been paid for? That the punishment has been accomplished? What we saw earlier didn't we in Jeremiah that he's used imagery of God's wrath imagery of a cup of God's wrath to speak of his judgment against sin and I guess as though God did pour his judgment out at various times in the Old Testament in a far greater way we know that someone else drank the cup of God's wrath someone who cried out in a loud voice it is finished it is accomplished Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane in Luke 22 verse 42 he says remove this cup from me I don't want to drink it but nevertheless not my will but yours be done Jesus willingly drank the cup of God's wrath for our sins so we didn't have to as we saw a couple of weeks ago Christ was punished instead of us I don't know how many of you here have read the Harry Potter books or watched any of the films but in the Harry Potter series the evil Lord

Voldemort creates an emerald green potion it's not that well known so I'll forgive you if you've never heard of this but he creates an emerald green potion called the drink of despair I think it's probably in the sixth book or seventh book you'll have to correct me afterwards but he does it to protect part of his soul in something called a horcrux in a locket within the potion obviously I had to look up to try and get these things accurate as J.K. Rowling wrote them and the point is that this potion that he protects his soul with can't be destroyed so it has to be drunk it has to be drunk by someone and anyone who drinks this potion faces despair physical and psychological agony and possible death I don't know if any of you know what I'm talking about but in one of the Harry Potter books Lord Voldemort has made this potion and Professor Dumbledore drinks it do you remember that? he drinks some of the potion and he experiences the intense physical and psychological agony from drinking it the emerald potion it's like a cup of death Harry's there and Dumbledore drinks some of it instead and it's like that that Jesus drinks the cup of God's wrath for us he drunk what we couldn't drink it's because of Jesus that the writer of Lamentations can say centuries earlier the punishment of your sin of your iniquity O daughter of Zion is accomplished he can say it's accomplished even though they've sinned against God in terrible ways and he's punished them for their sins he can say this cup is finally accomplished it's been drunk only because of Jesus and hundreds of years later the punishment for sin is so serious that it must be drunk like Lord Voldemort's potion you can't just throw it away you can't sweep it under the carpet he must punish sin either in hell or wonderfully on the cross of Jesus Christ

[ 26 : 43 ] I wonder if you have ever thought about why the cross the symbol for Christianity is a cross well it's because the cross is our only hope isn't it it's our only hope of drinking this cup just think about how incredible it is that Jesus drinks this cup instead of us that's why the cross is such good news because sin is serious it leads to death it's absolutely deadly but Jesus' death on the cross gives us life he pays for our sin completely so imagine that all your sin was poured into this cup I guess we'd have to get much bigger cups wouldn't we every time you've rejected your creator every harsh word you've said every selfish thought every moment of pride every lustful glance poured into this cup of God's wrath who will drink the cup of your sin it's worse than Voldemort's potion it's worse than the Ebola virus and you can't just get rid of it by throwing it away or pouring it down the sink give it to Jesus don't drink it yourself in hell give it to Jesus he willingly takes it on himself at the cross so sin is serious we've seen that

God punishes sin but secondly that in Christ our sins are completely paid for so thirdly and finally the writer of lamentations would urge us to confess our sins to the everlasting God and that's in chapter 5 the whole chapter verses 1 to 22 if you have a look at the beginning of chapter 5 you'll see that it's different from the other chapters it doesn't start with a how because it's a communal lament rather than being from one individual like in chapter 3 chapter 5 is said to be sung by the whole community together it continues it's a theme of lament and the suffering of God's people but it's also a prayer of confession to God so have a look at me with me chapter 5 verse 1 it starts with the word remember remember oh Lord what has befallen us look and see our disgrace asking God to remember it's not because he's forgotten no it's asking him to remember his covenant to remember the promises to his people but the writer is so full of lament that he can't not speak about it verse 2 he says our inheritance has been turned over to strangers our home to foreigners verse 3 we've become orphans fatherless our mothers are like widows verse 6 we've given the hand to Egypt and to Assyria to get bread they're desperately trying to survive why?

in case we'd forgotten verse 7 our fathers sinned and are no more and we bear their iniquities look on with me verse 8 slaves rule over us there's none to deliver us from their hand verse 10 we're still in famine our skin is as hot as an oven with the burning heat of famine verse 11 women are raped in Zion young women in the towns of Judah verse 12 princes are hung up by their hands no respect for the elders verse 15 the joy of our hearts has ceased like last week we saw it's like we've forgotten what happiness is why?

just in case we'd forgotten verse 16 woe to us for we have sinned once again the writer he doesn't blame the Babylonians does he? he doesn't say that God took his eye off the ball and he's not quite sure what's going on he knows that God sent the Babylonians as a punishment for their sin but just like the other chapters he's got a glimmer of hope have a look at verse 19 with me 5 verse 19 he says but you oh lord reign forever your throne endures to all generations he knows that God is still king despite the destruction of the temple despite the humiliation of his people the lord still reigns forever because he's still the everlasting God generations come generations go but God remains

the same still reigning over his world still in sovereign control still calling his people back to himself and that's why the writer has got confidence to confess his sins to God because he still reigns the great thing about Queen Elizabeth II is that she still reigns

I can't quite remember how old she is but she's reigned over many many prime ministers hasn't she and she still reigns she provides stability to this country in the midst of political uncertainty Theresa May is the 13th prime minister of which Elizabeth II has reigned over and soon to be replaced by someone else from Winston Churchill to Harold Wilson Margaret Thatcher to John Major Tony Blair to Gordon Brown David Cameron to Theresa May Elizabeth I has reigned over all of them whatever's happening in our nation sorry Elizabeth II yeah that would be a very long reign indeed Elizabeth II has reigned over all of them and whatever is happening to the nation however much chaos or turmoil is going on in the political situation she still reigns and it's like that with God isn't it even though his people have been driven to exile into the Babylonian empire he still reigns and God still reigns today

[ 32 : 19 ] I don't know what you think of the state of the church in this country or around the world but in one sense of course it doesn't matter because it doesn't change the fact that God still reigns he still rules over his creation God reigns and the writer of the Lamentations had this firmly fixed in his mind despite all the chaos around him I wonder if you have that firmly fixed in your mind whatever you look around the world or in London today that God reigns but have a look at how the writer ends it's not on a kind of triumphalist note is it verse 20 he says why do you forget us forever why do you forsake us for so many days restore us to yourself oh Lord that we may be restored renew our days as of old unless you've utterly rejected us and you remain exceedingly angry with us the writer doesn't end in triumph does he not in despair but neither in triumph his people have suffered unimaginable grief it feels like

God has forgotten them it feels like he's rejected them it really does and I guess the fact that he ends on this note shows us the pain is so intense all very well saying God reigns but the pain is still there it doesn't go away but he knows that God is the everlasting God the one who one day will restore his people and as we've said previously he does in fact go on to bring them back from exile under the Persians so the final chapter of Lamentations is a communal prayer both of confession of sin like in verse 7 and verse 16 and of pleading with God to restore them because he still reigns but the writer is still filled with grief isn't he he's still trying to make sense of the suffering of the nations how long God how long is it that we're going to be like this have you forgotten us completely I wonder if your suffering has stopped you confessing your sins to God like the writer of Lamentations perhaps suffering has made you turn in on yourself it's closed yourself off from other people and from God you really don't feel like talking to anyone let alone talking to God that's often how suffering makes us feel or like the writer of Lamentations take another look at who God is he's the everlasting God he's a compassionate father who longs to restore us to himself we've said before haven't we that there is mystery in suffering we don't know why God causes us to suffer in the ways we do but we do know that in the new creation he will do away with suffering once for all so come to him the writer of Lamentations would urge us wouldn't he confess your sins to the everlasting God give your cup of sin to Jesus to drink for you and he will restore you well let's step back and have a look at Lamentations as a whole over the last three weeks we've seen haven't we this beautifully crafted poetry one verse each letter of the Hebrew alphabet in all the chapters and three in each in chapter three he's crafted this poetry of lament lamenting the unimaginable grief that Jerusalem has suffered but we've seen haven't we that he's in absolute certainty that God is in sovereign control over his suffering he's written about God's righteous judgment that was poured out on Christ instead of us and he's sung hasn't he of God's compassionate heart his covenant love which gives us hope in our grief and points us to the God who we've just seen reigns forever he still reigns so we have to say that there is mystery in suffering but it's a mystery that points us to the cross because at the cross the wrath of God met the love of God in Christ and the Raja of Lamentations would urge us to flee from the wrath of God to the cross of Christ the arms of God who loved us and suffered for us as we finish listen to the words of

Nicholas Wathomstorff again in his book Lament for a Son which we mentioned briefly the last couple of weeks trying to come to terms with the death of his son Eric in a mountaineering accident he says that God is love that is why he suffers to love our suffering world is to suffer God so suffered for the world that he gave his only son to suffering the one who doesn't see God suffering

won't see his love because God is suffering love so suffering is down at the center of things deep down where the meaning is suffering is the meaning of our world for love is the meaning and love suffers the tears of God are the meaning of history let's pray father we thank you very much for the book of lamentations thank you that it helps us to make sense of suffering by pointing us to the cross of Jesus thank you for warning us of the seriousness of sin and of the need to flee to [ 37 : 55 ] Christ to give him the cup of our sins to drink instead of us and we pray father as we suffer in this broken world we keep sight of him until he comes again amen