

When it Feels Like God is Against Us

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- [0 : 0 0] chapter number two. That's what chapter we're in right now as we continue through Lamentations. The last couple weeks have been a couple weeks of celebrating. We celebrated volunteers of our church on Wednesday night. We had an ordination a couple weeks ago for Jens and then a get-together for lunch on a Saturday. Chris and Diana, the wedding last Saturday. It's so good to see them here tonight. Sunday we had family Sunday and then another meal and then Tuesday we had a meal and then I had leftovers and had another meal and just continue. But tonight you are at a funeral. Lamentations is the funeral of a city. And chapter number two is very much at the heartbreak part of this funeral. This tear-stained portrait of once proud Jerusalem is now in rubble and so Jeremiah a five poem dirge where he speaks about the death that has happened and Jerusalem lies barren.
- [1 : 0 6] Because I do not get to choose I guess I choose what book we're in, right? But I don't get to choose the order of the chapters. I don't get to choose the themes which means I don't get to choose the emotions of the night. And so this is not a light-hearted chapter. This is one that speaks about sin and the consequences of it. The fact that God brings judgment upon sin and we're going to see that as we look at it. Reminds you as in the first chapter having 22 verses so does this second one as an acrostic the Hebrew alphabet just from A to Z looking at the consequences of sin here and then crying out. We'll eventually get to 323 which will be a different emotion and it will be Jeremiah crying out there and saying great is thy faithfulness. But right now we're dealing with the tragedy and all of this. And God's been faithful and he never fails but the people of the story here certainly have not been faithful to him. He was long suffering to them but they continued to sin.
- [2 : 1 1] So if you haven't been to the limitations service yet I'll give you a quick summary and then I'll pray. So there's a Hebrew poem destruction of a temple the city of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. falls at the hands of the Babylonian army. God through his prophet Jeremiah have warned the people of Judah that judgment was coming but they failed to listen and as a result they faced the deserved judgment of God. Verse number 4 I'm going to give you a summary and the he being God in this verse he has bent his bow like an enemy he stood with his right hand as an adversary and he slew all that was pleasant in the eye of the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion he poured out all of his fury like fire. The author of the book Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy several of us read the book together last year it ascribes a time in your life that seems like night and even though you know at night the planet Earth is still in orbit and that eventually it will turn and that the dawn will come but in the moment you don't feel like there's any kind of control or any kind of order all you can do is feel the darkness.

We know the sun will rise if not this side of eternity it will on the other but in the darkness it feels like we're forsaken and so what do you do when you feel like God is against you?

[3 : 33] That would be the question tonight. What do you do when you feel like God is against you? As they pray in Psalm 89 verse 46 How long Lord wilt thou hide thyself forever shall thy wrath burn like fire?

That's where the people are in this. How long Lord and will your wrath burn like fire? Let's pray. Heavenly Father Lord I pray that you would help me Lord have clarity to think clearly and as I struggle Lord tonight Lord I just trust you I trust that this is the passage that we should be at tonight it is your word it won't return void and so Father help me communicate it with the proper emotion the proper manner in which we ought to look at this chapter trusting you and Lord no matter where a person is at tonight in their Christian walk or Lord of their age I pray that you'll help them Lord as it was sung already Lord to prepare you room Lord I pray that everyone at this moment Lord we would prepare room in our hearts to hear from you that your word would communicate its desired intent in Jesus name

I pray amen so lamenting helps tune our heart I've made mention of the last few services but the song come thy fount of every blessing I think I keep saying tune my heart to sing thy praise I think the lyric is tune thy heart to sing thy grace does anybody know in here what it is I'll just make it up then alright since you don't don't google it but either one of those we're talking about the fact that of tuning our hearts to see thy grace streams of mercy never ceasing calls for songs of loudest praise Jesus sought me when a stranger wandering from the face of God he to save my soul from danger interposed this precious blood and so that tuning of our heart and lamenting helps tune our heart it helps us get to where we should be a lament or a cry to God in prayer should be theologically rich in the things that we do it ought to be because of what we really think about God ourselves and this world are going to be communicated I like weddings better than funerals right there's no surprises to that that I'd rather go and eat cake than to mourn with people but I would rather and I think we'd all agree in here

I'd rather go to the funeral of a believer than the wedding of unbelieving people right prefer let's go to a wedding like we did of believing people but there's something about and I've seen this many times before when you open up the door to the funeral home or the church and it's been a saint an older saint that passed away that had a clear testimony that you just experience something in the room you're like you could tell me I could drive by a funeral home not knowing who's there walk up to the door open up the door and before I even enter in I think I could tell you if we're going to the funeral of a Christian family or not anybody follow what I'm saying here there's just a different understanding of it and so here lamenting it reminds us that there's a bigger song at play here a bigger symphony at play and we tune our hearts to make the music in alignment with God it gives us the prayers in the psalm gives us like lyrics to sing we're invited into the song that God is singing connects our small story to God's bigger story our heart our confusion and our struggle and as we reflect and we think about it

God is tuning our hearts he is warning us and in other words this lament it reminds us that God is merciful and kind and gracious but he is also holy just and to be fearful and so if we talk about tuning our hearts and we lament and you're in this funeral you're in this city that lays barren part of your understanding needs to be that God is merciful kind and gracious that's one aspect but you also have to know that he is holy just and to be feared and without those two things in tension there would be no real tuning of the heart and so that's what we're going to see and in this psalm that is so heavy that I'm about to get to and read that the grace that we sing about amazing grace the many different songs we sing it's only amazing because we know that judgment is real God will bring restoration to his people but this chapter is not about that it's only about judgment chapter 2 sings a terrifying song about God's glory and judgment and so many of you are like

[8 : 18] I'm so glad that I came here that I this sounds so edifying it sounds so encouraging but I remind you you find this in the same book that you find everything else and it's a message from God and so we divide chapter into three sections the wrath in verses 1-10 we're going to see the wrath real clearly then we're going to see the sorrow of the people in verses 11-17 and then it ends with an appeal and a prayer so here's the wrath God does not passively pursue holiness in the life of his people you're going to see this if you're underlining in your Bible you should underline all the actions taken by God towards Israel look at all the he hath when you see that you're going to know that this is God doing something and this is the part that we try to edit the harsh realities of the wrath of God from the Bible and if you were to do that you would need to skip this book you would need to skip that chapter kind of like Noah's ark right you ever seen that painted on the nursery

I forget who jokes about that but it's like the picture of Noah's ark is always so beautiful you know all the animals are on there they're on a little boat and they're there a lot of times you have two male lions which people just need to know better right and that is how that works and so there's you see this picture and it's so cute and we put it in our nurseries but what if you're the fast forward a few hours what if you're the fast forward a day that is not a picture that makes it onto the walls of the nursery but that is a story that is in the Bible and that is a truth that kids have to learn even from the youngest of ages that the ark was amazing because there was a flood that was coming that they're both true the grace of God is only wonderful because we deserve the judgment of God and so it seems to be without hope and it's the darkest before the dawn and that's what brings us to chapter number 2 and I'm going to read verses 1 through 10 and I want you to know this all that he hath in this portion how hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel and remember not his footstool in the day of his anger the Lord has swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob and hath not pitied he has thrown down in his wrath the strongholds of the daughter of Judah he has brought them down to the ground he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof he has cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel he has drawn back his right hand from before the enemy and he burned against

Jacob like a flaming fire which devireth round about he has bent his bow like an enemy he stood with his right hand as an adversary and slew all that were pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion he poured out his fury like fire the Lord was an enemy he has swallowed up Israel he has swallowed up all her palaces he has destroyed his strongholds and has increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation and he has violently taken away his tabernacle as if it were of a garden he has destroyed the places of the assembly the Lord has caused the solemn feast and Sabbath to be forgotten in Zion and has despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest the Lord has cast off his altar he has abhorred the sanctuary he has given up the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces they have made a noise in the house of the Lord as in the day of a solemn feast the Lord has purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion he has stretched out a line he has not withdrawn his hand from destroying therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament they languished together her gates are sunken to the ground he has destroyed and broken her bars her king and her princess are among the Gentiles the law is no more her prophets also find no vision from the Lord the elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground and keep silence they have cast up dust upon their heads they have girded themselves with sackcloth the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their head in the ground chapter 2 starts off with the same question that verse 1 of chapter 1 does how hath the Lord cover the daughter of Zion with a cloud of anger how it's a cry of pain it's a more intense cry than even chapter number 1 and I hope you took note of a few things that kind of gives a framework here you see that the Lord is angry and that's not a comfortable thought or image but it's real the God of the universe can be justifiably and righteously angry even though the people of God are precious to him he speaks about him as the daughter of Zion but he has set her under a cloud and what kind of cloud is this?

it is a cloud of judgment the glory of the people of God has fallen the blessings of God have been removed the light of all nations have been extinguished and the blessed people are now disciplined people the blessed people are now disciplined people the temple and the city seem to have been forgotten by God which it speaks about in Ezekiel how the glory of God had left the temple and the beauty of God's presence was gone and people the enemies are mocking at them a place that was once so beautiful a place that would have been a tourist destination a place that would have been something worth seeing is something now that is completely destroyed and ruined and not only did it happen but it came from God's hands and there is no way to work around chapter number 2 and they removed God from that equation over and over again it's as if he was an enemy holding back a bow and arrow as if he was an adversary to them and we'd all answer and say is God not slow the anger and the answer he is and if you've been following here he was very slow the anger he is merciful and gracious and he is plenteous in his mercy but they have been warned and then now judgment has come and the Lord has swallowed them up he has thrown them down he brought them down to the ground he has polluted the kingdom he has cut off his fierce cut them in fierce anger with the horn of Israel he has not he has drawn back his right hand from before the enemy and so we see the extent of the destruction it's really bad and Jeremiah clearly wants to know that God is the one who is behind this behind the Babylonian army and the judgment of Judah is a holy God you know I think sometimes I use this program called Grammarly that tries to help and the things that I write would be far worse

I didn't even have that right and you're like you use something oh yeah I do alright and sometimes it says I don't even know what you're trying to say alright but in one of the things it says in Grammarly is it talks about a passive voice kids use it all the time you walk into a room what happened well you see the table and the air mattress got together and it broke alright that's what happened this weekend at my in-laws house alright they busted an air mattress but in the storytelling by Carson yeah you're on the front row alright the storytelling by Carson it happened but there was no human element involved in it alright he was an innocent bystander and two inanimate objects came together and something happened and so when kids are speaking when they should say hey that's on me that's my fault I did that and when they don't that's called passive voice alright that's what I learned and so that they speak in passive voice here it's very clear you need to know these things did not just happen as the built in consequence of sin these things happen from the hand of God that God deals with sin on every level that God deals with sin on every level verse 6 and 7 he destroyed their places of worship and that just seems unbelievable because he seemed to be so invested in that these things are being built and now they're going to be destroyed he took away in verse number 8 their bars and that's not a liquor store right it's their protection it's their gates he had removed that from them and in verses 9 and 10 it's even speaking about their culture just taking everything apart about the city piece by piece

[16 : 49] God leveled their temples he scatters the people he ruined his own city and why because as important as Israel is to God there is something that is more important and it's God's own righteousness which I remind you the people of Israel the children of Israel were not too big to fail you can never be so important to the cause of Christ you cannot be so important that you just can live life however you want and not deal with the consequences of sin and this is what we have seen I've seen it before in my own life in childhood somebody living in sin but it's just being ignored because dealing with it would just be too inconvenient for everybody and they just allowed it to continue in this case that's not what God does God says you are important to me I refer to you as the daughters of Zion but my righteousness matters and they were not too big to fail so questions we must ask ourselves here is how big is God's holiness and righteousness to you do you take sin seriously have you first of all trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and is your heart tuned for God's glory do you have a holy reverence for

God do you have a holy reverence and fear of sin in your life and do we teach it I asked the high schoolers today I think the word stoic you ever know anybody just like they think that being very serious means being very religious right that there's something wrong about smiling there's something wrong about ever enjoying stuff that the more serious I am the more pious that I am and that's that happens on occasion but there's also a ditch on the other side right where everything's just light-hearted that God just doesn't seem to care it's the kind of the phrase of the day I don't think that God really cares about whatever you want right and if you listen to some people God doesn't really seem to care about anything but here in this story we're reminded God does care about things he does care about the righteousness he does care about sin and so here we have a transition from this section to the next and now we turn to the response of the people all the actions of God in those first nine verses and then in verse number 10 the elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground the older people there the leadership there sit and they keep silence and they have cast up dust upon their heads and they have girded themselves with sackcloth the virgins of

Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground those that you would consider the older and more mature they're sitting there putting dust on the ground and those that ought to be in the prime of their life happy and celebrating they are also people that are hanging their head it's just completely everybody has a place of mourning which brings us to the section on sorrow you know few things are more moving than the suffering of children in the midst of tragedy my dad I wouldn't say was a very generous person but there wasn't hardly any time we saw a commercial about Ethiopia on television and when I was a kid I remember them being very popular right you'd see a picture of kids and they would play music and then you would call in and he would always adopt one or whatever it took you know they didn't really adopt one but he would pay monthly for it and we would receive a profile about it because there's something about the suffering of children in the midst of tragedy that is very moving and the judgment of Jerusalem is something that isn't to be studied it's something to be mourned the difference between the monument of a museum in D.C.

the Bible museum or some other one and the Holocaust museum you go into the Holocaust museum not to just study but to mourn something it contains information but it's history that they were not built for the same reasons limitations we don't just study it historically the destruction of a city but we mourn with these people verse number 11 Jeremiah is saying I've just ran out of tears my bowels are troubled my liver is poured upon the earth for the destruction of the daughter of my people because the children and the suckling swoon in the streets of the city they say to their mothers where is corn and wine when they swooned as they wounded the wounded in the streets of the city when their souls were poured out into their mother's bosom what things shall I take to witness for thee what things shall I liken to thee O daughter of Jerusalem what shall I equal to thee that I may comfort thee

O virgin daughter of Zion for thy breach is great like the sea who can kill thee the prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee and they have not discovered thine iniquity to turn away thy captivity but I have seen the false burdens and causes of banishment and that pass by clap their hands at thee they hiss and they wag their head at the daughters of Jerusalem saying is this the city that men call the perfection of beauty the joy of the whole earth that's what God had for them that's what he created for them that's what obedience allowed them to rejoice him that's where they once were but now that's been completely removed from them all they are rejoicing they knew this day would come verse 17 the Lord had done that which he has devised he has fulfilled his word that he commanded in the days of old he has thrown down and he has not pitied he has caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee he has set up the horn of thine adversaries

[22 : 53] God had used the victorious enemy to be the instrument of judgment and now the enemies are laughing at the promises of God and the destruction of Jerusalem they proudly act as if they were the ones who brought the people down that we said in verse number 16 they opened their mouth against them they gnashed their teeth and they said this is the day that we have been looking for they continued in verse number 14 they had prophets that were teaching them empty vain and foolish things one of the consequences on a nation is the false teaching that was there and then we see through the hands of men as we looked at today that God was using the enemy here to bring sanctification in the lives of his people here by the wicked hands that would crucify Jesus by the same wicked hands of the Babylonian people the children of Israel have been placed in they must lead this leads to crying transition verse number 18 so the sorrow that they have is going to lead to them crying out their heart cried unto the

Lord verse 18 oh wall of the daughter of Zion let tears run down like a river day and night give thyself no rest let not the apple of thine eye cease their heart cried unto the Lord and this is where they give an they have ignored God and now he has their attention and this is going to lead to their prayer 18 and 19 their heart cried unto the Lord oh wall of the daughter of Zion let tears run down like a river day and night give thyself no rest let the apple of thine eye cease arise cry out in the night in the beginning of the watch pour out that heart like we consider whom we are because because of the covenant that's what they're appealing to God verse number 20 it says behold oh Lord and consider to whom thou hast done this that's what they're crying to the

Lord they're saying God we were your children we are the daughter of Zion consider this and in two statements of just horrible judgment should we have to eat our own children and should the prophets be slain in their sanctuary is there no limits to the consequences and the judgment that we are dealing with very similar in Habakkuk 3 2 we're told that they pray unto the Lord and they say in wrath remember mercy that's what they're praying here they're saying God would you remember mercy they're experiencing they're witnessing and they're remembering God's judgment and it's meant to turn their and so this ought to bring you to a point if you're listening to it now or if you ever listen to it in the future of this message this chapter if you're not a follower of Jesus it may be the message that awakens you to the seriousness of sin you should never say well

I don't think God really cares about my rebellion or I don't really think God would care about my sin chapter number two of limitations tells us God most certainly cares and that most certainly there is a consequence for the sin and so let's look at a New Testament understanding here of what's being taught what is always true about God what's true in the Old Testament of God is true in the New Testament of God and is still true today is that sin has to be dealt with completely Isaiah 61 verse 8 says for the Lord loved judgment I hate robbery for burnt offerings and I will direct thy work in truth and I will make an everlasting covenant with them for I the Lord love judgment sin must be dealt with completely we see in Romans 6 23 the wages of sin is death but the gift of life through Jesus Christ our Lord but the gift of sin is always going to be dealt with but limitations 2 is not the place where the seriousness of sin is seen on the greatest display

I think every one of us know where that's at it's on the cross Galatians 2 20 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us for it is written cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree we what does your sin what does it look like if you are not receiving mercy from him if you were to receive full judgment for them you would be cursed as well and that's what Jesus Christ received in our place so we see about God here in limitations chapter number 2 that sin is serious and sin is going to be dealt with and sin will be dealt with completely but we also see that we can be removed from the place of condemnation every one of us deserves what we read about in limitations 2 we deserve judgment on every level of our lives and in every area of our lives in the sanctuary in our homes in every area of our lives none of us deserve any escape

[28 : 21] John 3 18 tells us he that believeth on him is not condemned but he every person in this world awaits a fate that is far worse than limitations chapter number 2 they deserve the judgment and unless they are found in Christ then they will receive that but Jesus Christ received it in our place now as believers you may know right now that of times or now that you're under the disciplined hand of the Lord God disciplines those that he loves the daughter of Zion Hebrews 12 6 for whom the Lord loveth he chastened and scourges every son whom he receiveth you see all suffering is connected to sin but not all suffering is connected to the sin of the sufferer let me try that one more time all suffering is connected to sin but not all suffering is connected to the sin of the sufferer there is people here in

Lamentations chapter number two that are dealing with the consequences of a sinful nation and they are alongside Jeremiah and they are crying out and they're crying out for their nation to turn and repent and they're saying this is not what we should be doing this is against the God of heaven but judgment is coming and the same for us as a nation and as a people we cry out and we are dealing with the consequences of the sin of other people but there are times in which we deal with the discipline from our own sin and just like the children of Israel where God was long patient time and time again there came a time where they had to pay for the consequence of their sin and God is patient and he's long suffering but he loves you too much to allow you to continue living generation after generation or year after year as the children of Israel with not awaking you to the seriousness of your sin which is what he has done here in this story and so this chapter invites us to wake up to be sober minded in our hearts for our hearts to be tuned again to

God's glory and to be a warning towards us just like Hebrews 12 29 tells us for our God is a consuming fire and all the stories that we have in the Bible that are true about our God we also must remember the limitations true demonstrate something that we must love about him that he is holy and just and that he will not allow sin to go unpunished and so because of that it ought awaken us to have a right hatred toward the things of sin in the life of a believer we should not entertain it we should turn from it because we know that it will have devastating consequences on us as not honoring the him and in a person who is morally right a person who has not been forgiven of their sins we should read Lamentations chapter number 2 and say I can't even imagine and then picture that same thing for all eternity worse than a barren land but a place of destruction for all eternity our

God is a consuming fire let's pray Heavenly Father I thank you for the words of Jeremiah as he is going through something Lord that I cannot wrap my head around going through a time of discipline as a nation that he Lord crying out to you Father it makes me mindful of the fact that there is a coming judgment upon this world not just upon this nation or upon a city but the entire world that I live upon Lord that one day it will be destroyed and Lord I pray that I would be faithful to the work that the believers inside of this room would be faithful to the work and as historically true as the book of limitations we know is you have been long suffering and you have been patient towards our loved ones and our friends but Lord would you help us have a seriousness about sin would you help us give them warning about what is coming and point them to

Jesus Christ Lord would you help us Lord as we would leave here to have a seriousness about you to not take the things of God in just a flippant manner but to recognize that you are a God that is just and holy in Jesus name I pray Amen