

STAYING FOCUSED IN DARK TIMES

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Lamentations 3:19-33

1. In my Bible the introduction to Lamentations begins with these words; “Lamentations is a book of wailings that are read annually by the Jews as a reminder of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. They serve as a reminder of an avoidable tragedy caused by sin—and a God who judges, but keeps His covenant forever.”
2. These five laments were written by Jeremiah towards the end of his fifty-three year ministry; a ministry that was a failure from a human perspective.
3. A study of Jeremiah and Lamentations can help us to stay focused on God and His purposes for us during the dark times in which we live.
4. The Word of God warns that towards the end of the Church age:
 - a. An apostasy, a falling away, will occur. 2 Thessalonians 2:4
“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it (the day of the Lord) will not come unless the apostasy comes first.”
 - b. Difficult times will come. 2 Timothy 3:1-7
But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. 6 For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, 7 always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.
 - c. Both preachers and people will be wrongly motivated. 2 Timothy 4:1-5
I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: 2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. 3 **For the time will come** when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, 4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 5 But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.
 - d. Success will be measured by externals rather than internals. Revelation 3:14-22
"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 17 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and

repent. 20 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

5. In the midst of his wailings Jeremiah gives us a glimpse of what kept him going in spite of persecution, imprisonment, attempts on his life, and few, if any, converts.
 - a. The ability to pray. 19-20
 - b. The ability to remember and call to mind truth related to God. 21-23.
 - c. The ability to focus on his relationship with God and His goodness. 24-27
 - d. The ability to accept life regardless of its complexities and difficulties. 28-33
6. However, for a clearer understanding of Jeremiah and his ministry we need to take some time and examine Jeremiah 1, for it is there that we find the genesis of his ministry and the focus of his life.

I. Jeremiah understood his God-ordained purpose in life. Jeremiah 1:4-6

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." 6 Then I said, "Alas, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, because I am a youth."

A. Here we see God's foreknowledge.

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you."

B. God's predestination.

"Before you were born I consecrated you (set you apart); I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."

C. Man's humility and inability.

D. We see these truths repeated throughout the Bible. Rom 8:28-30

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He **foreknew**, He also **predestined** to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

II. Jeremiah received clear instructions and enablement from God. Jeremiah 1:7-10

But the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am a youth,' because everywhere I send you, you shall go, and all that I command you, you shall speak. 8 "Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you," declares the Lord. 9 Then the Lord stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. 10 "See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

A. Go where I tell you to go, and say what I tell you to say.

B. Do not be afraid of anyone or anything because I am with you to deliver you.

C. Then the hand of God touched the mouth of Jeremiah and he became God's man for the hour.

NOTE: God gave Jeremiah his message, his authority, and his ministry.

III. Jeremiah received an assurance a warning and a promise from God.

Jeremiah 1:11-19

The word of the Lord came to me saying, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “I see a rod of an almond tree.” 12 **Then the Lord said to me, “You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it.”** 13 The word of the Lord came to me a second time saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north.” 14 Then the Lord said to me, “Out of the north the evil will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. 15 “For, behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north,” declares the Lord; “and they will come and they will set each one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all its walls round about and against all the cities of Judah. 16 “I will pronounce My judgments on them concerning all their wickedness, whereby they have forsaken Me and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands. 17 **“Now, gird up your loins and arise, and speak to them all which I command you. Do not be dismayed before them, or I will dismay you before them. 18 “Now behold, I have made you today as a fortified city and as a pillar of iron and as walls of bronze against the whole land, to the kings of Judah, to its princes, to its priests and to the people of the land. 19 “They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you,” declares the Lord.**

A. An assurance: “I am watching over My word to perform it.”

B. A warning: “Embrace you calling, speak every word I command you to speak, and do not be intimidated by anyone or I will publicly discipline you.”

C. A promise: “I have made you a fortified city...They will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you,” declares the Lord.

APPLICATION

1. We are approaching the end of the Church Age.
2. The apostasy is a reality.
3. Difficult time have come.
4. Many preachers and most people are wrongly motivated.
5. Success is measured by externals and not internals.
6. It’s all about measureable results and not faithfulness to God, His original intent, and His Word.
7. May God help us to stay focused, fervent, and faithful in these dark and sometimes dangerous times.