

Lament & Repent – Part 3

Scripture Reading: Psalm 78:1-8

Psalm 78 is a historical psalm, but it has a touch of lament in it. Reviewing the history of previous generations, the next generation is told to “*not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation...*” (Psalm 78:8). It takes some honesty and transparency to declare our failures and weaknesses to our children. Truth is best communicated when done in humility.

Previously, we examined Deuteronomy 4:1-9. Moses had to teach, exhort, and admonish the second generation of Israelites, whose parents had been stubborn and rebellious. The first generation of Israelites were not allowed to enter the promised land because of unbelief (Hebrews 3:15 – 4:2). But their children would have that opportunity. Would they be different than their parents? We now resume looking at the notes of the previous study, basically where we left off.

As the Law was repeated to the second generation of Israelites, God promised them wonderful blessings. He also warned them, very graphically, of individual and national judgment that would come upon them if they chose to disobey and forsake the LORD. A careful reading of Deuteronomy chapters 27 and 28 will make a strong impression (e.g. Deuteronomy 27:1-14, etc.). Because of man’s fallen sin nature and because of the powerful influence of the world and of Satan, it would be a slippery path to receive God’s blessings (Romans 7:7-13 [cp. Romans 5:20; 11:25, 30-31; 5:21]; Romans 8:1-4; 10:1-4 [cp. Romans 9:27-33] cp. Matthew 7:13-14; John 1:17). Israel would walk a fine line between life and death, between blessing and cursing (Deuteronomy 30:15-20). Many lessons from Israel’s history are relevant to us today. See Romans 3:9-26; 10:1-13 [Romans 10:6-8 cp. Deuteronomy 30:11-14]; Galatians 3:10-13 [**Galatians 3:10** cp. Deuteronomy 27:26 & **Galatians 3:13** cp. Deuteronomy 21:23]; Galatians 3:21-24; I Corinthians 10:1-14; Hebrews 3:1 – 4:16.

Israel’s history and its future are packed with lamentable events. That is to say that Israel has had and will have a lot of failure and chastisement of the Lord, giving them reasons to lament. Do we Christians understand what it means to lament?

The word “**Lamentation**” comes from a Hebrew word which means “a song of weeping.” A Latin word, used in the Vulgate means, “loud cries.” Jeremiah is called “the weeping prophet.” He grieved and sorrowed for the hard things that the LORD was doing and would be doing to Judah because of their sin. Besides The Book of Jeremiah, the prophet also wrote another book, written as Hebrew poetry or song, called **The Book of Lamentations**.

The Book of Lamentations is probably not the favorite book of too many believers, but it is a rich example of how to humbly handle heartache and sorrow before the Lord. More on that later.

Should Christians lament? Isn't that just an Old Testament, Jewish thing?

Many will dismiss the idea of Christians lamenting. Consider some of the reasons that we might do this. We want to emphasize the joy and confidence that comes with knowing Christ. We want to live by God's promises and focus on the positive. We don't want to get depressed or to be discouraging to anyone. Some people dismiss evangelism that teaches against sin. The subject of sin's consequences, of God's condemnation of sin, of His future judgment, and of the doctrine of hell are important themes of Scripture. Yet, some mockingly state, "Oh, that's that hell, fire, and brimstone stuff!" While some people truly have become imbalanced and extreme on these things, we must not ignore uncomfortable truth. So, it is with the subject of lamentation, sorrow, grief, and mourning. It can be dismissed as pessimism, depression, and the doldrums ("The Doldrums" – A nautical term describing an area, in the oceans around the earth, near the equator. It is an area where sailing vessels can sometimes get stuck in windless waters – So, it represents a time of listlessness, despondency, inactivity, stagnation, or boredom.). Yet, this is a subject often mentioned in Scripture. We cannot relegate the subject of lamenting to the Old Testament, or to Jewishness.

Jesus told us, "**Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.**" (Matthew 5:4). Jesus mourned and lamented (Luke 13:31-35; 19:41-44 cp. Matthew 26:36-44; Hebrews 5:7-9). See Matthew 23:13-33. As Jesus pronounced the eight "*woes*" to the scribes and Pharisees, He did not speak out in harsh anger, but rather He spoke in a sorrowful lament. Jesus was questioned about fasting (i.e. temporarily ceasing to eat in order to give more time to intently pray and seek the Lord. It is a time of solemn reflection and associated with sorrow). The Pharisees fasted. The disciples of John fasted. But why did not the disciples of Jesus fast? Jesus compared it to a wedding party, celebrating with the bridegroom (Representing Jesus). But there will be a time when the bridegroom will be taken away. Then the wedding party will experience fasting and solemn praying. See Matthew 9:10-15; Mark 2:15-20; Luke 5:29-35. Also consider Matthew 4:1-11.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). The Greek word for "mind" means "to think, understand, feel, and share the same thing, along with others. It implies more than a belief or an opinion. It implies having moral interest that causes reflection. It is to join a mind-set, having affections / desires come to a heart-felt union with others. See Philippians 1:7; 2:2,5; 3:15,19; 4:1-4 (vs. 2). See also Romans 8:5; 12:16; 15:5; II Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 5:10; **Colossians 3:1-2**. We are not only to think **like** Christ. We are to think **with** Him.