

Lament & Repent – Part 5

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:12-17

We are told to *“Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly...”* (Colossians 3:16). We are told to be *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”* (Ephesians 5:19) This melody in our heart does not always have to be a happy-sounding song. It can be a more solemn and thoughtful sound, too.

Psalm 92:1-3 – Verse three has the Hebrew word *“Higgaion.”* (KJV). It is a musical notation that means solemn and thoughtful, worthy of reflection and meditation. It has been defined as *“striking a murmuring tone of the harp.”* Newer translations have reduced its meaning to simply *“a melody,” “a harmony,”* or *“resounding music.”* Please consider how Colossians 3:16 tells us to sing *“with grace in your hearts to the Lord,”* and Ephesians 5:19 says to sing, *“making melody in your heart to the Lord.”* These ideas resonate with the Hebrew word *“Higgaion.”* The *“murmuring tone of the harp”* is the *“grace”* and *“melody”* of our heart!

Let’s also consider the three (only three) other times this word is used in the Bible. **In Psalm 9:16**, many translations just transliterate the word *“Higgaion,”* as is done with the word *“Selah.”* The NKJV gives us the word *“meditation.”* Psalm 9:16 is telling us that we are to seriously meditate on the thought that the LORD judges the wicked and that the wicked are snared by the work of their own hands. That is not a cheery thought, but it is a very important one! **In Psalm 19:14** we ask God to accept the words of our mouth and the *“meditation”* (*“Higgaion”*) of our heart. The previous verses (19:11-13) speak of warnings and rewards, of errors and faults, of presumptuous, willful sins, and a great amount of transgression. It sounds like these are pretty serious / solemn things to meditate upon! **Lamentations 3:62** is a negative reference to evil thoughts, imaginations, whisperings, and murmurings (KJV = *“device.”*). In this verse, it does not seem to be a musical notation.

Now let’s take a sample lamentation from a “spiritual song” which is not in the Psalms.

Instead of following a theological or expositional outline of **The Book of Lamentations**, we are going to look at some verses that were collected for a musical meditation written by Carl F. Schalk (1929 – 2021). So, this will be a devotional approach (Carl Schalk chose to use the King James Version). Afterwards, we will look at a positive resolve within this lamentation.

“The Lord is Righteous” – Lamentations 1:18

“The LORD is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment; hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow...”

Before we mention the difficult chastisement of the LORD in our lives, we must put out the disclaimer, that the Lord is good and just. We may not – we cannot criticize the Lord’s dealing in our lives. See Psalm 51:3-4; 119:75 (cp. Psalm 119:67, 71).

“From Above He Has Sent Fire” – Lamentations 1:13

“From above hath He sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them: He hath spread a net for my feet, He hath turned me back: He hath made me desolate and faint all the day.”

Consider our Holy and Sovereign God. How powerful and deep can be the feeling of God’s displeasure! Can you imagine a burning in your bones? See Jeremiah 20:9 cp. Psalm 38:1-10.

“For the Sins of Her Prophets” – Lamentations 4:13-15a

“Because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who shed in her midst the blood of the just. They wandered blind in the streets; they have defiled themselves with blood. So that no one would touch their garments. They cried out to them ‘Go away, unclean! Go away, go away, Do not touch us!’...” (New King James Version used here for clarity)

What a source of grief! The spiritual leadership of Judah was dangerous, murderous, spiritually blind, defiled, and repulsive. The prophets and priests were turned away, as people turn away lepers. They would no longer live in the land. Jesus said, *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”* (Matthew 7:15). We are extensively warned to beware of false teachers and false spiritual leaders (This can be said of government leaders, too!). See Matthew 7:15-20; 15:7-14; 23:1-39; Luke 6:39-42; Romans 16:17-18; Colossians 2:20-23; I Timothy 4:1-2; II Timothy 4:1-5; Jude 1:17-19; I John 2:18-26; 4:1-6.

“Remember, O LORD” – Lamentations 5:1,7,15-16

“Remember, O LORD, what is come upon us: consider and behold our reproach...Our fathers have sinned and are not; and we have borne their iniquities... The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. The crown is fallen from our head; woe unto us, that we have sinned!”

“Joy has ceased” / “dancing has turned to mourning.” This means that they have lost the joy of their relationship with the Lord. **“The crown is fallen from our head...”** This means that the glory is gone. There is no power or authority from the Lord working within them. There are blessings and privileges from God that we take for granted. We do not appreciate them until we lose them. See Psalm 51:8-12. Also consider Psalm 38:1-41; 77:1-20; 130:1-6 cp. James 4:8-10.

A Faithful Look at God's Correction and Perfection of His People – Lamentations 3:19-41

We want to end on a good note, but Jeremiah's lamentations makes that difficult to do. Lamentations 5:21 gives us some positive input, but then ends with Lamentations 5:22! Lamentations 3:19-41 is very useful for encouragement, but the rest of the chapter goes back to more woeful things and requests for deliverance from enemies. What should we think of this? **Grief and sorrow are things that we'd like to get over with quickly. But many times it just does not go away quickly. It can be a long labor and a terrible battle. It doesn't mean that the Lord has given up on you or failed you. It is just a long delivery until the birth of a better hope and a mature, faithful outlook (Jeremiah 29:11-13; Psalm 30:1-12; 34:15-22; 130:1-8; Luke 18:1-8).** Compare Psalm 85:4-8; 80:3,7,19; Hebrews 12:1-14; James 1:2-8; 4:6-10; I Peter 5:10.

Let God do His work in you. He uses trials and sorrows to give you wisdom and faith. See **Ecclesiastes 7:2-4**; Psalm 90:12-17; 119:67,71,75; 138:6-8; James 1:2-8; I Peter 1:3-9.

Other Lamentations in the Bible

There are over forty psalms of lament. Consider Psalm 80:1-19; 3:1-8; 120:1-7; 129:1-8. Consider also these prayers: Ezra 9:5-15; Nehemiah 1:1-11; 9:1-38; Daniel 9:3-19.

Note Daniel 9:20 – See how Daniel describes his praying: *"...I was speaking, and praying, and confessing **my sin** and **the sin of my people Israel**, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God."* Daniel humbly identified with the sins of his brethren / the people Israel. He was jealous for the glory of the Lord, and desirous to see his people worship and serve God again. This reminds us how Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6:9-10.

Lamenting isn't forever (Psalm 30:1-5 – especially note verse 5).

Lamenting must be done in faith, which operates by the knowledge of God's good character and promises, not necessarily with nice emotional feelings (Psalm 27:5, 13-14; 31:19-24; 73:1-28).

As God gave warnings to Israel, warnings of great sorrows and curses (Deuteronomy 27:1 – 28:68; 30:19-20), He also gave great promises of future restoration and blessings. See **Isaiah 4:1-6; 11:1 – 12:6; 35:1-10; 40:1-31; 55:1-13; 61:1-11** (2 things to note: 1) Isaiah 61:1-2a – cp. Luke 4:16-30; 2) Isaiah 61:2b – 3 cp. II Thessalonians 1:7-10); Jeremiah 30:1-31:40; Ezekiel 37:1-28; Hosea 3:5; 14:1-9; Joel 3:18-21; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 7:14-20; Zephaniah 3:14-20; Zechariah 14:1-11; Malachi 4:1-6.

Closing Prayer: Habakkuk 3:1-2 (P.S. – Look up the lyrics to Michael Card's song: *"Tears of the World"*)