

LAMENTATIONS: JEREMIAH'S JOURNAL OF WOES

STUDY EIGHT

Jeremiah's Mournful Swan Song

Selections from Lamentations 5

Lamentations chapter five, from start to finish, is a prayer offered to God. Jeremiah poured out his heart to the Lord for all that he had been dealing with regarding Jerusalem's destruction. Staring at a devastation following a terrible calamity is just a dreadful experience. Nevertheless, remember this: no matter how bad and sad the scene around us may be, God is always present and the same.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

SOMETIMES, the heat of our pain grows so hot that it garbles our thoughts. Raw emotions unsettle our speech. Words become less measured. They might even fly out like steam from a boiling kettle. When Jeremiah penned the end of his journal, he had reached that point.

In the Hebrew language, the fifth chapter of Lamentations has no acrostic form like the previous chapters. Jeremiah wrote with more spontaneity. Some have speculated that the literary disruption reflects the spiritual and physical chaos Jeremiah had witnessed.

Amid high emotions, Jeremiah retained a presence of mind that is worth our attention. His theological foundations had led him to lift his eyes beyond the monstrous pain to the God of the heavens who controls it all.

In the last study of this *Searching the Scriptures* series on Lamentations, we will explore how Jeremiah did not let the pain keep him from expressing his confidence in God and seeking help from God.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before we explore Lamentations, we need to pause a moment to pray. Just as we pause and prepare ourselves for an important conversation, we do well to do the same before studying God's Word. The only difference here, however, is that we ask help from the One we're about to talk with. Do that now.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Profitable Bible study requires time and concentration and empathy.¹ Literary keys unlock interpretive insights. Putting ourselves in the place of the author expands our theological perspective. Be sure to practice these study tools as you read Lamentations 5.

God has given us His Word not just to satisfy idle curiosity. He's given us His Word to give us insight into our lives. In fact, to transform us to be more like Him, to see life as He sees it.
—Chuck Swindoll



Observation: Why Have You Abandoned Us for So Long?

Observe *Lamentations 5*. Note how Jeremiah directs his words to God. Pay attention to his imagery. Watch how his subject shifts from the destitution of the people to the unchanging character of God to a desperate plea. Record your observations below.



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Lamentations 5 contains four imperatives from Jeremiah—all directed to God. List those imperatives below.

- 1) 5:1a _____
- 2) 5:1b _____
- 3) 5:21a _____
- 4) 5:21b _____

Did you notice the distinctiveness of Lamentations 5:19 compared to the other verses?

*But LORD, you remain the same forever!
Your throne continues from generation to generation.*

It's a theological jewel about the nature of God. His character never changes. His rule will forever endure.



Interpretation: Remembrance and Restoration

Reflect upon and *research* the significance of Jeremiah's imperatives in *Lamentations 5:1, 21*. Explain how these imperatives inform us theologically as well as practically.



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A vital logical connection exists between Lamentations 5:19 and 5:20. The same exists between 5:21 and 5:22. Think carefully over these two pairs of *verses*. What is the logical connection? Why is it significant and how is it instructive for us today?

I find it marvelous that the Lord doesn't pick up my mood, that the Lord doesn't see the frame of mind I'm in and then take His cue from that. No, His mercies are new every morning. His plan is set. His character is holy. His purpose is pure. His ways are right. So all the way through life, no matter how bad or how sad our situation may get, you can count on this: the Lord you worship and serve remains the same forever. He is always present.

—Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: You Are My King and My God

Psalm 44 captures similar themes that thread the entire book of Lamentations, especially chapter 5. The writer of Psalm 44 also wrote the prayer using the characteristics of poetic lament common to this genre of Hebrew literature. The psalmist, like Jeremiah in Lamentations, aims at God's redemption and restoration.

Read the *psalm* now. Think through it. Pray through it. Record what you find interesting and important as it relates to your study of Lamentations.



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Could you feel the weight of the psalmist's faith even with its mix of frustration and desperation? Never hesitate to take your full self to God—the good and the bad, the pretty and the ugly. We have no need for a mask. God sees all of us. Express your trust and adoration as well as your pain, confusion, and turmoil. They aren't contradictory. God knows us and hears us.



Application: Concluding Principles

To wrap up our time in the book of Lamentations, Chuck shares four principles built both on the book of Lamentations as well as the life of its author, Jeremiah. The four concluding principles are:

- 1) *Some are called to ministries that are demanding, painful, and unappreciated.* Ease and convenience rarely accompany serving others and preaching the gospel. Our calling from God requires grit.
- 2) *Those who are called to minister to hardhearted people must guard against becoming like them.* We have strength from God's Spirit to sustain us through the grind. People don't dictate our attitude. God does.
- 3) *No matter how bad and sad the scene around us may be, God is always present.* Jesus abides with us and walks beside us through it all. That is His promise.
- 4) *No matter how bleak things may seem and how weak you may feel, prayer is always essential.* Jeremiah never hesitated to bring his need to God, and nor should we!

Which of these principles grabs you most? Why is it important that you remember that principle? How do you need to apply it to your life?

Until Jesus makes all things new, uncertainty and chaos will always fill the world we live in. Lament will not go away until Jesus Himself wipes away every tear from our eye. Until that day, we can continue to go to God for direction, comfort, and hope. We can turn to Him in our laments as Jeremiah taught us. We can trust Him through our laments as Jeremiah showed us.



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A FINAL PRAYER

Take time now to write your closing prayer based on the teachings that have been most important to you throughout this eight-part series.

ENDNOTE

1. To review Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, visit the website sts.insight.org or grab a *copy* of the book for your library. Chuck also uses the *New Unger's Bible Dictionary*. It's one of his favorite Bible study tools.

