

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Lamentations: Productively Learning From Sinful Failure

Part I: Productively Learning From Sinful Failure By An Overview Of Lamentations (Lamentations 1:1-5:22)

I. Introduction

- A. Ideally, God wants His people to learn from their first exposure to His Word to obey it for blessing.
- B. However, mortal man is a sinner, and at times even we believers in Christ with our sin natures yield to the temptation to disobey God's Word only to pay a dear price in doing so in the form of painful divine discipline.
- C. Nevertheless, in times of spiritual failure, the believer is ripe to learn from his sinful failure, what constitutes the burden of the prophet Jeremiah in his book of Lamentations. (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1207-1208)
- D. Studying an overview of the book provides a moving lesson in productively learning from sinful failure, so we study that overview for our insight and edification (as follows):

II. Productively Learning From Sinful Failure By An Overview Of Lamentations, Lamentations 1:1-5:22.

- A. Lamentations is written in formal Hebrew poetry, and the **way** Jeremiah wrote the **verses** indicates he meant the work to be a series of 5 funeral dirges: he employed a "rhythmic pattern" where "the second half of a line of verse has one less beat than the first half," a 3 + 2 "limping meter" that "conveys a hollow, incomplete feeling" that express "an air of sadness," Ibid., p. 1210.
- B. Jeremiah also wrote his book to emphasize Judah's failure to obey God's Word (as follows):
 1. The work is arranged into five distinct dirges where dirges 1 (Lam. 1:1-22), 2 (Lam. 2:1-22), 4 (Lam. 4:1-22) and 5 (Lam. 5:1-22) are each arranged in an acrostic pattern in which the first word of each sentence or line is a different letter of the 22-letter Hebrew alphabet. However, the 3rd dirge (Lam. 3:1-66), though arranged acrostically, uses three **consecutive** verses that begin with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet before moving onto the next letter in the alphabet. This acrostic pattern highlights Hebrew **words** that are **formed** by letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and evidently hints of the Word of God!
 2. In line with this observation, we note that Judah had failed to obey the Deuteronomy 28 Mosaic Covenant, and 15 times in the book are specific topics recorded of hardships Judah had faced or was facing in Jerusalem's fall in fulfillment of God's predictions of punishment in Deuteronomy 28! (Ibid., p. 1209)
- C. However, in the midst of focusing on this failure is the tremendous hope of restoration mentioned in God's Word and based upon the grace of God (as follows):
 1. The 3rd and longest dirge in Lamentations contains **three** consecutive verses for each letter of the alphabet, and it forms "the heart of Jeremiah's short book" to highlight God's loyal love in remaining true to His Word's promises to restore His sinful people. The heart of this section is Lamentations 3:22-23 that we cite as follows: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."
 2. In other words, in the midst of all of Judah's and Jeremiah's grief over the nation's sinful failure followed by severe divine judgment, the same Word of God in Deuteronomy 28 that promised such painful punishment for sin was also the same Word upon which the nation could depend for its promises of forgiveness and restoration in passages like Deuteronomy 32:43-44 in the Song of Moses!
- D. To this same end, the five funeral dirges of Lamentations are arranged in a thematic chiasm, where dirge 1 (Lam 1:1-22) on Jerusalem's desolation is paired with dirge 5 (Lam. 5:1-22) on the Remnant's response, dirge 2 (Lam. 2:1-22) on God's judgment is paired with dirge 4 (Lam. 4:1-22) on the Lord's anger and dirge 3 stands alone at the center of the chiasm, emphasizing Jeremiah's response (Lam. 3:1-66): Jeremiah expresses his afflictions (3:1-18), his hope of God's eventual restoration of the nation (3:19-40) and his prayer (3:41-66), calling for confession to God that the Lord might begin to restore His people, Ibid., p. 1210-1211.

Lesson: *An overview of Lamentations teaches that Judah's disobedience to God's Word brought dreadfully painful divine punishment, but since God's Word also promised national forgiveness for confession followed by restoration, Judah's people who suffered God's discipline for sin were to respond to its pain by equally trusting the truth of God's promises of blessing for confession that they might be motivated to confess their sins for blessing.*

Application: *If we face God's painful discipline for disobeying His Word, may we learn from the validity of His Word as evidenced by the reality of His discipline's pain that His Word's promises of restoration after confession of sin are just as true and powerful as are His promises of discipline, that we then confess our sins to the Lord!*