

Lamentations: "O Jerusalem, Who Can Heal You?"

Great Is Her Fall

Lamentations 2

Is God on America's side?

We know that God has blessed America, and that's what we all want. So we sing with enthusiastic gusto, *God Bless America*, even though America has banished God from the public square in American life. He has been evicted from anything public. But 19 years ago, when the 9/11 terrorist attacks ripped into our country, "God Bless America" signs were everywhere, and the song was sung in every venue in the nation. As R. C. Sproul put it, God was "allowed _____ the reservation" for a few months to fulfill His responsibility to bless our nation. Erwin Lutzer writes, "During the months following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, God was expected to put His approval on the American way of life without expecting us to repent of our sins. He was briefly allowed into our public life only to give us benefits, not to judge us." Because we're the good guys, right? So God would never curse us, only bless us.

That depends on who you listen to. Listen to God to His chosen nation, Israel, from **Deuteronomy 11:26-28**: "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a _____: ²⁷the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, ²⁸and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known." God gave Israel a *clear choice* of either being blessed by Him or cursed by Him.

By the time we arrive at **Lamentations 2**, wow, did they ever go after other gods. Time and time again, Israel had violated the covenant agreement that they had entered into with God and worshiped foreign idols. And although America does not have a covenant with God, the principle of blessing and cursing applies. God does not merely and only bless people and nations, He judges and curses them as well. The God of the OT Scriptures is the God who invites us to choose. If God severely judged His chosen nation, what makes us think for a second that He won't severely judge our nation and the church along with it?

Lamentations 2 focuses on the great fall of Jerusalem brought about by God as a consequence of her long rebellion against Him. And make no mistake about it, the Lord is just in His judgment. In the Bible God's anger and the consequent pouring out of His wrath speak of God's holy and _____ judgment. Yes, God is slow to anger, but He does get furiously angry with unrepentant human evil. The manifestation of His just anger on unbelievers comes in the form of punishment.

Jerusalem's great fall was the result of **Judah's great sin**. But the startling reality is this: *God did it*. Yahweh God destroyed Jerusalem without pity, and He was fully justified in doing so.

The Lord is just in His anger:

What is the _____ of His just anger?

- 1. He has cast down (1).**
- 2. He has broken down (2).**
- 3. He has cut down (3).**
- 4. He has become the enemy (4-5).**
- 5. He has laid waste (6-8).**

What are some of the _____ of her fall?

- 1. Her gates are ruined (9).**
- 2. Her rulers are exiled (9).**
- 3. Her law is gone (9).**
- 4. Her prophets are muted (9).**
- 5. Her old and young alike are grief stricken (10).**
- 6. Her little ones are starving (11-12).**

Judah and Jerusalem, look what you've done. Look what you asked for in *your choosing* independence from your God. Look what God in His holiness had to do to you. God did it, but all this is squarely on you! You got your gods and alliances. And now you got your _____ deserts.

Who can _____ her?

1. Not the prophets (13-16).

Verse 13: "O Jerusalem...Who Can Heal You?"

Verse 14: The prophets won't heal you. They're the ones who enabled your rebellion, who put you on the fast track to your destruction.

Verses 15-16: Jerusalem's enemies take credit, not knowing they were God's pawns. God swallowed her up, and He was justified in doing it.

2. Not even the _____ (17-22).

So, **great is her fall**, because **great was her unrepentant sin!**

But what about America? If God severely judged Israel, His chosen nation, what makes us think that He won't severely judge our nation and the church along with it?

Lamenting over the evangelical church in America...

(As I now address the evangelical church in America, on page 4, I will borrow from Erwin Lutzer's book, **Is God On America's Side?**)

Even more than lamenting over America's forsaking of God, I'm lamenting the way the church is handling it. The evangelical church especially has made it our mission to heal America. After our study in the book of Acts, do we still think that is our mission? Do we actually think we can save that which God is cursing and judging? When Augustine was told that Rome had fallen, he said, "Whatever men build, men will destroy. So let's get on with _____ the kingdom of God." *Listen, it is not our job to save America!* Our foremost responsibility is not to preserve our freedoms, as important as they are. Our foremost responsibility is to follow Jesus, witnessing to His Gospel of grace and power that is able to save souls. And certainly that doesn't include being known for what we stand against.

The first commandment of the Gospel is to love the Lord our God with all our being; and the second is like it, to love our neighbors as ourselves. Do our neighbors (including our Facebook friends) know, even if they are wretched sinners like we used to be, that we are their truest friends? That we love them and want what's best for them—heaven?

I am joining with all Christians who are praying for a national revival that begins in our own hearts, *because* I believe that without a national revival, our nation will continue to drift toward the chaotic precipice edge of a complete moral and spiritual fall. And yet today in America we have both liberal and conservative pastors confusing the message of the Gospel with the message of politics. **Erwin Lutzer:**

“Might Jesus be rebuking and disciplining the evangelical church as He did the churches in Revelation 2-3? One sign that we are experiencing judgment is that *the church has increased visibility but with diminishing influence* (italics his). The so-called Religious Right had great plans to reverse the moral trends of our nation. We are told that we have helped elect presidents and have impacted public policy. But by identifying these gains as those won by evangelical Christians who are in cahoots with a particular party, we have made this nation believe that the church is a political base rather than the dispenser of the Gospel. Any gains we have made came about at the price of the loss of the Gospel in the wider culture. We have cheapened Christ before a watching world.”

“By becoming publicly partisan and implying that one party is more ‘Christian,’ we have clouded the issues of what Christianity really is. Religion is being redefined as politics; the flag has replaced the cross. And we are feeling the negative repercussions. Today evangelicals are in the news not because of the Gospel, but because of their political support or endorsements.” “Some Christians can get more excited about what commentator Rush Limbaugh has to say than about what their pastor preached in church. To put it clearly, for some Christians, lower taxes, a strong national defense, and lobbying to keep ‘Christ in Christmas’ are more pressing issues than whether their neighbors and friends will spend eternity with God or be lost forever. Our partisan politics are in the news, but our good deeds and the Gospel we represent are not.” **Chris:** Consequently, whether you’re on the right or the left, some of your partisan political views that some of you post on Facebook, make my soul hurt and my heart weep. I lament over us, because with those posts comes an awful price—giving offense.