***Lamentations 5:1-22 Remember, O Lord, what has come upon us; Look, and behold our reproach! 2Our inheritance has been turned over to aliens, And our houses to foreigners.  
3We have become orphans and waifs, Our mothers are like widows. 4We pay for the water we drink, And our wood comes at a price. 5They pursue at our heels; We labor and have no rest.  
6We have given our hand to the Egyptians And the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.***

***7Our fathers sinned and are no more, But we bear their iniquities. 8Servants rule over us;  
There is none to deliver us from their hand. 9We get our bread at the risk of our lives, Because of the sword in the wilderness. 10Our skin is hot as an oven, Because of the fever of famine.  
11They ravished the women in Zion, The maidens in the cities of Judah. 12Princes were hung up by their hands, And elders were not respected. 13Young men ground at the millstones; Boys staggered under loads of wood. 14The elders have ceased gathering at the gate, And the young men from their music. 15The joy of our heart has ceased; Our dance has turned into mourning. 16The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned! 17Because of this our heart is faint; Because of these things our eyes grow dim; 18Because of Mount Zion which is desolate, With foxes walking about on it. 19You, O Lord, remain forever; Your throne from generation to generation. 20Why do You forget us forever, And forsake us for so long a time? 21Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old, 22Unless You have utterly rejected us, And are very angry with us!***

Lord willing, tonight we’ll finish our study of Lamentations. We’re back with Jeremiah as he laments the current degenerate condition of his nation, wickedness of the priests, princes, and people, and the coming conquest of Babylon. I once had a friend that I likened watching his life unfold to being witness to a train wreck in slow motion. There was literally nothing I could do to help until the glass was shattered, the metal twisted, and the smoke cleared. Jeremiah is watching this train wreck called rebellion against God in slow motion, helpless to do more than cry out for repentance and return.

Verses 1-6 *Remember, O Lord, what has come upon us; Look, and behold our reproach! 2Our inheritance has been turned over to aliens, And our houses to foreigners. 3We have become orphans and waifs, Our mothers are like widows. 4We pay for the water we drink, And our wood comes at a price. 5They pursue at our heels; We labor and have no rest. 6We have given our hand to the Egyptians And the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.* ***R****emember, O Lord, what has come upon us; Look, and behold our reproach! Our inheritance has been turned over to aliens, And our houses to foreigners.* Jeremiah laments the coming situation that God has revealed to him. Judah and all of Israel is or soon will be in the grip of the Babylonians and their heathen allies. The Promised Land temporarily will be in the hands of aliens. *We have become orphans and waifs, Our mothers are like widows.* We recall from the study of Daniel that the Babylonians carried away the choice young men and women. The educated and leaders among the people were taken. All that remain will be poor, orphans, crippled, sick, widows, and the destitute. Rebellion will be unlikely. *We pay for the water we drink, And our wood comes at a price.* Water and wood, once free, the people will be forced to buy. *They pursue at our heels; We labor and have no rest.* The people will be slaves, a yoke of bondage on their necks. Like in the time of Egypt, the people suffer under labor. *We have given our hand to the Egyptians and the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.* The Egyptians and the Assyrians are begged for support and sustenance. God is no longer the hope of Israel, but heathen nations once called enemies.

Verses 7-10 *Our fathers sinned and are no more, But we bear their iniquities. 8Servants rule over us; There is none to deliver us from their hand. 9We get our bread at the risk of our lives, Because of the sword in the wilderness. 10Our skin is hot as an oven, Because of the fever of famine.* ***O****ur fathers sinned and are no more, But we bear their iniquities.* The previous generations brought this suffering. Though not innocent by any means, the current generation bears the punishment. Jeremiah 31:29-30 says *– In those days they shall say no more: ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, And the children’s teeth are set on edge.’ 30 But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge.* Each individual works out his or her salvation with fear and trembling. The fact that the father sinned does not force the child. The child chooses to follow the wickedness, roll in the evil. And so it is today. We will suffer what our nation has chosen, but we have personal freedom to pursue prayer and righteousness. I can’t blame my father for my sinful choices and lack of pursuing the God of Hope. *Servants rule over us; There is none to deliver us from their hand.* The slaves of the Babylonians are masters of the greatest of the Jews. *We get our bread at the risk of our lives, Because of the sword in the wilderness.* Not unlike the time of Gideon, we see that there are looters, marauders, and thieves preying on the weakened people of Judah. Grain had to be gathered, wheat threshed, fruit harvested, even at the risk of death by the sword. *Our skin is hot as an oven, Because of the fever of famine.* Recall, we talked about how healthy faces look different than those starving. The color, healthy and pink, eyes bright, flees in the face of famine and other sadnesses.

Verses 11-16 *They ravished the women in Zion, The maidens in the cities of Judah. 12Princes were hung up by their hands, And elders were not respected. 13Young men ground at the millstones; Boys staggered under loads of wood. 14The elders have ceased gathering at the gate, And the young men from their music. 15The joy of our heart has ceased; Our dance has turned into mourning. 16The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned!* ***T****hey ravished the women in Zion, The maidens in the cities of Judah.* The females of the Children of Israel are vulnerable and dishonored. *Princes were hung up by their hands, And elders were not respected.* This doesn’t mean the princes are hung by their hands, but rather the princes are hung up using the hands of the enemy as an example, perhaps even after having been executed. Hanging may have been the means of execution. In Esther 10:12, we see the sons of Haman killed. Then in verse 14, the next day, they were hanged, as an example. *Young men ground at the millstones; Boys staggered under loads of wood.* Using the young men to grind grain like an animal is a common and humiliating use of the enslaved. Boys fainted under heavy loads of wood, being used like beasts of burden. *The elders have ceased gathering at the gate, And the young men from their music.* The gate of the cities were gathering places for the leaders and elders to keep social order and administer justice, but no more. Young men no longer sing with joy. *The joy of our heart has ceased; Our dance has turned into mourning.* Joy is gone, replaced by mourning. Comfort replaced by suffering. *The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned!* A common tradition of the Jews during celebrations was to braid flowers together for a crown. As celebration has ceased, so the crown has fallen in ruin to the ground. The general idea here is that Israel’s glory days are over. Once the chosen, now Israel seems to have been rejected. We know though that God will soon restore.

Verses 17-18 *Because of this our heart is faint; Because of these things our eyes grow dim; 18Because of Mount Zion which is desolate, With foxes walking about on it.* ***B****ecause of this our heart is faint; Because of these things our eyes grow dim.* Because we see how the glory days are over, our heart sinks, our spirits wilt, our eyes are dimmed by tears. *Because of Mount Zion which is desolate, With foxes walking about on it.* The Holy Temple, on Mt Zion, is in ruin, polluted by sin. God has brought it to desolation, so much so that foxes and wildlife roam freely in the ruins.

Verses 19-22*You, O Lord, remain forever; Your throne from generation to generation. 20Why do You forget us forever, And forsake us for so long a time? 21Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old, 22Unless You have utterly rejected us, And are very angry with us!* ***Y****ou, O Lord, remain forever; Your throne from generation to generation.* Despite the calamities and disasters, God is still God and He is Forever. He is not diminished by our failings. His goodness is not lessened by our rebellion. He is still in control, no matter what passes in the world. He is always eager to draw near and help in our distress. *Why do You forget us forever, And forsake us for so long a time?* Why do You forget us God for such a long time? This isn’t an accusation, but the beginning of a plea. *Turn us back to You, O Lord, and we will be restored; Renew our days as of old.* Turn us back to You. You turning us is the only Hope we have. We have no power to save ourselves. Restore us to our former glory. *Unless You have utterly rejected us, And are very angry with us!* The Hebrew has the idea that God cast the Children of Israel off rightly. We plead for God to stay His righteous anger and have mercy and compassion on us, even as we are powerless to save ourselves.

And so, we conclude the Book of Lamentations. Jewish tradition ends the book with a prayer for restoration and mercy. So much of what we have seen applies to our nation. Wickedness prevails. Our young and old are slaves to sin and stuff. We consider ourselves glorious, even as our glory days pass away. Only God can restore! Only God can have mercy and relent! Our fervent prayers will not go unheard. As in the days of Nineveh and Sodom, may we pray for God’s mercy, may we pray for His saving Grace, may we cry out, not falling into the sins of the nation, even while we suffer for the sins of the nation.