

THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS
"Part XXVII: Lamentations - Productively Facing Spiritual Failure"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) When we showed up for prayer meeting last Wednesday night, there was no heat downstairs! It was found that the oil tank was **empty** -- the meter read right at the **bottom!** We notified the oil company with whom we are on automatic refill and they called back Thursday morning, apologizing that "it got away from us"! I am going to be checking both tanks **myself** from now to keep them filled!

(2) **But it reminded me of failure in the spiritual realm:**

Connection Extra: Topics of Interest To Dallas Theological Seminary Alumni, "What About Dallas Theological Seminary and the Promise Keepers Ministry?" (Dallas Theological Seminary: Dallas, Texas, Dec. 1995, p. 2.) I wrote to Chuck, replying that Galatians 1:8-9 orders us to **excommunicate** those with a faith **plus** works gospel **regardless** how many **other** doctrines we have in **common** with them. The Judaizers whose gospel added circumcision to faith would have rejected pornography and abortion on demand along with Paul, but that still did **not** give **him** grounds to **fellowship** with **them**. I told President Swindoll that I could not now recommend Dallas Seminary as a place of training lest its students believe that they could disobey Gal. 1:8-9 and thereby weaken the **gospel's** truth in **their** ministries! So I find that I cannot now recommend others to train at the seminary that gave me so much valuable training in how to exegete the truth of God's holy Word!

(b) Five Nepaugers have shared with me this week their concerns about spiritual failure in parent-child relationships of a large number of Christian families! On Thursday alone I spent time talking over the phone with several Christians about teen suicidal problems, substance abuse and possible immorality, and its effects on **parents!**

Spiritual failure! How can we respond constructively to it?!

Need: *Either I or an associate or a group has failed the Lord! Is there any hope at this point? Where do we go from here?!"*

I. **Though the seed of Abraham had been called by God to check Nimrod's apostasy, they instead became so seduced by it that God had to administer judgment, sending them ALL into captivity.**

- A. Though God created the world and set man up as His deputy, sin deposed him, and Satan became ruler on earth, Gn. 1-5; 2 Cor. 4:4.
- B. The Lord renewed history through the Noahic flood, Gen. 6:1-9:7.
- C. Yet, Noah's descendant, Nimrod, began an apostasy opposing God's rule on earth, Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9; Rev. 12:1-3.
- D. God thus chose Abraham to start a nation to check his sin, Gn. 12:1-3.
- E. Yet, after many challenges en route, that nation failed to curb Nimrod's error, and God had to judge it by Gentile invasion, Gn. 12:4-Jeremiah.
- F. As pictured in Jeremiah's work, Lamentations, the final fall of Jerusalem was **devastating** to the Hebrew people:
 1. Where the Gentile had once not been allowed, the holiest place was laid bare to the desecrating feet of evil soldiers, Lam. 1:10.
 2. Those who used to be rich were now sitting in ash heaps to relieve sores caused by sickness from unsanitary conditions, Lam. 4:5.
 3. Due to the breakdown of the family and the psychological scars of the invasion, even mothers went about seeking their own welfare, ignoring the cries of their toddlers for food and drink, Lam. 4:3-4.

II. **Yet, in the MIDST of such failure, Lamentations skillfully weaves a message of HOPE based on GOD'S great FAITHFULNESS:**

- A. On the surface, Lamentations looks like a merely sad lamentation:
 1. Lamentations uses the "limping meter" of 3+2 where a feeling of hollowness resounds as at a funeral, cf. B. K. C., O.T., p. 1210.
 2. The despair word "Alas" (*'ekah*) appears repeatedly, Ibid.
- B. However, underneath Lamentations teaches that **IN** Judah's **FALL**, there is an amazing **hope** due to God's **faithfulness** to **judge**:
 1. Lamentations records how Jerusalem's fall **precisely** fulfilled the judgments predicted in Moses' Deut. 28 Covenant, Ibid., p. 1209:
 - a. Deut. 28:44 said that Israel would be the tail and the Gentiles the head if they sinned. Lam. 1:5 records its fulfillment.
 - b. Deut. 28:32 said Israel's children would be given to a Gentile nation. Lam. 1:5 records how the children were taken captive.
 - c. Deut. 28:25 said Israel would flee before her enemies due to sin. Lam. 1:6 records how in weakness they fled before pursuers.

- d. Deut. 28:37 predicted that Gentiles would scorn them for sin; Lamentations 2:15 records the clapping of hands and shaking of the head of Gentiles in scorning their Jewish captives.
 - e. Deut. 28:53 said that women would eat their own offspring in judgment for sin; Lam. 2:20 records how this came to pass.
 - f. Deut. 28:50 said the invaders would not respect old or young. Lam. 2:21 shows old & young together lying dead in the streets.
 - g. Deut. 28:30 said that they would build homes, but others would live in them in judgment. Lam. 5:2 records its fulfillment.
 - h. Deut. 28:48 said that Israel would be hungry and thirsty if judged; Lam. 5:10 records Hebrew captives with hot skin, one of the symptoms of fever from hunger.
 - i. Deut. 28:30 said that men would see women to whom they were betrothed given to other men. Lam. 5:11 records its fulfillment.
 - j. Deut. 28:26 said that Israel's bodies would be food for animals in judgment; Lam. 5:18 shows jackals prowling upon Mt. Zion.
2. This very **faithfulness** of God to administer **judgment** offers **hope**:
- a. Lamentations' five chapters, each a dirge, are arranged in a chiasm for **emphasis** where dirge 1 matches dirge 5, dirge 2 matches dirge 4 and dirge 3, the **keynote** one, stands alone, Ibid.
 - b. This **keynote** dirge teaches that God's **LOYAL LOVE** (*hesed*) to His **people** alone keeps Israel existing, Lam. 3:22-23! In other words, **As God so faithfully fulfilled the promised judgments of Deut. 28, WERE Israel to REPENT, He would just as faithfully fulfill Deut. 30 and RESTORE the nation!**

III. **Lamentations adds to the "thread of redemption" by SECURING Israel's restoration: since God's loyal love alone preserves Israel (Lam. 3:22-23), and since God's Abrahamic Covenant for her blessings is unconditional, she WILL have a WONDERFUL future!**

***Application:** If experiencing spiritual failure, realize the reality of Scripture's truth **BY** the pain of that failure and hope in the **EQUAL** faithfulness of God to fulfill its teaching on renewal, and (1) believe on Christ for salvation (Jn. 3:16; 6:37b) and (2) fellowship with Him as a believer, 1 Jn. 1:9; Gal. 5:16-23; 1 Jn. 2:3-6. (3) To pick up the pieces and go on, recall God's unconditional promises to build His Church (Mtt. 16:18) and go forward by faith in HIS reliability!*

***Lesson:** God so precisely fulfills Scripture in disciplining us that this faithfulness to keep His Word in defeat **ENCOURAGES** us that He will equally restore us if we but repent in accord with Scripture's promises!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the solution . . .)

When a member in our Church last Sunday saw red fruit splatterings plastered all over the high stairwell wall facing the fellowship hall at the back stairwell, he at first felt irritated.

However, believing in the Lord's future work in the hearts of people, and concerned that the markings not become an issue with visitors that might come to the church and get turned off to the teachings here, but also concerned that he deal in grace with others as God had dealt with him, he did something **constructive** about it.

He got down the tall ladder we have in our balcony, carried it all the way to the stairwell out back, and propped it up at the base of the stairwell. Then, with a bucket of warm water, steel wool and a cloth, he climbed the ladder and was barely able to reach so as to get all of the dried, red fruit stuff off of the wall. It now looks like a wall that merely needs a fresh coat of paint!

He then put the ladder back and resolved to be on the lookout for further problems he could cover over until Christ's building of His body got things improved where fruit was no longer thrown at the walls of Nepaug Church!

The person who did this wants to remain anonymous as he did it for the glory of God alone! However, it was **his** contribution in faith toward spiritual renewal at Nepaug Church!

That's how we rebound out of spiritual failure! We recall the promises of God and the purposes of God to keep building His church, and we go forward with hope in GOD'S PROMISE of Matthew 16:18 alone -- not in ourselves or in others!