

Lamentations 2 "Looking at Suffering from God's Perspective" **

Main Idea: Lamentations 2 emphasizes the importance of looking at suffering from God's perspective. To do so, this lamentation teaches us to engage in three vertical activities when suffering hits.

I. We need to see the Lord in our suffering (1-12).

A. Jeremiah shared that the Lord brought about this destruction (1-8).

1. He destroyed Zion's splendor (1).
2. He destroyed Zion's kingdom (2).
3. He destroyed Zion's power (3).
4. He destroyed Zion's beauty (4).
5. He destroyed Zion's palaces (5).
6. He destroyed His temple (6).
7. He destroyed His altar (7).
8. He destroyed Zion's wall (8).

B. Jeremiah shared the results of this destruction (9-10).

1. He took away their king (9a).
2. He took away their Law (9b).
3. He took away their joy (10).

C. Jeremiah shared how it affected him (11-12).

1. He grieved (11).
2. He grieved most for the children (12).

II. We need to help others see the Lord in their suffering (13-19).

A. Jeremiah verbalized what his people were feeling (13).

B. Jeremiah verbalized what went wrong (14).

1. They had preachers who told them what they wanted to hear.
2. What they needed were preachers who would expose their sin.

C. Jeremiah verbalized what their enemies were saying (15-16).

D. Jeremiah verbalized what the Lord had just done (17).

E. Jeremiah verbalized what his people needed to do (18-19).

1. You need to repent.
2. You need to pour out your heart to the Lord.
3. You need to pray for your children.

III. We need to talk to the Lord about what we seeing (20-22).

- A. Jeremiah asked for the Lord's attention.
- B. Jeremiah affirmed that the Lord's anger got their attention.

Application: Some lessons we learn from Lamentations 2...

1. It shows us that God is not passive when sin is present.
2. Like all Scripture, it points us to Christ, namely, to His cross.
3. If suffering enters our lives, it went through the hands of a good God first.

Far too often, we don't think rightly about suffering when it enters our lives. And if we don't think rightly about it, we certainly won't respond rightly to it.

Imagine a man who complained of pain in his chest to his wife. "Do something!" he insisted. So she headed for the phone, but he quickly grabbed her arm and asked, "What are you doing?"

"I'm calling the doctor," she explained. "I'm afraid there's something serious going on and we need to find out what it is."

"No you're not!" he insisted. "I don't want to know what's causing this pain. I just want it to leave. Give me some of those heavy-duty pain killers from the cabinet, and a sleeping pill, too. I'll feel better in the morning."

The book of Proverbs has a good word for that man. It calls him a *fool* because to have the symptoms of severe chest pains but not pursue the potentially life-threatening cause, wanting temporary relief instead, is foolish. The God-given purpose of pain is to alert us of something that needs attention. In this case, the man's chest pain is likely alerting him that he needs to give attention to his heart.

I love the title of medical doctor Paul Brand and Philip Yancey's book, *Pain: The Gift Nobody Wants*. That's our problem precisely. We don't see pain as a God-given gift designed to accomplish something for our benefit. As the old commercial put it, we *haven't got time for the pain*, let alone much interest in finding out why the pain has come so as to address the heart problem.

To begin with, it's because of sin that there is suffering in the world. That's a given. Furthermore, it's because we are sinners that we do not naturally respond rightly to suffering. We need help if we are going to suffer in a God-pleasing way.

Thankfully, God has graciously given us such help in His Word in the book of Lamentations. Last week we began a series in this often-neglected book which we're calling, *"When It's Time to Mourn."*

God gave this book to His people right after the Babylonian army destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C., killed untold numbers of Jews, and carried most of the survivors into exile in chains. The book is anonymous, but many feel the author was the prophet Jeremiah. I've suggested it's a *grieving guide* of sorts, not just for individuals but for a nation.

Last time I mentioned that the structure of the book is significant. For starters, it's poetry, five poems to be precise, one per chapter. In fact, in the Hebrew Bible Lamentations appears, not in The Prophets' section (as in our English Bibles, between Jeremiah and Ezekiel), but in the section called "The Writings" and is tucked away between the books Ecclesiastes and Esther.[\[1\]](#)

And what we don't see in our English Bibles is the fact that these poems are acrostics in the Hebrew text. That means the writer begins the first verse with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *aleph*, the second verse with the second letter, *bet*, and so on through the last letter, *tav*. You'll notice that the first two chapters have twenty-two verses, the third chapter sixty-six verses (a triple acrostic), the fourth has twenty-two again, as does chapter five (but the final chapter drops the acrostic).

But why the use of the acrostic? For starters, it helps the grieving Jews grieve thoroughly, which is something suffering people are prone *not* to do. We'd rather take the pain killer and get on with life than deal with the heart problem. But these five poems encourage, even force the suffering mourners to mourn thoroughly.

What's more, the acrostic actually gives hope to the hurting people. How? It communicates a *limiting factor* to the devastation. To them, it feels like life is in total chaos, and that their tragedy will never end. Not so, says this book. Yes, what we're enduring is terrible, but like the alphabet, it will end.

The acrostic shows that the tragedy has a limit to it. And so does the grieving. Yes, there's a time to mourn, but then there's a time to stop mourning, says Lamentations.

That's easier said than done for the hurting person. This past Thursday night I woke up in the middle of the night and my mind started racing. As I lay there I thought of one situation after another after another in my life. I couldn't turn off the mental juices and felt like the ball in a pinball machine that wouldn't stop ricocheting.

It dawned on me that this is precisely what happens to us when we face hardship in life (in fact, I got up that night and jotted down this thought so I'd remember it in the morning!). Our minds tend to go over and over the situation endlessly, jumping from thought to thought, picking up speed as it races through the night. And that's where an acrostic can serve us well.

A – **A**h, the pain is great in my life!

B – **B**efore your throne I'm coming now, O Lord!

C – **C**an a person escape your presence?

D – **D**o not your eyes see what I've done and what I'm now experiencing?

E – **E**verything is from You, through You, and to You, including the sleep I desire and the sleeplessness You've sent tonight.

And so on. That's what an acrostic can do. It forces you to engage your mind and work through your situation carefully and prayerfully. It seems to me that's sort of what's happening in Lamentations.

There's an important perspective of suffering that we're prone to neglect. It's the top-down perspective. When suffering we tend to get preoccupied with the horizontal view, but what we need is to look at it *top-down*. That's what the second Lamentation helped the suffering, sixth-century BC Jews do. Lamentations 2 emphasizes the importance of looking at our suffering from God's perspective. To do so, this lamentation teaches us to engage in three vertical activities when suffering hits.

I. We need to see the Lord in our suffering (1-12).

As we read through this second dirge we're going to notice three primary movements. Right off the bat

in the first ten verses, we'll hear direct references to "the Lord" and the pronouns "He, His, and Him" again and again. If you count the number of actions attributed to the LORD in the first movement, you'll discover the total comes to around *forty*, that's right, forty depictions of God's involvement in this tragedy.

You may not like the next statement, but it's in the text loud and clear...

A. Jeremiah shared that the Lord brought about this destruction (1-8).

By the way, perhaps you're wondering, "What's the point of talking about how the Jews suffered twenty-six centuries ago? It's not *our* suffering, so it doesn't apply to us." But it does, for as we look at what happened to the Jews we're able to learn some vital things about God Himself and about our own suffering.

Of the forty divine activities, allow me to point out eight of them.

1. *He destroyed Zion's splendor (1).* "How the Lord has covered the Daughter of Zion with the cloud of his anger! He has hurled down the splendor of Israel from heaven to earth; he has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger."

Zion, in essence, is another name for Jerusalem.^[2] The Daughter of Zion is a reference to God's people who lived there, and Jeremiah uses it throughout the book. Here he says that the Lord Himself is the One who destroyed Zion's splendor.

Even the fact that the temple was there didn't stop Him. Jeremiah says the Lord did not "remember His footstool" in the day of His anger. 1 Chronicles 28:2 indicates that God's footstool is a reference to the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies.

As I mentioned in our last study, I am indebted to Walter Kaiser's commentary on Lamentations, *A Biblical Approach to Personal Suffering*, and will be referring to it frequently in this and future studies. Kaiser explains, "The reason that the ark was named his footstool is that the Lord was enthroned and seated between the cherubim (1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; Pss. 80:1; 99:1, 5; 132:7), which were over the ark of the covenant; thus the Lord's feet rested on the cover of the ark (the mercy seat)."^[3]

Did you catch that? God was so angry with His people and their sin that even His footstool, His mercy seat, couldn't stop Him. No more mercy! Now it's time for judgment!

There are people who have trouble attributing anger to God. Marcion, for instance, lived in the second century and promoted a God who never took offense, who was never angry. For this and other reasons, Marcion (who was Gnostic) cut out the Old Testament and tried to purge Christianity of every trace of Judaism. The church eventually expelled Marcion in A.D. 144, but his influence remains even to this day.

Why do people struggle to attribute anger to God? Probably because the kind of anger we usually see (and demonstrate) is explosive, out of control, irrational, selfish anger. But that's not true of God's anger. When God expresses His anger He is always under control, rational, and righteous. Jeremiah calls attention to God's anger ten times in this book and five times in chapter two (in verses 1a, 1b, 3, 6, and 22; and mentions His wrath in verses 2 and 4).

We shouldn't wonder why we see God's anger at times. We should wonder why we don't see it more often in light of our sin. We certainly see it here. He destroyed Zion's splendor. Next...

2. *He destroyed Zion's kingdom (2).* "Without pity the Lord has swallowed up all the dwellings of Jacob; in his wrath he has torn down the strongholds of the Daughter of Judah. He has brought her kingdom and its princes down to the ground in dishonor."

H. L. Ellison suggests that the second lamentation was written right after the capture of the city of Jerusalem (see 2 Kings 25:3-4), for as he says, "Unless it is poetic license, the dead still lay on the streets unburied."^[4]

3. *He destroyed Zion's power (3)*. "In fierce anger he has cut off every horn of Israel. He has withdrawn his right hand at the approach of the enemy. He has burned in Jacob like a flaming fire that consumes everything around it." *Horn* speaks of power in the Bible. To cut off Israel's *horn*, is to affirm that Israel's power is gone, and it's gone not merely because the Babylonians overthrew their country (which they did), but because the Lord Himself took it away.

4. *He destroyed Zion's beauty (4)*. "Like an enemy he has strung his bow; his right hand is ready. Like a foe he has slain *all who were pleasing to the eye* [*italics added*]; he has poured out his wrath like fire on the tent of the Daughter of Zion."

5. *He destroyed Zion's palaces (5)*. "The Lord is like an enemy; he has swallowed up Israel. He has swallowed up all her palaces and destroyed her strongholds. He has multiplied mourning and lamentation for the Daughter of Judah."

6. *He destroyed His temple (6)*. "He has laid waste his dwelling like a garden; he has destroyed his place of meeting. The LORD has made Zion forget her appointed feasts and her Sabbaths; in his fierce anger he has spurned both king and priest."

Let that sink in. The Jews didn't have their temple to go to any longer, and they didn't have it because *the Lord* took it away. He destroyed His own House, the place He had designated for His people to come into His presence. But not just the temple. He stopped the holy feasts, too. No more Feast of Tabernacles, or Feast of Unleavened Bread. Or Sabbaths.

Did you catch that? God stopped the very activities He Himself had commanded. Why would He do that? Because those things were supposed to be a means to something and not an end. So is coming to church, for that matter. If you are not giving yourself first to Him, then He's not interested in you doing things for Him, even good things. Beware, my friend, of vain and empty religion. It rouses His anger.

7. *He destroyed His altar (7)*. "The Lord has rejected his altar and abandoned his sanctuary. He has handed over to the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have raised a shout in the house of the LORD as on the day of an appointed feast."

Now that's a staggering thought. The Lord rejected His altar. Without that altar, there's no acceptable place for bringing sacrifices. And without blood sacrifices, there's no atonement for sin. And without atonement for sin, there's no way for a sinner to be right with God!

The Lord rejected the very altar He commanded His people to build. What does that say to us about the Lord? For starters it says that sinners need more than an altar. The Jews had been bringing lambs to this altar for centuries, right up to the day that those Babylonian soldiers smashed and burned it to the ground. Merely coming to this altar didn't mean a thing to Him if the heart of the offerer wasn't right. God hates vain ritual.

But that's the sinner's problem. We don't have right hearts. We need a new heart if we're going to offer God anything that's acceptable, including our sacrifices. That's why Jeremiah announced that God was going to make a new covenant with His people (see Jer. 31:31-34), one in which He Himself would write His law *on their hearts*. If we're going to be right with God, we need a new heart.

What's more, that was the point of this altar, this temple, and the whole sacrificial system in the first place. It all pointed to something else, to another altar (the cross), another temple (Christ's body), and one final sacrifice (the Lamb of God who would be slain for the sins of His people outside this same city six hundred years later).

If you are not a Christian, I'm so glad you are here, but please know this. You can't patch things up with God by coming to church. You need a new heart, and you need forgiveness, and you can have both if you will come, and only if you will come, to Christ.

But that's not all the Lord destroyed, says Jeremiah.

8. *He destroyed Zion's wall (8)*. "The LORD determined to tear down the wall around the Daughter of Zion. He stretched out a measuring line and did not withhold his hand from destroying. He made ramparts and walls lament; together they wasted away."

Jeremiah makes it sound like the Lord Himself, rather than the Babylonians, attacked Jerusalem and smashed its wall into rubble. How so? Because the Lord is *sovereign*, my friend. In fact, Jeremiah will spell it out clearly in Lamentations 3:37-38, "Who can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come?" Where do calamities come from? From the Lord Most High, says Jeremiah. And he saw it firsthand. I can't explain it, but I believe it. The Lord decrees the good things, and the calamities too.

B. Jeremiah shared the results of this destruction (9-10). "Her gates have sunk into the ground; their bars he has broken and destroyed. Her king and her princes are exiled among the nations, the law is no more, and her prophets no longer find visions from the LORD. The elders of the Daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have sprinkled dust on their heads and put on sackcloth. The young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground."

We're talking about suffering on a national scale like we've never known as a nation. And it didn't just happen. Jeremiah attributes three results to the Lord's judgment.

1. *He took away their king (9a)*. Literally. You can read 2 Kings 24 for the details. Nebuchadnezzar took King Jehoiachin captive to Babylon and made Zedekiah his puppet king (15-17). Later, when King Zedekiah rebelled, he was blinded, put in shackles, and hauled off to Babylon where he died (2 Kings 25:7).

2. *He took away their Law (9b)*. If there's anything a nation needs when destruction hits, it's leadership. If you doubt that, take a look at earthquake stricken Haiti. Relief comes and it sits on the ship without leadership. The people need decision-makers to put the pieces back together. That's gone, says Jeremiah. No more king to lead the nation, but no more guidance from the Lord either. No more law and no more prophetic visions.

3. *He took away their joy (10)*. The elders are sitting on the ground in silence and the young women are bowed low, too, the picture of absolute hopelessness.

At this point, Jeremiah can take it no longer. He breaks from the third person to the first person in verses 11-12 and shares how all this affected him personally.

C. Jeremiah shared how it affected him (11-12). Verse 11—"My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within, my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed, because children and infants faint in the streets of the city."

What did Jeremiah do?

1. *He grieved (11)*. I mean, he grieved to the point where he couldn't see straight and his heart fell out of his chest to the ground. And did you catch what hit him the hardest? Above all the nightmarish atrocities he witnessed...

2. *He grieved most for the children (12)*. He even quotes them in verse 12, "They say to their mothers, 'Where is bread and wine?' as they faint like wounded men in the streets of the city, as their lives ebb away in their mothers' arms."

And yet there's hope even in this. Do you see what Jeremiah is doing? It's what we need to do when we're suffering. We need to look at it *top-down*. We need to see the Lord in our suffering. He's not on vacation. He's not oblivious to what's causing our pain. He's right there in the midst of it all.

In your job loss. When the doctor uses the "c" word. When a snow avalanche hits China, or an earthquake hits Haiti. He's there, and He's at work, and we need to fix our gaze on Him. That should lead

to a second vertical activity.

II. We need to help others see the Lord in their suffering (13-19).

From a structural standpoint, another pronoun shift occurs in verse 13, from “He” (1-9) to “I” (11-12) to “you” (13-19). That’s because in this movement Jeremiah is trying to help his people do what he just did, that is, to look at their suffering top-down. He did so by putting into words for them five subjects in verses 13-19.

A. Jeremiah verbalized what his people were feeling (13). “What can I say for you? With what can I compare you, O Daughter of Jerusalem? To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, O Virgin Daughter of Zion? Your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you?” Sometimes when you’re hurting, it’s hard to put your feelings into language. *Let me help you, says Jeremiah. Your wound is as deep as the sea.*

Okay, that’s how we feel, yes, but why?

B. Jeremiah verbalized what went wrong (14). “The visions of your prophets were false and worthless; they did not expose your sin to ward off your captivity. The oracles they gave you were false and misleading.”

Why did the tragic destruction of Jerusalem occur anyway? You can answer question that in a couple of ways. Ultimately, the Lord had answered it on Mount Sinai eight centuries earlier when He said, “If you do not obey my laws, I will destroy your land...” (check out Leviticus 26:27-33 for the details). So the people disobeyed God’s Word. That’s why the destruction came.

But here’s another reason. It’s not just the people, but the preachers who were to blame. How so?

1. *They had preachers who told them what they wanted to hear.* Like Hananiah, for example. According to Jeremiah 28, in the fourth year of King Zedekiah’s reign he announced, “This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says, ‘I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon (2).’” I love what Jeremiah did next. He told Hananiah with sarcasm dripping from his lips, “Amen! May the Lord do so (6)!” And then he told him in Jeremiah 28:15-16, “Listen, Hananiah! The LORD has not sent you, yet you have persuaded this nation to trust in lies. Therefore, this is what the LORD says: ‘I am about to remove you from the face of the earth. This very year you are going to die, because you have preached rebellion against the LORD.’” Two months later, Hananiah died. Seven years later, Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians.

Beloved, beware of preachers who tell you what you want to hear. They don’t have the power to pull off their sweet-sounding predictions. Jeremiah hit the nail on the head when he told his people...

2. *What they needed were preachers who would expose their sin.* Yet that’s what their prophets like Hananiah didn’t do. “They did not expose your sin to ward off your captivity,” says Lamentations 2:14.

Here’s a vital mark of God’s kind of preacher, beloved. He exposes sin, and not just “the other guy’s” sin, but *your* sin. That’s not easy to do, for the fear of man and the love of man’s approval are powerful deterrents that keep preachers from exposing sin.

But answer this. What kind of preacher do you want? Do you want a preacher who exposes your sin or do you want one that makes you feel good? I need to tell you this. A lot of people hated Jeremiah. But in the end they wished they had listened.

This is no teenage, “I told you so!” coming from Jeremiah. He’s trying to help his people look at their suffering top-down. That’s why he verbalized, for their sake, what they’re feeling, and then what went wrong. And thirdly...

C. Jeremiah verbalized what their enemies were saying (15-16). “All who pass your way clap

their hands at you; they scoff and shake their heads at the Daughter of Jerusalem: 'Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?' All your enemies open their mouths wide against you; they scoff and gnash their teeth and say, 'We have swallowed her up. This is the day we have waited for; we have lived to see it.'"

There are always mockers ready to have their say when the people of God fall. And mock they did in the sixth century B.C. "Did you hear what happened to those uppity-uppity folks who've claimed to be God's chosen people? Chosen, right! Bunch of hypocrites! Got what they deserved! Good for them!"

Tough to say, but needed, and Jeremiah knew it. His people had to face the facts that their sinful actions had tarnished God's beautiful reputation. They weren't the only ones affected by this tragedy. So was He. He was now the brunt of the pagans' jokes.

But even in this Jeremiah affirms God's sovereignty. Notice verse 17, "The LORD has done what he planned; he has fulfilled his word, which he decreed long ago. He has overthrown you without pity, he has let the enemy gloat over you, he has exalted the horn of your foes." In other words...

D. Jeremiah verbalized what the Lord had just done (17). Once again he sees the situation top-down. But this isn't fatalism. Jeremiah is going somewhere with this, namely...

E. Jeremiah verbalized what his people needed to do (18-19). Three things...

1. *You need to repent.* That's verse 18, "The hearts of the people cry out to the Lord. O wall of the Daughter of Zion, let your tears flow like a river day and night; give yourself no relief, your eyes no rest." Granted, there's more to repenting than crying, but that's a great place to start. When destruction is all around you because of your sin, it's time to let the tears flow like a river and repent!

2. *You need to pour out your heart to the Lord.* That's the first part of verse 19, "Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin; pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord." When your life is in shambles, don't run *from* the Lord, but *to* Him. Don't try to patch up things in your own strength. Lay it before Him. Lay *yourself* before Him. Pour out your heart like water in His presence. And then...

3. *You need to pray for your children.* That's the last part of verse 19, "Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street."

Our sinful decisions never affect just us. Sadly, it's our kids that often bear the brunt of our folly. My heart aches when I hear someone say, "I've had it with my marriage. I'm not happy anymore. And don't throw a guilt trip on me about the kids. They'll be just fine." Fine? Really? You'd better listen to Jeremiah.

What should you do when you find yourself in tragic circumstances with your world crashing around you? That's a fitting question on this particular day we call the Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, for since our Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973, millions of women have felt the weight of the world. *What should I do? My boyfriend won't support this child. My parents will be disgraced. The baby might have health problems. What should I do?* Jeremiah gives the answer. It's not complicated. Repent. Pour out your heart to the Lord. Then pray for your children.

By the way, why pray for your kids? It's because though you are powerless to help them, He's not! And I believe God answered this pray request. Remember four teenage boys by the names of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel? They ended up in Babylon, apparently alone (were there parents killed?). But God protected them, and even promoted them to positions of influence in the secular empire.

This isn't a sentimental prayer. I think that in reality it's a messianic prayer. Jeremiah knew that the future of God's messianic plan depended on children. If all the Jewish children died, then the nation died. And if the nation died, so did God's promise to David to bring the Messiah into the world. Shealtiel lived! Remember him? He's Jehoiachin's son, and you'll find him in Matthew 1:12, where he's listed as the next

link in the chain that takes us to King Jesus!

Three vertical activities when suffering hits. One, we need to see the Lord in our suffering. Two, we need to help others see the Lord in their suffering. Here's three...

III. We need to talk to the Lord about what we seeing (20-22).

"Look, O LORD, and consider: Whom have you ever treated like this? Should women eat their offspring, the children they have cared for? Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? Young and old lie together in the dust of the streets; my young men and maidens have fallen by the sword. You have slain them in the day of your anger; you have slaughtered them without pity. As you summon to a feast day, so you summoned against me terrors on every side. In the day of the LORD's anger no one escaped or survived; those I cared for and reared, my enemy has destroyed."

What's Jeremiah doing here? He's praying. What's his prayer? It's twofold.

A. Jeremiah asked for the Lord's attention. "Look, O LORD!" And then...

B. Jeremiah affirmed that the Lord's anger got their attention. That's not a given, for sure. When people suffer, many people turn a deaf ear to the Lord. Not Jeremiah. He turns to the Lord, and by penning this lamentation he's helping his people do the same.

Application: Some lessons we learn from Lamentations 2...

1. *It shows us that God is not passive when sin is present.* Sometimes we get complacent. I know I do. We get used to sin in our lives with nothing happening. It's just a matter of time, says Jeremiah. We cannot afford to be passive about dealing with our sin. But how can we? That's the second lesson of Lamentations 2...

2. *Like all Scripture, it points us to Christ, namely, to His cross.* In John 5:39 Jesus made it clear that all Scripture speaks of Him. That includes this second Lamentations. As Walter Kaiser observes, "Had He [God] not cared or loved so intently He would not have troubled Himself to call His wandering sinners back to His embrace."^[5] That's what this is all about, beloved. God hates sin, but He loves the sinner. Yes, He judges sin, but His intent is to restore the sinner. And that's why He sent His own Son to the cross, so He could judge sin and restore the sinner. He'll restore you today, if you'll repent and put your trust in Christ.

3. *If suffering enters our lives, you can be sure it went through the hands of a good God first.* And that's reason to be encouraged, my friend!

****Note:** This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

^[1] The order of The Writings in the Hebrew Bible (*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*) is: Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles.

^[2] See 2 Samuel 5:7. Zion referred to the southernmost hill of the city of Jerusalem, but later became synonymous with the city itself.

^[3] Walter Kaiser, p. 66.

^[4] H. L. Ellison, p. 710.

^[5] Kaiser, p. 62.