

How to Speak About God When He Hurts Us

No Other - Leaders Training

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The book of Lamentations is the heart-cry of Jeremiah when he and his people were being hurt by God, and by their enemies, and by their own sin. How he speaks of this divine hurting shows us some of the various ways we may speak about God in our own pain. If we affirm them all, then not one of them will be taken amiss.

The Lord directly does the hurting (2:1-4).

"The Lord in his anger has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud!... The Lord has swallowed up without mercy all the habitations of Jacob;... He has cut down in fierce anger all the might of Israel;... he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob, consuming all around....He has killed all who were delightful in our eyes in the tent of the daughter of Zion."

The enemies have done the hurting and God has exalted their might (2:16-17).

"All your enemies rail against you; they hiss, they gnash their teeth, they cry.... The Lord has done what he purposed;... he has made the enemy rejoice over you and exalted the might of your foes."

The enemy has done the hurting, as if the Lord were not watching! (1:9-11;3:49-50).

Her fall is terrible; she has no comforter. 'O Lord, behold my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!... Look, O Lord, and see, for I am despised.'... My eyes will flow without ceasing, without respite, until the Lord from heaven looks down and sees."

The hurting happens as if by God's "forgetting" and "forsaking" them (5:20).

"Why do you forget us forever, why do you forsake us for so many days?"

The Lord will repay the enemies who did the hurting on earth (3:64).

"You will repay them, O Lord, according to the work of their hands."

The Lord will follow his hurting with compassion (3:32).

"Though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love."

God's hurting us is not "from his heart" – not his deepest delight (3:33).

"He does not willingly [literally "from his heart" *millibboi*] afflict or grieve the children of men."

In his hurting the Lord shows mercy every morning (3:22-23).

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

God's decisive mercy is his causing the erring people to repent; he removes the cause of his own wrath (5:21).

"Cause us to return (*hasibenu*) to yourself, O Lord, and we will return (*wunasub*)! Renew our days as of old."

When God is hurting us, wait patiently for the salvation of the Lord (3:26).

"The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him."

In and after God's hurting us, he is our only hope and portion (3:24).

"'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.'"