The Surprising Activity of God

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang. Thank you for joining us.!

I was back and about 10 days ago I was in the gym and my phone rang and he was coming in town to do a conference with college and high school students at OBU.
And so it just kind of worked out last minute to have him here and so that was a thrill for us. Our men in the Institute just finished their final exam.
We've got about 90 students that are a part of that right now and so they just took their final exam for New Testament 1. And we'll look forward to getting those graded and we'll begin our next course here in just a couple of weeks moving to Old Testament 2.
So if you know somebody who was, that's in the Institute, encourage them, pray for them, let them know that you're proud of them and ask them how they did on their final.
[1:21] This would be the night to ask them because they don't know. So they can just be honest and tell you, I think I did well. And they won't be saying anything wrong. But I'm so proud of those men and how hard they work.

Just to give you an idea, they've got videos they watch every week. They've got reading assignments to do. They've got online quiz they take.
Then they've got scripture to memorize. Then we come to class here in person and lead that class. They've got quizzes at each class and then a final exam. And so it's a lot of work these men do. And when they finish and graduate, they've had the chance to learn a lot. I'm very, very proud of those men. So many of you that are already here tonight that are in that. Gentlemen, I'm so proud of you.
Thankful for your work. Thankful for your commitment to learn. And encourage you to press on. A week ago, we had our ladies out of theology here and had our largest gathering we've had.
[2:24] I think 460 ladies, something like that, that were here a week ago. And just love how the Lord's opened doors for our church to be a part of training and equipping. And, of course, tomorrow we are hosting Steve Lawson's preaching conference.

He'll be here Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. So as the Lord brings that to your mind, please pray for him and for the men who are here. We've already got some men who are here tonight in our evening service that have traveled to be here for the conference.
And so I really appreciate these men who have taken time to come and join us in worship tonight. If you see someone you don't know, introduce yourself and be friendly and let them know you're glad they're here a part of our church.
Our desire the next three days is just to be an encouragement to these men who are here. They've come to learn. They've come to sharpen their skills. They've come because they're committed to preaching the word of God in a faithful way.
And we pray that will happen. We also, though, as a church, just want to encourage these men. One of the things that is just forever on my heart is how our church can play a role in blessing, encouraging, and strengthening other churches.
[3:38] Any way that we can do that, I'm always eager for us to do so. And if we can play a role in encouraging and strengthening other pastors, that exponentially is just a ripple effect to the people and the congregations we are able to prayerfully encourage.

And so it's such a blessing to be able to have a church that has the facilities to be able to do things like this conference. And just the friendships and relationships the Lord has given to us to be able to have those doors open.

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We're so thankful for them and for those in our church who are always so quick to serve. So thankful for you. And one of the things that Dr. Muller was saying to me today is he said in my office, he said, No wonder you love your church so much.
He said, You just pull on the church campus and you just sense the love and grace of the church. And that is certainly true. That is certainly true.
I can't imagine serving anywhere else. I can't imagine doing ministry with anybody other than you in this church. And just the sweetest, most gracious, most servant-minded people I've ever known anything about.
[4:53] And it is just an honor to be a part of walking with you and serving with you. I tell people all the time, one of the real thrills of my life is to be a member here. I love my role.

I love what I get to do as pastor, but I'm a member here. This is the church that I'm a member of, that I serve with, that I'm strengthened by. And every Sunday, I'm just amazed at the privilege of getting to come and to worship and to sing with you and to hear testimonies of baptism that we heard this morning.
I'm just so thankful for all that the Lord is doing. This is the sweetest place to be. And I'm so, so thankful.
While we gather in here, be mindful that our children's choirs and youth choirs have started up. And last week, we had 110 in our youth choir.
They're meeting right now. It's the most we've ever had in that group. I don't know how they're doing that because we don't have 110 chairs. I'm not sure we have room for 110 people.
[6:01] So, but John emerged unbroken. So, be excited for that. And we had 117, I think, in our different children's choirs on top of that.

And so, just so many good things that the Lord is doing and so grateful. One last thing. Be in prayer for our membership class. Our next round of membership classes starts this Wednesday. It's a three-week class.
And we've got a very large sign-up again for people wanting to join our church. And we just receive that as good gifts from the Lord. We want to be faithful to teach whoever God brings to us.
Train and equip whoever He would allow us to. We want to serve whoever the Lord would bring to us. And when I look at a membership class and see how many people are on there, I always feel a couple of things.
I feel excited for how the Lord continues to grow our church. I also feel just a massive sense of responsibility that our church has.
[7:02] We talked about this in staffing last Monday. Numbers aren't everything. There's a lot more to the church than numbers. But one of the things that it shows us is just how accountable we must be for what the Lord has entrusted to us.

When you look at how many people of all ages, new members, people who are a part of our training and equipping programs, it's thrilling.
But the Lord has given us a lot. And we must be faithful with all of it. So, as we say often, please be prayerful.
Let's never trust our structure more than prayer. Let's never trust our experience more than prayer. Let's never trust our gifting more than prayer.
We've got to be a continual, faithful, praying church. That's where the power comes from. And we want to train and equip, make disciples, send out, all of those things.
[8:10] But that happens because God's people pray. So, never lose sight of the importance. Prayer is a non-negotiable for us.

We've got to be a humble people, quick to pray, looking to the Lord for direction in His Word, for the empowerment of His Spirit. And we know this, any good that comes from what we do is because of the Lord's gracious hand.
Amen? We work hard. We give. We sacrifice. We work. We volunteer. We do all those things. But at the end of it all, if not for the blessing of the Lord, we could not make anything significant happen. We are desperately dependent upon the Spirit to move in power among us. So, let's pray believing that, and we'll pray that way even this week for the gentleman we're honored to host here at the preaching conference.
Well, if you've got your Bible, open with me tonight once again to the book of Lamentations. I hope you're able to have heard Dr. Mola this morning.

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[9:14] He said a few things I thought were really helpful even as we look at Lamentations. One is we preach the Word because we believe it. We believe the Word.

That's what we were talking about at lunch is just that we have this sold-out conviction that we really believe the Bible. And we really believe that the one thing the church must do is teach the Word of God.
There are a number of things we can do. There are some good things that we can do. But the one thing we must do is we must faithfully proclaim the Word of God.
And one of the ways you know if a church really believes that the Word of God must be preached is how you turn to God's Word.
Do you see this as your authority? Do you see this as something that's Holy Spirit-inspired? Do you see this as something that is profitable for our teaching and our training, our reproof, and our instruction and training in righteousness?
[10:19] And so whether we are in Luke 16 like this morning with Dr. Mola or Mark 9 like we've been at as a church recently or on Sunday evenings Lamentations, what we are seeing is the very Word of God, the revealed heart and mind of God.

And wherever the Word of God is faithfully taught, there is great power because the Holy Spirit who inspired that Word is the Holy Spirit alive within His people helping us to understand, to see, to believe, to know, and to do all that we are commanded to do.
And that is our desire, that we would believe it and that we would do what it says. So in Lamentations, we spent a week looking at the book as a whole, the five chapters.
And last week we looked through chapter 1, and today, tonight, we're going to look at chapter 2 specifically. And it won't take long in looking at chapter 2 to see that we're looking in part at the anger of God.
Admittedly, the anger of God is not something that people like to talk about. Many people would like to ignore it or just dismiss it altogether. When you talk about the wrath of God, unbelievers get suspicious, and even Christians can start to squirm when we talk about God's wrath.
[11:48] But the fact of the matter is, the book of Lamentations will not let you avoid it. You can't read the book of Lamentations without having to confront the reality that God's anger is real.

Of course, this isn't just an Old Testament thing. This is New Testament. Romans chapter 1, verse 18 says, The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.
So I've titled this evening's message, The Surprising Activity of God. And I think as we go through, you'll see exactly what I mean by that. If you want to take a few notes to help us walk through this, verses 1 to 8 deal with the judgment of God.
The judgment of God. And two things specifically I want you to see here in verses 1 to 8 about the judgment of God. One is that God is angry.
Look at verse 1 of chapter 2. By the way, if you haven't been with us the last couple of weeks, remember in Lamentations chapter 1, chapter 2, 22 verses, each verse is walking through the Hebrew alphabet.
[13:05] All right? So you've got one verse per letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It's an acrostic. It's not only helpful for memorization. It's also a poetic way of saying that this subject is being dealt with in its entirety.

We can say that we are looking at God's anger, at the destruction of Judah, at the devastation that they've encountered from A to Z, so to speak.
Chapter 2, verse 1 says, How the Lord in His anger has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud. He has cast down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel.
He has not remembered His footstool in the day of His anger. The first thing we see is that chapter 2 starts the same as chapter 1. In the original, that first word, how, it would read more of, alas.
It's a cry of emotion. This isn't just simply a statement. This is a deep, emotional statement. How the Lord in His anger has done this.
[14:14] If you read simply the first part of Lamentations 2, verse 1, you cannot escape this reality. We live in a world that wants to believe you can do whatever you want, and the Lord doesn't care.

You just are free to live how you want, think how you want, behave how you want. That's not true. The Lord absolutely cares, and He sees, and He knows, and there's a consequence for sin.
Yes, God is loving, for sure. He is also holy. And He is filled with wrath against sin.

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The good news for the believer is that our sin is paid for by Christ on the cross. But for those who have not been covered by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great problem for them is they stand with the wrath of God upon them.
And they may not believe that. They may not care about that. They may be indifferent to that. But one day, that will not be the case. They will care greatly. Now, just to note, when we think about anger, understand it is possible to be angry at the right person at the right time for the right reason in the right way.
[15:42] That's possible. Our problem is our view of anger is often so sinful and so selfish that we get angry often at the wrong person or at the wrong time or for the wrong reason or in the wrong way.

Not so with God. He has a right to be angry against those who have sinned and rebelled against Him. And there is a time to be angry for the right things.
Just a couple of weeks ago, I was watching a video somebody had sent me. You've seen probably many of these. There's a video of a large store in a big city. And a mob of people just rushed the store with bags and just wiped the store out.
In fact, you've got large stores that are closing all over the nation because they can't afford to stay open because people just come and rob them completely.
And I watched that and it made me angry. People who have no care for the law. People who are taking what is not theirs, stealing what is not theirs while other people are working hard and making a living and providing for their family.
[17:04] Others just come and with bags with no care or fear of any retribution at all. Just steal. I think you should be angry at that.

I saw a video, it was last week, of people in their security camera who had people in their neighborhoods going up to their car to see if their car door was open during the night.
Trying to see if the door was open to steal and rob them. They were at home sleeping with the vehicle. They worked, saved up, purchased. And now someone who's just going through the neighborhood streets just trying to steal and take what's not theirs.
And I think that should make us angry. But we remember the words of Ephesians quoting the psalmist, In your anger do not sin. And part of our problem oftentimes because of our sinfulness is in our anger we often handle it in a very sinful way.
But not with the Lord. He is perfectly holy. He has the right to command what he will command. When people sin and trample on his glory, he is angry.
[18:26] Not only is he angry though, there's a second word I want you to write down. And that is that he is active. He is active. In fact, in just a moment I'm going to read these first few verses.

And as I do, I want you to notice the verbs. And notice who it is doing the work. The subject of these verbs is the Lord. He is the one who is very active.
Forty times in the first part of this chapter, we read some kind of description or account about the Lord acting. Remember in Habakkuk chapter 1, the prophet says, God, you're not doing anything. Why are you so passive? Why are you just sitting idly by while all this stuff is going on? Why don't you do something? And the Lord says to Habakkuk, I am doing something.
Habakkuk 1 verse 5, He says, In fact, I'm doing something so unbelievable, you wouldn't even believe me if I told you. And Habakkuk says, Well, what are you doing?
[19:34] And the Lord tells him. And Habakkuk says, I don't believe you. See, Habakkuk thought God was passive, but he was not.

And when you come to Lamentations, we see God is angry, but he is also active. Look here, and let me just read this text to you. Verse 2, The Lord has swallowed up without mercy all the habitations of Jacob.
In his wrath, he has broken down the strongholds of the daughter of Judah. He has brought down to the ground in dishonor the kingdom and its rulers.
He has cut down in fierce anger all the might of Israel. He has withdrawn from them his right hand in the face of the enemy.
He has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob, consuming all around. Just make a note here that the right hand stands for protection, and that hand of protection has been removed, and so now there's no protection for the people.

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[20:43] This is not ultimately about armies or military or ammunition. This is about the protection of God. He has withdrawn that right hand of protection, and they are exposed, free.

Their enemy is free to do whatever they choose. Why? Because sin brings judgment. Verse 4, He has bent his bow like an enemy with his right hand set like a foe.
He has killed all who were delightful in our eyes in the tent of the daughter of Zion. He has poured out his fury like fire. The Lord has become like an enemy. He has swallowed up Israel.
He has swallowed up all its palaces. He has laid in ruins its strongholds. He has multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentations. He has laid waste his booth like a garden, laid in ruins his meeting place.
The Lord has made Zion forget festival and Sabbath, and in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest. What's happening here in verse 6? The temple is now described as nothing more than a booth that is just disassembled.
[21:58] The king is rejected. The priest is rejected. And if we could understand even just a part of life in Old Testament Judah, what we've just read is almost too much to fathom.

This place that the Lord gave to his people this building designed for God to meet with his people. And as the prophet records this, all he sees is destruction. Stones overturned, buildings burnt, smoke rising, the stench and smell of all that's been destroyed so strong in the air you just can't get away from it.
People being taken away into exile. The sound of people screaming, looking for food. Complete destruction.
And yes, it's true the Babylonians came and destroyed Judah. 605, 586, that's true.
[23:28] But in chapter 2, in the verses I've read, you don't see the word Babylonians. Who is it that's active in chapter 2?

Answer out loud. God. This is God. God is doing this. In fact, this week I printed out the text and I got a highlighter and just started to highlight everywhere where it described something God was doing and the whole text was just highlighted.
This is all what God is doing. Because sin has a consequence. Verse 7, the Lord has scorned his altar, disowned his sanctuary.
He has delivered into the hands of the enemy the walls of her palaces. They raised a clamor in the house of the Lord on the day of the festival. The Lord determined to lay in ruins the wall of the daughter of Zion.
He stretched out the measuring line. By the way, you would mark out a measuring line, stretch out a measuring line to build something.
[24:39] Here, the measuring line is stretched out to destroy it. In other words, the Lord is free to bring any consequence of sin he desires.

You build the temple, he can destroy it. Now this is true in the New Testament with Jesus, right? He says, destroy this temple of his body, what's going to happen?
Rise on the third day. You tear it down, man's not sovereign, it'll be raised back to life. It's just flipped here in the Old Testament in Lamentations.
You build the temple, I'll tear it down. This is like Haggai. Why is it that you're working and making all this money and you don't ever seem to get ahead?
And the answer from God to the people through Haggai is because you wear yourself out to earn wages and you put your wages into a purse with what? Holes in them.
[25:49] Now the people aren't cutting out holes in their purse. What's he saying? He's saying, you're never going to be satisfied, I'm not going to let you. You can work if you want, you can ignore the things I've called you to do, but all this money you're saving up, it's as if you're putting it in a purse with holes in it.

And what you've built, what did you say to Haggai? I will blow it away. So as I said last week, you've got to have a category in your theology that understands that God is sovereign.
Now, are the Babylonians making real decisions? Yes. Do they have real leaders? Yes. Are they truly acting out what their heart desires to do?
Absolutely. Will they be punished for their sin, rightly so? Absolutely. But you don't see the Babylonians referred to in chapter 2 because the Babylonians are simply tools in the hands of God that are going to bring about judgment on His people for turning their back on Him.

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You've got to have a category for that. If you don't understand that, you cannot make sense of the prophets. Verse 8, the Lord determined to lay in ruins.
[27:21] Yahweh, His personal covenantal name, the Lord who knew His people and they knew Him, but they turned their back on Him, which just begs the question, why?

Why? Why are these people that were given the law and given the prophets and given the temple and given all of these advantages?
Why would they turn their back on the Lord? The same question we ask in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve, they sin.
And in chapter 3, when they sin, it says the Lord approached them and Adam and Eve did what? They hid. Why are you hiding?
This is the God who was created. This is the God who loves you. This is the God who has put this world around you for your enjoyment, for your blessing. Why are you hiding from God?
[28:20] Because that's what sin does. It makes us hide from the Lord. And what a foolish activity to hide from the omnipotent God?

To hide from the omnipresent God? You remember playing hide and seek maybe when your kids were little and they'd run off and hide in the house and you're looking for them and they're in the closet going, you're terrible at this game.
You're hiding, I know, right where you are. It's a weird game anyway because if you're really good at hide and seek, it just gets really boring.
Like the really, the varsity, the guys who get scholarship for hide and seek, like they're just still hiding somewhere. They haven't been found for years. It's a terrible game to be good at. It's a terrible game to be bad at. And in the spiritual world, it's an absolutely foolish thing to do to try to hide your sin from God.
And yet, if we're honest, don't we do that all the time? We try to bargain with God, try to hide things from Him. The Lord determined to lay in ruins the wall means they're defenseless.
[29:51] Here's what I want you to understand. In chapter 2, what's being recorded for us is not just that something bad happened in Jerusalem.

It is that God happened in Jerusalem. The enemies were real and the damage they did was real. But this was about the judgment of God. There's a second thing we see in chapter 2, not only the judgment of God, but secondly, the failure of the leaders. The judgment of God and now the failure of the leaders in verses 9 to 14.
And the leaders failed the people in four different ways. One, there was a disregard of the law of God. Verse 9, her gates have sunk into the ground.
He has ruined and broken her bars. Her king and princes are among the nations. The law is no more. The leaders ignored the word of God and the people followed as blind people following blind guides right into the ditch.
[31:04] The failure of the leaders was first, they disregard the law of God. Second, they failed to seek the word of God. Verse 9, her prophets find no vision from the Lord.

They did not honor the Lord. they didn't seek the Lord. And then third, they even took it a step further. They taught what was untrue.
Verse 10, the elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence. They have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth. The young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground.
My eyes are spent with weeping. my stomach churns. My bile is poured out to the ground because of the destruction of the daughter of my people because the infants and babies faint in the streets of the city.
The condition in Jerusalem is more awful than anything you can imagine. but this is not the final word.
[32:26] The good news in Lamentations 2 is that as the people are taken to exile, God is still God. And the good news in Lamentations 2 are those who would trust in the promises of God still find deliverance.

But there will come a day when for every person who is alive, who does not know Christ, there comes a day they take their last breath.
And when they do, as awful as Lamentations 2 is with the scene, it's nothing like one second after you die without Christ.

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And unlike Lamentations 2, one second after you die without Christ, there is no hope. when you read Lamentations 2, part of what you should do is just let your heart feel the weight of this.
Part of what you should do is grieve and lament over the condition of the people. But they were not without hope.
[33:49] In fact, we'll get to this in the next couple of weeks, but for just a moment, turn to chapter 3. verse 21 says, but this I call to mind and therefore I have hope.

See, friends, the scene in Lamentations 2 is awful, but it's not hopeless. one second after you die without Christ, the scene is infinitely worse and utterly hopeless.
This is why whatever you're going through today that may break your heart, and real as that pain may be, no pain in this life need be hopeless.
hopeless. The Lord is with you. And even for those who would rebel and reject the gospel, God in His grace has sustained them through the night and given them another day and breath, and these are still days of grace, and the Lord is still saving sinners, praise be to God.
They're not hopeless. The gospel still goes forth. The Spirit still converts sinners. But one second after death for the unbeliever, there is no more hope of any kind.
[35:27] Which is why, as a church, we must stay focused on what matters. Which is why, as a congregation, we cannot busy ourselves with things that don't truly matter.

This is why we teach and why we make disciples. This is why we bring our children to church. This is why we need parents in the home, teaching and discipling and helping point their children to Jesus.
This is why we need older saints in our church in prayer and serving and passing on wisdom because the task we have been given is so great and the needs are so many, but this is not a hopeless place.
Our world is dark. We get that. sin is rampant. We experience that. But it's not hopeless because God in grace still forgives sinners.
And the prophet says in chapter 3, verse 21, this I call to mind, this I'm thinking of, as dark as it is, as awful as it is, as thorough as the destruction is, this much I still know.
[36:45] Our God is merciful. Verse 22, the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end.

They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. One of the church's most beloved hymns ever written comes from Lamentations 3, which is recording one of the darkest, most awful, dreadful situations the people of God have ever known.
Awful, yes. Hopeless, no. Because God was still with them. And those who would repent and those who would believe in the promises of God would find deliverance.
But back to chapter 2, the problem with these leaders, these rulers, they disregarded the law of God and they failed to seek the word of God and then they taught what was not true.
Verse 12, they cried to their mothers, where is bread and wine? As they faint like a wounded man in the streets of the city, as their life is poured out on their mother's bosom.
[37:58] What can I say for you? What can I compare you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What can I liken to you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is vast as the sea.

Who can heal you? Verse 14, your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions. The leaders taught things that were not true, and it destroyed the people.
To put it in our vernacular today, it's not that the preachers went silent. They just stopped being faithful. To put it in our vernacular today, it's not that people quit going to church.
They just quit hearing faithful preaching. Jeremiah 6, 14, they have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace.
The most unloving thing a spiritual leader can do is tell someone who has embraced sin, that they have peace with God.
[39:28] It's the worst thing you can do. Peace, peace, where there is no peace. A physician who takes a biopsy and sees cancer invading your body and says to you, you're healthy.

No fear, no worry. They would get dismissed for malpractice. That's what it is for a spiritual leader who refuses to say what God truly said.
So part of what's happening in the Old Testament are the shepherds, the ones who are supposed to speak, protect, defend, speak the words of God, confront people in their sin, instead, just want what the people want them to say.

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And the result of that, Jeremiah says, is they treat the wound lightly. They don't do the hard things necessary to promote healing.
The New Testament addresses the exact same problem. It just says that these are people who have itching ears and accumulate teachers who will just say exactly what they want to hear.
[40:49] This has always been a problem. People are religious at the core, but if they don't know God and love God, they will still find a way to indulge their desire to be religious.

They'll just get someone to say whatever they want to hear. Which leads to a fourth mistake, sin of the leaders.
They fail to confront sin. Look at the second half, verse 14. They have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles that are false and misleading.
Does that sound all familiar to you with the state of our churches today? People who say things that are false and misleading, people who care more about the applause and the affirmation from the people than they do being faithful to their calling.
But not in limitations. In limitations, it deals with it head on. The people have sinned.
[42:08] The leaders have sinned. in the most heart breaking, gut wrenching, soul crushing way imaginable.

You're just watching the city crumble. Amos warns about this. Amos 8, verse 11, behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will send a famine on the land.
Now, people hear that and they think, oh my goodness, a famine, we're not going to have any rain. If we don't have rain, we don't have crops, we're not going to have water, we're not going to have food. That's the worst it could be.
That's not what the Lord says. I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.
They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of God, but they shall not find it. One of God's judgments on the land is a famine of faithful, biblical preaching because of people who have been religious, but it was all just a charade.
[43:25] And don't think for one moment God can't tell the difference. Third, we see the sovereign power of God. God, verses 15 to 17, the sovereign power of God.

All who pass along the way clap their hands at you. This isn't applause. This is a mocking thing. This isn't their clapping because they revere you. This is the taunts toward the people.
They hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem. is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?
This is the surrounding nations looking at what's happened to Judah, what's happened to Jerusalem, and laughing at what's become of them. Is this the people of God?
Is this the great city? Is this the temple? Is this the place where your God meets with you? And they laugh and they hiss. Verse 16, all your enemies rail against you.
[44:34] They hiss, they gnash their teeth, they cry, we have swallowed her. Ah, this is the day we long for. Now we have it, we see it.

It's very interesting in the language here. Because this is the enemies of God's people railing against them, verse 16. This is the victory lap of those who love to see Jerusalem's demise.
But look at verse 17. The Lord has done what he purposed. He has carried out his word, which he commanded long ago.
He has thrown down without pity. He has made the enemy rejoice over you and exalted the might of your foes.
Now I want you to see here in verses 1 and verse 17 forms an inclusio. It's brackets. the Lord has done this.
[45:52] Verse 1. Verse 17. The Lord has carried out his word. The rebellious people of Judah may have seen the Babylonians and been terrified.

They may have seen buildings crumbling and been frightened. They may have thought about their economy and their food supply and been scared.
But Hebrews 10.31 reminds us it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. the Babylonians were not sovereign.
God is. This is why we don't fear what the world does. Not as God's people. This is why the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

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Nebuchadnezzar is real. His threats are real, but he's not sovereign. The Babylonians are real. Their threat is real, but they're going to be wiped away by the Medo Persians. They're just there doing whatever the Lord has raised them up to do for his purposes.
[47:14] So when you read Lamentations 2 verse 17, it reminds us that God's providence can be hard. The Lord has done what he purposed.

But there's mercy here. And the mercy is that God is reminding his people he keeps his word. And if he kept his word about coming judgment, you can trust he will keep his word about a coming savior.
Some of you know the name of John Wooden, basketball coach for UCLA, won all these championships. He had a rule. One of his rules was you could not have facial hair to play on his team.
He had a player named Bill Walton, one of the great, all-time great college centers, Bill Walton at UCLA. The team had 10 days off during the break and Bill Walton came back after 10 days with a beard.
I'm a little envious and jealous of that, but nonetheless, 10 days he's got a beard. And when he came back, John Wooden said to him, have you forgotten my rule that you don't get to play if you have facial hair?
[48:37] And he said that Bill Walton said, no, I remember the rule, but I think I should have the right to wear a beard if I want to. And John Wooden said, do you believe that strongly?

And Bill Walton said, yes, I strongly believe I should be able to grow a beard. And Coach Wooden said, Bill, I have great respect for people who have strong convictions.
I have great respect for people who choose to stand up and live for their convictions. And we're really going to miss you on this team. And he went and shaved his beard.
Because the coach kept his promise. there are times where there are things you may not like. There may be occasions or circumstances that it just frustrates you.
There may be times where you say, God, why don't you fix this? Why don't you remove this? Why don't you change this? But just know this, that God who promised thorns and thistles in Genesis 3 brought them about.
[49:54] But all of it as a way to be reminded that in Genesis 3.15, when he promised a Savior, you could trust this, God keeps his word. So, was it promised that if the people disobeyed, they would face judgment?

Yes, all of this had been told to them. All of this they had been warned of. But they weren't without hope. Because the same God who promised judgment and brought it is the same God who promised a Redeemer and brought him.
There's hope. Lastly, as we close, let me show you a fourth thing, verses 18 to 22, and that's the response of the people. The response of the people. First, they cried.
Verse 18, their heart cried to the Lord, O wall, the daughter of Zion, let tears stream down like a torrent day and night. Give yourself no rest, your eyes no rest.
But friends, there's a time to just cry. There's a time to just understand the awfulness of your sin.
[51:07] But a second thing the people did is they prayed. Verse 19, arise, cry out in the night. At the beginning of the night, watch us. Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord.

You cry and you pray. Your tears drive you to prayer. Many of you know what that's like. Your heart's broken and you can't do anything.
And all you can do is pray. And sometimes as you pray, you find you can't even speak. You're so overcome with grief.
Well, the third thing that is they expressed lament. Verses 20 to 22. Look, O Lord, and see, with whom have we dealt thus?
Should women eat the fruit of their womb, the children of their tender care? Should priest and prophet be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord? In the dust of the streets lie the young and the old.
[52:12] My young women and my young men have fallen by the sword. You have killed them in the day of your anger, slaughtering without pity. You summoned as if to a festival day my terrors on every side.

And on the day of the anger of the Lord, no one escaped or survived. Those whom I held and raised my enemy destroyed.
Now, in my Bible, the end of verse 22, that last sentence, those whom I held and raised my enemy destroyed, is at the very bottom of the last column.

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That's how the page ends, which leads me desperately to turn the page and hope there's more to the chapter. But there's not.
We're at the end of the 22nd letter. The poem of chapter two ends. No one escaped.
[53:19] No one survived. Those whom I held and raised my enemy destroyed. And it ends.

Why? Because you're supposed to feel the weight of the pain. Our culture has no place for this. We want the pain to go away. We want a happy ending. But here's the reality. You're supposed to let the reality of sin and judgment just fall.
God You're going to the Bible. It's beautiful. It's Which is why it's so beautiful in chapter three when the prophet says in spite of all that's happening yet I have hope because God is still faithful.
But brothers and sisters there's a season there's a time to just cry and pray and lament.
[54:52] there's a time to just get downwind of your sin. There's a time in James 4 to let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

It's a door you walk through not a room that you live in but there's a time to do that. And one of the things you and I should do is take some time alone with the Lord not rushed not hurried and just confess our sin and not be too quick to get up.
Let it break your heart. Cry and grieve and lament.
You have trampled on the eternal glory of the eternal God. Take that in. And then after you humble yourself under the mighty hand of God James 4 in due time he will lift you up because his mercies are new every morning and great is his faithfulness and the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases even when we have sinned.
Lamentations too is dark. It's supposed to be. If you look beyond the horizon chapter 3 verse 21 22 and 23 is coming.
[56:51] Just on the horizon of our brokenness is the reminder his mercies are new every day.

And so even with broken hearts the prophet can declare great is your faithfulness. Lord we thank you for your word and pray that you would use it to bring understanding and love in our hearts.
Lord we are grateful for your word thankful for our church. We pray that you would use us to make a difference use us to speak the gospel to live the gospel to call on people to repent quick to forgive may we be quick to serve make us slow to speak slow to become angry and where we have failed you may we cry and grieve and lament and then rest in this promise that you demonstrate your love in this that while we were still sinners Christ died for us and for that we give you praise amen church I love you you're an amazing congregation you are a joy to my heart and I pray this week we can be a joy to many we get to serve pray for us
God bless you you're dismissed you're you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you you

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