

Jeremiah's Plea for Israel

Key Verse: “*Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old.*”
—**Lamentations 5:21, English Standard Version**

Selected Scripture:
Lamentations 5:1-21

OUR KEY VERSE IS JEREMIAH'S

plea for divine deliverance. The preceding chapters of Jeremiah's Lamentations reveal how profoundly destitute Zion had become. “How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow has she become, she who was great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces has become a slave.

She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies. Judah has gone into exile because of affliction and hard servitude; she dwells now among the nations, but finds no resting place; her pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress. The roads to Zion mourn, for none come to the festival; all her gates are desolate; her priests groan; her virgins have been afflicted, and she herself suffers bitterly.”—Lam. 1:1-4, *ESV*

We are instructed by Jeremiah's plea to God. Note that he did not say that the people of Israel and the inhabitants of Zion should pull themselves up by their bootstraps and make themselves *0*is favor. No amount of self-sacrifice and personal penance can restore the spiritually sick

back to the favor of God. Jeremiah's approach goes to the proper source, when he asks the Lord, "restore us to yourself," and reinstate your favor "as of old."

When we feel distant from our Creator, we may wisely use Jeremiah's approach. We must realize that there is nothing we can do of ourselves to restore God's favor or grace to us. The temptation is to think that perhaps if we put a bit more money into the donation box, hold the door for an elderly person, or double up on good works, that by these our closeness with God will flourish once again. We reflect on the words of the grand old hymn, Rock of Ages:

Could my tears forever flow,
Could my zeal no languor know,
These for sin could not atone;
Thou hast saved and thou alone.
In my hand no price I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling.

It is only through the cross, and by the power of Jesus' shed blood, that we stand in God's grace. We must not diminish that fact by attempting to justify ourselves. The penitent sinner's only hope is in God's mercy. We stand before God in Christ, and Christ alone.

The words of the psalmist resonate deeply within us. "Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD; Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, That You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning. ... For with the LORD there is mercy, And with Him is abundant redemption."—Ps. 130:1-7, *New King James Version*

We cherish the thought that because God is forgiving and merciful, we can approach him in reverence. Let our plea, as Jeremiah's, ascend to God on behalf of ourselves and on behalf of our brethren in Christ. ■