

## THE LORD CAN RESTORE! *continued*

is part and parcel of the gift of God. We need His grace to work in us both to will and to do. What they are pleading for is grace; an unmerited display of compassion and acceptance (cf. **Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25**). In requesting, “*renew our days as of old,*” Jeremiah recalls that there was a brighter past, realises the depth of the present desolation, and yearns for the return of good times again. As do we.

**[4] THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE SUSPICION BEFORE GOD; 5:22. Verses 21&22** do not sit comfortably together; in **the 21st verse** hope is on the rise, but the next verse – the final one in this book – that hope goes into a spin and a nose-dive!

(a) **REWRITING THIS CONCLUSION:** What way is this to end a book? Scholars have contrived ways to lessen the force of these words; to this day whenever the book is read, it is the custom in many synagogues to *repeat verse 21* after **verse 22**.

(b) **REEVALUATING THIS CONCLUSION: 5:22** is not a plunge into utter despair. Reconciliation had happened, in similar circumstances, in the past: the Lord had outlined the path back to Himself in **Leviticus 26:43-44, Jeremiah 33:23-26**: “*I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.*” Still they had cause for cautious optimism. At the end of seventy years the Jews were restored to their own land and God came to His people again. Though history did repeat itself (**Luke 13:34-35**). (c) **REVIVING IN THIS CONCLUSION:** “*God never leaves any till they first leave Him, nor stands afar off any longer than while they stand afar off from Him. Those that repent and do their first works shall rejoice and recover their first comforts.*” (Matthew Henry). Even the darkest of dark nights can send forth the most brilliant shining day!



## MEETINGS TODAY

- Morning Worship – 11.30am:  
*13th Message in Lamentations Series:*  
“*The Lord Can Restore!*”
- Evening Service – 7.00pm:  
“*Why Not Come To Christ?*”



## EVENING OF FELLOWSHIP AND PRAISE

70 people gathered at Martyrs on Thursday night for Phil and Sharon Hartin’s annual ‘Evening of Fellowship and Praise.’ Musical items were provided by Peter Mander, Coral Sloane, Davy Megarry and Bethany and Stephen; reports on several of the outreach works in Martyrs were given by Rev. Brown, Marion Getty and Heather Hammond; contributions were also made by various members from the recent missionary teams to Romania and the Philippines. The wide range of desserts on offer at the end, plus the tea and coffee were also most acceptable!

Do continue to pray for the works that Phil and Sharon spearhead at the Martyrs – their enthusiasm and dedication is very much appreciated. It was especially encouraging to learn of several children and young people who have sought the Lord for salvation in this new year already. May the Lord continue to honour the efforts of his servants and all who assist them and may He be pleased to privilege this House of God with the description of being “a saving shop within a yard of hell” throughout this year. *Soli Deo Gloria!*



## THE LORD CAN RESTORE! Lamentations 5:19-22.

Since 1967, a monument has stood at the extreme end of the *Judenrampe* in the former German concentration camp: a mound of sombre stones, where at the base rest 21 engraved plaques in every language of Europe, including Yiddish. It reads, “*For ever let this place be a cry of despair and a warning to humanity ...*.” Reading the book of Lamentations evokes similar emotions to those expressed on the plaques at Auschwitz – for it is a horrendous story of Weeping, Wailing and Warning. Yet there is also the Wish for a better day. This final section of the book sees a sudden switch *from* the detailed presentation of the suffering of the people – ‘the catalogue of their calamities’ – *to* earnest prayer.

### [1] THE RELIANCE ON THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD;

**5:19.** Once again, Jeremiah directly and urgently addresses God as Jehovah (“*O LORD*”), the covenant King who possesses ultimate authority and complete dominion (cf. **Psalm 123:1-2**). The throne of Judah had fallen, but not the throne of God! What we urgently need is a grander and fresher view of His sovereignty and eternity as part and parcel of a grander view of Jehovah in His entirety. “*Ignorance of God ... lies at the heart of much of the church’s weakness today.*”

The verb in **5:19**, “*remainest*,” is literally “sit” – a further indication of the firmness of God who “*fainteth not, neither is weary*,” and with whom “*is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*” (**Isaiah 40:28; James 1:17**). *Through all His ancient works / Surprising wisdom shines, / Confounds the powers of hell, / And breaks their cursed designs: / Strong is His arm, / And shall fulfill / His great decrees, / His sovereign will.*

### [2] THE REQUEST ABOUT THEIR SITUATION TO GOD;

**5:20.** We have already noted that this final poem – **Lamentations 5** – is more a petition than a lamentation; it *both* starts *and* finishes with prayer.

(a) PRAYER WITH ENDURANCE: In fact prayer is pretty much *an ongoing exercise* in this **chapter 5**. We can divide it as, (i) Look upon us (**5:1-10**); (ii) Woe unto us (**5:11-18**); (iii) Turn Thou us (**5:19-22**). “*Having poured out his sorrow, Jeremiah now turns to the Lord in a last fervent appeal*” (Laetsch).

(b) PRAYER WITH ENQUIRY. In **5:20**, two impassioned questions appear about God forgetting and forsaking His people: “*Wherefore dost Thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time?*” The “*wherefore*” underlines the tension that is felt in the heart of this petitioner: the people have acknowledged their sin, and confessed their belief in the sovereignty of God; surely now the Lord will stop the suffering of all those that He has permitted to survive the overthrow of the city? Or, is there still a place in God’s plan for the Jewish people?

“*... forget us for ever, ... forsake us so long time*”: this is not a short lapse of memory, but is pointing to a lack of divine intervention over an extended period. The King is no longer in their midst, protecting them and providing for them. For the majority of Jews, the seventy years of the exile (**Jeremiah 25:11**) seemed like never-ending, perpetual, lifelong captivity.

(c) PRAYER WITH EXPECTANCY. “*The Lord’s stern discipline has awakened within Judah a sense of her own sinfulness, worthlessness, and helplessness. And finally, out of the depths of the bitterness occasioned by divine chastisement, she invokes God’s grace and compassion*” (Thomson).

“*I know that He will make corn to grow upon the top of His withered Mount Zion again*” (Samuel Rutherford).

### [3] THE REPENTANCE IN THEIR SIGH TOWARDS GOD; 5:21.

(a) AN ADMISSION ABOUT THEIR REBELLION:

The problem with this distance and difficulty between God and them was their fault. It always is. They had turned away from Him (cf. **Psalm 80:3,7,19**). (b) AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ABOUT THEIR REPENTANCE. The people knew that there must be a reversal of direction and return to a point of departure – the Old Testament way of describing repentance as a spiritual return to God (cf. **3:40; Jeremiah 3:12; Hosea 14:1**).

(c) AN AXIS ABOUT THEIR RETURN: The language of the prophet underlines the fact that they are weak; they cannot return in their own strength. Repentance – although we are obliged to repent