

Who Can Heal You?

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[0 : 00] Let's pray together. Father, as Tim has prayed already, it is good that we can be here. It is good to be gathered together. It is so good to be reminded of your grace that is greater than all of our sin. It's so appropriate for us to remember that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And it is also good for us to remember that this is how we are saved.

And that it is by the precious blood of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing in us that is deserving or worthy of this salvation that we have received. We confess it is all and only of your grace. Thank you for gathering us together. Thank you for each one who's here. And Father, I would ask that as we have come into this place to worship, to learn, to grow, to sing, to pray, to fellowship with one another, that we would also continue as brothers and sisters to find healing, encouragement, support, help from you ultimately, Father, through the power of your Holy Spirit and through your word. But that we would also find this through our brothers and sisters, that we would be the kind of church that loves and supports and encourages and helps.

Please do this kind of work in us, even as we turn our attention to Lamentations chapter 2. Focus our attention on Jesus. Help us to consider him above all. We ask this in his name, giving thanks. Amen.

Amen. What is going on with the guy in this picture? What's happening here? He's mad. How can you tell that he is mad? He's flaming out the top of his head. Tinsley, what were you going to say? His hair is turned into fire. Yep. His hair is on fire. I think that's a phrase that we say sometimes. Do you know why this particular character works in the movie? He works because this is what anger often looks like when we see anger and when we express our own anger. This is what our anger often looks like.

Anger is often explosive and out of control. There may be foot stomping. There may be fist pounding. There may be finger waving or swear yelling or door slamming or horn honking or social media post writing. All of these things are reflective of the explosive nature of human anger. Anger is kind of like temporary insanity. And that's why we say that person is losing their mind. And that's why this particular character works. Why do we get angry? Why do you get angry?

[3 : 40] Well, maybe because you experience injustice and wrongdoing, like having your snowmobile stolen.

That makes us angry. Maybe you get angry because someone hurts you and you want revenge. You want the other person to hurt the way that you are hurting. Sometimes we say hurting people hurt other people. That's true.

Maybe you get angry because you overreact to little wrongs that are done to you. Think of children poking at each other in the car or parents poking at one another in the car or someone who doesn't respond to you. Think of them. They don't respond to you the way that you want. And now you are angry at them.

Some of our anger is appropriate. It's reasonable. Like when your snowmobile is stolen. Some of our anger is reasonable and appropriate.

But some of our anger is unreasonable. Some of our anger is, are you ready? Sinful. Did you know that God gets angry?

[5 : 08] He does. But unlike us, God's anger is never explosive or out of control. God's anger, sometimes we refer to it as wrath.

W-R-A-T-H. Wrath. God's anger is a reliable, resolute expression.

of his real displeasure towards sin. A resolute, a reliable, resolute expression of his real displeasure towards sin.

Some of our anger is sinful. All of God's anger is perfectly directed at sin.

sin. This makes sense. It makes sense for this reason. Because God is holy. He cannot be apathetic or indifferent towards injustice and unrighteousness.

[6 : 21] He cannot ignore people doing whatever they want and thinking that they can cause whatever pain they want to cause regardless of the consequences to themselves or others.

God treasures his glory and he loves his creation and God's anger towards sin is proof of his holiness and evidence that he cares.

Read along with me on the screen or in your Bible and notice how the poet describes God's anger. Lamentations chapter 2 verse 1.

Notice that it begins again same as last week with that word how. This expression it's not a question it's an expression of shock amazement wonder pain.

How? the Lord in his anger has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud.

[7 : 34] This is a tricky translation for us but the idea here is that the Lord has made Jerusalem his city an abomination a loathsome thing something repulsive to him.

He has cast down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel in other words the temple. He has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger.

The Lord has swallowed up without mercy all the inhabitants of Jacob. all the habitations of Jacob excuse me 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. In other words the Lord is no longer defending them.

[8 : 55] He's taken his right hand that used to defend his people Israel and he has withdrawn it and put his sword away. No longer defending them.

He has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob consuming all around but not only has God withdrawn his defense but notice in verse 4 he is attacking his own people.

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 and he has multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.

[10 : 17] He has laid waste his booth like a garden laid in ruins his meeting place the place where he would come and his presence would come to be with his people it's ruined he's cut his people off from him there's no longer a temple no longer a tabernacle nothing no place for them to come and worship God the Lord has made Zion forget festival and Sabbath and in his fierce indignation he has spurned king and priest when we were still raising little children we used to play a game where we would say to them who created the world and they would respond with

God did and then we would ask more and more questions all about creation well who made the giraffes God did who made the cows God did who made the trees God did who destroyed Jerusalem God did did you hear the active verbs the Lord swallowed up he burned he bent his bow he killed he poured out his fury he laid waste and did you notice the movement from high to low the Lord has cast down broken down brought down cut down and all of this movement from high to low culminates with the very gates of the city the thing that would represent the city it's kind of like how we think of a sky line you know like you can see a silhouette of a sky on a t-shirt or something in a tourist place and you just know what that is that's how people would think about the gates and here are the gates of

Jerusalem not only has the temple been brought down and the palace brought down but the gates themselves are sinking into the ground and God's people are hanging their heads in shame look at verse number nine sorry verse yes verse number nine 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 and her prophets find no vision from the Lord 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 it is as though God wiped Jerusalem right off the map the temple is gone the king's palace is gone the gates of the city the place where you would go for legal rulings and commercial activity and merchants and civil social life all of it gone and not just the city but it's people too kings and princes have been exiled and there is no priest to teach God's

people the law and there is no prophet to hear from God and retell the people what God has said to them Jerusalem once a beautiful bustling city is an abandoned ghost town a heap of smoldering ruins and

God did it God demolished Jerusalem this is an appropriate time for me to remind you that God's anger is never explosive or out of control verse number eight the Lord determined to lay in ruins the wall of the daughter of Zion this is not explosive out of control anger this is intentional planned demolition notice the words in that very next little sentence he stretched out the measuring line how interesting what an interesting metaphor normally you would stretch out the measuring line to make sure something was level or to measure something when you are what building it that's the metaphor for the measuring line but here that metaphor gets turned upside down and the poet says [16:06] God has stretched out the measuring line not to build to demolish he did not restrain his hand from destroying he caused rampart and wall to lament and they languished together we get angry on a whim don't we sometimes for the very slightest wrong done to us we get angry but not God God's anger is never unreasonable God does not overreact our anger tends to rise and fall with the seasons we feel it this time of year don't we our anger tends to rise and fall with the seasons it also tends to rise and fall with the football season for those of us who are

Vikings fans it rises and falls sometimes our anger rises and falls based on the time of the month sometimes our anger rises and falls depending on we say getting up on the wrong side of the bed but God's anger is never like that God's anger is never unpredictable because God is holy he responds perfectly to sin with reliable resolute expressions of real displeasure I think it's easy for us to let this feel like an over reaction and so let's look at a couple of texts that I hope help us understand how this came to be this is Deuteronomy chapter 28 and verse 58 if you are not careful to do all the words of this law that are written in this book that you may fear this glorious and awesome name the

Lord your God then the Lord will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions afflictions severe and lasting and sicknesses grievous and lasting verse 61 every sickness also and every affliction that is not recorded in the book of this law the Lord will bring upon you until you are destroyed whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven you shall be left few in number why because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God and as the Lord took delight in doing you good and multiplying you so the Lord will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you and you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to take possession of it and the Lord will scatter you among all peoples from one end of the earth to the other and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone which neither you nor your fathers have known and among these nations you shall find no respite no rest no comfort no dwelling place no home and there shall be no resting place for the soul of your foot but the

Lord will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul your life shall hang in doubt before you night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life in the morning you shall say if only it were evening and in the evening you shall say if only it were morning because of the dread that your heart shall feel and the sights that your eyes shall see God's people rejected God and chose idols they refused his rule over their lives they disobeyed repeatedly God's commands they believed that they could do whatever they wanted without consequence they trampled on the sanctity of God's holiness and God patiently warned them 2nd

Chronicles 36 and verse 15 the Lord the God of their fathers sent persistently! to them by his messengers! Why? Because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place but they kept mocking the messengers of God despising his words and scoffing at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people until there was no remedy not out of control anger not unreasonable expected promised warned predicted repeatedly warned rejected how would you feel if you drive down the street that your house is on and as you get closer and closer to your house you notice that there is a dark pillar of smoke over the place where you are expecting your house to be and then as you get closer you realize that the house that you lived in the house that you left this morning is leveled that there is nothing there but a smoldering pile of ruins and then you notice perhaps your parent or maybe a spouse sitting on the curb and they have their head down in their hands and they're crying

[23:08] I wonder if this is how the poet feels notice in these next several verses his first hand account of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem verse number 11 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 infants and babies faint in the streets of the city they cry to their mothers where is bread and wine perhaps better where is grain and wine grain and wine can be preserved they can be kept they can be stored the picture here is that there is nothing left in the reserves everything that you could possibly eat has been eaten everything that you could possibly drink has been drunk there is nothing left where is bread and wine as they infants and babies faint like a wounded man in the streets of their city as their life is poured out on their mother's bosom what can

I say for you to what can I compare you oh daughter of Jerusalem what can I liken you that I may comfort you oh virgin daughter of Zion for your ruin is vast as the sea who can heal you it won't be the priests because the priests are gone and the Lord verse seven has scorned his altar and disowned his sanctuary it won't be the prophets verse 14 your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes but have seen for you oracles that are false and misleading who can heal you not priest not prophet who can heal you verse 15 all who pass along the way clap their hands at you 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 who can heal you not priest not prophet not the passerbys all your enemies rail against you this is like sticking out their tongue this is the metaphor that we would use they hiss they gnash their teeth they cry we have swallowed her ah this is the day we longed for now we have it now we see it the enemies of God are delighted by what they are seeing and so the poet exhorts God's people to cry out to God verse 18 their heart cried to the

Lord oh wall of the daughter of Zion let tears stream down like a torrent you see the picture like the wall before it had crumbled on a thunderstorm day and the rain is pouring down the wall the poet says it should be like that cry like that like when the rain is pouring down the wall let tears stream down like a torrent day and night give yourself no rest your eyes no respite arise cry out in the night at the beginning of the night watches pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord lift your hands to him for the lives of your children who faint for hunger at the head of every street and then verse 20 perhaps a prayer by the people of

Jerusalem look O Lord and see you with whom have you dealt thus should women eat the fruit of their womb!

[28 : 15] 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 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 perhaps those last three verses are intended as a prayer but the context of chapter two makes me wonder if verses 20 through 22 may be a continuation of the poet's words he surveys Jerusalem he is a first hand witness of the horrific suffering and I wonder if he gets angry at God let me read those three verses again with a little different tone and see what you think look oh Lord and see it's as though he is daring God to look at what he has done look oh Lord and see with whom have you dealt thus do you know what you've done do you know who you have done it to these are your people and they're eating one another look at what you have done 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 well they're doing the

Lord's work you wiped them out in the dust of the streets lie the young and the old my young women and my young men have fallen by the sword you have killed them in the day of your anger slaughtering the word is butchering without pity you summoned as if to a festival day my terrors on every side he says it's as though we were gathering for the Passover and everybody was coming to celebrate and instead what came was every possible nightmare we could possibly imagine and on the day of the anger of the Lord no one escaped or survived those whom I held and raised my enemy destroyed this prayer includes no praise for

God did you notice that there is no praise for God there is no claim of God's promises there is no appeal to God's goodness or his mercy the poet knows why God is angry he knows that God's anger is proof of his holiness I think the poet is angry at God but he doesn't stay angry at God do you know why because verse 17 reminds us the Lord has done what he purposed do you see that he has carried out his word which he commanded long ago it wasn't like we didn't have warning it

wasn't like he didn't send prophets again and again to tell us it wasn't like he wasn't patient and compassionate and showed mercy towards us but now the
[32 : 37] Lord has done what he purposed carried out his word the word which he commanded long ago!

Lamentations 2 refuses to allow us to exclude God's activity and God's purposes in human suffering God's actions are all over this chapter suffering is not the result of some fatalistic force or chance or the universe suffering is intensely personal and completely purposeful here's what happens when we remove God from suffering when we remove God from suffering we relieve relieve!

relieve guilty consciences we relieve guilty consciences we do not want to relieve guilty consciences because when you sin you should feel guilty for your sin the question becomes what will you do with your guilt will you stuff it will you try to ignore it will you drown it out with some other addiction will you push it off to the corner of your heart and try to stay too busy to think about it will you rationalize and make excuses for your sin what will you do with it second Corinthians seven Paul writes this for godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret whereas worldly grief produces death what is worldly grief well worldly grief would be remorse without repentance worldly grief would be feeling bad because you got caught not because you hurt someone else worldly grief would be seeing my sin as just a small thing rather rather than an offense to the holiness of

God and a violation of his will think about Judas Iscariot he had some kind of worldly grief didn't he he felt bad in his heart for what he had done he even tried to go and return the money to the chief priest who paid him off to betray Jesus!

and yet yet no repentance only remorse and his worldly grief drove him to suicide this is why we do not want to relieve guilty consciences by removing God from human suffering guilt is a grace that ought to turn you towards God godly grief produces repentance that leads to salvation when we remove God from suffering we relieve guilty consciences and here's the second thing that we do we salve wounded souls with bandages soaked with salt water when we encounter someone who is suffering

[36 : 49] I wonder if you are tempted to offer comfort with words like these don't take this too personally you know it's not healthy to dwell in the past let's stop talking about what happened you should really just be looking for ways to move on and move forward life is unpredictable Sometimes these kind of things just happen this is how life is sometimes you win some you lose some what will be what will be bad things happen to good people there's just nothing at all that you can do about it we mean well when we say these types of words I am convinced that we mean well we really do want to love hurting people but these statements that fail to point towards

God's activity and purposes in our suffering and as a result our salve stings maybe not immediately our salve stings and the sufferer that we encounter is made worse off than when we found them whether you suffer the consequences of your own sin or whether you bear the pain and the shame caused by the sin of others we cannot accept and we dare not offer trite platitudes for suffering the penalty for removing God's anger from suffering is grief that is depersonalized suffering that just comes to us from the universe fate a life of uncontrolled accidents just waiting to happen chance this is the path that leads to depression and despair and death what is one thing that is guaranteed to make you angry do you have that one thing in your mind one thing that is guaranteed to make you angry angry why does it make you so angry it makes you angry because you care about that thing or that person you care that thing or that person or that event it matters to you if this is true of us and we get angry in our human anger that is unpredictable right and often overblown and explosive if we get angry about something that matters to us why is it so surprising to us that God would get angry about something that matters so much to him why is it hard to accept that sin makes

God angry sin is proof of God's holiness and God's anger towards sin is evidence that he cares that sin matters that he doesn't want people to stay locked in their sin under the shroud of guilt that he doesn't want his people to endure suffering forever it matters to God your suffering matters to God he is angry about the ways that his people suffer and he will not tolerate it forever God cares about you as a sinner and he cares about you when you suffer as a result of the sin of others we know this we know how personally

God takes sin we only need to look at the cross to notice that God took sin so personally so seriously so purposefully that he sent his son Jesus all the way to the cross in order to deal

personally with sin Isaiah 53 in verse 5 he was pierced for our transgressions he was crushed for our iniquities upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed all we like sheep have gone astray we've turned everyone to his own way and the Lord has laid on him on Jesus the iniquity of us all yet it was the will of the Lord to crush who the sinners who committed the sin the rebels who were full of iniquity the transgressors of his law the wandering sheep it was the will of the

Lord to crush him his son the Lord Jesus he has put him to grief God's anger is not like ours explosive and out of control God's anger is never unreasonable God does not overreact God's anger is focused on sin God's anger towards sin is proof of his holiness and evidence that he cares and these two realities meet in the cross of our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ here it is proof of God's holiness that he cannot look the other way at sin and evidence of his care that he would send his only son Jesus all the way to the cross and crush him for my sin and your sin dear sinner there at the cross

[44 : 06] God focused the full intensity of his anger against sin on his son Jesus this is how we are saved that's what we sang together it is because of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ infinite matchless grace Jesus suffered the wrath of God towards sin so that anyone who believes in Jesus can say there is now no condemnation for me is Jesus your Savior has the grace of guilt moved you to repentance that's God's intention with guilt have you believed in Jesus suffering brothers and sisters is not always the direct result of sin but sin is the source of all brokenness in this world the poet asks this rhetorical question who can heal you who can heal you not priest not prophet not the passerbys who can heal you as we grieve with

God we learn the answer to this question in the gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ Jesus Jesus can heal me by his wounds we are healed do you believe that today let's pray good father we are so grateful for your word thank you for giving it to us father would you take your word not my words would you take your word the truths of your word and plant them deep down inside of our hearts so that we meditate on it and reflect on it and think about it and grow and learn and respond to it and even so that dear father we might come to a place where as your people we can respond to your anger towards sin with awe and reverence and even worship because we understand that your anger towards sin is proof of your holiness and that it is evidence of your great loving steadfast care and compassion and mercy and grace for your people help us we pray we love you and we are so grateful for all that you have done for us in our savior the lord jesus christ please draw us to fresh faith in him as we take time to celebrate the lord's supper together it is in jesus name that we pray amen amen amen