

## Debriefing Our Life

06/30/24

Some years ago, a Ranger received a call from County Control (911 Center) about someone seeing some kind of substance floating on top of the water at Lake Redman which is in William Kain County Park. It was an oil slick and the worry was the oil was from some kind of vehicle in the lake. So, Hazmat, PSP, Fire Company, and some divers were called in. The divers went in and found a motorcycle at the bottom of the lake and oil was seeping out. A tow company was called in and it was pulled out. The lake shore was checked for bodies and the divers checked the lake bottom the best they could and nothing was found. There was no way to identify who the owner was. So, the conclusion was the motorcycle had been stolen and finally dumped into the lake after it was no longer needed. After the investigation was done, the Fire Chief called to a debriefing at the firehouse. All the departments sent someone to the debriefing. I was selected and went to the debriefing. During the debriefing, the investigation was gone over and we talked about what mistakes were made and what could have been done better. The debriefing wasn't done to make anyone feel bad or make someone look bad. It was done to make sure everyone was kept safe. For example, I had brought up about boat usage during the investigation because the park boat was used plus a couple of others. One department did use another department's boat and it was discussed because would insurance cover another department using a boat. At that meeting, it was decided each department would use their own boat unless an emergency caused that not to happen. The debriefing was done to fix errors and to make things better for next time. It needed to be done. In our walk with Jesus, there should be debriefing with our Lord on how we are doing spiritually on this earth. Is there any improvements needed or is there something we are doing wrong in our walk with Jesus Christ?

The Old Testament is like a debriefing on the life of the people. We can learn so much from the Old Testament. We can learn so much on how to live today and how God is concerned on how we live personally. So, we'll see that God does a

check on us and we are to do a check or debriefing on ourselves as well. Let's take a closer look at this. Let's turn to Lamentations 3: 19 – 40. We have been looking at Jeremiah for the past few weeks and we'll be looking at Lamentations, which was written by Jeremiah. In Hebrew, Lamentations can mean "Song of Wailing". The English definition can be "the passionate expression of grief or sorrow, weeping" (Oxford). Jeremiah wrote this after the total destruction of Jerusalem. The people were either killed or taken captive. The Jewish people were in a very dark place. The captives had lost everything except for life itself. So, this Song of Wailing from Jeremiah was for the fall of Jerusalem. This is what we read from Jeremiah, "The thought of my suffering and homelessness is bitter beyond words. I will never forget this awful time, as I grieve over my loss. Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this: The unfailing love of the Lord never ends! By his mercies we have been kept from complete destruction. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each day. I say to myself, 'The Lord is my inheritance; therefore, I will hope in him!' The Lord is wonderfully good to those who wait for him and seek him. So it is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord. And it is good for the young to submit to the yoke of his discipline. Let them sit alone in silence beneath the Lord's demands. Let them lie face down in the dust; then at last there is hope for them. Let them turn the other cheek to those who strike them. Let them accept the insults of their enemies. For the Lord does not abandon anyone forever. Though he brings grief, he also shows compassion according to the greatness of his unfailing love. For he does not enjoy hurting people or causing them sorrow. But the leaders of his people trampled prisoners underfoot. They deprived people of their God – given rights in defiance of the Most High. They perverted justice in the courts. Do they think the Lord didn't see it? Can anything happen without the Lord's permission? Is it not the Most High who helps one and harms another? Then why should we, mere humans, complain when we are punished for our sins? Instead, let us test and examine our ways. Let us turn again in repentance to the Lord. (NLT, 1193)"

We start to read here that Jeremiah is reflecting on his affliction and bitterness on the situation his nation is in. Different translations use different terms here to describe how Jeremiah felt. Jeremiah is reflecting on the pain he is going through.



His soul is grieving over the destruction of the nation as he knew it. What Jeremiah feels is what we usually feel when we are going through a bad situation. We dwell on it till our soul becomes downcast to the point where bitterness can set in. In fact, have you ever tried to sit somewhere and try not to think or sit with a blank mind? Some kind of thought is going to worm into your brain and before long, you are thinking about something that fills the void. Something is going to fill in the void in our mind. If our soul is downcast, then our mind is going to be downcast. In fact, to Jeremiah, he will never forget the awful time. It's interesting how awful things are easier to remember than good things. A first responder can usually remember all the bad events they have had to deal with through their career in great detail. I can remember the first time I helped to pull out a dead body from a lake like it just happened yesterday in great detail. The problem is we can allow life's bad situations to consume us to the point where it makes us sick. Jeremiah is remembering all of this bad stuff he has witnessed. However, Jeremiah quickly changes in verse 21 where now he has hope because he thinks about the Lord's great love and because of this great love, he is not consumed by all of this darkness that surrounds him. He remembers that God's compassion never fails. He remembers who God is and he is reminded His love is new every morning. The Lord is still his portion even while he is being held captive by a pagan nation. In verse 25, he continues by reminding us that the Lord is good to those whose hope is in Him and to the one who seeks Him. Jeremiah already knows and we talked about this last week that those who are held captive won't be able to return to Israel for seventy years yet. The only hope Jeremiah has left is from God Himself.

How do we know that the only hope Jeremiah has is from God only? In verse 24, Jeremiah states that God is his "portion". In Hebrew, the term is "heleq" which mean inheritance, allotment, a plot of ground (Strong's Concordance). In the days of the Old Testament, land was a big part of inheritance and it was good to have it handed down to each generation of the family. The Jewish people had lost their human inheritance for the time being. Now, Jeremiah has no choice, but turn to God who is now his only portion / inheritance. Jeremiah and the Jewish people have nothing left, but the Lord. So, now they must wait for Him.

Their earthy inheritance is all gone. It's amazing what the Lord sometimes has to do to wake people up to get them to seek Him. For the Jewish people, God had to take everything away from them. They had even ruined the Holy Temple by worshipping other gods and by not loving the Lord with everything they had. Remember, Moses had told the Jewish people in Deuteronomy 6: 5, "And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. (NLT, 269)" They failed to do this, so God had His own Temple destroyed. In other words, God had to take everything away from them so that their only option was to seek Him as Jeremiah tells us He wants in verse 25 of Lamentations. The Lord wanted His people to seek Him and have hope in Him. They got so bad at this, that God had to take everything away from them before they could start to seek and have hope through God. They were stripped of all their earthly things that had replaced God. What is it going to take for the Church in America to wake up and really start to seek God for love and hope instead of looking to other resources? Is the Lord going to have to take away all of our earthly things to get our attention to Him? I wonder?

Then Jeremiah adds to this in verse 26 that it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. They had no choice now. All their resources were gone and the Lord was their only hope. They had to wait for their salvation. The Hebrew term used here for salvation is "tsua" which means rescue from earthly enemies and can also mean rescued from sin and guilt (Strong's Concordance). Not only did they have to wait on God to rescue them from their enemies, but also wait for God to rescue them from their own sin and guilt. The sin and guilt of disobeying God by not loving Him with everything they had. We just think of salvation in the spiritual sense. This was total salvation – rescue from human enemies and from their own sin. They had to wait.

So, while they had to wait, they also had to wait quietly while God refined them into the people they should have been. In verse 27, we read that it is good for a young man to bear the yoke. While the older generation died off, the young generation was to bear the yoke. In Old Testament days, the term "yoke" was used as a figure of speech meaning "a symbol of training". The yoke was used on animals to control and train them. So, this time of suffering for Judah was also a



good time for training. A time for them to get back to the laws and understanding how God's laws were good for them. In today's culture, many in the Church is replacing God's law with human law. This is not good and it is wrong. God does not change. God is always Righteous and sin can't be made into something good – which our culture is trying to do – make sin good. Sin is disobedience against God and it has always been and will be till this earth is destroyed by God. God will punish sin. Jeremiah says so in verse 32 when he tells us that God brings grief, but will show compassion because of His unfailing love. He will punish His Church today as He did in the Old Testament (the Israel nation).

What can we do today so that we don't get into the same position as Israel did where the Lord had to take everything away from them before they could be refined into loving people again? Well, Jeremiah gives us the answer in verse 40, "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord" (NIV). This is actually a command here. We may brush this off as just a Old Testament thing, but Apostle Paul tells the New Testmant Church, which we are part of, this in 2 Corinthians 13: 5, "Examine yourselves to see of your faith is really genuine. Test yourselves. If you cannot tell that Jesus Christ is among you, it means you have failed the test. (NLT, 1850)" Now, we are more fortunate than Jeremiah and those of the Old Testament because we now have the Holy Spirit within us because of what Jesus did on the cross. His Spirit can help us to examine our ways and test them. In other words, we should be doing monthly debriefings on our spiritual life with the help of the Spirit. Paul wanted the church in Corinth to examine themselves because they had allowed themselves to water down their love for the Lord. We do this debriefing to see if any areas of our spiritual walk with Jesus have become weak, like studying God's Word or praying. We go back and reevaluate and see what needs improvement. After we have gone through a storm in our life where we suffered or had gone through a trial, we should reevaluate our life and see if we had become closer to the Lord or further away and why? We need to test for weak areas in our faith. The Lord wants us to and He will gladly help us to reevaluate and improve our spiritual condition so that we don't become like Israel had become or as the Church in Corinth had become. When has been the last time you examined and tested yourself to see if you're faith is really

genuine? I think we need to do a better job in getting with the Lord and doing a debriefing on our spiritual condition. How is your faith today? Is it healthy or will the Lord have to remove everything you hold as important before you even notice the Lord? Just to let you know, satan has already done a check on your spiritual condition. Let's make sure we know our own condition better than he does. If not, he'll use it for his advantage against you. Take it to the Lord in prayer.

*NLT Life Application Study Bible.* Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, 1996.

*The Strongest Strong's Concordance.* Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001.