

# No One to Comfort

*Facing Covenant Disaster*

By Dr. D. Ralph Davis

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Lamentations 1  
**Preached on:** Sunday, April 23, 2017

## First Presbyterian Church

1324 Marion St  
Columbia, SC 29201

**Website:** [www.firstprescolumbia.org](http://www.firstprescolumbia.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/fpccolumbia](http://www.sermonaudio.com/fpccolumbia)

Our passage this evening comes from Lamentations 1. One of the best and most encouraging things to me of a few months ago was when Mr. Brad Anderson was preaching the evening service and he preached from Lamentations 5. Lamentations is not a book that appears in church too often, maybe because it's smooshed between Jeremiah and Ezekiel and we don't pay much attention to it, but we'll try to look at it in the next several weeks, if possible, and work our way through it.

Tonight, Lamentations 1. Let's hear the word of God.

How she sits all alone, the city that was full of people. How she has become like a widow who is great among the nations. How the princes among the provinces has been put to forced labor. She weeps bitterly in the night and her tears run down her cheeks. There is no one to comfort her among all her lovers. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies. Judah has gone into exile because of affliction and because of much servitude. She dwells among the nations. She does not find a resting place. All her pursuers have overtaken her among her distresses. The roads to Zion are in mourning with no one coming to the stated festivals. All her gates are desolate. Her priests keep groaning. Her young women are grieved and it is better for her. Her foes have become the head, her enemies prosper, for Yahweh has made her suffer for her many rebellions. Her children have gone into captivity before the foe. So all her majesty has gone off from daughter Zion, her princes have become like stags that do not find pasture, so they go on without strength before the pursuer. Jerusalem remembers the days of her affliction and her wanderings, all her precious things she had from days of old when her people fell by the hand of the foe and there was no one to help her. The foes saw her and laughed over her annihilation. Jerusalem has sinned terribly therefore she's become impure. All who honored her despise her for they have seen her nakedness. What's more, she groans and is turned away. Her uncleanness is in her skirts. She does not remember her future so she has plunged amazingly. There is no one to comfort her. Look, Yahweh, at my affliction for the enemy has triumphed. The foe has

spread his hands over all her precious things for she saw nations enter her sanctuary. Those of whom you have commanded, they are not to enter your congregation. All her people are groaning as they are seeking bread. They have given their precious things for food to renew their strength. Look, Yahweh, and take it in, for I am despised. Is it nothing to you all who pass by? Take it in and see if there is any pain like my pain which has been inflicted on me, which Yahweh has made me suffer on the day of his hot anger. From on high he sent fire into my bones and overpowered them. He has spread a net for my feet and has turned me backwards. He has made me desolate, faint all day long. The yoke of my rebellions have been bound on by his hand. They are interlocking. They have gone up upon my neck. It has broken down my strength. The Lord has given me into the hands of those I cannot withstand. He has tossed aside all my finest lawyers, the lords in the midst of me. He has proclaimed a festival against me to crush my young men. As in a winepress, the Lord has trodden down the fair daughter, Judah. For these things I am weeping. My eye, my eye runs down with tears for any comforter is far off from me, one to restore my spirit. My sons have been devastated for the enemy has won the day. Zion spreads out her hands. There is no one to comfort her. Yahweh has given orders about Jacob, his enemies are all around him. Jerusalem has become an impure thing among them. Yahweh is in the right for I have rebelled at his commands. Please listen, all peoples, and see my pain. My young women and young men have gone off into captivity. I have called out to my lovers, they have betrayed me. My priests and my elders have perished in the city for they searched for food for themselves that they might revive their strength. Look, Yahweh, for I am in distress. My insides churn. My heart turns over within me for I have terribly rebelled. Outside the sword bereaves, inside it's like death. They have heard how I'm groaning. There is no one to comfort me. All my enemies have heard of my disaster. They rejoice. In fact, you have done it. You must bring the day you have called for and let them be like me. Let all their evil come before you and deal with them as you have dealt with me for all my rebellions for my groanings are many and my heart is faint.

It was hard to estimate really what took place in 1945 in what's called the Battle of Berlin, the end term of Berlin in the second World War. Casualties, I suppose, civilian casualties were estimated about 100,000, 20,000 people succumbed to heart attacks, 6,000 committed suicide. It's a devastating thing when a city falls. It was a devastating thing in 587 BC when Jerusalem fell and the nation of Judah fell, leaving the city in devastation, smoking ruins, the temple burned down and so on. It was national judgment for unfaithfulness to Yahweh, corrupting his worship, despising his laws and now he brought judgment via the Babylonian invasion. One writer has said that archaeological evidence suggest about 80% of the towns and villages of Judah were destroyed or abandoned during the Babylonian invasion and its aftermath. It was rather extensive. That's what's behind the book of Lamentations.

So where does faith find hope when one's nation is decimated and everything one leaned upon as props for life has been tossed into the trash compactor of history? What then? That's what Lamentations deals with in part, the suffering, and then there are different books in Scripture, aren't there, that deal with different kinds of suffering. The book of Job deals with mysterious suffering for no particular sin. The book of Lamentations deals with appropriate suffering for covenant unfaithfulness and it has a national scope to it for all the people of Judah.

Now, before we go into the text, let's just make a few preliminary observations on Lamentations 1. Notice, first of all, that in verses 1 to 11, most of it is in the third person, that is, it's talking about "she" and "her" and that sort of thing. Third person. Not all but mostly. And then in verses 12 to 22, the last half of the chapter, it's couched mainly in the first person, "I, my"; Lady Zion speaks for herself there except for verse 17. So you notice those and then notice the five fold repetition of the sad refrain "no one to comfort her" or words to that effect. You find that five times: verses 2, 9, 16, 17 and 21. It runs through it like a thread. And then, third, notice that there is prayer interspersed in this chapter. Notice that it comes out in the last line of verse 9, the last line of verse 11, and then in verses 20 to 22. So you have these prayers coming in.

So Lady Zion wants you to listen to her or she wants you to hear about her situation and what is Lamentations 1 trying to say to us? First of all, I think it's saying hear or feel rather, feel the anguish, and that's primarily in verses 1 to 11. Feel the anguish. Judah, Zion, wants pity and you see her anguish described in several different ways or in terms, for instance, first of all of her losses. If you look there are verses 1 to 11, what are those losses? Well, she has lost her homeland, verse 3: Judah has gone into exile; she dwells among the nations. Verse 5, the last of the verse: her children have gone into captivity before the foe. So she's lost her homeland.

She's lost her privileges also. Notice verse 4: the roads to Zion are in mourning with no one coming to the stated festivals. No more public worship. The temple has been decimated. So that privilege is taken away. You see it also in verse 10, that the foes, the nations enter her sanctuary. So public worship has been taken away from her. She has lost her privileges.

She's lost her leadership. You see that, for instance, in verse 6 where she says her princes have become like stags that do not find pasture. And then if we cheat and go on a little further in verse 19: my priests and my elders have perished in the city for they searched for food for themselves. The whole leadership of the nation has been so decimated and they have to try to survive themselves and so there is no one taking leadership.

She's also lost her respect. You notice that in verses 7 to 9. Her foes, last of verse 7, laugh over her annihilation. And then you have this picture in verses 8 and 9 of a woman, as one writer says, a sort of a debased harlot or hussy, you might say, shamelessly exposing her nakedness and indifferent to the marks of menstrual blood on her skirts, verse 9, and so on. She's lost her respect.

She lost homeland and privileges and leadership and respect and she's also lost her provision. Verse 11, all her people are groaning as they are seeking bread. They have given their precious things for food to renew their strength. Daily bread is even a problem.

So these are her losses and that's part of her anguish, but then even more of her anguish comes in her isolation and you see that in that thread that goes through it. As we mentioned, five times, "no one to comfort her," verses 2, 9, 16, 17 and 21. Then in verse 7, the same sort of thing, "no one to help her." Her isolation. It's one thing to be going through heavy losses and so on, but there is an aggravation beyond losses if you're there alone and there's no one with you. You remember Paul in 2 Timothy 4 said, "Everyone forsook me at my trial but the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength." But Judah has no one there is no one to comfort her. There are these losses and she's utterly by herself. No one to comfort.

And then I suppose you could say her anguish comes from her misery as well. You notice another repeated five times, a word repeated five times in the chapter, "groaning." You have it in verses 4, 8, 11, 21 and 22. Groaning. It's her misery and, of course, in verse 12, it kind of all comes out in that anguish question, "Is it nothing to you, all who pass by? Take it in and see if there's any pain like my pain which has been inflicted on me." You hear her misery. Verse 12 is not referring to the sufferings of Christ, it's referring to the sufferings of Zion as Yahweh has inflicted his judgment on her and that is her expression in misery. "Take it in and see. Sense my unsurpassable pain." She doesn't want detachment. She doesn't want indifference. She's trying to pull you in. She says, "Feel the anguish."

That's a salutary reminder for us. It seems rather pedantic, perhaps, but not to be cold and detached and indifferent to the sufferings of God's people even if their sufferings for their own sins as in Lamentations. Sometimes we can be that way, I suppose.

I was interested to read what Ruth Tucker said about a Scottish missionary by the name of Alexander Duff. He was a missionary in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, quite a missionary of some achievement in which he achieved in India and so on, and looked up to as a missionary statesman. Tucker says Duff was a staunch, sober, humorless Presbyterian. Now, that's a stereotype. Not all Presbyterians are staunch, not all of them are sober, and not all of them are humorless. So you understand that's a sort of stereotype, but that was Duff, apparently.

And he came back, he and his wife came back from India in 1839 or had been back, and they were going back to India then in 1839. They had four children, the youngest being an infant boy. They left these children behind with a widow lady and they didn't come back on furlough until 1850. That little infant boy was now 11 years old.

Well, apparently they're about, oh, four years or so, but then they went back to the field in about 1855 and that boy who was 11 was now 16 and the parting seemed unbearable. He and his mother were in anguish over this. They were at the London bridge and both of

them were crying their eyes out, he said. This is the way he puts it, he's a teenager, "I well remember how my mother's and my own heart were well nigh breaking and how at the London bridge my father possessed himself of the Morning Times and left us to cry out our eyes in mutual sorrow, and so we parted, a sadder parting as between mother and son there never was." But there was Alexander Duff with his nose in the newspaper, hard and calloused and unfeeling, with no sympathy apparently at all.

We need that reminder sometimes. It's not that we have to be hyperly emotionally involved in all kinds of suffering and so on. We can't really do that all the time but there is something that the New Testament says to us, doesn't it? For instance, 1 Peter 3:8, "All of you," Peter says, "be of one mind." What's the next one? "Sympathetic." You've got to have a heart for the Lord's people and their troubles. Well, what does the writer of Hebrews say in Hebrews 13:3? "Remember those who are in prison as though in prison with them." Try to have an imaginative sympathy for the sufferings of the Lord's people. Now when it says that, it's not saying that they ought to remember. You're not talking about rapists and murderers in prison, incarcerated as we have and so on. They're talking about in that context other Christian believers who have been thrown into the slammer and they're in there and he says, "Don't forget them."

What would that involve? Well, they weren't there for long term but they would be in prison awaiting their trial, perhaps, and the verdict, or it's already been given and they're awaiting their execution. But it was a temporary thing, but it could be a very difficult time and he's saying remember your fellow believers who are in prison as though in prison with them. Why would they have to remember them? Well, because they wouldn't have food unless their loved ones and fellow believers brought it to them. The state didn't furnish that. So if they weren't going to have food, they would have to bring it to them. If they were going to have warmer clothes, fellow believers or loved ones would have to bring it. Remember those who are in prison as though in prison with them. Have some imaginative sympathy. Or as Lady Zion reminds us in Lamentations 1, feel the anguish. Please, feel the anguish.

Second, I think Lamentations 1 is trying to tell us hear the truth. Hear the truth, verses 12 to 19. Now in verses 12 to 19, there is a shift grammatically, as I said earlier. Most of verses 12 and following is in the first person and so Lady Zion, you might say, is speaking, "I and my" in the first person. So it's as if we're going almost inside her distress.

Now, you notice that we've already, I hate to flip back and forth and so on, but poetry is not always nice cut and dried and so on, we've already met the first overt theological note in the book in verse 5: for Yahweh, emphatic subject, for Yahweh has made her suffer for her many rebellions. That's the truth. She's been judged for her covenant unfaithfulness and so on, but then that was the first overt theological note but as you look at verses 12 and following, you notice how that kind of accent becomes a veritable barrage. Look at the last of verse 12: this is pain which Yahweh has made me suffer on the day of his hot anger. Look at verse 13: from on high he sent fire into my bones; he spread a net for my feet; he has made me desolate, faint all day long. Notice the last of verse 14: the Lord has

given me into the hands of those I cannot withstand. Verse 15: he's tossed aside all my finest lawyers; he's proclaimed the festival against me; as in a winepress the Lord has trodden down the fair daughter, Judah. He's done it. God has afflicted this suffering. This is our judgment for being unfaithful.

Hear the truth. Get that down. Notice the intention here is not to blame Yahweh through this, but to justify him and to bring clarity into the mix. It's as if they're saying or she is saying, "This is something Yahweh has done and he's done it rightly." Do you see the first part of verse 18? "Yahweh is in the right for I have rebelled at his commands." And it hammers that point home through verses 12 to 19. Hear the truth. Sometimes we need that just to come through to us.

William Jennings Bryan used to tell the story and he ran for President of the United States three different times. I don't know, maybe this was about 1908. I'm not sure of my dates and so on, but he ran for President three different times and he lost three times and after his third defeat, Bryan liked to tell the story of the inebriated fellow who tried three times to get into a private club. He was thrown down stairs each time, landing in the street. After his third attempt, he picked himself up and dusted off his clothes and said thoughtfully, "They can't fool me. Those fellows don't want me in there."

Ah, sometimes it's helpful just to get the facts of the case in front of us and that's what Lady Zion is doing here. This is Yahweh's judgment and he's right in doing it. So there's no avoiding the actual state of things and for that reason there may be some hope because if you notice the truth of the situation and admit it, then there may be some way to work toward resolution or solution but you won't do that unless you have a true assessment of the trouble. If you know the truth, you may begin to work your way back and Zion here is acknowledging the truth of the matter about Yahweh's judgment. Hear the truth.

Now, I think at this point this kind of leaves us unhitched. I think this kind of leaves us cold and there is a subtle danger to us here because it's easy for us to have a low key detached arrogance that comes slithering through the crevices of your gray matter and it's something like this, "Well, that's Israel or that's Judah. Ha, they never did get it right. Israel was rebelling in the wilderness after they came out of Egypt. They're worshipping Baal during the period of the Judges. They get the kingdom established and so on and you read just 1 and 2 Kings and it's just a downward spiral. They were always screwing up. It was always covenant infidelity. But we're the church." Whoa, don't go too far with that. We don't have a great record. "Ah, yes, but," you'll say, "but," I don't know what labels you prefer to use but you may say, "Oh yes, but we're conservative, evangelical, Bible believing folks. We're the remnant type, you know. This really doesn't touch us, does it?" Don't ever think that. Perhaps we're not guilty of gross infidelity to the covenant but don't ever think that you're awash in guiltlessness because if you do, you need to pull that Trinity hymnal out and go to hymn 493 and you need to read words like this,

"We have not known thee as we ought,  
nor learned thy wisdom, grace and pow'r;  
the things of earth have filled our thought,

and trifles of the passing hour.

"We have not feared thee as we ought,  
nor bowed beneath thine awful eye,  
nor guarded deed, and word, and thought,  
remembering that God was nigh.

"We have not loved thee as we ought,  
nor cared that we are loved by thee;  
thy presence we have coldly sought,  
and feebly longed thy face to see."

You can read those first three stanzas of hymn 493 and think you have nothing to repent of? You do have a hard heart. Hear the truth and they're saying the truth is these are Yahweh's ruins.

Now, thirdly, observe the discipline. I think that's what Lamentations 1 is saying, observe the discipline and here I want to draw attention to the way Lamentations 1 is shaped, okay, so this takes in the whole chapter. It follows an alphabetical acrostic, that is, you have 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and you'll notice you have 22 verses here in the way it's divided up. The first letter begins the first verse. The second letter of the alphabet begins the second verse. The third letter begins the third verse, etc., until you get through the alphabet to verse 22. Do you understand that? Alphabetical acrostic, an A-B-G, if you're Hebrew, pattern as you work through and it goes all the way from alpha to tav, you might say A to Z, they would say A to T perhaps, but in any case, it follows a certain form so it's structured this way. The verses are laid out beginning with the sequential letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

Now, why this form? Why this technique? Why did they write it up that way? Four of the five chapters in Lamentations are in an acrostic form. Well, some think they did it in order to enhance or help memory. I don't think so. I think they could have done something better if they were working for memory. But probably why they used this mechanism was for expressing grief of lament in a complete way so that one can say everything from A to Z about it, as if they're trying to give a full expression to their grief and their suffering. So they follow this pattern.

Eugene Petterson puts it this way, "When you have this acrostic form following the alphabet, it organizes grief, patiently going over the ground step-by-step, or you might say letter-by-letter, insisting on the significance of each detail of suffering." So it's not just a barrage of grief and anguish but it's an organized, thoughtful barrage. A lot of thought goes into expressing this.

So if you follow an alphabetical pattern like that through it, it keeps you from taking shortcuts through your grief. It makes you go on for 22 verses describing it in detail. It slows you down. It forces you to pay attention. You have to choose your words carefully. It seems to me that the time comes in grief and suffering when this sort of thing should be

done. Not immediately necessarily. There is a time when there is that immediate shock and disbelief and so on, there is a time for incoherent sobs and knee-jerk reactions, for moans and groans, for sometimes just the mute disbelief of broken heartedness and so on. But after a while, it's time to talk through and speak through the grief and the suffering and Lamentations does this through this alphabetical acrostic. There's a pattern that comes in grief.

Now, it doesn't have to do with judgment for national sin in this case, but with a personal sorrow, but Charles Hodge, the great Princeton theologian of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was writing to his brother. People used to do that, they wrote letters. This was in 1851. Charles Hodge had suffered the loss of his wife, Sarah, after 27 years or so of marriage, and it was on their anniversary that he wrote his brother and he said this, among other things. He says, "My feelings now are in some respects very different from what they were this time last year, but in others they remain unchanged. No day has intervened that I have not often and literally shed tears to her memory. No week has passed that I have not been twice or oftener to her grave." He's saying, you know, in that grief, the edge goes off of it, the initial bereavement will wear a little bit, but some things don't change. You still grieve. There's still the loss. You still weep practically every day, maybe not for other people to see.

Grief is a process. It's a long term project, perhaps. The intensity may change, the edge may be less, but the sorrow remains. It's not a fleeting matter. I'm not sure, you'll have to talk to somebody that knows more about it. I'm not sure we should get over it necessarily. It's a long term affair. The Bible recognizes that. It alphabetizes grief and wades its way through it.

So the acrostic idea may help here with ongoing suffering and grief, whether it's judgment for national sin or whether it's personal suffering and distress and so on. How does it help? Well, this grief put into an ABC pattern like this is anguish but it's structured anguish. It's disciplined anguish. It expresses itself but it has to think of words that talk about it and select them. It's suffering that's finding and choosing words. It's grief that's still intense and yet it's coherent. It's not merely a knee-jerk reaction but it's an ordered and thinking kind of grief.

That may be something of help to us. Doesn't this suggest, I don't want to be misunderstood but doesn't this suggest that there is an art to grieving? I think the implication of this in Lamentations 1, for instance, is that mourning, I don't mean the time of day, I mean mourning with a "u," sadness. Mourning is worth your best effort. Your best artistic, intellectual, emotional effort. And so observe the discipline of this acrostic.

Now, there's a fourth point I want us to look at and that is ponder the instinct. Ponder the instinct and here I want to look at those prayer notes. You notice how as you go through the lament, the first two prayers are just brief sentences. Look at the last of verse 9: look, Yahweh, at my affliction for the enemy has triumphed. Last of verse 11: look, Yahweh, and take it in for I am despised. In all the expression of her grief and so on, and of her



distress, it's as if there are these little instantaneous prayers that poke their way through in verses 9 and 11, but then you notice that you have a third "look, Yahweh" section in verses 20 to 22, and the last three verses of the chapter are a prayer.

Look at that prayer. It's a little more extended obviously than the others. Notice how that prayer takes in internal distress: look, Yahweh, for I am in distress; my insides churn; my heart turns over within me. Notice how it focuses on real guilt: for I have terribly rebelled, the middle of verse 20. Notice how it highlights horrid conditions, last of 20: outside the sword bereaves, inside it's like death. Notice the utter isolation she speaks about, verse 21: they have heard how I am groaning; there is no one to comfort me. Notice how she speaks of the hostile celebration of the enemies: all my enemies have heard of my disaster, they rejoice. Notice how she speaks of really a doctrinal petition: in fact, you have done it; you must bring the day you've called for and let them be like me. Let all their evil come before you and deal with them as you've dealt with me for all my rebellions. That's a doctrinal petition. Lady Zion is saying, "You've inflicted this judgment on me but now you need to, there's a day you've called for," verse 21, "Your word speaks of it when you'll judge the enemies of your people. You need to do that with them. Bring justice against those nations."

Now, Jeremiah 27, for instance, had said that that would be the case. Jeremiah in Jeremiah 27 said of the King of Babylon, that Judah would serve him and so on. He was Yahweh's servant, in a way. But then they say, "until the time of his own land comes." Babylon is going to be judged. Jeremiah 50 and 51 deal with that sort of thing. So there's the plea. Lady Zion knows the theology. She knows that Psalm 92, for instance, says that all God's enemies are going to be scattered. She says, "Now bring your judgment on them as you've brought it on me."

This is an extended prayer. What I want you to see is this prayer is a sort of instinctual thing and I want you to ponder the significance of the instinct. You see, there's a great irony here for the God who has done this, verse 21, "You have done it," the God who has brought this and according to verse 5 and 12 and 14 and 15 etc., the God who has inflicted this judgment and suffering is nevertheless the one to whom she flies for relief and keeps pleading with in the darkness and keeps going, poking prayers, poking through and pleading with this God. He's the one who has inflicted the judgment and he's also the one to whom she goes for help in the midst of it. It's an instinct, I think, and sometimes instincts are a truer guide than logic and reason, not putting down logic and reason, but sometimes instincts are very revealing.

For example, one of John Blanchard's books, he speaks of some atheists that he has quoted and so on, and he said, "These atheists that I've just quoted maintain that there's no point in looking for any meaning to life. The existence of humanity is a mindless mystery. It's a cosmic accident." And he says, "Now you push that thinking to its logical conclusion, it leads to nihilism." What's nihilism? Well, he says, "In its most popular form, nihilism says there is no reason why the universe exists; there is no goal toward which it's moving; nothing is of real value; human beings are biological accidents." Then he says one of the problems, not the only problem but one of the problems he has with

atheists and nihilists is that no nihilist consistently lives as if there's no rational or moral order. This is what he asks, "Does a nihilist step out in front of moving traffic cheerfully whistling 'Que Sera, Sera'?" Do you see the problem? If you become atheist or nihilist, do it with your eyes opened but let me tell you, you need to be wary of it because there are a lot of hypocrites among the atheists because they're not consistent with their faith, with what they believe. Okay?

What's Blanchard saying? Well, basically if you think that everything's according to chance and therefore there is no purpose in life and therefore we're an accident, in other words I'm a purposeless blob of protoplasm, if that's the case and if you really believe that, then when you're standing on the street corner, why don't you step out in front of moving traffic if it doesn't make any difference? Because you've got an instinct. A nihilist doesn't live according to his faith. No, he doesn't do that. He stands on the street corner beside a theist and waits until the "walk" light comes on. Why does he do that? Because he has a crazy instinct that self-preservation matters. He's inconsistent but it's an instinct that's very revealing. It kind of goes contrary to his faith that he professes.

Instincts can be very revealing and a people who are cast down and apparently cast off by God yet plead with him, that's what you have in Lamentations 1. Lady Zion assumes that somehow Yahweh must care about the misery she's in even if he himself brought it about. She can't get away from the fact that he must still be like the God of Exodus 3:7 where it is said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and their cry on account of their taskmasters. I have heard. Yes, I know their pains." But she still thinks he's like that. You just can't get away from it. You simply can't let go of him.

Ponder the instinct. Instinctively she goes to him in the darkness in spite of everything and many of you, some of you, probably understand that or there are some of you, no doubt, who profess Jesus and yet have such doubts about the love of God in Christ Jesus that you've become convinced in those dark nights of the soul that he has cast you off and in those dark nights you may cry, "Father, I'm in such utter misery with no assurance of your favor!" and then you need to stop yourself and ask yourself, "What did I say? I said, 'Father.' What was that? Was that the Spirit bearing witness with your spirit that in spite of it all you're a child of God?" It's an instinct that somehow you just can't shake and it may hold you until more help arrives.

Let us pray.

*Thank you, O God, that all Scripture is profitable. Thank you for the book of Lamentations, a rather strange book. Thank you that you are light and there is no darkness at all in you but you are the God who leads your people through the darkness. And for that we give you thanks in Jesus' name. Amen.*