

## News & Notes

Sunday, November 11, 2007

**Remember in Prayer:** Daryl Alberson; Steve Alberson; Tommy Alberson; Mike Carter; Vikie Cobb; Melba Cox; Charles Johnson; Aubrey Huey; Lettie Mae Hunt; Dot Ketchum; Sherry Lawrence; James Luna; John and Deliah Mann; Sue Moody; Diane Mize; Ann Ray; Katherine Shaw; Chris Spence; Jamie Spence; Ruby Tapp; Rural Tapp; Ron Tega; Calvin Ursery; Luther Williams; Dillon Wammack; Alvie Williford;

**Sympathy** is extended to the family of Cullas Tidwell.

**Pantry item** for the month of November is drink boxes.

Please check the **bulletin boards** for thank you notes that have been posted and additional announcements;

**Ashland Events:** Today: Elder's meeting at 4:00 PM;

**Area Events:** December 1: Benefit fund-raiser for Cindy Phelps at the Ables Store Fire Department;

### Sermon in Preview:

AM: Dealing with Grief (Luke 7:11-17)

PM: God's Plan for Fellowship

### For the Record (October 28, 2007):

Attendance: 64      Contribution: \$1355.00      Budget: \$1326.00

### The Ashland Church of Christ

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Ashland, MS 38603-0025

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acoc@ashlandcoc.org

#### Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM  
Worship 10:30 AM  
Worship 5:00 PM

#### Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

#### Shepherds:

Barney King  
Carrol Street



## "LET US SEARCH AND TRY OUR WAYS"

Roger D. Campbell

The message of the Book of Lamentations is one of pain and sorrow. The prophet Jeremiah grieved over the status of his people. Why? Because "*Judah is gone into captivity*" (Lamentations 1:3). In B.C. 586 the army of the Babylonian Empire conquered Judah, destroyed the city of Jerusalem, including the temple of God, and for at least the third time took a number of Jews into captivity. What had happened to bring all of this about? "*Jerusalem hath grievously sinned: therefore she is removed*" (1:8).

Time and again Jehovah had sent His messengers, men like Jeremiah and Zephaniah, to call the people of Judah to turn from their rebellious ways and return to Him. Sadly, they stubbornly refused, and their doom was inevitable. The message of the Book of Lamentations points to the reality of what happens when God's people choose to go their own way rather than obey what the Lord tells them to do.

It does not thrill us to read in the Book of Lamentations that some of the Jews cooked and ate their own children (Lamentations 4:9,10), nor does it excite us to hear of the immorality of the priests and false prophets (4:13,14). This book does, however, catch our attention. And, it does (at least it should) cause us to do some serious soul searching. Take, for example, the words recorded in Lamentations 3:40: "*Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.*" If we break down the words of that text, what do we have?

**I. Something Personal: "Let Us."** Someone needed to do some serious self-examination. Who was it? Well, now it was true that there was sin in the camp of the Babylonians that conquered Judah. And, it goes without saying that the idolatrous folks down in Egypt had their share of faults that needed to be looked into as well. But, all of that had nothing to do with the people of Judah and where they stood in their relationship with God, right? What the Jews needed to do was to look into their own lives!

It may very well be the case in our day that a congregation down the road

is having some troubles. However, does that fact make the congregation of which I am a member any better off in its relation with God? If we point to the other folks' weakness, does that make us stronger before the Lord? Of course not. Yes, it is true that other people will have to stand before the judgment seat of the Christ and give account of their actions (2 Corinthians 5:10). But, again, none of that has anything to do with our standing with the Lord. Like the people of Judah that were still alive after the Babylonian attacks on it, so you and I need to be taking a good look at ourselves. It is appropriate to point out the mistakes that others make (1 Timothy 5:20), but we must be certain that when we do so, we are not guilty of the same things (Romans 2:21-24).

**II. Something Productive: "Search and Try Our Ways."** We need to put our thoughts, speech, and actions to the test. We need to analyze and examine them. Why? To make certain that we are being the kind of people that the Lord wants us to be. What would be the proper standard by which we should search and try our ways? The word of God. It alone is the lamp for our feet (Psalm 119:105). It alone is able to build us up and give us an inheritance among all those that are sanctified (Acts 20:32).

Let us be sincere in our self-searching and self-trying. Let us not do it halfheartedly, but diligently. Let us make it a serious endeavor, because how we approach it just might make the difference in where we will be in eternity!

Let us be honest in dealing with what we find in ourselves. No one rejoices in observing a character flaw in self, but the only way to deal with and overcome it is to admit it and face it head on. One fellow looks in the mirror, sees changes that ought to be made in his outward appearance, but goes on his way without making those changes (James 1:23,24). When it comes to you and me looking into the perfect law of liberty, when we through that message see ourselves as we really are, let us have the courage to make the necessary changes. Searching and trying our ways is good for us. It helps us stay on the proper course. That leads us to the third aspect of the text of Lamentations 3:40.

**III. Something Potentially Life-Saving: "And Turn Again to the LORD."** A truck driver that inspects the condition of his truck for safety issues before he drives it, just might save his life (and the lives of others) by finding some flaw and correcting it. A hospital technician that inspects the instruments to be used in a major surgery just might save the life of the patient by discovering some faulty preparations and correcting them.

In the same way, when children of God search and try their ways, this has the potential to save them from spiritual disaster. That depends, of course,

on their response when they see that they have become entangled in the affairs of life (2 Timothy 2:4) or have left their first love (Revelation 2:4,5). Self-analysis has promising potential, but that is all it is until we deal with any flaws that we might find.

On the other hand, and this is equally important, there are those members of God's family that examine themselves and honestly find in themselves a pattern of life that shows that they are walking in the light (1 John 1:7). If so, thanks be to God. They are not perfect, but they are striving to walk humbly with the Master. For them, there is no need to "*turn again to the LORD*," because they have not departed from Him. Some preachers, when "extending the invitation," seem to plead and plead for any person "that has said or done anything wrong" to come forward and make a public confession. Friends, one that is showing himself as a "*pattern of good works*" (Titus 2:7) and confessing private sins privately to God (1 John 1:9), has no need "to walk down the aisle" and announce things to others that are unknown to them or anyone else.

There two other reminders that we must not fail to note about the charge to "*turn again to the LORD*." First, the Jews of Jeremiah's day that survived the onslaught of the Babylonians could not undue the past. They could repent and turn back to Jehovah, and hopefully many of them did that very thing. But, their repentance and return to Him could not change their past sins and remove the consequences of their horrible actions. No, the consequences would remain with them, just as in many cases the consequences of our sins remain even though we have repented of them. Second, it would be foolish for those surviving Jews to search and try their ways, admit that they needed to change, and then declare that they really planned to make the necessary changes *some time in the future*. In the future? Brothers and sisters, if we try and search our ways by the Book and find ourselves living amiss, then the thing to do is not simply talk about fixing it, but really do what is needed – repent of our mistakes, confess them, and pray to God about it (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9). When should an erring child of God do that? Immediately – do it while it is yet day, for the night comes when no man can repent and return to his Maker.

"*Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD*" (Lamentations 3:40). For those that have not yet become Christians, they need to turn "to" the Lord for the first time. In order to be saved by God's grace through the blood of Jesus, one must hear the gospel truth (Romans 10:17), believe that Jesus is the Son of God (John 3:16-18), repent of all sins (Acts 3:19), confess faith in the Christ (Romans 10:10), and then be immersed in water in order to have his/her sins washed away (Acts 22:16). This, and this alone, is what will get the job done. Why? Because that is the only path of salvation that the Lord has prescribed.