

Lamentations 1:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The LORD is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow: my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity.

Analysis

This verse marks a crucial theological shift: "The LORD is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment" (tsaddiq hu YHWH ki fihu mariti). After sixteen verses describing suffering, Jerusalem finally acknowledges God's justice. The word tsaddiq (צַדִּיק) means righteous, just, in the right. Even in judgment, God's character remains unblemished. This confession is essential—repentance begins with acknowledging God's righteous anger against sin. The phrase "I have rebelled against his commandment" uses marah (מַרָּה), meaning to be contentious, rebellious, or bitter against authority. This isn't mere weakness or mistake but willful defiance. The singular "commandment" (fihu, פִּיהוּ, literally "His mouth") may refer to God's authoritative word in general or to specific prophetic warnings Judah ignored. Rebellion against God's revealed will brought inevitable judgment. The appeal "Hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow" calls witnesses to observe how God deals with covenant breaking. The phrase "my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity" emphasizes loss of future hope—the next generation taken away. Yet this honest acknowledgment of deserved judgment prepares the heart for receiving mercy. Reformed theology emphasizes that genuine repentance includes confessing God's righteousness even while experiencing His discipline.

Historical Context

This confession reflects the prophets' consistent message. Jeremiah repeatedly called Judah to acknowledge sin and accept God's righteous judgment (Jeremiah 3:13, 14:20, 25:5-7). Daniel's prayer in Babylon (Daniel 9:4-19) exemplifies this same theology: God is righteous, we have sinned, our suffering is deserved, yet we appeal to God's mercy. The historical context shows that many in Judah resisted this conclusion. False prophets insisted God would never let Jerusalem fall because His temple was there (Jeremiah 7:4, 26:9). Some blamed Josiah's reforms for angering the "Queen of Heaven" (Jeremiah 44:17-18). Others blamed political mistakes rather than spiritual rebellion. But the faithful remnant, represented in Lamentations' voice, recognized that no one could righteously complain against God's judgments (Lamentations 3:39). The call for "all people" to hear witnesses to the nations. Israel's election as God's people meant their judgment would be visible to surrounding nations as a testimony to God's holiness. Deuteronomy 4:6-8 promised that obedience would cause nations to marvel at Israel's wisdom; conversely, disobedience would demonstrate that even God's favored people cannot escape consequences of rebellion (1 Peter 4:17-18).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Why is acknowledging God's righteousness in judgment essential to genuine repentance and restoration?
2. How does the statement 'The LORD is righteous' challenge our tendency to view ourselves as victims when facing consequences of sin?

3. What does it mean that rebellion is not just against rules but against God's 'commandment'—His personal, authoritative word?
4. In what ways does Jerusalem's public confession before 'all people' model the corporate nature of repentance that God desires from His covenant community?

Interlinear Text

מְרֻ יִתְיַ is righteous H1931 H6662	בְּ יְהוָה The LORD H3588 H3068	בְּ יְהוָה against his commandment H6310 H3588	מִרְבָּרְ יִתְיַ for I have rebelled H4784 H4784
שָׁמְעוֹ hear H4994 H8085	כָּלְ נָא I pray you all people H3605 H5971	עַמְּ יִם and behold H7200 H7200	מִקְאָבְ וְ my sorrow H4341 H1330
בְּשָׁבֵןְ וְ and my young men H970	בְּלֹכְ וְ are gone H1980	בְּכָרְבָּיְ into captivity H7628	

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 119:75 (References Lord): I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

Zephaniah 3:5 (Righteousness): The just LORD is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame.

Jeremiah 12:1 (Righteousness): Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?

Lamentations 1:12 (References Lord): Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.

Psalms 107:11 (Word): Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High:

Nehemiah 9:33 (Righteousness): Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly:

Lamentations 3:42 (Parallel theme): We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned.