

Have You Considered Your End?

(And, no, this isn't some kind of diet article.)

The book of Lamentations in our Old Testament is a sad book. "To lament" means "to feel or express sorrow or regret for; to show grief or mourn deeply." That is exactly what Lamentations is – a collection of mournful wailings over the sorry condition of Jerusalem and her people. The city has been destroyed. The temple of God is decimated. The people have been taken into captivity and scattered among the nations. It's a sorry, pitiful sight and all the prophet can do is lament.

What brought on this disaster? It was the Israelites' refusal to listen to God's rebukes and reform their behavior. Over a period of centuries they had been warned repeatedly and told what they needed to do to prevent a catastrophe. Every now and then it seemed like they were getting it. A change was made here and there, but it never stuck. The Israelites kept reverting to the disobedient behavior and finally, calamitously, God showed them He had had enough.

Lamentations is in our Bible for a reason. It serves as a warning to us. It should open our eyes and make us think.

Lamentations 1:9 contains this statement about how Jerusalem wound up in such a mess: "She never considered her end" (Holman Christian Standard Bible). Think about that. *She never considered her end*. The people of Jerusalem never stopped to consider the likely outcome of their present behavior. They never asked the question, "If we keep doing this, where will it take us?"

Thus the title of this article: *Have you considered your end?* Have you given thought to the likely outcome of your present behavior, choices, and priorities? If you keep doing them, where will they take you?

The problem that Jerusalem had is a very human one. We will go to great lengths to avoid thinking about the logical consequences of our behavior. We convince ourselves that we're too busy right now to think about the future. We tell ourselves there's plenty of time to change IF anything is wrong. We ignore warning signs like a teenage driver flying through a red light. We think bad things won't happen to us. We think it will all work out and, besides, it's too much bother to worry over.

That's a bad plan for life. The theological term for it is BONEHEADED! (They teach us fancy words like that in seminary.) It is not wise to keep turning the calendar pages of your life and never consider your end.

Stephen Covey, in his book The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, identified one of the fundamental practices of people who live well: *They begin with the end in mind*. Instead of letting the

unexamined busyness of life determine their destiny, they think first about where they want to end up. Then they make choices, set priorities, and choose behaviors that are in keeping with the desired result.

Brothers and sisters, you ought to read Lamentations and then consider your end.

(And, no, I'm not talking about looking behind you in a mirror, although, let's face it, that's not a bad idea either.)