

Hope in the Darkness

Lamentations 3:22-24 22 The Lord's acts of mercy indeed do not end, For His compassions do not fail. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. 24 "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I wait for Him."

Lamentations begins with a description of Jerusalem after the Babylonian invasion saying **How lonely sits the city That was full of people! She has become like a widow Who was once great among the nations! She who was a princess among the provinces Has become a forced laborer!** (Lam 1:1). Jeremiah walked through the streets and alleys of the Holy City and saw nothing but pain, suffering, and destruction in the wake of the Babylonian invasion of 586 BC.

Jeremiah lamented knew exactly how Jerusalem had earned this tragedy. He had warned them from the Lord over and over, beginning in Jeremiah 2:11-13 **11 Has a nation changed gods, When they were not gods? But My people have exchanged their glory For that which is of no benefit.** Israel had been giving itself over to the worship of false gods, like Baal and Asherah. These false religions offered apparent freedom from the law of God, but in reality enslaved Israel to their lusts for power, sex and money. God says in Jer 2:12 **12 Be appalled at this, you heavens, And shudder, be very desolate," declares the Lord.** God describes their treachery several times, summarizing it saying **13 "For My people have committed two evils: They have abandoned Me, The fountain of living waters, To carve out for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That do not hold water.** God's people had forsaken God, who is a fountain of living water, having life in Himself, giving life to all. Jer 17:13 **Lord, the hope of Israel, All who abandon You will be put to shame. Those who turn away on earth will be written down, Because they have forsaken the fountain of living water, that is the Lord.** To forsake this Fountain is the first evil; this is done when the people of God neglect his word and ordinances out of a desire to follow their own path.

And, they had hewed out cisterns out of the earth. Not being a natural spring or fountain, a cistern is a carved tank or reservoir dug in the ground, intended for storing rain water only, and therefore could not be depended on to be full, and were limited in the quantity that they could contain at any time. Any earthly provision is limited, and undependable, but God is the Great I AM, and is able to meet all our needs. Lamentations is important, because it reminds us that there are always consequences of sin, and that our attitude should be one of fleeing sin, and when we give in to temptation, to mourn over our sin. Remember, when Jesus is describing the character of believers, of Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven in the beatitudes, He begins by saying **3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.** When we don't process the desolation of our sin, and understand our loss, then we deny ourselves the comfort that can only come from Him. Jesus is saying--Until you come to the point of your recognition of your utter bankruptcy that you have achieved nothing, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. The sorrow we're talking about is Godly sorrow, and according to 2 Corinthians 7, this produces something other than depression and death. It produces repentance. Listen to what he says in verse 9. **"I now rejoice," 2 Corinthians 7:9, "not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance." Verse 10, the sorrow of the world produces death, but this is godly sorrow, he says, and it produces repentance.** And repentance brings blessing and comfort, that's the key. When we understand that we are spiritually bankrupt, and look at our life and find nothing of value, nothing of worth, nothing to commend ourselves to God, nothing by which we can claim righteousness or be acceptable to God, then we come to the place where God can begin to work. When we look at ourselves and find absolutely nothing, and understand that we have nothing to offer God, then we are in the place to come to God and ask for grace and beg for mercy and forgiveness. In Psalm 51, you have the very same thing. He says, **"According to the greatness of thy compassion, blot out my transgression, wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, cleanse me from my sin, for I know**

my transgressions and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, I have sinned and done what is evil in thy sight.” He couldn’t get rid of it. It’s ever before him. He couldn’t get it out of his mind. And David then said, **“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man under whom the Lord imputes not iniquity.”** Happy is the man who confesses his sin. Happy is the man who repents. That’s the comfort he’s talking about. 1 John 1:9 **9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** These are the people who enter the kingdom, who enjoy the comfort of the kingdom.

And out of that true understanding and repentance and confession comes one thing—HOPE. The verses that we’re looking at in Lamentations 3:22-24 stand strong in the midst of the surrounding darkness of lamentations as a beacon to all those suffering under the consequences of their own sin and disobedience, but know to come to the God of all hope. No matter how far we have gone from Him, we have the hope that we can return to Him and find Him compassionate and forgiving.

22 The Lord’s acts of mercy indeed do not end, For His compassions do not fail.

God is continually filled with lovingkindness and compassion, and these attributes never fail, like a spring of living water. Jeremiah was probably tempted, when he looked about him at the destruction of the city as well as its implications for the relationship between God and his people without the temple, and he could have concluded that God stopped caring about his people. But God reassures him that His lovingkindnesses never cease. This covenant faithfulness is not passive or merely an attribute of God, but His proactive effort, omnipotent power, and supernatural intervention on behalf of his people. Isaiah 63:7 **I shall make mention of the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, According to all that the Lord has granted us, And the great goodness toward the house of Israel, Which He has granted them according to His compassion And according to the abundance of His lovingkindnesses.**

Some might wonder if such work will cease in exile. The poet points out an important reality: “we indeed are not finished.” God’s not done with us yet. Israel’s survival is a testimony to the fact that God’s lovingkindnesses have not ceased.

23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. 24 “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I wait for Him.”

This verse deals with its greatness or abundance of God’s faithfulness. They are new every morning. The term “new” can also mean renewing or refreshing something in order to return it to its original pristine state or being (1 Sam 6:7). God’s readiness to intervene for Israel is at its peak all the time. This demonstrates that God’s love for his people even in exile is not only constant, but is still as grand as it was in the past.

God’s faithfulness is great. “Great” does not refer to magnitude, but rather to a multitude. His acts of faithfulness abound more than his work of judgment. He will keep his promises to the end, no matter what might occur. This is a God whose covenant love will make all things new; his plentiful faithfulness will accomplish that reality.

24 “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I wait for Him.”

The term “portion” refers to a share of spoils or an inheritance. It describes our complete satisfaction in God. When we have nothing left but God, we realize that God is all that we need.

Our “Hope” is an expectant waiting for God’s work, and a faith in Him to do what only He can do.