

## Lamentations 3:22-33

<sup>22</sup>By the mercies of the LORD we are not consumed, for his compassions do not fail.

<sup>23</sup>They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness.

<sup>24</sup>My soul says, "The LORD is my portion. Therefore, I will hope in him."

<sup>25</sup>The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.

<sup>26</sup>It is good to hope quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

<sup>27</sup>It is good for a man that he bears a yoke early in his life.

<sup>28</sup>Let him sit alone and be silent, because the LORD has laid this upon him.

<sup>29</sup>Let him stick his face in the dust. Perhaps there still is hope.

<sup>30</sup>Let him turn his cheek toward the one who strikes him. Let him be filled with disgrace.

<sup>31</sup>For the Lord will not push us away forever.

<sup>32</sup>Even though he brings grief, he will show compassion on the basis of his great mercy.

<sup>33</sup>Certainly, it is not what his heart desires when he causes affliction,  
when he brings grief to the children of men.

## Hope in Him

### I.

It wasn't a very normal thing to collect, but he did it anyway.

Collections. Lots of people have them. Stamps. Coins. Collectors are always looking for the rare or unusual. A coin or stamp that has a discernable flaw can be far more valuable than all the rest that came out perfectly. Collections often gravitate toward the unusual.

It wasn't a very normal thing to collect, but he did it anyway. His collection undoubtedly seemed odd to many. The subject matter was so much a part of his life that he just felt compelled to create the collection.

Painstakingly he sifted through all his memories of the facts to organize his collection. Each fact needed to be poured over—to be turned this way and that and examined from every possible angle. Carefully it was crafted to be a superb work, even though it was tinged with sadness.

The collection was a collection of poems. I know, that doesn't sound so unusual—there are lots of collections of poetry. The name of the collection is Lamentations.

It's a pretty depressing name for a book of the Bible. "Lament" means to mourn or feel sadness over something. Jeremiah's collections of laments is carefully crafted. He speaks about the pain the people of Judah and Jerusalem felt over the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon. Deep, dark sadness permeates most of the book.

Today's First Lesson is in the third lament. "I am the man who has experienced affliction under the rod of his fury. <sup>2</sup>He drove me off and brought me into darkness instead of light. <sup>3</sup>See how he turns against me. He turns his hand against me all day long" (Lamentations 3:1-3, EHV). Jeremiah writes as one of those who is suffering. He has seen the results of God's punishment on his people, punishment that God had been warning about through Jeremiah himself, as well as through other prophets.

He speaks *about* God, but not *to* God as he laments. Suffering can come in a number of different ways; so can the judgment of God. Mentally, physically, and emotionally this man

has experienced the judgment of God. Like Job, whom we heard about last week, the stress he experienced in all these different ways seems to have worn him down. Unlike Job, he doesn't challenge God and demand answers. Instead, he can't even seem to speak *to* God at all—just *about* him.

“Even when I call and cry out, he shuts out my prayer” (Lamentations 3:8, EHV). It seems to him that God is no longer even listening to his prayers. What is the point, he has come to wonder, of even bothering to pray at all?

## II.

It's a pretty common reaction. There is a tendency to look at life and evaluate how each situation has gone. When things go well it is easy to say that God is powerful and great and good and loving. When life is filled with one hardship after another with no relief in sight, God is not loving and good, but vengeful and vindictive.

At the end of the 3-verse segment of the poem right before our text today he says: “Nevertheless, I keep this in my heart. This is the reason I have hope:” (Lamentations 3:21, EHV). You see the colon that closes out that segment. The man remembers something—something important. Actually, he remembers *someone*. He remembers God.

God had much to say in the past to his people through the prophets. To be sure, there were dire warnings of the consequences the people would face if they failed to follow God's commands. But there was also a continuous thread of God's faithfulness. God does not change. His love does not change. His promises to his people do not change.

## III.

Remember we said that deep, dark sadness permeates most of the book. Today's lesson is the exception. The segment that begins with today's First Lesson shows the change in the writer's attitude. “By the mercies of the LORD we are not consumed, for his compassions do not fail. <sup>23</sup>They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:22-23, EHV). In a heartbeat he is now speaking *to* God rather than *about* him. “Great is your faithfulness.”

Looking back, even at the horrific events of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the focus turns to the fact that God did not utterly destroy his people. There was still mercy.

Things get dire. Life is full of twists and turns. As Job found last week, believers face loss of loved ones and loss of wealth and loss of health. Still, God's mercies are new every morning; he continues to care his people in ways we cannot possibly imagine.

Look at God according to his promises. His promises never fail: “For the Lord will not push us away forever. <sup>32</sup>Even though he brings grief, he will show compassion on the basis of his great mercy” (Lamentations 3:31-32, EHV). There are times when each of us has to face difficulties in life. Every human being faces grief at one time or another. At such times it might begin to feel as though God is pushing us away. Yet we know of his promises and his great mercy. The compassion of the Lord will shine through.

“My soul says, “The LORD is my portion. Therefore, I will hope in him”” (Lamentations 3:24, EHV). When God brought his people into the Promised Land each tribe was given part of the land...all except one, that is. The tribe of Levi—the called workers, so to speak, of the Old Testament—had no specific allotment. To his ministers God said: “I am your share and your possession among the people of Israel” (Numbers 18:20, EHV). While God had said this to his priests, it was really true for *all* God's people. They might have been given a portion of land, but their *real* portion was God—their *real* inheritance.

“The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. <sup>26</sup>It is good to hope quietly for the salvation of the LORD” (Lamentations 3:25-26, EHV). Challenges roll

in like so many waves on the shore. They are never-ending. It's easy to get caught up in the immediacy of what you face today and demand a solution. Wait for the Lord. "It is good to hope quietly for the salvation of the LORD."

You know what God has done in his great love for all mankind. Throughout human history God promised again and again that he would send someone to deal with the seemingly endless problem of sin. In the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus God has shown his faithfulness. On the cross of Jesus God revealed his love once for all time. Jesus, both truly human and at the same time God himself, took up our sins on himself. He bore pain and punishment that is more lamentable than any lament about a land or a city or any of the daily concerns that seem so overwhelming to us. He paid the full price for every sin. God's love is so great that he promises eternal life to us.

#### IV.

"By the mercies of the LORD we are not consumed, for his compassions do not fail. <sup>23</sup>They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. <sup>24</sup>My soul says, "The LORD is my portion. Therefore, I will hope in him" (Lamentations 3:22-24, EHV).

God's faithfulness guides our lives in hope. Living in hope does not mean that suffering has been taken away. In Jeremiah's lament, the suffering is still present. After this lesson, which is the bright spot of hope in the whole book, he goes back to lamenting.

There is a difference, though. Even in the midst of his laments he now expresses hope. "I called on your name, LORD, from the deepest pit... <sup>57</sup>The day I called to you, you came near and said, 'Do not fear'" (Lamentations 3:57, EHV).

From time to time you will find yourself in the deepest pit. Perhaps you will even have a collection of laments that feels as great as those of Jeremiah. Call to the Lord. Listen to him speak to you in his Word. Hear him tell you "Do not fear."

God has given to us the promise of his faithfulness. We see it every day when we look at the cross. God the Father condemned his only Son to death so that we could hope quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Jesus has risen from the dead and proclaims that steadfast love of God to you and to all mankind. God's faithfulness in his promise is great. It is great in its power to forgive your sins. It is great in its duration—lasting from generation to generation. God's promise guides your life in hope until Christ returns. Then he will bring about a new creation, where all those who believe in him will live in the wonder of his great faithfulness and love. Amen.