

Pastor Don Nelson

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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“NEW EVERY MORNING”
Lamentations 3:19-24

Lamentations is bleak, gut-wrenching, raw. As dark as the book of Jeremiah is, Lamentations is darker still. It pulls few punches in its description of the horrors of the siege and obliteration of Jerusalem. It pummels the reader with agony, loss, and despair. Lamentations is not for the faint of heart or weak of stomach!

But right in the center of this desolation is a stunning gift of unparalleled hope, which is made all the more glorious by its gloomy setting. Please turn to Lamentations 3.

■ Verses 19-20 function as the transition from darkness to light:

**I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.
I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.**

The author (probably Jeremiah) is neither ignorant of, nor in denial about, what has happened. He is no naïve optimist, much less a delusional lunatic.

He has not suppressed his memories. He is very much in touch with his anguish.

Jeremiah’s ongoing grief proves that the encouraging words which follow are not an escapist fantasy or theoretical abstraction. They are firmly grounded in actual reality and real-world experience.

■ Verse 21:

**Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:**

For 40 years Jeremiah has urged his people to turn to God and live – and for 40 years they have mocked, rejected, slandered, threatened, imprisoned, and beaten him. And still he says, **“I have hope”!**

During the war the prophet saw men, women, and children perish by the tens of thousands (if not more). Corpses lay in the street, unless they were cannibalized. And still Jeremiah says, **“I have hope”!**

After the imperial army captured Jerusalem they tore down its fortifications. They set fire to every public building and private home. They desecrated the temple and burned it to the ground. And still Jeremiah says, **“I have hope”!**

Ten years ago King Nebuchadnezzar deported 18,000 of Judah’s brightest and best. Now he has seized thousands more. And still Jeremiah says, **“I have hope!”**

Many of us can identify with Jeremiah’s pain, to a degree. We, too, have been misunderstood, have watched friends die, have seen our world collapse, have been left alone. Can I get an “Amen”?

On the other hand, many do not identify with Jeremiah in his hope. They have fallen so far they have to dig up just to hit bottom. All the “what-ifs” that they imagine are terrible ones.

It does not have to be this way. What does Jeremiah say? **“Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope.”**

Exactly what is **“this”** that he “[calls] to mind”?
What are the sources of Jeremiah’s hope?

■ Verses 22-23:

**Because of the LORD’s great love we
 are not consumed,
 for his compassions never fail.
 They are new every morning;
 great is your faithfulness.**

⊗ Verse 22a: **“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed.”** Jeremiah’s 1st source of hope is God’s love (*ḥesed*).

God loves us. That’s what Jeremiah is saying. It is a simple statement, but think of what it means in context!

Judah has forsaken and betrayed Holy God. In the Book of Jeremiah the LORD compares their sin to {3:1-5} the promiscuity of a married woman who willingly enters a life of prostitution.

He says, {Jer 6:13; 5:8, 28}

**“From the least to the greatest,
 all are greedy for gain;
 prophets and priests alike,
 all practice deceit.”**
**“They are well-fed, lusty stallions,
 each neighing for another man’s wife.”**
**“Their evil deeds have no limit;
 they do not plead the case of the**

**fatherless to win it,
 they do not defend the rights of the
 poor.”**

He asks, {Jer 7:9-10} **“Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury ...and then come and stand before me in this house...?”**

Judah deserves annihilation. It is because of their insistent immorality, injustice, and idolatry that YHWH has inflicted defeat and exile on them.

Judah does *not* deserve rescue. Yet Merciful God is preserving a remnant and he will prosper them. It is only **“Because of the LORD’s”** tenacious, fierce, truly **“great love”** that they **“are not consumed,”** not totally destroyed.

Are you being eaten alive by worry, fear, grief or misery? Take heart and seek the LORD. **“Because of [his] great love we are not consumed.”**

Do you despair of receiving God’s love because of your failure and sin? Take heart, remember his love for unworthy Judah, and cast yourself on his mercy.

We can share Jeremiah’s hope by calling to mind **“the LORD’s great love.”**

⊗ Verses 22b-23 a: **“for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning.”** Jeremiah’s 2nd source of hope is God’s compassion (*rāḥāmîm*).

📖 This noun *rāḥāmîm* combines tenderness and mercy.

📖 It grew out of the verb *rāḥam*, which is action we take in response to feelings of {Th. Wordbook O.T.} **“mercy**

that [are] most easily prompted by small babies (Is. 13:18) or other helpless people.” We can get a feel for the overtones of *rāḥam* from Isaiah 49:15: “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and” not *raham*, “have no compassion on the child she has borne?” It is also used in Psalm 103:13: “As a father” *rāḥam*’s, “has compassion on his children, so the LORD” *rāḥam*’s, “has compassion on those who fear him.”

📖 *Rāḥāmîm* has a sister-noun *raḥam* that means “womb.” Isn’t that fitting? Is there any purer human compassion than that a mother has for the child she carried in her womb?

Erma Bombeck said it better than I can:

Every mother has a favorite child....I have mine – the child for whom I feel a special closeness, with whom I share a love that no one else could possibly understand.

My favorite child is the one who was too sick to eat ice cream at his birthday party –...who had a fever in the middle of the night...the child in my arms at the emergency ward.

....My favorite child is the one who messed up at the piano recital, misspelled committee in a spelling bee...and had his bike stolen because he was careless.

My favorite child is the one I punished for lying, grounded for insensitivity to other people’s feelings, and informed he was a royal pain to the entire family.

My favorite child slammed the doors in frustration, cried when she didn’t think I saw her, withdrew and said she could not talk to me.

....All mothers have their favorite child. It is always the same one: the one who needs you at the moment...for whatever reason – to cling to, to shout at, to hurt, to hug, to flatter, to reverse charges to, to unload on – but mostly just to be there.

The next time you are in a pit so deep you lose all hope of getting out, take heart and call this to mind: God does tender mercy infinitely better than any mother. His “**compassions never fail**” – not even when ourselves dug the pit into which we have fallen!

We can share Jeremiah’s hope by calling to mind the LORD’s “**compassions**” which “**are new every morning.**”

☼ Verse 23b: “**great is your faithfulness.**” Jeremiah’s 3rd source of hope is God’s faithfulness (*’ēḥmûnâ*).

📖 *’Ĕmûnâ* is literally defined as *firmness, fidelity, steadiness*. Applied to God it expresses his total dependability. He is absolutely trustworthy.

📖 *’Ĕmûnâ* has the same root as *’āmēn* (*verily, truly, so be it*), our “Amen”. When we say that in prayer, we affirm that God has heard us, his intent is entirely good, and he will answer in the best way at the best time.

Unlike us he is 100% dependable. He never wavers, never fails. His faithfulness is “**great**” indeed.

Many of us find it difficult to trust the LORD, don’t we, especially in the hard times. We doubt his heart toward us and question his ability to come through.

As I was studying I came across the assertion that {Huey} “**with reference to God, this word**” *’ěmûnâ* occurs in Scripture “**only during...and after the**” Babylonian “**exile.**” I have not been able to determine the accuracy of that claim.

What is certain is that until now, before their defeat and exile, the Israelites of *Jeremiah’s day* have not really believed that God always does as he says. That helps to explain why they have ignored his call to repent.

It is after the exiles are deported that they realize that God does what he says. The mind-blowing irony is that it is YHWH’s faithfulness to accomplish the announced disaster that convinces them to believe his promise of blessing! They see that if God is reliable to fulfill prophesied judgment, he is equally reliable to fulfill prophesied restoration.

Many hardships are the consequence of our own sin. Many are not. Either way God can redeem them, using them as instruments to strengthen our faith, hope, and love, and {Ro 8:28-29} to conform us more closely to the image of his Son Jesus.

Some of us have been badly disappointed by loved ones and friends. Take heart and lean on the LORD. His way of doing things is almost always not our way, but it is perfect. His timing is often not what we would choose, but it is right. “**Great is [his] faithfulness**”!

We can share Jeremiah’s hope by calling to mind the LORD’s “**faithfulness.**”

■ Jeremiah finds hope in God’s love, compassion, and faithfulness. Hence, in verse 24 he says: “**The LORD is my portion**” – the LORD is my inheritance, the LORD is all I have – “**therefore I will wait for him.**” A more literal translation of the Hebrew is: “**Therefore I have hope in him.**”

Sometimes our lives can seem as bleak, gut-wrenching, and raw as Lamentations. We are pummeled with agony, loss, and despair, just on a smaller scale. Life in this world is not for the faint of heart or weak of stomach!

But right in the center of this desolation is a stunning gift of unparalleled hope, which is made all the more glorious by its gloomy setting.

**...this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:
Because of the LORD’s great love we
are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.**

God is good all the time! All the time God is good!

Lamentations is the word of the LORD.