**Lamentations 3**

**I. Text Of Chapter 3 – “I Am A Man Of Constant Sorrow” (4 min. to read)**

*A. Jeremiah’s Cry Of Despair (vv. 1-18)*

1. It’s hard in this section to determine whether Jeremiah is merely speaking of his own personal experience in this destruction or whether he is speaking representatively for the nation. The emphasis of the book seems to prefer the latter.

2. A variety of different images is used to convey his despair (Harkrider, 137)

i. Rod of God’s anger calls to mind Isa. 10:5.

ii. Darkness in v. 2 recollects Ch. 2 as well as Amos 5:18-20; Is. 13:9f

iii. *My flesh & my skin* (v. 4) suggest comprehensiveness of desolation and also brings to mind the extent of the famine b/c of siege

iv. Bitterness = gall; connected to wormwood (Dt. 29:18; 32:32; Jer. 8:14; 9:15). Jeremiah suffers from the consequences of the work of the false prophets (Jer. 23:15; Ezek. 21:1-5)

v. Walling up prisoners was a torture popularized by Assyria; Forcible confinement would be particularly offensive to a culture with nomadic roots

vi. God shoots arrows into kidneys (precious in the sacrificial tariffs of LOM; the source of life, emotional attributes of joy (Prov. 23:16) and sorrow (Job 19:27; Ps. 73:21))

vii. Drinking water with stones in it (vv. 15f) is similar to the incident with the Golden Calf (Ex. 32:20) and the test for adultery (Num. 5:11-31). cf. also Ps. 3:7; 58:6; Prov. 20:17.

*B. Remembering God’s Mercies (vv. 19-39)*

1. As he contemplated the situation, he was overwhelmed w/ depression, but when he directed his attention to the compassion and mercies of the Lord, his thoughts and hope were elevated (vv. 19-22). *Chesed* (mercies) is God’s lovingkindness, loyalty, devotion, and faithfulness to covenantal promises

2. He cries out with one of the titles for our great hymns: *“Great is Thy faithfulness!”* The Lord is the portion of those in distress; what greater hope could they have?! We must wait on & seek God! (cf. Is. 40:31)

3. Jeremiah points out that benefits may be gained in bearing burdens in one’s youth. His point seems to be to highlight that burdens are more easily borne with the vigor of youth. Other applications may be found in the increased malleability of character & faith in youth (vv. 27-30).

4. God doesn’t forget those who trust in Him. He is merciful & compassionate and His eyes likewise overflow with tears when ours do (vv. 31-33). He does not approve of cruelty or mistreatment in any situation and will avenge (vv. 34-36; cf. Ps. 69:33; Ps. 146:7; Is. 42:7; Lk. 4:18).

5. God is in control: *“Therefore man has no cause to murmur or complain against God when evil (punishment) comes because of sin (cf. Rom. 11:22).”* (Harkrider, 138) God would deliver in 70 years (Ps. 30:5)

*C. Jeremiah Calls The People To Despair Over Their Sins (vv. 40-54)*

1. God punishes the evildoer and blesses the righteous. Because of this, Israel and Judah needed to evaluate themselves and return to the Lord in sincerity. Jeremiah says they need to lift up their hands and their hearts to God and have them cleansed (cf. Is. 1:15; 1Tim. 2:8). Some (NEB) have an alternate translation of this phrase: *“Lift up your hearts instead of your hands”.* Both are possible but that latter is primarily founded on its being a fairly unique expression to have both the lifting up of the hands and the heart; typically, it’s one or the other.

2. God is said to cover Himself in such a way that their prayers could not reach Him. Before He would listen, they needed to first hear God! (cf. Zech. 7:11-13; Ps. 66:18)

3. As a result of their punishment, they had become as the “offscouring and refuse” among the nations (cf. 1Cor. 4:13 and the treatment of the apostles). EVV attempt to reconstruct Hebrew assonance in v. 47 w/ alliteration, but it does not adequately suffice.

4. Jeremiah’s eyes wept rivers of water as he considered the condition of his people (cf. 1:16; Jer. 4:19; 8:18-9:2, 18; 14:17f). He was no prof. mourner making a show for pay (cf. Jer. 9:17-21; Mk. 5:38).

5. In vv. 52-55, Jeremiah reflects on God’s past intervention in his own distress (Jer. 38:6-13) and builds hope to face the current calamity.

*D. Deliverance And Plea For Vindication (vv. 55-66)*

1. He takes this personal experience & offers intercession for his nation.

2. v. 58 uses the imagery of God as *go-el* for the people (cf. Jer. 32; Ruth 4; Lev. 25:25ff, 47-54)

3. Judah and Israel were judged in righteousness by God. Even so, the nations had corrupted their role in punishing God’s people. As such, Jeremiah speaks imprecations against them and requests retaliation from the Lord (cf. Jer. 50:14f, 29-34; Ps. 137:9).

4. Mocking/taunt songs (v. 63) were used by pagans and by Israel (e.g. Num. 21:27-30; Judg. 5; Is. 47:1-15; Jer. 48:27; Ezek. 12:16; 36:20; Ps. 137:3; Nah. 3:7; Hab. 2:6-19)

**II. Thought Questions For Chapter 3**

A. What images are used to convey Jeremiah’s despair? (vv. 1-18)

B. What benefits are gained when one contemplates the attributes of the Lord, especially when feeling overwhelmed? (vv. 19-26)

C. In what sense can it be good for one to bear burdens in their youth? (vv. 27-30)

D. What passages use the imagery of v. 30 for Jesus? (Mic. 5:1; Is. 50:6; Matt. 26:67; Lk. 22:64; Jn. 18:22; 19:3; 1Pet. 2:21f) See also, Job 16:10; Matt. 5:39

E. Does God take joy in the affliction of those created in His image? (vv. 31-33; cf. Ezek. 33:11; 2Pet. 3:9)

F. What may be gained in reflecting on God’s past intervention and response to our prayers as we find ourselves in current distress? (vv. 52-58)

G. Do you see any similarities from this chapter and Psalm 22; Isaiah 53?

**III. Applications For Chapter 3**

A. *“God’s expressions of mercy and compassion are brought forth with each new dawning day. Life itself and all that makes life possible are but some of the daily manifestations of divine love. To awake to a new day is only the beginning of fresh renewals of God’s faithfulness to his people. We can ‘sing a new song’ every day ‘with grace in our hearts to the Lord’ concerning the many expressions of mercy and compassion of God toward His children (Pss. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; Isa. 42:10; Col. 3:16).”* (Humphries, 558)

B. WAIT for the Lord! (Ps. 37:9; Hos. 12:6; Zeph. 3:8; Rom. 8:25; Gal. 5:5; etc.)

1. *“Lam. 3:25-26: Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength (Isa. 40:31). But to ‘wait’ means more than to have folded hands. It involves the desire to know and to do God’s will (cf. Psa. 25:3-5). It also involves having patience based on the faith that God will provide for His own (cf. Phil. 4:11-13; Heb. 13:5-6).”* (Harkrider, 141)

2. *“To ‘wait for the Lord’ means that we will not run ahead of him by presumptuously taking matters into our own hands (Isa. 30:15-16) or by going astray in our own way (Isa. 53:6). Neither does it mean that we should simply sit down and fail to follow the Lord’ leading and guiding through his word (John 10:4). The one who expects the good things of the Lord to be given to him must wait for the Lord and walk with him in faith and humble obedience (Isa. 40:31; Mic. 6:8; 2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 8:25). To wait for the Lord involves seeking the Lord. To seek the Lord is to know the Lord’s will for our lives. ‘Seek ye out the book of the Lord, and read’ (Isa. 34:16). This also includes the desire to have his blessings and his fellowship with us. ‘Seek the Lord while he may be found’ (Isa. 55:6).”* (Humphries, 559)

C. *“The believer has a living hope because he trusts in a living God whose promises are as sure as His judgments (cf. 2 Cor. 1:20).”* (Harrison, 225f) *“In all of life’s ebb and flow, the child of God will comfort his soul with the blessed assurance that his ‘hope is in the Lord.’”* (Humphries, 559)

D.*”…the incidence of calamity in individual experience is normally the end-product of a chain of causation…Since nothing can happen to an individual without God’s knowledge, a man should endure misfortune patiently and without protest, trusting in the mercies of God to bring good out of evil (cf. Rom. 8:28). This attitude should be particularly the case when an innocent person suffers unjustly (cf. 1 Pet. 2:21-25). When a transgressor is punished for his wrongdoing, he has absolutely no cause for complaint (cf. 1 Pet. 2:19f).”* (Harrison, 226f)

E. *“By definition man possesses certain basic rights, one of which is that of equal opportunity before the law. Where a person is deprived or cheated out of his legal rights, the image of the supremely just Deity within him is defaced.”* (Harrison, 227)