

Lamentations: "O Jerusalem, Who Can Heal You?"

Great Is His Faithfulness

Lamentations 3:1-30

Reflections of my life...

One's observations about the song: "It evokes feelings of joy and sadness at once. Although the lyrics are despondent, the song is in a major key rather than in melancholy minor. Trumpets and sweeping strings add grandeur, giving the song a timeless quality."

Already these young guys understand the truth about the world in which we live. "The world is a bad place, a bad place, a terrible place to live." And we who are disciples of Christ and students of His Word know why: This is a fallen world where we are confronted by three great enemies of the soul: our sin nature, aka as the flesh, the _____—the evil world system, and the devil, along with his demons—"the cosmic powers over this present darkness" (Ephesians 6:12).

Some of the terrible we experience is self-inflicted, brought home by that nasty sin nature within us, the flesh with its awful desires. But much of our sufferings come from the sins of others. At no fault of our own, some people make us pay for their own awful sins. Much of our sufferings are caused by others.

Their junk often makes the world a bad place to live. And that's the life of the godly, weeping prophet Jeremiah in **Lamentations 3:1-30**. It's **reflections of the saintly man's life**. And for a sensitive soul like Jeremiah, who was called by God to be His prophetic voice to a most unholy people who hated him for being God's faithful servant, his world was "a bad place, a bad place, and terrible place to live." **Reflections of Jeremiah's life**. It comes to us in three waves.

Reflections of a saint's life:

1. A look _____—Jeremiah's afflictions _____
the fall (1-20).

Verse 1: God is not angry with Jeremiah. Jeremiah is God's holy one—he is His well-pleasing servant, so he's suffering as a *victim* of his rebellious nation's sins. They are a nation that for the most part is no longer a

saved people. So they followed the depravity of their fallen hearts, and in the process broke God's heart. They pursued a life free from the God who loved and blessed them. They deliberately and passionately chased after a life outside of God's protection.

And because Jeremiah lived among them, he suffered along with them. Even God's holy ones experience the rod of God's wrath as a consequence of someone else's sins. So Jeremiah has the satisfaction of knowing that he himself is not being judged, but the judgment that fell on Jerusalem victimized him, the innocent one.

That's life in a fallen world surrounded by fallen people. We suffer much because of the wickedness of others. Not even God's right-hand man Jeremiah was exempt, and neither are we. We live in this bad place and we suffer the consequences of its badness. And it may feel like, at times, that even our good and gracious God is against us.

Verses 2-20: This was Jeremiah's *felt* experience, and it *feels* like: "[God] has driven and brought me into darkness without any light..."

The terrible consequences of someone else's deserved sins has driven him toward despair—his soul is broken and bowed down. Some of us can relate. We did nothing wrong. We were victims of someone else's wickedness. But do we ever suffer for it! And during those seasons we too can say, "Oh, my sorrows, sad tomorrows, the world is a bad place to live." And broken and bowed down, all hope has perished...

But that's not the _____ of story for God's faithful saints. It appears to be the end—we feel like we're dying. But suddenly cue the trumpets and the sweeping strings! because that is never the end for God's true remnant in a terrible place to live.

2. A look _____—His knowledge of God in the _____ of his afflictions gives way to hope (21-26).

God gave him and us a memory for when all seems hopeless! So Jeremiah lifted his eyes from the evil world around him and turned them upward toward heaven. In so doing he found what he desperately needed—**three truths about the character of God that restored his hope.**

First, God loyal _____ never comes to an end (21-22). The Hebrew word is *hesed*, which has the idea of *loyal love*. God's *great, loyal,*

steadfast love always and forever sticks with and by His saved remnant—those who are truly saved.

Second, His _____ never fail (22-23). In the hours before dawn, we are filled with hope, because morning is coming. And along with it is the truth that a fresh supply of God’s mercies will come with it.

Third, Great is His faithfulness (23-24). The bedrock of Jeremiah’s faith was the faithfulness of God. Every Monday, I pray this prayer: “Lord, my _____ is in the absolute certainty of your faithfulness.” His great faithfulness is the bedrock of our faith!

Jeremiah’s heart, mind, and soul was raptured up by the reality that God’s faithfulness to him in a bad place to live was limitless, as high as the heavens are from the earth. No wonder “the Lord was His portion.” The Lord was enough. He was all he needed to restore His hope! But he didn’t just hope in hope. He hoped in the Lord.

Because of these three great truths—God’s loyal love never comes to end, His mercies never fail, and His faithfulness is great—Jeremiah resolved to wait on God to restore his hurting soul (25-26). Our terrible affliction in a terrible place to live can be endured with *hope*—which is our *confident expectation*, calmly waiting, *for His salvation will come!*

Jeremiah’s circumstances didn’t turn around; his remembrance did; Jeremiah turned in his mind from downward to upward, from remembering his terrible affliction as a victim of Judah’s sins to his tremendous hope in his most loving and merciful God! **A look upward in the truth gives way to hope!**

3. A look _____—A rebel’s _____ hope (27-30).

Verse 27: What’s a rebellious person’s only hope for salvation? “Bear the yoke in his youth.” A *yoke*—a wooden neck beam so the oxen’s owner can control them—it serves as a metaphor for *submission*.

Willingly submitting to God in one’s youth is a great advantage. If you submit to God while you’re young, you will spare yourself from a whole lot of self-inflicted trouble, and you will be better prepared in later years to deal with whatever comes your way in this bad place to live.

For example, Jeremiah's mind is going back to the final days of King Zedekiah's reign, just before Judah was taken into Babylonian captivity and Jerusalem fell. He was a wicked king who did what was evil in the sight of God until God had had enough. And according to Jeremiah 27:12, in the beginning of Zedekiah's reign, when he was a young 21 year-old, Jeremiah spoke to the king: To Zedekiah king of Judah: "**Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon** [i.e., submit to him], and serve him and his people **and _____**".¹³ Why will you and your people die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence, as the LORD has spoken concerning any nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?"

Here's the deal for the evil king. In order to live, he had to submit to God's chosen instrument, the Babylonian king, whom God used to mete out His judgment. But Zedekiah refused to see that submission was his salvation. Not only his salvation, but that of his people as well. If he'd submit, he'd live. Of course, he didn't obey God. So, as God promised, he was captured and taken into captivity. (The description of his judgment is found in 2 Kings 25:1-7.)

Why? Because he wouldn't bring himself under the yoke of submission to God. So when he rejected God, he also rejected the protection of God. And, of course, the prophecy was fulfilled, because God is faithful to save the obedient and faithful to judge the wicked.

Verses 28-30: The Lord Jesus is our ultimate example of One who submitted to strikes, and insults, and even to death on a cross! Jesus submitted to His Father, *therefore He is our only hope*. And if any rebellious person submits fully to God and His yoke, he has hope.

The reflections of a godly man's life in a terrible place to live. We too will suffer under God's judgment of our nation. It's getting tough... One columnist observed that 2020 started off like 1974 (an impeachment crisis), quickly became 1918 (a pandemic), turned into 1929 (economic crash), and is now 1968 (massive urban unrest).

Turn your eyes upon Jesus!

Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.