

THE SCROLLS

Stand Alone Sermon | Lamentations 3:19-33

Life Lesson

Disappointment becomes dangerous when it alters how we perceive God, but hope is renewed when we intentionally recall who He truly is. Even in times of deep pain, we must discipline our minds to trust His unchanging nature rather than our shifting circumstances. When we stop trying to control everything, surrender humbly, and wait quietly, we realize that God's mercies are still new, His love remains steadfast, and His purposes are still good.

Examine Scripture

י Zayin

19 Remember my affliction and my homelessness, the wormwood and the poison. 20 I continually remember them and have become depressed. 21 Yet I call this to mind, and therefore I have hope:

ב Beth

22 Because of the Lord's faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end. 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness! 24 I say, "The Lord is my portion, therefore I will put my hope in him."

ג Teth

25 The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the person who seeks him. 26 It is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord. 27 It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is still young.

The Faithfulness of God

Have you ever felt so discouraged or disappointed by a person or situation that it leads to disappointment with God? When something or someone hurts or angers you, you might start complaining about it. Suddenly, you direct that complaint toward God. In our deep sinfulness, we often use our "horizontal" frustrations—the pain of broken relationships or ruined circumstances—as a lens to view our "vertical" relationship with Him. We let the chaos of life convince us that God has turned His back.

Jeremiah expresses deep hopelessness in Lamentations 3. In the first part of this lament (vs. 1-20), Jeremiah directs his discouragement and despair at God. Notice how Jeremiah feels punished by God: "I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of God's wrath. He has driven me away and forced me to walk in darkness instead of light. Yes, he repeatedly turns his hand against me all day long" (vs. 1-3).

Yet, as Jeremiah "remembers" in (vs. 19-33), he shows us a different path. Amid the literal ruins of his world—the destruction of Jerusalem—he teaches us that while our pain may seem like an endless cycle, God's mercies are part of a daily rhythm. Even when we are "walled in" and "weighed down" (v. 7) by the burden of our suffering, we have the power to "call to mind" (v. 21) a different reality.

To fully grasp the depth of Lamentations 3, we need to explore its foundation. In the original Hebrew, this chapter exhibits impressive poetic discipline. While the rest of the book uses the Hebrew alphabet to structure its laments, Chapter 3 is a notable example of an acrostic. The Hebrew alphabet consists of 22 letters. In Chapters 1, 2, and 4 of Lamentations, each verse starts with a successive letter of the alphabet (vs. 1 begins with Aleph, v. 2 with Beth, and so on). But Chapter 3 takes this pattern even further. It has 66 verses instead of 22. Every three verses start with the same Hebrew letter (vs. 1, 2, and 3 all begin with Aleph א, and vs. 4, 5, and 6 all start with Beth ב).

Why does this matter? This intentional and beautiful structure serves a powerful spiritual purpose when we are overwhelmed by disappointment. First, it brings order to chaos. When our "horizontal

י Yod

28 Let him sit alone and be silent, for God has disciplined[d] him. 29 Let him put his mouth in the dust—perhaps there is still hope. 30 Let him offer his cheek to the one who would strike him; let him be filled with disgrace.

כ Kaph

31 For the Lord will not reject us forever. 32 Even if he causes suffering, he will show compassion according to the abundance of his faithful love. 33 For he does not enjoy bringing affliction or suffering on mankind.

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frustrations" make life feel like it is spinning out of control, this acrostic reminds us that God is a God of order. Second, the structure shows that by using the entire alphabet, we can bring every thought and emotion to God. It encourages us not to hold back. Whether our pain starts with "A" or "Z," God's mercy encompasses the whole spectrum. Finally, practicing this triple acrostic requires great effort. It demonstrates that moving from "complaining against God" to "hoping in God" (v. 21-24) is not just a feeling; it is a disciplined choice. Just as the poet compelled his pen to follow the Hebrew alphabet, we must train our minds to follow the truth of God's character. This passage acts as a bridge from the "A to Z" of our suffering to the "A to Z" of God's unwavering faithfulness. We don't have to let our disappointment turn into hopelessness; instead, we can learn to wait quietly for the God whose compassion never fails.

Vs. 19-21 (י Zayin)

Jeremiah does not sugarcoat his pain. He describes his suffering as "wormwood and poison" (v. 19). He is completely depressed. Like Jeremiah, if we only focus on our problems, our souls remain "weighed down." However, Jeremiah does not break under the weight of his suffering. In (v. 21), he writes: "Yet I call this to mind, and therefore I have hope." This verse is the turning point of the entire chapter (and the entire book). Hope does not come from a change in circumstances; it comes from a deliberate act of the mind. We must "call to mind" the character of God when our feelings tell us he has forgotten us. It's not just "mind over matter." It is an intentional choice to focus on the character and goodness of God rather than on the darkness and despair of our suffering.

Vs. 22-24 (כ Cheth)

Under the Hebrew letter cheth, Jeremiah emphasizes the word "hesed," which is translated as "faithful love" or, in some translations, "steadfast love" (v. 22). Jeremiah recognizes that if God's character remains the same, then our circumstances are the variables. God does not change; therefore, He is a reliable and steady foundation. Unlike humans, God's love is not based on anyone's performance or worth; it is rooted in His nature. God loves because He is love. And that cannot change (Ex. 34:6, 1 John 4:8).

Jeremiah shows us how God's love is unconditional; it is because "his mercies never end" (v. 22). His mercies are renewed every morning. In other words, God is never without a supply of mercy. Jeremiah reminds us: "They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness!" (v. 23). We can trust that His mercies are never-ending because He is faithful with great faithfulness! Charles Spurgeon provides

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practical words to explain this surprising truth: “The water that is in the cistern may be sufficient for a long time; but if it is stored, it will not remain fresh. It may have been fresh the first morning it flowed into the cistern, but it will not be fresh tomorrow; and the longer it lasts, the more stagnant it will become. But the water that gushes from the spring-head is always fresh. God is not the cistern, but the fountain.” Because His mercies are “new every morning,” our disappointment and despair do not have the final word. His mercies are always greater than our misery!

Additionally, God is our “portion”—the only thing that cannot be taken away by earthly loss. If God is our portion, then our hope is in Him. Not in what He does, what He gives, or what He blesses us with, but in Him! If we place our hope only in the blessings rather than in God Himself, then what happens when they are taken away or disappointment clouds our view? We become disappointed and angry at God. However, if we trust in Him as our portion and hope solely in Him, nothing can take Him away. In suffering, we are reminded that God does not call us to live a life that makes Him unnecessary!

Vs. 25-27 (⚡ Teth)

Jeremiah now turns to the letter “teth,” which begins the word “tob,” meaning “good.” Jeremiah stresses that God’s actions are inherently good, even when they involve the “yoke” of suffering. How can we believe this truth? God not only does good things, but He is good. Just as with love, God is not loving and good because He loves and does good things; He loves and does good things because He is love and He is good. These qualities are inseparable from Him because He is good and love. Therefore, we can trust in His goodness even when we don’t feel it.

Paul stated it clearly in (Romans 8:28): “We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” However, there are some important points to consider about this verse. First, while all things work together for good, not everything is inherently good—suffering, for instance, is not good in itself but can lead to good outcomes. Second, this hope is reserved for those who love God. And third, it applies to those who are called according to His purpose. In other words, if God is working and moving in your life, you can trust the process. So, how does everything work together for good for those who love God and are called? The Puritan John Flavel, known for his writings on suffering and divine sovereignty, said, “We must conclude, in general, God certainly designs (all things) for his own glory, and his people’s advantage.” All things are for God’s glory and for our good! That is why we can trust that “The Lord is good

Personal Reflection

1. When have I allowed disappointment with others to distort my trust in God, and what does that say about how I view His character?
2. When my emotions become overwhelming, which truths about God am I most tempted to forget—and why do I find it hard to “call them to mind”?
3. If God truly is my “portion,” what other sources of security or identity am I still holding onto when life gets tough?
4. How is God inviting me to trust His goodness in my suffering—not just intellectually, but through how I respond, wait, and surrender?
5. What would I need to do to shift from complaining about my circumstances to quietly surrendering to God’s work within them—and what am I afraid surrender might cost me?

Commentaries

Expositor's Bible Commentary (Abridged Edition): Old Testament
Edited by Kenneth Barker

New Bible Commentary Edited by D. A. Carson

Exalting Jesus in Jeremiah, Lamentations by Steven Smith

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Mt. Zion Baptist Church exists to
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to those who wait for him, to the person who seeks him. It is good to wait quietly for salvation from the Lord” (vs. 25-26).

Vs. 28-30 (Yod)

The next three verses start with the Hebrew letter “yod.” This is particularly significant because “yod” is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, often seen as a simple stroke or a jot. Still, in these verses, it symbolizes deep spiritual surrender. Just as the letter “yod” is the tiniest and most humble in the Hebrew alphabet, these verses encourage us to embrace humility and smallness, reminding us that great hope often begins in quiet, unassuming places. We often want God to solve our problems with a grand gesture, but Jeremiah shows that hope is found when we become “small” enough to submit to God’s timing.

Waiting quietly is the antidote to loudly complaining. It shifts our focus from what others have done to us (horizontal) to what God is doing in us (vertical). Our trust in God should overshadow our distrust of others. We often try to talk our way out of pain or work our way out of disappointment. Sometimes, the most spiritual thing you can do is sit in silence and trust that God is working in the “meantime.”

Similarly, Jeremiah instructs us to “put his mouth in the dust” (v. 29). This is a posture of complete surrender. It symbolizes the moment when we stop trying to justify our “horizontal” complaints and acknowledge God’s “vertical” sovereignty. In this humble position, Jeremiah says, “perhaps there is still hope” (v. 29).

While we wait quietly and surrender, we become more like Christ. (Verse 30) says, “Let him offer his cheek to the one who would strike him; let him be filled with disgrace.” This verse vividly foreshadows Christ (Is. 53:7). It shows that even when the pain comes from others (the “one who strikes”), we can endure it because we trust in God’s hand behind the circumstances.

Vs. 31-33 (Kaph)

Some scholars argue that in Hebrew pictographs, “kaph” represents the palm of a hand—a hand that is often curved to hold, support, or offer something. In these verses, the “hand” of God demonstrates restoration and boundary, rather than just punishment. This is the ultimate comfort for the discouraged soul. God may allow grief, but it does not stem from malice. Unlike those who disappoint us, God’s heart is always inclined toward compassion. These verses show that suffering is temporary (v. 31), God remains compassionate in the midst of our suffering, and He does not take pleasure in watching us suffer. As Spurgeon said, “God is too wise to be mistaken; God is too good to be unkind; if you cannot trace His hand, trust His heart.”