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Borrowed Breath: Learning to Live by The Source / Lamentations 3:19–26

God's Daily Supply: "While human resolve inevitably depletes, the Creator's faithfulness offers a daily and unlimited supply of mercy to those who learn to live by dependence on Him alone."

Notes

01/04 Lamentations 3:21-24, "The Daily Mercy: Beyond Resolution," Scripture: 2 Cor. 12:7-10

We are not self-sustaining batteries that can be recharged at will; we are dependent vessels requiring a constant exposure to power and strength of God's mercy.

Judah persistently pursued paganism over covenant partnership with God and so, reaped the consequences. Those who sow the wind will reap the whirlwind of God.

"The ashes of a devastated Jerusalem ... testify at once to the demonstration and the vindication of divine righteousness (1:18)."

"... a positive reaction to an experience of suffering is a necessary prerequisite to spiritual maturity"[1]

[1]R. K. Harrison, *Jeremiah and Lamentations: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 21, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 204.

Main Idea:

While human power and resolve inevitably depletes, the Creator's faithfulness offers a daily and unlimited supply to those who learn to live by dependence on Him alone.

We have approached this New Year like machines.

We have tried to program our behavior and recharge our own will.

We suffer from the arrogance of self-sufficiency.

We need to unplug from our striving and plug into God's mercy.

May we be reminded this day that we are not the Source of our own power to rise above the struggles and cruelty of this world, God is.

- The world says, "Reinvent yourself."

- The Lord says, "Return to Me."
- Come, let us stop trying to be the source of our own light.
- Let us turn our faces to the Sun [Son] of Righteousness.
- His mercies are new this morning.

Text: Lamentations 3:19-26

Focus: Beyond Resolutions this time of year: Instead of Secular or Internal, We must live on Power that is from God

INTRODUCTION

The Fresh Start Effect: There is a concept in psychology known as the "Fresh Start Effect." It's that burst of energy you feel on January 1st. We buy the planner, we buy the gym membership, we write the list. We tell ourselves, **"This year, I am going to upgrade. I am going to be a better version of me."**

Quitter's Day: But statistics tell us that by the second Friday of January—a day researchers actually call "Quitter's Day"—80% of those resolutions have failed. Why? Are we just lazy? —— No.

We are failing because we are operating on a culturally imposed myth. **We believe the myth that we are self-sustaining batteries.** We think that if we just "charge ourselves up" enough with willpower and discipline in January, we can run indefinitely.

Prosthetics: Humans create tools (like AI) to cover our weaknesses—we create "prosthetics" because we lack knowledge or strength. But when it comes to the New Year, we try to fix our souls with those prosthetics. We try to patch a spiritual hole with behavioral prosthetic of increased bandwidth. Often, we quickly get to and find ourselves at a place where we have simply just burned out.

In Lamentations 3, the prophet Jeremiah has hit "0% battery." He sees nor feels that there is anything left and the depth of the despair is evident in his poetry. But, we need to understand that this isn't just poetry to him.

In Jerusalem, archaeologists have excavated what is known as the **"Babylonian Destruction Layer."** It is a distinct stratum of soil filled with thick ash, charred wood, and Scythian arrowheads from 586 BC. When Jeremiah says, *"He has made me dwell in darkness like the dead,"* he is speaking from inside that ash layer. His government is gone. His temple is gone. His "Plan" is buried under three feet of charcoal. He has run out of willpower, optimism, and strength. He sees nothing but death, destruction, and

exiled slaves of his people. But right at the bottom of that ash heap, he discovers a power source that all the fire he has witnessed cannot consume.

God is now telling us through the writings of Jeremiah that...

I. WE CANNOT MANUFACTURE HOPE FROM A DEPLETED SOUL (v. 19-21)

A. Pain destroys the illusion that we are self-sustaining (v. 19-20)

"Remember my affliction and my wanderings... My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me."

Jeremiah begins by admitting the tank is empty. His soul is "bowed down."

There is a set of ancient texts called the **Lachish Letters**, written by a soldier during this exact invasion. In one letter, the soldier writes in panic: *"We are watching for the fire signals of Lachish... for we cannot see Azekah."* The signal fires were going out one by one. The communication network was down.

That is where many of us are. The signals we rely on—our bank account, our health, our relationships, our jobs, our five-year plan—are flickering. One by one we are watching the lights go out.

The Insight: We treat this depletion as a failure. But Jeremiah realizes that the "Crash" is a revelation. It reveals that we ourselves, were never designed to be the Generator.

Jeremiah realized that ...

B. Hope begins the moment we admit personal bankruptcy (v. 21)

"But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope."

Notice the pivot. He doesn't find hope by looking **out** at the dying signal fires. He doesn't find hope by looking **in** at his own resolve. He looks **up**.

Image: The Red Battery Look at this image of the charge in a battery. We all know the concern of the 1%. When we see this, we don't try to download a new app to fix it. We don't try to "optimize" the phone. We look for a charger and a plug.

Many of us are starting January already at 1%. We are running on spiritual fumes. We don't need a Resolution; **we need a different Charger.**

Jeremiah began to see that ...

II. GOD OFTEN PROVIDES FRESH MERCY FOR THE DAY, NOT A RESERVOIR FOR THE YEAR (v. 22-23)

A. God's supply is infinite because it flows from His nature (v. 22)

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end."

But often, even though God's supply is infinite, He controls the flow as He knows we need it

Why does it never cease?

We need to look at the Hebrew word for "Mercies" here. It is the word **Racham**. It shares the same root as the Hebrew word for "**Womb**" (*Rehem*). This isn't cold, legal mercy from a distant judge. This is "womb-like" compassion. It is the kind of organic attachment a mother has to a dependent infant in her womb. A child in the womb doesn't worry about "storing up" food for next week. The child is simply attached to the source of life.

God's mercy isn't a "prosthetic" He uses to fix us; it is the overflow of His life into ours in a constant need-determined flow.

B. Grace is "Daily Manna"—it rots if you try to hoard it (v. 23)

"They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."

This is the theological error of the New Year's Resolution. We try to create a "Storage Tank" of willpower. But God's supply is daily.

Consider the word for "Faithfulness." It is **Emunah**. It literally means "**firmness**," "**steadiness**," or "**reliability**." It is the word used for a pillar that holds up a roof. God is the Pillar. You are just the rooftop setting on it. We must stop trying to hold up the roof, we are the roof, we need to rest upon the pillar of our Creator.

Image: The Clay Lamp Look at this image. This is a common oil lamp from Jeremiah's time. It is small. It fits in the palm of your hand. It holds only a few ounces of oil—enough for maybe 3 or 4 hours of light. You literally *could not* store light for a week. To keep the light burning, you had to refill it constantly.

The Apostle Paul picks up this exact imagery. He looks at our weakness and says:

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us." 2 Corinthians 4:7

This is the design. God does not give you a barrel of oil for 2026. He gives you a tiny clay lamp.

- A Resolution says, "I have enough strength for the year."
- Dependence says, "I am just a lamp of clay. I need to refill this lamp again."

The Promise? We don't need the strength to finish the year right now. We just need enough oil for Monday.

So, Jeremiah's text moves us to the reality that ...

III. WE MUST TRADE THE ANXIETY OF "PLANNING" FOR THE SECURITY OF A "PORTION" (v. 24-26)

A. A "Plan" seeks control, but a "Portion" seeks relationship (v. 24)

"The Lord is my portion,' says my soul."

This word **"Portion"** (*Cheleq*) is crucial. In the Old Testament, it referred to the Levites' land inheritance.

They didn't get big farms; God was their farm. They were just given stewardship over a portion of what God owned. In the same way, we are given stewardship over a portion of what God owns. What we have, He wants us to have and what we do not have, is not our portion to get, for it is all God's.

- A Plan is a map of the future. It makes us feel safe because we see the destination.
- A Portion (*Cheleq*) is just enough food for tonight, it is just the part of what is God's that He has given us for this moment.

The Witness of Asaph: Jeremiah is not alone in this. Asaph in one of his Psalms feels the exact same burnout we feel in January. He writes:

*"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and **my portion** forever." Psalm 73:26*

Jeremiah says, "I don't have a plan. The Ash Layer buried my plan. But I have my

Portion."

It reminds us of **Corrie ten Boom**, who watched her own world turn to ash in the camps during WWII. Yet she said:

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God." - **Corrie Ten Boom**

It takes more faith to live on a Portion than to live on a Plan, but it takes less of our power and more of God's to do so.

The Portion is where you actually meet God in all His power and presence.

B. "Waiting" is the active discipline of staying synced to the Source (v. 25-26)

"The Lord is good to those who wait for him... It is good that one should wait quietly..."

How do we live this out? Is it passive?

The Hebrew word for "wait" here is **Qavah**. It literally means to "**bind together**" (like twisting a rope) or to "**look eagerly**" (tension).

We are not batteries; we are solar panels.

- A battery waits to discharge by doing nothing.
- A solar panel Qavahs—it actively "binds" itself to the light.

Verse 25 isn't telling us to nap. It is telling us to do the active, mechanical work of aligning your soul with His mercy every morning.

Prayer is the Morning Sync. It is saying, "Lord, I am just a lamp. You are the Oil. I am binding, I am aligning myself to You for the next 24 hours."

Main Idea:

While human power and resolve inevitably depletes, the Creator's faithfulness offers a daily and unlimited supply to those who learn to live by dependence on Him alone.

CONCLUSION & APPLICATION

We stand at the threshold of a New Year. The world tells you to be strong. The world tells you to pull yourself up by your bootstraps. But the archaeology of our souls tells us the truth: **We are small lamps. We need daily oil.**

We were not made to hold ourselves up. We were made to be held up by the pillar of

our Creator.

We need to stop making resolutions that rely on our own batteries, and start a habit that relies on God's supply.

Before checking the news, before checking email — are we spend the first spending the first 15 minutes of our day in God's Word, in action declaring Lamentations 3:23?

As **John Bunyan** warned us 300 years ago:

"He who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find Him in the rest of the day."

John Bunyan