

Let's Worship God

22nd-27th June 2020
Lamentations 3





Monday - Lamentations 3:1 - I Am The Man

Rev. Joel Loughridge was unable to write the notes for 1 Samuel this week due to a family bereavement. So, this week we are looking at Lamentations chapter 3 using notes by Rev. Kyle Borg, minister of Winchester RP church.

The third lament contains some of the most well known verses from the book of Lamentations and perhaps of the Old Testament. That is not without its reason. Situated at the very center of this book you will notice that this lament is three times as long as the other four laments - sixty-six verses instead of twenty-two. In its content it rises above the others like a strong tower of refuge that shelters mourners in all their sorrows.

The lament opens with the usual expression: "I am the man who has seen affliction." The sorrow and suffering of Judah is described in the experience of a single individual in verses 1-24 and 48-66, but in verses 40-47 with "we." Why this back-and-forth between the singular and plural - who is the man that is afflicted? Perhaps the easiest way to answer that question is that this third lament give us the language of personal sorrow expressed by the Prophet Jeremiah, but he does so not simply for himself, but on behalf of God's people. He is the representative mourner, the weeping Prophet - "For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded" (Jeremiah 8:21). By that he gives a pattern and paradigm that we might learn from him and grieve even as he does.

As we look at Lamentations let us remember that the greater than Jeremiah has come. The author of Hebrews said of Jesus: "In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence" (Hebrews 5:7). How true this was of his life. He wept at the tomb of Lazarus, he mourned over Jerusalem, he agonized in the Garden of Gethsemane, and he cried aloud on the cross of Calvary. Behold the weeping Savior. By that he gives us a pattern and paradigm and by his own tears has sanctified every tear shed in holy grief.

Questions

1. Why it is important to see Jeremiah as the representative mourner?
2. Who else has given us a pattern of grief?

Prayer Points

1. Thank the Lord for Jesus and his suffering.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

They are new every morning; Great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:23

Praise: Psalm 18:1-5 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Tuesday - Lamentations 3:1-18 - The Rod of His Wrath

The words of Jeremiah as a representative mourner are intended to be used not only by the citizens of Judah in his particular time and place, but by all who find themselves in dreary sorrow. As the glorious hope and confidence that will be found in this chapter is the possession of every believer, so the Holy Spirit has given us words to express our spiritual sorrow in these verses.

The Prophet laments the "rod of his wrath." As Christians we must remember that sometimes the comforting rod of God becomes one of discipline. The author of Hebrews brings this out most clearly when he asks: "For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?" He goes on to say: For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:8, 11). Certainly Jeremiah's experience is not pleasant. He says God "brought me into darkness," "turns his hand against me," "has besieged and enveloped me," "has walled me about," "is a bear lying in wait for me, a lion hiding," and "he drove into my kidneys the arrows of his quiver."

But the real grief is in the way these things steal away from Jeremiah a sense and experience of his spiritual comfort. He senses the door of prayer is closed to him (v 8), because of the crooked path of sin he is now set on the crooked path of sorrow (v 9), and his peace has vanished (vv 17-18). Have you ever felt that?

While the blessings of God are never removed from his people, our experience of them change. Because of our sin we can and do lose a present enjoyment of the things he has promised. Yet, even in these unpleasant times the Lord is treating us as sons. Even Jesus learned obedience through what he suffered (see Hebrews 5:8). The severe rod of his discipline is only intended to secure us all the more in the covenant blessings.

Questions

1. What is the discipline of God?
2. What good comes out of God's discipline?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God to help you learn obedience.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

They are new every morning; Great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:23

Praise: Psalm 38 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Wednesday - Lamentations 3:19-21 - Therefore I Have Hope

The weeping Prophet was trapped in a dark prison. His joy was gone. His peace was gone. His comfort was gone. His safety was gone. So dire was the place where he found himself even his hope had withered and died: "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD" (v 18). A person can withstand much if there is even the faintest glimmer of hope, but to have a sense of hopelessness seems to remove one from life itself. This loss was so great to Jeremiah he could only describe it as "wormwood and gall" and as a burden that weighed so heavily upon him his soul was "bowed down." Was it really hopeless?

As Jeremiah vents the feeling of his soul it is almost as if he had gone too far in expressing his grief. Before he can go on weeping it is as if he pauses to reflect on what he has said. "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope." What a quick turnaround! Dark and difficult as the present circumstance may be, Jeremiah knows that the people of God are never without hope - there is no such thing as "hopeless" in the Christian's vocabulary.

What is hope? The Bible expresses it in many ways. Hope is something that is directed toward the future (see Romans 8:24). Hope is something that relies on the promises of God (see Romans 4:18). Hope is something that is founded upon the faithfulness of God (see Hebrews 10:23). Hope gives boldness (see 2 Corinthians 3:12). Hope gives assurance (see Hebrews 6:11). Hope never puts to shame (see Romans 5:5). Compiling these different statements hope could be defined this way: hope is the spark of the divine promises that ignite a confident and steadfast expectation in the faithfulness of God.

Even as Lamentations trains us to give expression to the grief and sorrow of our heart, so it also teaches us what it is to have our hearts strengthened by the never failing character of God and his promises. It trains us to hope!

Questions

1. What is hope?

Prayer Points

1. Think of a couple promises God has made and pray for them.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

They are new every morning; Great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:23

Praise: Psalm 130:all - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Thursday - Lamentations 3:22-24 - The Faithfulness of God

The Portuguese explorer Bartholomew Dias originally named the southern tip of Africa the "Cape of Storms." He did so because the waters there have been the cause of many shipwrecks. Once the waters were learned to be navigated the Cape of Storms was renamed "The Cape of Good Hope," for the optimism engendered by opening up the trade route. In Lamentations we have, at least for a brief interval, rounded the Cape of Storms and come to the Cape of Good Hope.

As the Prophet expresses his confident hope in the midst of grief he elevates us above sorrow and pain to plant us firmly upon the character of God. He speaks of the "steadfast love of the LORD." That word "steadfast love" is central to the Old Testament. It is difficult to find an English equivalent that adequately expresses the breadth of this small word. Very simply, it is a way of saying God is gracious and God is love-he has a covenantal gracious-love.

In these verses there are three particular details about this gracious-love. First, it "never ceases" nor does it ever "come to an end." Dreary and sorrowful as Jeremiah's situation was it did not indicate a temporary cessation of the gracious-love of God. Second, it is "new every morning." Not only does it continue forever, but it is never diminished, reduced, or weakened - you might say it never ages. There is a daily renewal of his gracious-love. Third, it is an expression of his faithfulness, "Great is your faithfulness." The faithfulness of God means he will do what he has promised, and this never ending, ever renewing gracious-love to his people is a promise to which he will remain true.

That is where our hope directs itself in times of great sorrow, depression, and grief. As it is expressed elsewhere: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you" (Jeremiah 31:3).

Questions

1. What is God's "steadfast love"?
2. Give the three characteristics of his steadfast love.

Prayer Points

1. Thank the Lord for his gracious-love.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

They are new every morning; Great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:23

Praise: Psalm 73:Call - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Friday - Lamentations 3:25-39 - The Goodness of God

It is not uncommon to hear people ask the question: Why do bad things happen to good people? It is a sincere and honest question as they struggle with the reality of grief, sorrow, and suffering. But it is a misguided question. The Bible never portrays us as "good" people. Rather, it says "No one does good, not even one" (Romans 3:12). Perhaps, then, the question should be: why do good things happen to bad people? The answer, of course, is because though we are bad, God is good.

In the first two laments and those that follow it is emphasized that Jerusalem's destruction has been the direct result of their sin - they are bad people who have done bad and so bad things result. Yet, for all the bad the goodness of God could not be overthrown, he is still good to his people. That is where Jeremiah's hope directs him: "But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope. The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him" (vv 21, 25).

This confident expectation in God's goodness gives Jeremiah great freedom in coping and dealing with his mournful circumstances. That is to say, the goodness of God allows him to patiently wait (v 26), to bear the yoke of sorrow (v 27), to guard his mouth with humility (vv 28-29), and to endure injury inflicted by others (v 30). That is because Jeremiah knows: "The Lord will not cast forever," and it is God's goodness which will disapprove and triumph over the wickedness committed against the Prophet (vv 34-36). Thus he comes not only theologically but experientially to a comforting place: "Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come?"

Let us learn in our sorrow and pain to lay hold of the goodness of God: "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Questions

1. Why do good things happen to bad people?
2. Why will the goodness of God overcome all things?
3. What particular promise does God give his children in Romans 8:28?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that the Lord would teach you to wait on him.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

They are new every morning; Great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:23

Praise: Psalm 32 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Saturday - Lamentations 3:40-66 - The Forgiveness of God

The Puritan Thomas Watson defined repentance as an inward humility and outward reformation. These two need to always go together. It is not enough to behave well on the outside but love sin in the heart, nor is it enough to hate sin in the heart but behave badly on the outside. True repentance is a heartfelt humility for sin that changes the way we act. Of course, we cannot do that on our own but need the Holy Spirit to do it in us.

There is an example of that in the Prophet. We have already seen that the sorrow of Jerusalem is because the people had sinned. God would not stop punishing them until they repented of their sin. So Jeremiah says: "Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD! Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven." He knows that the people need to repent of their sin. They need a heartfelt humility and a change of behavior. If that does not happen then the people cannot expect God to forgive.

The Bible promises us that when we confess our sins God is faithful to forgive us (see 1 John 1:9). As Jeremiah repents of his sin the Lord hears: "I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit; you heard my plea" and later "You have taken up my cause, O Lord; you have redeemed my life."

Even in the most difficult time Jeremiah hoped in God's forgiveness. On this side of heaven there is no situation that is too far from God. We can feel that we are in a deep pit of sorrow and despair, but God hears every prayer of faith and is ready and willing to forgive. As the Psalmist sang: "If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared" (Psalm 130:3-4).

Questions

1. Why can we not expect forgiveness if we do not repent?
2. What promise is given to those who will confess their sins?
3. What two things does true repentance include?

Prayer Points

1. Ask God for patience to wait on his ultimate goodness from dark situations.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

They are new every morning; Great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:23

Praise: Psalm 103:1-12 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

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