

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Lamentations Chapter 3

8/5/15

Bible Study Notes

The Prophet—A Man of Despair - Verses 1-20

1 I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. 2 He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light; 3 indeed, he has turned his hand against me again and again, all day long. 4 He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones. 5 He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. 6 He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. 7 He has walled me in so I cannot escape; he has weighed me down with chains. 8 Even when I call out or cry for help, he shuts out my prayer. 9 He has barred my way with blocks of stone; he has made my paths crooked. 10 Like a bear lying in wait, like a lion in hiding, 11 he dragged me from the path and mangled me and left me without help. 12 He drew his bow and made me the target for his arrows. 13 He pierced my heart with arrows from his quiver. 14 I became the laughingstock of all my people; they mock me in song all day long. 15 He has filled me with bitter herbs and sated me with gall. 16 He has broken my teeth with gravel; he has trampled me in the dust. 17 I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. 18 So I say, "My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the LORD." 19 I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. 20 I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me.

3:1-5 In Jeremiah's darkest moment, his hope was strengthened with this assurance: God had been faithful and would continue to be faithful. Jeremiah saw both God's judgment and God's steadfast love. In the time of judgment, Jeremiah could still cling to God's love, just as in times of prosperity he had warned of God's judgment.

3:1-15 In the original Hebrew, the first four chapters in Lamentations are acrostic poems. Each verse in each chapter begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 3 has 66 verses rather than 22 because it is a triple acrostic: The first three verses begin with the equivalent of A, the next three with B, and so on. This was a typical form of Hebrew poetry. Other examples of acrostics are Psalms 37, 119, and 145, and Proverbs 31:10-31.

The Prophet—A Man of Hope - Verses 21-33

21 Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: 22 Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 24 I say to myself, "The LORD is my

portion; therefore I will wait for him." 25 The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; 26 it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. 27 It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. 28 Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him. 29 Let him bury his face in the dust - there may yet be hope. 30 Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. 31 For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. 32 Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. 33 For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men.

3:21-22 Jeremiah saw one ray of hope in all the sin and sorrow surrounding him: "Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail." God willingly responds with help when we ask. Perhaps there is some sin in your life that you thought God would not forgive. God's compassionate love and mercy are greater than any sin, and he promises forgiveness.

3:23 Jeremiah knew from personal experience about God's faithfulness. God had promised that punishment would follow disobedience, and it did. But God also had promised future restoration and blessing, and Jeremiah knew that God would keep that promise also. Trusting in God's faithfulness day by day makes us confident in his great promises for the future.

3:27-33 To "bear the yoke" means to willingly come under God's discipline and learn what he wants to teach. This involves several important factors: (1) silent reflection on what God wants, (2) repentant humility, (3) self-control in the face of adversity, and (4) confident patience, depending on the divine Teacher to bring about loving lessons in our lives. God has several long-term and short-term lessons for you right now. Are you doing your homework?

3:30 To "offer his cheek to one who would strike him" means to submit to physical abuse without defending yourself or fighting back. Jesus taught his followers to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39), and he exemplified this at the highest level just before his crucifixion (Matthew 27:27-31; Luke 22:64; John 18:22; 19:3). This, however, should never be used to justify anyone's continued suffering of spousal or any other kind of abuse.

Verses 34-66

34 To crush underfoot all prisoners in the land, **35** to deny a man his rights before the Most High, **36** to deprive a man of justice-- would not the Lord see such things? **37** Who can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it? **38** Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come? **39** Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins? **40** Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD. **41** Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven, and say: **42** "We have sinned and rebelled and you have not forgiven. **43** "You have covered yourself with anger and pursued us; you have slain without pity. **44** You have covered yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can get through. **45** You have made us scum and refuse among the nations. **46** "All our enemies have opened their mouths wide against us. **47** We have suffered terror and pitfalls, ruin and destruction." **48** Streams of tears flow from my eyes because my people are destroyed. **49** My eyes will flow unceasingly, without relief, **50** until the

LORD looks down from heaven and sees. 51 What I see brings grief to my soul because of all the women of my city. 52 Those who were my enemies without cause hunted me like a bird. 53 They tried to end my life in a pit and threw stones at me; 54 the waters closed over my head, and I thought I was about to be cut off. 55 I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit. 56 You heard my plea: "Do not close your ears to my cry for relief." 57 You came near when I called you, and you said, "Do not fear." 58 O Lord, you took up my case; you redeemed my life. 59 You have seen, O LORD, the wrong done to me. Uphold my cause! 60 You have seen the depth of their vengeance, all their plots against me. 61 O LORD, you have heard their insults, all their plots against me-- 62 what my enemies whisper and mutter against me all day long. 63 Look at them! Sitting or standing, they mock me in their songs. 64 Pay them back what they deserve, O LORD, for what their hands have done. 65 Put a veil over their hearts, and may your curse be on them! 66 Pursue them in anger and destroy them from under the heavens of the LORD.

3:39-42 Parents discipline children to produce right behavior. God disciplined Judah to produce right living and genuine worship. We must not complain about corrective or instructive discipline in our lives but learn from it, trusting God and being willing to change. We must allow God's correction to bring about the kind of behavior in our lives that pleases him.

3:52-57 At one point in his ministry, Jeremiah was thrown into an empty cistern (a pit or cave used to collect and store water). He was left to die in the mire and water at the bottom of the pit (Jeremiah 38:6-13), but God rescued him. Jeremiah used this experience as a picture of the nation sinking into sin. If they turned to God, he would rescue them.