

## October 2

**Scriptures:** Read Lamentations 3, 4

**Key Verse:** “The Lord’s mercies. ..[and] compassions.. .are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:22-23)

### Overview

The third poem of Lamentations (chapter three) is the high point in the book. Jeremiah opened his heart to reveal the suffering of his body and soul and he identified himself with the plight of the people. When the Lord’s wrath was poured out, everyone suffered — the innocent with the guilty. Yet, as Jeremiah came to understand, the Lord was still showing His mercy, even through these divine judgments, for He was preserving a remnant of His people (3:31-32).

Jeremiah also understood that these trials served to test the faith of the righteous. Jeremiah was “the man” who suffered from more than the famine; he suffered great national contempt, scorn, ridicule, and persecution, possibly more than any other man of his day, just as did Jesus (3:1,14, 61-63). Unlike the Lord Jesus, however, his troubles caused him to have a momentary doubt about his strength and hope in the Lord, who had promised to strengthen and deliver him (3:18; Jer. 1:19). When Jeremiah cried out to God, he realized that the mercy and compassion of the Lord upon the righteous were “new every morning” (3:23). He realized that every morning when he awoke, still having breath, God was mercifully sustaining him, for all around him people were dying because of the severe conditions in Jerusalem. Indeed, great is the Lord’s faithfulness to His own. Our every breath is a gift from God. Although Jeremiah was destitute and had nothing, he still had the Lord as his portion (3:24). The Lord is still the believer’s all-sufficiency.

Though it appeared that his prayers went unheard (3:8), Jeremiah firmly believed that God had not abandoned him. Therefore, with surprisingly great faith, in the midst of describing his distress, Jeremiah proclaimed: “I have hope” (3:21, 24). Since he trusted in the Lord, the Lord comforted him when he was near death in the muddy cistern (Jer. 38:6-13), saying, “Do not fear!”; then God intervened to deliver him.

Jeremiah affirmed that nothing happens to God’s people by accident. The Lord providentially orders the steps of the righteous. Therefore, they are to humbly, submissively, and quietly accept the will of God for their lives, which may entail the enduring of reproach and hardship — something Jeremiah claimed to be profitable, especially for the young person, since early discipline helps one to live all his life in submission to God’s will and authority (3:27). Chastisement is often necessary for spiritual growth, and as Jeremiah exhorts, hardships are to be endured without complaining but in waiting on the Lord and never losing hope (3:26, 28, 39). Though it is often hard to understand the ways of God, we must not doubt His ultimate good intentions for the righteous, nor His compassion and mercy (3:25). Jeremiah made it clear that the Lord does not delight to bring pain and grief, nor does He approve of oppression, injustice, or subversion (3:31-36).

After considering the goodness and mercy of God, Jeremiah exhorted the rebellious and suffering people to do some heart searching and sincerely repent of their sins, for only then

would God pardon and deliver them (3:40-42). For many years Jeremiah preached this message, but as the poem in chapter four relates, it went unheeded. Therefore, the cup of God's fury was poured out upon them (4:11), and Jeremiah was a sorrowful eyewitness. Through using many different contrasts, he shows how that which was once lovely had become repulsive. The beautiful Temple was now nothing more than scattered stones (4:1). The once loving mothers had become cruel and cannibalistic — their minds being affected because of the severe famine (4:3-4, 10). Those who were once distinguished, established, clean, healthy, and wealthy were now weak, filthy, defiled, and forced to rummage through the garbage for food.

Jeremiah gives the reasons for these atrocities: it was because of the sins of the prophets and priests who had shed innocent blood and attempted to do the same with Jeremiah (4:13; e.g. Jer. 26:20-24); it was also because of their vain hope for deliverance from Egypt rather than trusting in God (4:17). The false prophets had led the people of Jerusalem to wrongly believe that they would live in peace under Zedekiah, the one anointed king over Judah. Their king, however, could not give them any hope, for he too was caught by the enemy (4:20).

The final poem in chapter five is a national prayer of the penitent who now realize that their only hope and help is in the Lord. The conquerors have cruelly subjected them. They suffer from all the horrible aftermaths of war and all joy has disappeared (5:15), for truly sin brings only sorrow. They call upon God to regard their desperate condition and their disgrace. They confess their sins, and the sins of their fathers which still affect them (5:7, 16). This sorrow culminates in the fact that the Holy Hill, where the beautiful and majestic Temple of the Lord once stood, is now a desolate heap where wild animals roam (5:18). The penitent rightly believe, however, that the destruction of God's House (often referred to as His throne) does not in any way lessen His sovereignty, for they confess that He eternally reigns; this gives them comfort and hope that the unchangeable Lord still loves them (5:19). Since the eternal God does not change, they recognize that it is they who must change their position with God. Unable to do so on their own, they ask God to bring them back to Himself. The Lord is pleased to send His Holy Spirit to restore and renew those who sincerely call upon Him with humble and repentant hearts (5:21).

## **Prayer**

Oh Lord, we approach You with a humble heart and repent of any sin in our lives. Restore and renew us today, that we might be the kind of people You desire us to be.