

From Suffering To Hope
Lamentations Series Number 3

I. The agony of no hope (Verses 1-18)

1 I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath; **2** he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light; **3** surely against me he turns his hand again and again the whole day long. **4** He has made my flesh and my skin waste away; he has broken my bones; **5** he has besieged and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation; **6** he has made me dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago. **7** He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has made my chains heavy; **8** though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer; **9** he has blocked my ways with blocks of stones; he has made my paths crooked. **10** He is a bear lying in wait for me, a lion in hiding; **11** he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces; he has made me desolate; **12** he bent his bow and set me as a target for his arrow. **13** He drove into my kidneys the arrows of his quiver; **14** I have become the laughingstock of all peoples, the object of their taunts all day long. **15** He has filled me with bitterness; he has sated me with wormwood. **16** He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; **17** my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; **18** so I say, "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD."

A. I am the man (1)

Psalm 88:4-7 (ESV) — **4** I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am a man who has no strength, **5** like one set loose among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, like those whom you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand. **6** You have put me in the depths of the pit, in the regions dark and deep. **7** Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves. Selah

B. My hope is gone (16-18)

Psalm 88:11-12 (ESV) — **11** Is your steadfast love declared in the grave, or your faithfulness in Abaddon? **12** Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

Deuteronomy 33:27 (ESV) — **27** The eternal God is your dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. And he thrust out the enemy before you and said, 'Destroy.'

II. Hope stimulates change (Verses 19-21)

A. Remember (19)

Luke 15:14 (ESV) — **14** And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.

B. Rejection (20)

Luke 15:15-16 (ESV) — **15** So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. **16** And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

C. Recall (21)

Luke 15:17-19 (ESV) — **17** "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! **18** I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."

III. The basis of hope (Verses 22-39)

22 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; **23** they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. **24** "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." **25** The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. **26** It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. **27** It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. **28** Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him; **29** let him put his mouth in the dust— there may yet be hope; **30** let him give his cheek to the one who strikes, and let him be filled with insults. **31** For the Lord will not cast off forever, **32** but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; **33** for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men. **34** To crush underfoot all the prisoners of the earth, **35** to deny a man justice in the presence of the Most High, **36** to subvert a man in his lawsuit, the Lord does not approve. **37** Who has spoken and it came to pass, unless the Lord has commanded it? **38** Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come? **39** Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins?

A. The steadfast love of God (22-24)

Jeremiah 31:31–34 (ESV) — **31** “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, **32** not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. **33** For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **34** And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Romans 8:38–39 (ESV) — **38** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Hebrews 6:17–20 (ESV) — **17** So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, **18** so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. **19** We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, **20** where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

B. Waiting is not a waste (25-30)

Psalms 27:13–14 (ESV) — **13** I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! **14** Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

Colossians 1:24 (ESV) — **24** Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

C. The final word has not been spoken (31-33)

Psalms 103:8–10 (ESV) — **8** The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. **9** He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. **10** He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

D. God is in control (34-39)

Isaiah 46:9–11 (ESV) — **9** remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, **10** declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,’ **11** calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.

James 1:17 (ESV) — **17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

IV. From self-examination to a hopeful situation (Verses 40-48)

40 *Let us test and examine our ways, and return to the LORD!* **41** *Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven:* **42** *“We have transgressed and rebelled, and you have not forgiven.”* **43** *“You have wrapped yourself with anger and pursued us, killing without pity; 44 you have wrapped yourself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through. 45 You have made us scum and garbage among the peoples. 46 “All our enemies open their mouths against us; 47 panic and pitfall have come upon us, devastation and destruction; 48 my eyes flow with rivers of tears because of the destruction of the daughter of my people.*

A. An honest assessment (40-42)

Psalms 19:11–14 (ESV) — **11** Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. **12** Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. **13** Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. **14** Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Psalms 139:23–24 (ESV) — **23** Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! **24** And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

B. God has judged (43-45)

C. Behold the devastation (46-48)

V. From hope flows prayer (Verses 49-66)

49 "My eyes will flow without ceasing, without respite, **50** until the LORD from heaven looks down and sees; **51** my eyes cause me grief at the fate of all the daughters of my city. **52** "I have been hunted like a bird by those who were my enemies without cause; **53** they flung me alive into the pit and cast stones on me; **54** water closed over my head; I said, 'I am lost.' **55** "I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit; **56** you heard my plea, 'Do not close your ear to my cry for help!' **57** You came near when I called on you; you said, 'Do not fear!' **58** "You have taken up my cause, O Lord; you have redeemed my life. **59** You have seen the wrong done to me, O LORD; judge my cause. **60** You have seen all their vengeance, all their plots against me. **61** "You have heard their taunts, O LORD, all their plots against me. **62** The lips and thoughts of my assailants are against me all the day long. **63** Behold their sitting and their rising; I am the object of their taunts. **64** "You will repay them, O LORD, according to the work of their hands. **65** You will give them dullness of heart; your curse will be on them. **66** You will pursue them in anger and destroy them from under your heavens, O LORD."

A. Anticipated relief based upon past persecution (49-54)

Romans 5:3–5 (ESV) — **3** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

B. Confidence in prayer (55-57)

Psalms 116:1–2 (ESV) — **1** I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. **2** Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

Psalms 124:2–3 (ESV) — **2** if it had not been the LORD who was on our side when people rose up against us, **3** then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their anger was kindled against us;

C. Thy kingdom come (58-66)

Isaiah 62:6–7 (ESV) — **6** On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, **7** and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth.

Revelation 6:9–10 (ESV) — **9** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. **10** They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"