

# Lamentations 3:19-42

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Date: 09 August 2020

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[ 0 : 00 ] Lamentation 3. Lamentation 3.! So the only advantage of you wearing masks is I don't see whether you're on it.! Lamentation 3.

We're doing a series on daily things two weeks ago. You'll remember we looked at daily care or daily beds. And then this morning we're going to get daily verses tonight.

Let me come and see you. If you can, we're looking at daily concerns. Daily concerns. So we're in this series on daily things. Do you remember the prayer Jesus told us to pray, give us today our daily bread.

He talks about how we're to live the Christian life. He says take up your cross daily. And God has given us our lives in daily knots. And it's good to know what God provides for us each day.

And I don't know if you know this, but Christians are not meant to live their lives from yesterday.

That's a nostalgic perspective. And we're not meant to live our lives for today.

[ 1 : 04 ] That's a very short sighted way to live. And we're not meant to even live our lives for tomorrow. That's a dreamy, impractical way to live. The Christian is called to live his or her life in the light of yesterday and in the light of tomorrow.

And as you live today, which are one of the things that God has done in the past and promised, are we conscious of what God will do in the coming days. That anything may happen under his good control.

We may meet him, we may give an account. The Lord Jesus will return. We live today in the light of yesterday and the light of tomorrow. And our text comes from this little book of Lamentations.

It's chapter 3, verse 22 and 23. Can you see? So it says, The steadfast word of the Lord never chooses, His mercies never come to an end.

They are new every morning. Daily mercies. The book of Lamentations is a really sad little book. It's a bleak little book.

[ 2 : 10 ] And this verse stands out like a raft in the sea, like a flower in the desert. Lamentations, it is a lament. The book is an outpouring of grief.

And it describes the fall of Jerusalem. It's got sorrow and distress, heartache, of desolation. And it's not just the personal thing, it's on a national scale.

So the book has five chapters and they are mostly grief or grievance. And in the middle section comes this little short section, which I say is like a diamond on a black cloth.

It's about hope. The people of God, in this book, they are under the wrath of God. And the suffering that they are going through is deserved. These people, they know exactly why they are suffering, but the bank is therefore not a complaint.

It's got lots of confession built into it. And the only solution to this wrath, the only solution to the punishment of God, is the mercy of God. And the mercy of God is not a pipe dream.

[ 3 : 17 ] It's not something that we optimistically think it would be nice if it was true, but it's not. The mercy of God is a reality. It's something that has been proved and promised.

So I'm going to look at two things this morning. First of all, the affliction brought by God. And then secondly, the mercy brought by God. Look at chapter 3 verses 19 to 20. Remember my affliction, how I want this.

The wormwood and the gall my soul continually remember it, and it's bowed down within me. The writer is probably Jeremiah. He's been describing the destruction of Jerusalem as if he were a reporter.

So, first couple chapters, he said, look at this, look at this, look at this. But chapter 3 changes. And he describes the destruction of Jerusalem as if it happened to him personally.

He speaks as if he's been personally attacked by God. Of course, the city was attacked by Babylon. Babylon came in 5 and 5 BC and began to besiege the city.

[ 4 : 23 ] And within 18 months, they've totally taken over. They've destroyed it. They've ransacked it, razed it to the ground. And the writer speaks as if he has been attacked by God.

So what's happened to the city, it's as if it's happened to him. So let's go through. Let's see chapter 3 verse 5. Chapter 3 verse 5, he's besieged and imbalanced me.

Verse 8, though I call and cry for help, he shuts up my prayer. Verse 11, he turned aside my steps. He's torn me in pieces. He's made me desolate. He bent his bow and set me as a target for his power.

Verse 14, Jerusalem is a joke. He says, I became a laughing stock of all the peoples. Verse 18, so I say, my endurance has perished and so is my hope for the Lord.

So he personalizes what's happened to the city. It's almost impossible for you and I to enter into the depths of the Book of Lamentations. What is that? It happened on a city scale.

[ 5 : 29 ] It's like the bombing of a city in the war. It's a very, very big grief. It's a very intense grief. The Jerusalem siege is a horrendous siege.

People were reduced to atrocities. Let me give you one example and you won't forget it. Look at chapter 4 verse 10. Look at the depths of the horror.

Where it says, with their own hands, compassionate women have boiled their own children and kept their food.

But what we can't really appreciate, I think it's the function of Jerusalem. It's the city in God's world for God's glory. And it seems to be moved.

The city was kind of like his bride and it looks as if the marriage is over. It looks as though God's promises have been called off. So Jerusalem is described in chapter 1 verse 1 as a widow.

[ 6 : 27 ] Chapter 2 verse 6. He says there, he's laid waste his boot, his blanket, his leg, and his leg, and his leg, and his leg, and his leg, and his leg, and his leg, and his leg, and his leg, and his leg, and his leg.

And the Lord has made Zion forget the festival on Zion. There's no point in Jerusalem anymore, he says. There's no walls, no temple, no altar, no meeting place with God.

It's a useless place. And the reasons that his people are back and unfaithfully, they've beaten the covenant-breaking wife.

And now the covenant-breaking wife, the covenant-breaking people, are facing a penalty of breaching the covenant, which is to be kicked out of the land. No land. I'm going to take you off in exile, into slavery in Babylon.

No more promised land for you, no more role to play, no more sense of fellowship, no more covenant. And that's why chapter 3, verse 2, is such a scary verse.

[ 7 : 27 ] He's driven me away. He's brought me into darkness without any light. It's possible that the only people that can really understand this Bible about the tishons, are not people being drawn war, or people being reduced in great poverty.

It's possible, I think, that the only people who can appreciate the depth of lamentations are the people who know what it's like for an extended period of time to go through a kind of God-forsaken period.

Where you actually feel that there's no God. You feel the whole story, the Christian story, rubbish. As you walk the days and the weeks and the months with the sense that there's nobody, and there's nothing at all, it's a joke, it doesn't make sense, it's a crisis, a collapse, it's a catastrophe that's taking place in your Christian life.

And so the strain of lamentation is very difficult for us to reproduce. It's national, it's intense, it's catastrophic, and spiritually it is a disaster.

It is a sleep. If God is slaying the marriage of God. And no wonder we get to chapter 3 verse 19 where the writer says, I remember my affliction quite longer.

[ 8 : 45 ] I can't help remembering the affliction of verse 20. It's all around me. All the memories, they're here.

And he keeps remembering, he keeps remembering the affliction that that is what God has brought on them. And then Paul has white people's wrong. And he's remembering his thinking, now the people's wrong.

And it's interesting, in this book of Lamentations, in the Bible, it doesn't accuse God of being unfair. The central verse in the book of Lamentations is chapter 3 verse 33.

It's one of the most crucial verses in the Bible. It's a great way to learn. For he does not, that is God, he does not afflict from the heart.

Or greed which is a really important verse. Burn it into your thinking. Because you're not thinking in the biblical verse 3, 3, 3. Whatever is happening, another way of saying it, is God does not delight in affliction.

[ 9 : 50 ] And so listen to me for a moment. Suffering is not part of the plan of God, if I can say that. Genesis 1 and 2, you've got a perfect world without suffering. And in between Genesis 1 and 2 and Revelation 21 and 22, there's a value, isn't there, of suffering.

In this rebellious world in which we live. And God uses that value of suffering without apparently delighting it. So important. I'm going to say something here.

I don't need to tell you that some people say, well, because there's suffering, that's a really good reason not to believe in God. I would suggest that it's the opposite. That we use the subject of suffering as a way to prove the existence of God.

It goes like this. If God does not exist, then objective moral values do not exist. Because everything then is opinion, and everything is just your own measure of sin.

If God does not exist, there are no objective moral values. But the fact is, you and I, and everyone else, and what evil does exist.

[ 11 : 08 ] And in the face of evil, what is there? There is widespread outrage. There's a sense of objective outrage against evil. So we as a nation sometimes can have objective outrage in something that takes place.

And therefore, moral objective values do exist. Which is a very good indication that God himself does exist. And it's possible you see, I think, during the tables of the face of some of you said, well, there's this atrocity, how can there be a God?

And you just say, well, why do you care? Why do you care about this? Because there is objective outrage that says this is wrong.

And that is a help to you and I in believing in the existence of God. So the suffering actually may be used as a stepping stone for us to speak to others about God.

Not only does the writer know that he is God, but he actually confesses sin. So, let me turn back to chapter 1 and verse 18. And you'll see this great verse where he says, the Lord is in the right.

[ 12 : 13 ] The Lord is in the right, yet I am valid in his word. And if you look to chapter 1 and verse 20. Look, O Lord, for I am in distress, my subject is.

My heart is bound within me, because I am very rebellious. Verse 22. Let all that evil drink come before you and deal with them, as you dealt with me, and give them all my transgressions.

You go to chapter 3 and verse 39. And you'll see a very, very important question. Why should a living man complain when punished for his sins?

This suffering has promoted a confession of God. And this suffering has promoted and prompted him to return to God. It has had a good effect on God. God has used it.

He has not willingly done it. He has not delighted in it. He has used it. And he has caused the man and hopefully the nation to begin to return.

[ 13 : 12 ] So look at chapter 3 and verse 20. In the middle of this terrible affliction. He says, my soul continually remembers it.

And he has bowed down within me. But this I quote about it, therefore I am. This national, intensive and spiritual affliction.

But a writer personalised it and says, it's our fault. But please, we want to come back to you. So the affliction is very real and it's very effective. But secondly, the mercy is brought by God.

Look at verse 19. Remember my affliction and my wonderings. The wound and all the pain of it. My soul continually remembers it. So chapter 3 verse 19 to 20. He can't help remembering. He can't help remembering the affliction and his wonderings. The shadow of his sin. But in chapter 3 verse 21, he does something very different.

And very deliberate. And because I call it to mind, therefore I have to open the Lord's great love and his compassion to which never fail and the greatness and his faithfulness.

[ 14 : 20 ] The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

His mercy has never come to an end. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. That steadfast love, that is God's covenant love.

I hope you understand what I mean when I say the point is. He is meditating, he is thinking on the covenant. I have a voice on it. Never good to meditate on the covenant.

I won't tell you that meditating on the covenant that God has made with his people is extremely true. What is the covenant? It is the binding relationship that God has made with his people.

It is a thing to the Bible where God says, I will be your God and you will be my people. And this covenant is the story of one of the ones.

[15:22] He is the beginning of the world. That is the beginning of the world. God makes a world for himself. And then he says to Noah, he says, Noah will never flood the world again. And then he says, Abraham I am going to start a people. I am going to start it with you. And then he says to Moses and the people of Sinai, you are going to be my special nation.

You are going to be a witness to the world. And then he says to David, it is going to be an everlasting kingdom and there will be a king who will sit on the throne forever and ever. And then he says to Jeremiah, it will be an inward, changed heart covenant.

And then in the New Testament, Jesus sits at the Lord's table and he says, this is the covenant in my blood. The new covenant. And he seals it and he inks it and he writes it in his death.

And that is what this writer is thinking about. He thinks about as much as he knows of the covenant. As if this unfaithful man in an unfaithful nation in this unfaithful bride turns his mind into the kingdom.

And then he says, this is the covenant in my blood. And then in the New Testament, Jesus sits at the Lord's table. And he says, this is the covenant in my blood. as he knows of the covenant. And it's as if this unfaithful man in an unfaithful nation, in this unfaithful bride, turns his mind away from his sin and his rebellion and the mess which he's created, and he puts his mind deliberately onto the faithfulness of God and the covenant that God has made.

[16:45] And so in chapter 3, in verse 21, he turns his mind to something that's destructive. And that is to put your mind back on the 2,000 years of what God said and done in the covenant.

And then to put your mind on the last 2,000 years of God sustaining a people and increasing a people throughout the whole world. And that is what the writer does. He says, I call it to mind. I deliberately think about it. The steadfast love of the Lord. It's an involuntary thing for him to think about his problems, chapter 3, verse 19. He gets up in the morning and all he can think about there are his problems, his problems, his problems, his issues.

But it's a very deliberate thing for him to think of chapter 3, verse 21, and the covenant. There are three things that are mentioned in chapter 22 and 23.

They are steadfast love, daily mercies, faithfulness. These are the things which he knows about. So, for example, I expressed it before.

[17:50] After Israel had sinned that they did. That incident with the golden calf, God took Moses back at the mountain and he said, this is going to be the solution. The Lord, the Lord, gracious and merciful, slow, and steadfast, abounding in love.

And out comes this tremendous declaration, steadfast, mercy, unfaithfulness. And the writer, he meditates on those three things.

He's not just thinking positive. Thinking positive is thinking with a reason, without a ground. He is thinking God here. He's thinking on the basis of what God said or what God was done.

And he realises in verse 22 that the mercies never stop. That they are near everyone. The mourning itself which you experience today is a sign of God's mercy because we come from that. And we are giving it on a daily basis something of a proof of God's faithfulness. So just imagine that there is a covenant of God who is so gracious that his love and his mercy and faithfulness they continue by returning the world.

[19:08] We're tempted that we can think that we can get God's steadfast love and mercy and faithfulness that we can kind of drag it down from heaven.

But we can no more do that than cause the world to him. The world turns because of God's faithfulness. The steadfast love, the mercies and the faithfulness of God continue because of his character for years.

He gives these things to us full stop and that is where the writer meditates. The love that gives daily mercies. Some of the daily mercies we experience as we get up this morning are things I'm reading

on there.

There's the sunshine, the rain, the wind, the cold breeze. We experience friendship, fellowship, food, drink, warm, clothing, eating.

They are temporary, temporal mercies. But the spiritual mercies, the eternal mercies of God, they are very wonderful.

[ 20 : 16 ] That's when you get up in the morning and you realise that the forgiveness of God is again provided for you. That it's possible to turn back to God and to be forgiven and to know him and his fellowship.

That it will continue with you through the day. That he doesn't call it to an end. And that you are able to serve him even though you've failed him.

And you find yourself as you go on in a Christian life testifying to a God who has forgiven you a thousand times. And then a thousand ten times. And then a thousand one hundred times. And so you have this God who provides you this tremendous mercy, the hope of the covenant.

And I wonder whether there are some people here this morning watching this morning with a sense that's pumped into our brains every now and again that God actually gives us very little.

That's the sort of thing that comes from the devil himself. Remember back in the garden you've been deprived of the moon. God is holding back on the moon.

[ 21 : 27 ] And every now and again it's possible that you're going along in the Christian life and you get the impression in your brain that you've been asked to live the Christian life which is a very expensive life to live and God is only providing you with ten pounds worth of remorances.

But what you and I need to do at that point is to turn our miles deliberately to the covenant and the value of the covenant. And we need to remind ourselves that being brought into a covenant completely unworthy by God unworthy by God that is a billion billion billion billion pamphlet.

Just wait a thousand and you'll appreciate it. The value the worth the pricelessness of the covenant. And we need to remember the thousands of ways in the past that he's pardoned for us and provided for us.

And we need to remember the hundreds of things we have in this world freely provided by day by day by day by day the tremendous covenant God the faithful promise keeping steadfast loving God.

Psalms 8 says this in Psalm 84 no good thing does God come up. What's that saying? That's saying that if God is withholding something from you this morning it's for your good.

[ 22 : 59 ] Because no good thing is he withhold from everything. So if you come here this morning and you're feeling as if your resources were all finished you're pretty nervous you're fairly soon for the good of that teacher tells us that if you are willing to invest and if you are willing to walk in the way of God because he is new and abundant in today.

If you're feeling this morning that you're quite unloved and neglected by God and your circumstances are very difficult do not forget that every single day that you gather will be new mercies.

If you're thinking the road is uphill and there's no prospect for you apart from the diminution of your resources remember the promise of God every single day of God and the Jesus went to the faith of Christ I say and all the rest of your days there will be new mercies from God.

Tomorrow morning when you get up there will be new mercies and the next day will be changed. Every day mercies. I want to finish by telling you why chapter 3 verse 21 the hope that's not verse true.

Why is there a truth? Please do not go out of church today giving you that God is obliged to give you love and mercy because you're cute.

[ 24 : 27 ] Please don't think that God is obliged to give you love and mercy no we're sinful but the sin doesn't matter. What the Israelites did in the 6th century BC deserved their removal of it did.

And what I've done in my life deserves not even removal of it does. And what you've done in your life deserves your removal from God does.

We deserve to be God full of sin. sin. We've no solution. And the reason why we are not God for sake is the cross.

The cross provides the solution. The cross is literally the place where Jesus was removed and literally God for sake.

of course this took centuries after levitations and centuries ago but nevertheless the cross stands in the middle of history where Jesus was God forsaken and it means that the believer will never be forsaken by God.

[ 25 : 38 ] What do you write in a bit back? To say to yourself today remember the reason I am not God forsaken and never will be God forsaken is because Jesus was God forsaken.

When he took action back at the crucifixion and he carried our sins off into that terrible darkness why did he do that? He was so that you and I would never be carried away into that terrible darkness.

It is his sacrifice at the cross which is the reason that God could bring back people of Israel and I hope each one of us to have faith and fellowship with him.

His mercy is unbreakably given to us. His mercy is given to us unbreakably never to be broken.

New mercy every day every time died