

## Hope In the Lord

### Lam. 3

#### Introduction:

1. Reading of Lam. 3:1-18.
2. Perhaps you can relate to the words of Jeremiah in Lamentations 3.
3. Maybe you feel his affliction. Maybe you are in a dark place. Maybe you even feel like God is a bear or a lion waiting to tear you to pieces.
4. If you have felt exhausted and have lost all hope, or have known someone who has, then this lesson is for you.

#### Discussion:

- I. God is behind your affliction (3:1ff).
  - A. This may seem odd to many, but is this not what Jeremiah is saying?
    1. "I am the man who has seen affliction because of the rod of **His** wrath."
    2. "**He** has driven me and made me walk in darkness."
    3. "**He** has turned **His** hand against me all day."
    4. "**He** has broken my bones."
    5. Etc.
    6. Jeremiah is clearly saying that God is the source of his affliction.
  - B. He is the source of your affliction too.
    1. The ancient Hebrew concept was that God was in control of everything.
      - a. If good things happened to people God was behind it.
      - b. If bad things happened to people God was behind that too.
    2. Such an understanding is consistent with the revelation in Scripture of God's sovereignty. He is not necessarily the cause of all things, but He is in control of them.
    3. This may cause us to question, "How can God being good allow bad things to happen?" My short answer to that is, "You can't have men making free-will choices without allowing bad things to happen for inevitably men's wrong choices lead to bad results."
    4. The real question is, "Is God at fault for that?"
  - C. All affliction traces back to sin in one way or another.
    1. Sometimes it is our own personal sin that causes our affliction. Ex. When Israel went into the promised land, under the leadership of Joshua, God said all the silver and gold, the bronze and iron should go into the treasury of the Lord (Josh. 6:19). But Achan saw a mantle from Shinar, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight. He coveted them and took them and concealed them in his tent (7:21). It ultimately cost him his life.
    2. Sometimes it is the sin of others. Ex. As a result of Achan's sin Israel was initially defeated at Ai. Thirty-six men were struck down. Their defeat was the result of Achan's sin. Ex. A gang fight leads to the death of an innocent women caught in the cross-fire.

3. All of us are born outside of Eden as a result of Adam's sin. As a result we experience the consequence of Adam's sin.
  4. The people of Jeremiah's day were idolatrous and involved in rebellion against God. Now they were afflicted by their enemies. Jeremiah himself was experiencing the consequence of their rebellion, even though he was faithful to the Lord.
- D. It appears to me that Jeremiah, in his poem, is identifying himself with the people of his day. His affliction, in poetic form like a mirror, reflects their affliction. Cf. v. 48.
1. Read verses 5ff.
  2. It is a horrible affliction to be in opposition to the Lord.
  3. A position of enmity against God results in destruction.
  4. Jeremiah asks, "Why should any living mortal offer complaint in view of his sins?" (39).
  5. In other words, "God is not at fault that you are suffering." In verse 33 Jeremiah says, "He does not afflict willingly or grieve the sons of men." Peter said, "God is not willing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9). Instead, He is in the business of saving sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). Even Jesus endured the hostility of sinners against Himself. Hebrews describes this as part of the discipline of a loving Father and as part of our striving against sin (Heb. 12:3ff). Cf. Job, who did not blame God.

II. Hope is found only in the lovingkindness ("steadfast love," ESV) of God (3:19-38).

- A. "The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness" (3:22-23).
- B. Note verses 24-38.
- C. Jeremiah's perception about the nature of God is clear.
  1. There are consequences to sin. And God is behind those consequences. Although at least some of those consequences occur naturally, God is still in control and is responsible for those consequences. Yet we are responsible, and yes, accountable for our sins.
  2. But God is compassionate. His graciousness is active in bringing salvation (26, 31-36).

III. Repentance is the avenue of relief (3:39ff).

- A. Complaining is inappropriate in light of our sins (39).
- B. Returning to the Lord is the only appropriate response (40-42a).
- C. God's response is appropriate (42b-46).
- D. Though the consequence of our sin is overwhelming when we call on the name of the Lord He hears and draws near to us (47-59).
- E. Our oppressors will be repaid (60-66). Cf. 2 Thess. 1:5ff.
- F. The people of Jeremiah's day did not repent and as a consequence of their sin were overwhelmed by their enemies.
- G. God's message today is no different.
  1. From the preaching of John the Baptist the message of God is "REPENT."

2. We can talk of the technical definition of “repentance,” but I think we all know what it means. It means to genuinely turn from the course of sin and rebellion. It means to stop blaming God for our calamity and to humbly accept responsibility for our sins. And it means to turn away from sin and to turn to God for forgiveness. It means a change of course in our lives.

Conclusion:

1. Jeremiah had experienced something of the frustrations of sin and its consequences.
2. The city of Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Babylonians. Many would die. Those who survived would be taken into captivity.
3. Our circumstances are little different. The world encroaches on us. The more we give in to its encroachment the more disastrous the consequences.
4. Our only hope is through REPENTANCE. The Lord would redeem our lives.
5. Our redemption does not come through political elections. It does not come through military might, but it comes by the hand of God as we repent and turn to Him.