

LAMENTATIONS

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Lamentations chapter 3 as we continue our study through the Word of God. As we move into Lamentations chapter 3 this evening you will notice that there are 66 verses in this chapter, while chapters 1 & 2 and chapters 4 & 5 contain only 22 verses. That may not seem like such a big deal and in the English it does not come across. But what we have here is an alphabetic acrostic.

Also, keep in mind that there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. What that means is that every verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Thus, verse 1 begins with aleph. Verse 2 begins with the letter beth and-so-on through the 22 letters of the Hebrew Alphabet.

But here in Lamentations chapter 3 we don't have 22 verses but 66 verses. That means that 3 verses begin with Aleph, the next three verses begin with beth and-so-on. Again, we don't see that in the English but it is there in the Hebrew and it makes it easier to remember these verses because of that.

Now before we get to our text, just a little background information. The timeframe here is around 586 B. C. and the Babylonians have made their third and final assault upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah. They have destroyed Jerusalem, its walls, and have destroyed the Temple.

And Jeremiah is sitting upon a hill overlooking the city of Jerusalem, which is still smoldering from the fires the Babylonians had set. And Jeremiah is weeping over what he sees. The devastation that has taken place is overwhelming and that has led many to call the book of Lamentations, the Wailing Wall of the Scriptures.

So as we dig into our study tonight picture Jeremiah on a hill overlooking Jerusalem as smoke is rising from the city, the walls broken down, thousands of fellow Jews slaughtered and the rest captured by the Babylonians. I know, it does not sound too uplifting, but as you will see, there is great hope in what we will read this evening. With that said, let's begin reading in Lamentations chapter 3 beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

LAMENTATIONS 3

VERSES 1-4

1. Who is speaking here, the Jewish people who are experiencing this devastation or Jeremiah? I believe that this is the cry of Jeremiah as he sees the devastation that has come upon his people and his city, Jerusalem. The reason I am so sure is that this verse starts out with the word “**I**” and thus, I think it is referring to Jeremiah and he is speaking of the wrath of God that has caused him to see much affliction.
2. Talk about your gloom and doom. Jeremiah is speaking of no hope, only darkness that is before him on the path that God has set for him. All this despair and hopelessness has led to depression, and it always does. And not only is Jeremiah depressed, but he is saying that the ministry that God has placed him in has made him an old man, he was not only broken in his body, but also in his spirit. Jeremiah has been in ministry now for some 40 years, and in the end he will minister for some 46 years. And through it all he didn't see any fruit.

Now as we read this we might be thinking, “Wow, Jeremiah is depressed, he is down. How can that be? He is a man of God!” I truly see the heart of God manifested in Jeremiah’s life as he is broken over what he sees. God loves His people and to pour out His judgment upon them because of their sin I believe grieves God! And also keep in mind that Jeremiah is a man and we go through all kinds of emotions, and many times it is because we have lost focus!

The solution as we will see farther down in this chapter is the Lord and His great mercy that He extends to us. Without that we all would be in trouble. Keep your eyes on the Lord; don’t lose hope because with God all things are possible! Trust in Him, walk by faith.

Remember what Solomon said in Proverbs 3:5-8, **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.”**

We don’t see the big picture but only what is in front of us. We can speculate about the future and that can cause anxiety, fear, hopelessness and-so-on. But we are not to lean on our own understanding but to trust the Lord and allow Him to direct our steps. We are to walk according to the high calling that He has called us to, to avoid evil and it will be good for our lives!

3. Now think about this. Jeremiah served the Lord for some 46 years and no fruit as I have said. The nation did not turn back to the Lord and as far as we can tell, no one did! If his ministry was evaluated today by the way churches evaluate these things he would be seen as a failure and probably would have been let go years ago.

Was it Jeremiah's responsibility to bear fruit? No, it was the Lord's and the Lord accomplished what He desired with Jeremiah. You see, Jeremiah was a success in the eyes of the Lord because He was faithful in the work that God called him to do. And I believe that is what God desires of us, to be faithful with what God has given to us and let Him work out His plan and purpose for it. Just stay attached to the vine and God will bring forth the fruit that He desires in your life, be faithful!

4. Jeremiah is not done speaking about what the Lord has done to him, he is going to go on for a while here and maybe you feel that God has brought things into your life that are not fair, that He made you do something and now you don't want to do it any longer. Jeremiah had those issues from time-to-time and I think this is one of them. He is just overwhelmed by what he sees.

VERSES 5-8

1. Notice who has done this to Jeremiah, it is the Lord! Yes Jeremiah was in a pit for his faith, he was in prison for his faith, he was abused by the people that he tried to warn and it is no longer the people's fault for this calamity, but God's. Jeremiah has lost perspective, the situation has overwhelmed him!

And again, picture what he is looking at as he sits on this hill and watches the city he loved, the Temple he worshiped at and the people he loved destroyed. To say he is overwhelmed by it all is obvious. And yes, he is bitter, he is tired, he is worn out and he feels like a zombie, the walking dead.

2. Now here is an important lesson for us to take from this. God never asked Jeremiah to carry these burdens. All he asked Jeremiah to do is to speak forth His words to the people. But now these burdens have overwhelmed him, he is weighed down and he feels he can't get up.

We can do that also, allow ministry to weigh us down, allow life to weigh us down, to become a burden to us. In Jeremiah's day they would cry out, "***The burden of the Lord! The burden of the Lord!***"

We do the same thing today as we say things like, "It is the cross we have to bear!" That is not what God means and either way, God is not pleased with that. Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-30, "**Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**" Keep that in mind!

Peter reminds us of this very thing in I Peter 5:7, "**casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.**" How much of our cares are we to cast upon Him? We are to cast **ALL** of them, not most of them or some of them but **ALL** of them! Then what are we carrying? Our love for God who loves us more than we will ever know and thus, you won't be broken by all that you are carrying because the Lord has taken those things and is carrying them for you! That is something that Jeremiah did not do and it is something that we don't do many times and we bear the weight and it is overwhelming at times. Give it to the Lord; He can carry them for us!

3. One more point before we move on and that is from verse 8 where Jeremiah said, “**Even when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer.**” As Jeremiah falls deeper into this self-pity, this bottomless pit of despair, he now feels that his prayers are being blocked, they are not getting through because he didn’t see God respond like Jeremiah thought He should. Jeremiah began to look at God as his adversary, and that was a wrong perspective. Yes, Jeremiah had a tough ministry, but to blame God for this was wrong, it was untrue.

Yes, on occasion God forbid Jeremiah to pray for the deliverance of Judah. We see that in Jeremiah 11:14, “**So do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry out to Me because of their trouble.**” So I think that was what Jeremiah was speaking about, he wanted to see his people delivered and judgment came because of their sin and their refusal to repent and get right with God! (See also Jeremiah 14:11)

VERSES 9-16

1. As you read this you see God as the hunter and Jeremiah as the prey and God is stalking him, and he is using Jeremiah, in a sense, like target practice. Did you ever feel that way, that God has placed a big bull’s eye on your back? Jeremiah did and that is a very wrong perspective to have about God. He loves us more than we will ever know, He loves us so much that He was willing to die for our sins that we might be saved!

And because of Jeremiah dwelling upon this, letting this fester and grow, letting it continue to boil, we see that Jeremiah was filled with bitterness against God at this point. He saw himself going through all these bitter experiences, which wormwood, being a bitter plant was symbolic of.

2. Job was another man who went through very difficult times to say the least. And it all happened in a short period of time. And Job did struggle with all this, it was not easy but he did have a correct perspective. He said after all of this, that “**... ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.’ In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.**”
Job 1:21-22.

That truly is the proper perspective to have. Don’t allow your circumstances to create a warped picture of God. God is not the problem! And understand this, God did not want to bring about judgment, He did everything He could to get His people to repent but they refused to listen, and judgment came upon them. Remember, the problem is never God!

3. In verse 16 we are told, “**He has also broken my teeth with gravel, And covered me with ashes.**” That is the way he felt! And in the Hebrew it speaks of being pushed down into the ashes. Another words, God has pushed Jeremiah down so hard and so fast into the ashes that his teeth were broken on the gravel. And ashes were a sign of mourning and Jeremiah is saying he has been pushed into this condition by God! What a terrible perspective of God he had developed!

VERSES 17-20

1. Why did Jeremiah sink into such a deep despair and hopeless condition? Because he took his eyes off the Lord and placed them upon the situations he was in, which were very difficult. He looked to the past and no one listened to him. He is looking at the present and all he sees is death and destruction. And thus, the future is hopeless!

I think this is a very important lesson for us to learn. As you look at your past, as you look at what is happening now, as you look at what you think the future holds, you may not be too excited. You see, anytime you begin to focus upon life's circumstances apart from God it will lead to discouragement, despair, depression, and you will develop a warped picture of God. That is what we see here with Jeremiah and it is also seen in our own lives many times as the things of life cloud our picture of God and bring us to despair!

A great place to turn to in the Scriptures when you are in times like that is the Psalms. And the reason I say that is because many of the Psalms start out with that perspective, of hopelessness, despair, devastation. And it is not until the Psalmist turns to the Lord that we see their whole perspective, their whole countenance change.

In Psalm 42:11 we read, **“Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.”** In this Psalm David is going through a very difficult time. And now, as the Psalm closes things have changed.

Yes for David God seemed distant, like He was not listening to David's hearts cry, that He had forgotten David or even worse forsaken David. And we can place ourselves in David's shoes because we have all had times like that. Did God forsake us? Is that true? Absolutely not and thus, our feelings are wrong because God's Word tells us He will not forsake us, He will not leave us! If you lose that perspective, you will be depressed!

And I love the way that this Psalm ends. We don't see David walking down the street on a bed of roses with the sun shining down upon him. Yes Mr. Bluebird is sitting on his shoulder singing, but Mr. Bluebird also left him a little gift on his shoulder you might say!

We have been there and the same is true for David. The trial is still going on. David is still down and he is trying to get re-focused. Friends are still mocking God during this time. The thing we must remember is that God never promises to deliver us from all our problems, but He has promised to be with us through them all. Thus – ***HOPE IN GOD!*** That is the perspective we need to have as we go through this life because if we don't, if we take our eyes off the Lord the circumstances of life will bring us down!

2. For Jeremiah you can clearly see that he is in the pit of despair and hopelessness. He has hit rock bottom. He couldn't get any lower. And so we are going to see in the next few verses that Jeremiah, out of desperation, does the only thing that is left, look to God. And like Jeremiah, many times we do the same thing. We wait to the very end to get our eyes looking upward instead of upon the situations we are in. And as you will see, these are some of the most uplifting, encouraging verses in the book of Lamentations. I mean these first 20 have not been too encouraging right!

VERSES 21-24

1. As I have said so many times before, perspective is everything. Now you may not believe that but let me show you what I mean. Imagine it is January, in the heart of winter and the temperature is 40 degrees above zero! We would think that is great, some may even wear a lighter jacket with those temperatures.

But now it is July and the temperature is 40 degrees above zero! Guess what? We would be complaining how cold it is; we would probably put on winter jackets. Hey, I remember one Fourth of July fireworks show down by the lake where we had on winter jackets in July!

How can that be when it is the same temperature? It is all about perspective. You see, in January that is a great temperature but not in July.

The same is true in our spiritual lives. As we look at the world it is cold, heartless, it is bad and we complain about it. But all of a sudden your perspective changes as now you are placing the Lord right in the middle of all that, you are looking to Him. Now there is peace, there is joy, there is hope and-so-on.

Why the difference? It is not because the situation changed but your perspective of the situation changed, now you are looking to the Lord. Same circumstances or same temperature you might say but now you are resting in the Lord and that does change everything.

Remember when Jesus walked on the Sea of Galilee and as He came upon His men in the boat Peter climbed out and was walking on water to Jesus. But then he took his eyes off of Jesus and focused himself on the situation! "Hey, I can't walk on water!" as waves are crashing over his head and he begins to sink.

His perspective of the situation changed, not the situation. And when all hope was lost who was reaching down to lift him up? It was the Lord and many times that is what happens in our own lives. It is when we have reached the end of ourselves, when we have exhausted all our ability that the Lord is just waiting with His hand opened up to lift you up, you just need to look to Him!

2. Notice again what Jeremiah says in verse 21, “**This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope.**” What did he recall to his mind? The truths of God found in the Word of God! You see, God’s Word is unchanging and what He has promised will come to pass. On the other hand everything else is changing, all the various circumstances of life!

And notice what Jeremiah saw as he looked to the Lord. It is interesting when you think about it. Jeremiah saw and he knew that God could have wiped them out. He could have consumed them. It could have been a whole lot worse than it was.

You see, God does not chasten His people to destroy them, but to get them back on track. He is compassionate towards us, and His judgment, as harsh as it may seem, is always tempered with compassion and mercy. We never really get what we fully deserve, and that is what Jeremiah is seeing here.

And as bad as things looked, Jeremiah is reminding himself about the goodness of God. We all go through rough times, difficult days, and you may be exhausted, discouraged. But in the morning it is a new day that God has given to you and you wake up refreshed, ready to go. Every day we awaken to another day of the goodness of God being extended to us! Jeremiah needed to be reminded of that fact, and so do we!

And it is not only circumstances that we face, that come upon us, it is also our failures, our sin, the things that we do and God loves us and draws us back to Him. He does not consume us or destroy us, He is full of compassion and that compassion never runs dry, His compassion does not fail, ***NEVER!***

And each day we start afresh with the Lord and I am so thankful for that. I am glad that I don’t have to carry all those things around with me but I can give them to the Lord and walk in the newness of His mercy every morning! Praise God for that!

And think about it, who else are you going to trust besides the Lord? There is no one! I love what Isaiah 26:3 says, **“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.”** Keep focused on the Lord and His peace will fill your life as you go through the storms. You see, the Lord is my portion, it is all about Him in my life and once I get that focus, that perspective I will not be moved!

Listen to what one commentary had to say about life and the focus of our life. We are told,

What has been the deepest, darkest experience in your life, the time when you felt the worst emotions, perhaps to the point of utter despair? For Jeremiah and his contemporaries in Judah, it was the destruction of Jerusalem. The death of the city was absolutely crushing. The Israelites’ magnificent temple was reduced to ashes, the city walls were pulled down, the main part of the populace had been either killed or deported, and only starving elders, women, and children remained (Lam. 2:10–12).

Only one truth kept hope alive - the knowledge of the mercies of the Lord (3:22–24). God’s mercy (Hebrew chesed; see Deut. 7:9) involved His undying love and loyalty toward His people. Having committed Himself to Israel through His covenant with them, the Lord could be expected to follow through on that commitment. He might discipline His wayward people, allow them to be ravaged by their enemies, and even let their temple and the Law be destroyed (Lam. 2:9), but He would never ultimately forsake His people.

Neither will God forsake His spiritual children today. His mercy and grace have been extended to those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1), and nothing can separate us from His love (8:31–39). As a result, we can have hope (5:1–5; 1 Pet. 1:3–5), even in the midst of the gloomiest circumstances (2 Cor. 1:8–11).

- Radmacher, Earl D. ; Allen, Ronald Barclay ; House, H. Wayne:
Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary, Lamentations 3:24

How true that is, God's love for us will never wax and wane but is a constant in our lives. And yes there are times when we might not feel it but we can know it because God's Word tells us so!

And J. Vernon McGee looks at this bright spot you might say here in Lamentations and wrote,

If I were to give a title to these last three chapters of Lamentations, it would be, "When Tomorrows Become Yesterdays." Jeremiah is now looking back upon the past. He had predicted the judgment that came upon Jerusalem, and Jeremiah sits in the rubble and ruin of Jerusalem weeping as he writes this lamentation.

These verses are the only bright spot in all of the five laments. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness." In spite of the severe judgment of God - and many thought it was too severe - Jeremiah can see the hand of God's mercy. They would have been utterly consumed had it not been for the mercy of God. If they had received their just deserts, they would have been utterly destroyed - they would have disappeared from the earth.

Was Judah's deliverance from such a fate due to something in them? No, it was all due to the faithfulness of God. He had promised Abraham that He would make a nation come from him - and this was the nation. He had promised Moses that He would put them into the land. He had promised Joshua that He would establish them there. He promised David that there would come One in his line to reign on the throne forever. The prophets all said that God would not utterly destroy this people but that He would judge them for their sin. God is faithful. He has judged them, but He will not utterly destroy them. A faithful remnant has always remained, and ultimately they will become a great nation again.

J. Vernon McGee, Thru the Bible, Vol. III, p. 431

God is always encouraging us, giving us hope, giving us His peace in a world of turmoil and there is great comfort in that. May we learn to look to Him and lean upon Him more and more in our Christian lives!

VERSES 25-26

1. Jeremiah tells us there are blessings as we wait on the Lord, as we hope in Him and as we wait quietly for Him to answer our prayers. I think the point that Jeremiah is making is we are not to try and take things in our own strength, doing it on our own, for when we do we only mess things up.

Also, don't complain, just wait patiently for the Lord to intervene, and there is the blessing. For Abraham, he wanted to help God out and had a child with Hagar, his hand-maiden. Out of that we see that Ishmael, their son was born and has been a thorn in the side of Israel ever since. That is an important lesson for us to learn!

And when Jeremiah says we are to wait on the Lord it is not some kind of stoic endurance. It is resting in the promises of God knowing that He will see us through these difficult times and His plans and purposes will be fulfilled, thus, ***WAIT ON THE LORD!***

VERSE 27

1. I think the idea here is that the longer you walk with the Lord the better it is or at least it should be. We want to grow overnight and our sanctification takes a lifetime. Use the lessons to grow in the Lord. Seek His direction for your life as you grow and mature in Him.

And as you do, as you face difficult situations, that relationship you have developed will help see you through. On the other hand, there are those who have been a Christian for years and remain very carnal, very immature in their faith. They may have the head knowledge but they just don't apply it to their life, they don't use it, only abuse it!

Jeremiah did start out at a young age serving the Lord, maybe around 16 or 17 years of age or so when he began his ministry. Remember what the Lord said to him when he was concerned about his youth? In Jeremiah 1:7-8 we read, **“But the LORD said to me: ‘Do not say, “I am a youth,” for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you,’ says the LORD.”** And Jeremiah was faithful in serving the Lord, not always easy but he was faithful!

VERSES 28-30

1. The idea here is that of conquest as the captive is lying face down with the conqueror's foot on his back and in this case it would be the Babylonians. But in the midst of that we see hope in verse 29, a hope that somehow, someday the Lord will deliver the Jewish people!

2. Now verse 30 is speaking about giving his cheek to the oppressor who will strike him and it is speaking of the Babylonians striking them but I also think it is looking ahead to our Lord. To me I think Jeremiah is now just speaking forth a prophecy of Jesus Christ. Why do I say that? Because in Matthew 26:67-68 we read, **“Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, ‘Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?’”** So this had a near term fulfillment in the Babylonians striking them and a long term fulfillment in what happened to Jesus!

VERSES 31-33

1. God does not desire to chasten us. He gets no pleasure from it. But He does so only to bring us back to Him. And as patient and longsuffering as God is, sometimes He has to hurt us to heal us.

Think about having an infected wound and it has to be lanced so the poison can be drained and there can be healing. That is what the chastening of the Lord does in our lives. Paul put it like this in Hebrews 12:5-6 says, **“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’”**

We may not see this chastening as love as we are going through it but looking back we see the love of God for us as He is trying to protect us and draw us back to Him!

2. And with unbelievers God does not want to judge them and punish them. His desire is that all would come to repentance and be saved. But if they refuse, He will judge them! It is as Isaiah 55:7 says, **“Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.”** Praise God for His grace and mercy that He extends to sinful man!

VERSES 34-36

1. What Jeremiah is speaking about here is a perversion of justice by God’s people. But also understand that our God is not unjust, He is not unrighteous, He is always fair in what He does.

We are told in Isaiah 11:3-5, **“His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears; But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.”**

And God’s people should have been righteous, they should have shown justice towards each other but they were not!

VERSES 37-39

1. As I have said and the Scriptures show us, God is just, He is fair, He is righteous, He is holy and-so-on. Thus, man is only getting what he deserves and that means he has no right to complain about the punishment that he receives. In fact, the reality is that man gets far less than what he deserves. And yet we see man complain today and they should be thanking God that He is gracious and merciful and turn to Him for God gets no pleasure in the death of the wicked, He wants them to turn to Him and live!

VERSES 40-45

1. Man loves to complain about the things that come upon his life. He loves to blame God for all the bad that has come upon him. But instead of doing that, which is futile, worthless, examine your heart and repent before God if there is a problem there.

David cried out in Psalm 139:23-24, “**Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.**” That is what Jeremiah is saying here in verse 40.

2. Now there is the cry to search our hearts and now here in verse 41 we see the call to repentance, even though they did not repent that is what they were to do. Unless you repent of your sin and come to Jesus, ask Him to be Lord and Savior of your life, there will be no pardon!

3. Now why was God not hearing their prayers? I think Isaiah 59:1-2 shows us as we are told, **“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”**

It was not that God ignored them but it was their sin that separated them from God and the same is true today. The sin of man separates him from God and it is only through Jesus that those sins can be cast as far as the east is from the west to be remembered no more!

VERSES 46-51

1. Jeremiah has been called, and rightly so, the Weeping Prophet. For 40 years now he has been warning the people that destruction was coming. He wept over their failure to heed his warnings, and now destruction has come. He loved the people and it hurt him deeply to see this. He had compassion on them.

There is another prophet of God who was not a weeping prophet but he was more of a whining or grumbling prophet. He did not want to go to Nineveh to warn the people of God’s coming judgment upon them. When he was persuaded by God to go he told the people, **“Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”**

No love, no compassion for the people. In fact, after he warned the people he sat down waiting for God’s judgment to fall upon them. And the people repented, God’s judgment did not come upon them and Jonah was upset with God!

Not at all like Jeremiah. That is what Jeremiah wanted, the people to repent and get right with God. May we have a heart like Jeremiah, for it is the heart of God for people! May we too weep over the lost and the destruction that is going to come upon them and not whine over what they are doing and wanting them to get what they deserve! Think about it, we all deserve death and God has given to us life. May we extend that gift to others!

2. As you read of all Jeremiah saw with his eyes it was overwhelming. The women were raped; infants were thrown against the walls and killed. There was starvation, cannibalism, disease, and death all around. And now the city was burning, the Temple destroyed. The Babylonians were a brutal people.

This idea of witnessing something horrible was shown to me when I watched the movie, "Lone Survivor." It was about some Navy Seals and a mission they were on and it was based upon a true story. And I know war is brutal but it was a very hard movie for me to watch. And at the end of the movie, when they showed the Navy Seals that were killed in this battle, it made it even more real. These young men who lost their lives made it hard for me to watch. So I had a little glimpse into what Jeremiah was going through but for him, he saw it before his eyes, it was live you might say!

3. Now the rest of the chapter, verses 52-66 we are going to see Jeremiah remember something that happened to him during his life, during his ministry. In Jeremiah 11:18-23 we see a hometown plot to kill Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 26:7-9 we see the people who gathered at the Temple of God wanting to kill Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 37:11-16 we see Jeremiah imprisoned in a dungeon. But I think Jeremiah is recalling the events that transpired in Jeremiah 38:1-6, as he was placed in a cistern, sinking in the mud, left there to die by the people he was praying for. So let's read on and see what Jeremiah is experiencing and who his hope is in.

VERSES 52-54

1. These verses here in Lamentations 3:52-54 and on into verse 56 almost seem out of place as you read them. These are events that took place prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, so why are they placed here? One reason may be that Jeremiah was trying to encourage the people that were in captivity in Babylon.

You see, they all knew the things that came upon Jeremiah. In fact, some of them may have been involved with mocking him, beating him up and throwing him in prison. And Jeremiah is showing them that God saw him through it all and that same God will see them through the difficult times they are in. One day He will bring His people home. God will get them through it is what Jeremiah is encouraging them with. And that is exactly what God did, He fulfilled the promise He made through Jeremiah that the captivity would only last 70 years and that is all it lasted.

2. Get the picture here as Jeremiah is stuck in this muddy pit, the people were throwing rocks down upon him. It may have been raining and this cistern, as it was collecting water, the water was falling down upon Jeremiah's head. What will he do? Let's read on and see.

VERSES 55-60

1. Jeremiah is crying out to God for help as he is in this miry pit, sinking in the mud. And the Lord answered the cry of Jeremiah and delivered him from this pit.

We are told of this in Jeremiah 38:7-13, **“Now Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs, who was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon. When the king was sitting at the Gate of Benjamin, Ebed-Melech went out of the king's house and spoke to the king, saying: ‘My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon, and he is likely to die from hunger in the place where he is. For there is no more bread in the city.’ Then the king commanded Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, ‘Take from here thirty men with you, and lift Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he dies.’ So Ebed-Melech took the men with him and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took from there old clothes and old rags, and let them down by ropes into the dungeon to Jeremiah. Then Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, ‘Please put these old clothes and rags under your armpits, under the ropes.’ And Jeremiah did so. So they pulled Jeremiah up with ropes and lifted him out of the dungeon. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.”**

God did deliver him but talk about your tough ministry. The people Jeremiah was interceding for all wanted him dead!

VERSES 61-63

1. They mocked Jeremiah and the words he spoke. Day in and day out and this was going on for 40 years! Can you imagine how that can wear a person down and I think we see Jeremiah face that from time-to-time! But he always gets refocused on the Lord which lifts his spirits because to focus on the Lord you have to look up!

VERSES 64-66

1. As Jeremiah reflects about his situation, remember what he went through down in that pit and I think you can understand why he was calling for God's justice to be poured out on these people. He had enough of their rebellion and he wants God to wipe them out.

This seems kind of strange when you think about it because Jeremiah is known as the Weeping Prophet! You clearly see in the book of Lamentations that broken heart of Jeremiah over what he sees and yet, when he was in the midst of persecution, when the enemy was troubling him he was calling for their destruction. And now, as he sees the destruction all around him, which he was not responsible for, he is sorry he said those things, he is sorry he even felt that way.

I guess we can do the same thing. We can allow our frustration, our anger, our bitterness, and-so-on cause us to say things to people we love, things that are wrong, even vengeful. The tongue, being such a small member of the body, can cause so much trouble. It can set a forest ablaze by what comes out. Paul, in Ephesians 4:26-27 admonishes us by saying, **“Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.”**

God wants us to right the wrongs we have done to others, if we can. He does not want that anger to grow because if we do allow it, it will finally explode and cause much destruction. And the reality is, it doesn't really matter who is right and who is wrong. You need to take that step and heal those wounds. I believe that is what Jeremiah was doing here, and it is what the Lord asks us to do.

2. In a book that is filled with Lamentations, we have seen how gracious and merciful God is. He is our hope and thus, we need to keep our eyes upon Him and not lose the perspective of the situation. And as I have said, it is easy to lose sight of God being in control when we do take our eyes off of Him.

That is the problem for us and I think the more we learn about the Lord, we learn how much He loves us, we can then apply those truths to our lives and rest in Him. It is like falling backwards into someone's arms. You are not going to trust that person unless you know them, unless you have seen their faithfulness in your life already!

The same is true with the Lord. We know about Him, we have read about Him and now it is time to apply those principles, those truths to our lives and walk by faith! You have to put feet and legs to your faith and walk!

Make no mistake about it, He is in control and His plans and His purposes will come to pass. It is as Jeremiah said, **“This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘Therefore I hope in Him!’ The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly For the salvation of the Lord.”** Lamentations 3:21-26. May we not lose sight of that!