

Lamentations 3:21-26

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- [0 : 00] I'd like us now to go back to the reading that we have in the Old Testament, the book of Lamentations, chapter 3, and looking there from verse 21 as far as verse 26.
- I think to many quite a well-known passage of scripture. Excuse me. Lamentations, chapter 3, verse 21.
- Yet this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope. Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.
- They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, the Lord is my portion, therefore I will wait for him.
- The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him. It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.
- [1 : 23] I mentioned in my prayer that this passage was written depicting a very desperate situation that the people found themselves in, in the time of Jeremiah the prophet.
- But in spite of what we read in the majority of this book of Lamentations, it is rightly called Lamentations, there is hope.
- Hope for a despairing world. And that is true today, just as it was then.
- And I think we do live in a despairing world. Quite a number of years ago, my wife and I visited Israel, and visited the Yad Vashem Memorial to the Jews who were lost in the Holocaust during the last great war.
- A very stark place, a very moving place, desperately, desperately sad. I'm sure many of you are familiar with the pictures that we often see of drought conditions in parts of Africa, even at the present time.
- [3 : 13] And in our own experience, we've lived through such a drought when you see the animals wasting away and then dropping dead, often by the roadside.
- It's a terrible thing. Just recently in the newspapers, we had quite a moving picture of two of the last survivors of the First World War.
- Very old men, one of them 114 years old. survivors of a terrible experience.
- We're familiar with the war memorials scattered throughout our country. Some of them nowadays in very isolated places.
- And you wonder, when you see the long list of names, how there ever could have been so many people living in what today is a completely depopulated area.
- [4 : 32] And of course, we're all familiar with tales of terrorism, of abuse, and so on.
- We're citizens of a very broken world. world in its brokenness is peopled, again as I mentioned in the prayer, people who are in deep despair.
- they don't know if it'll ever get any better for them. It may seem rather cynical to many people to come to church and to actually praise the Creator God who made this world in which we live when it is covered with so much sadness.

But, as we find in the book from which our text is taken today, while it was in a terrible situation, at least the part of the world in which the book was written was in a terrible situation.

And the book is, as I mentioned, aptly named Lamentations because each of its chapter is a lament written in the style of such laments of the ancient world crafted in a way that in language and in style each chapter is an acrostic beginning with each letter of the alphabet and describing in poetic images which were used to describe the fall and the overthrow of important cities and places and powers in that particular time, describing horrific events and in it all seeking reasons why such things happened.

[7 : 07] But they happened then as they happen now because people disregarded God in that age and what came upon them came upon them because he said it would and so much of our suffering in the world happens because we disobey God and go out of his way.

the words that are taken for our text form a highlight in the book.

The writer was immersed in the utter desolation which he saw around him as far as his people were concerned and if the writer was as we believe Jeremiah the prophet he so often told them told them with tears what God had foretold would happen if they disobeyed him yet they did disobey him and the calamity that befell Jeremiah's beloved Jerusalem when it lay in ruins came as a result of God's judgment but as Jeremiah recorded these words he comes as it were out to get a breath of fresh air and as he lifted up his face towards the sun so to speak he lifted up his eyes to heaven to God in heaven and the light and the hope and the wonder of all that God himself is flooded all over him putting everything even the desolation around him putting everything into its true perspective perspective because as we've said what had happened happened because God said it would happen when the people persistently lived in a way that was dishonouring to him in sinful disobedience we read away back in the time of

Moses how God warned the people then that if they followed his way and he had marvelously provided for them as we know if they would follow his commands he would set them above the nations but if they did not carefully follow his commands and ways they would be cursed in the city and in the country they would be destroyed and come to sudden ruin such would be the fruit God said of turning away from him we read that in Deuteronomy chapter 28 and there's a very striking picture in the book of the prophet

Ezekiel where in a vision Ezekiel saw the temple of God in Jerusalem and Ezekiel who was in Babylon who had hoped to be a priest in the temple but could not because he was a prisoner in Babylon he loved to have visions of the temple but this time the vision brought him terrible sadness because in the vision he saw the light of God's presence in the temple going out from temple and it left the city God left it alone and that was a terrible thing that people left to themselves without

[12 : 01] God and that's when hope goes to hope but here in lamentations although the need of the city the plight of the city at that time was real enough that was not the end of the story for God was still there God is who he is the God of hope there's always hope with God and it is to that hope that our text refers God is the God of hope and more than that he's the God of love and the God of faithfulness and as we'll see he's also the

God of salvation and that is all spelled out for us in these verses and I think it's quite extraordinary to find these character qualities of God hope and love and faithfulness and salvation to find these qualities of God spoken of so very very beautifully bang in the middle of this book describing for us the despair and the destruction and the horror of the suffering of these people but I think it is just because of the surrounding gloom that God wants us to see the brightness of who he himself really is and to give us hope in the midst of whatever suffering or despair or whatever problems we may have to know that he is the

God of grace and grace is a wonderfully significant word in this passage because as I mentioned the suffering came about because of the people's own sin but God was not going to continue dealing with them as they deserved but in grace but let's for a moment concentrate on this word hope God is the God of hope he gives hope and he himself is the reason for hope because of the character that he possesses when we often use the word hope we use adjectives like faint or something like that feeble hope trembling desperate hope sometimes vain hope and with good reason because if we're only trusting in ourselves or our abilities to deal with the deepest problems of life we're not going to make it but when you bring

God into the picture there is always hope and this is true whether we're dealing with a spiritual problem or with a physical problem or with a situational problem we may find ourselves in or a relational problem God cares for us in all our circumstances so in him we truly can have a positive and expectant attitude towards our future and the reason is that our hope is grounded in God and in his past work for us in Jesus Christ and in his promises which are founded and built upon

Christ so God is our hope I don't know the circumstances that you're in this morning but I can honestly say to you that God is the one you need and who will meet that need Jeremiah saw this very clearly when in his book the book of his prophecy he calls God on more than one occasion oh thou who art the hope of Israel the hope of Israel a wonderful name and he was surely right in that look at our text says here

[17 : 48] I call this to mind says the prophet and therefore I have in hope what does he call to mind because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed for his compassions never fail they are new every morning great is your faithfulness so remember for whatever you may be passing through today when you commit yourself to the Lord there is hope there is a way through and there is someone with you who will go through with you and not only is there hope described for us here but there is also love in the midst of all that suffering and darkness in the midst of all the retribution that was being poured out on a sinful people the love of God shines through the new testament tells us

God is love it's his very nature and here we find it described too because of the Lord's great love the original has that in the plural God's great loves it's emphasizing his love just as you find in the same verse his compassions the word is in the plural too giving emphasis to this aspect of God's character and in the context of the suffering of the people at that time it's quite a remarkable testimony that the prophet gave that God loves them in spite of all they've done against him in spite of the way that they've turned their backs on him yet God in covenant grace and mercy loves the people and God is love today sometimes people in this dark world in which we're living feel very unloved you should never feel that for God loves us he so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but should have everlasting life it's because of that great love for the kind of world in which we live and of which we're a part it's because of that great love that as the prophet says here we're not consumed we're not utterly destroyed there's an emphasis in order that we might take to ourselves the wonder of God's love of course there is judgment upon sin but there is grace which comes undeserved but it is grace and it comes to us from the heart of God's love and so do you know anything of the love of God today

I remember the words of one suffering Christian in Indonesia in East Timor in Indonesia where there was terrible outburst of persecution against Christians and one of the Christian leaders there Francisco Miranda Bronco said we can't feel anger or angry we can't feel angry and upset at God when we suffer because behind all the suffering he has a beautiful surprise for us and the surprise we find in the midst of our suffering is just this fact that the love of God channeled to us in Jesus

Christ comes when perhaps we least expect it but it comes to flood our souls and to assure us that he cares for us it is because of his great love we're not consumed for his compassions never fail hope and love and faithfulness God is the faithful God his compassions never fail for we read here in verse 23 they are new every morning great is your faithfulness that is also a wonderful testimony coming out of the situation in which the book was written the people had been persistently unfaithful but God and his word are always the same faithful sure in judgment yes but also in grace his love and compassion were new every morning the hymn writer put it very well in this way great is thy faithfulness

O God my father there is no shadow of turning with thee thou changes not thy compassions they fail not as thou has been thou forever will be pardon for sin and peace that endureth thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow blessings all mine with ten thousand beside great is thy faithfulness great is thy faithfulness morning by morning you mercies I see all I have needed thy hand have provided great is thy faithfulness Lord and to me hope love faithfulness and salvation salvation in verses 24 to 26 we read this

[26 : 00] I say to myself the Lord is my portion therefore I will wait for him the Lord is good to those whose hope is in him to the one who seeks him it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord I think it's interesting to notice that when the writer speaks here therefore I will wait for him that is for the Lord the words in the original are the same as those in verse 21 where he says yet this I call to mind and therefore I will hope hope wait in the

Lord the same words there's always hope for those who wait upon the Lord for salvation and these verses 25 and 26 especially are wonderfully encouraging verses and they're meant to be they were meant to be for the people in the day in which the book was written and they're meant to be for us too the pain and the despair were real enough in Jeremiah's day they had brought it upon themselves and he gave them this message it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord there is hope in that way and for us as well I don't know as I said what your condition is today where you are with regard to God and Jesus

Christ what problems you may have in your life but God comes to us whoever we are wherever we are at and he comes in saving grace and these words are wonderfully encouraging words because they are words which direct us to God himself when a person is at the end of his tether so to speak there God comes to tell us that he will take over our life and when God takes over your life when his compassions and his love come into your soul when you cry out to him for the help that you need and he comes to you then you really then and only then start to live the words of the psalmist are so familiar to many of us

I waited for the Lord my God and patiently did bear and then he goes on to say at length to me he did incline my voice and cry to hear he is the saving God and that is why Jesus came into our world to save sinners who were lost and that is why the Holy Spirit has been left in our world to save the lost by bringing them to Christ and then to encourage them to go on and to walk through life with him so today if you cannot yet truly say that by God's grace you have been saved or are being saved then I would urge you really to wait upon the

Lord hope in him trust him in the sing psalms version of psalm number 62 at verse 5 we read this find rest my soul in God alone in him my hope is ever sure my safety fortress sheltering rock in him alone I am secure you can't put it more plainly than that and I would urge you to seek the Lord and to know the reality of what Jeremiah is telling us in these verses here whatever the outward circumstances may be or the inner turmoil may be

[31 : 45] God comes to us in love compassion in faithfulness in salvation he's the only one in whom we find hope and I trust that you will seek him for yourselves and find him even today Amen let us pray together our dear Lord we thank you for your word to us and we pray that you would apply that word to the heart and mind of each person here today who has heard it that we may be people of hope because we trust in you people who know the love and the grace of a faithful

God people who are saved by the power of Christ enable us Lord to rejoice in that salvation and to bear testimony to it in the way that we live and all for Jesus sake Amen I will sing in closing in the sing psalms version of psalm number 38 psalm 38 and we'll sing from verse 15 to the end of the psalm to the tune Rockingham at psalm number 38 on page number 48 of the psalm book at verse number 15 I wait for you O Lord my God and you O Lord will answer me

I pray to you if my foot slips let them not gloat exultantly indeed I'm about to fall my pain is ever deep within I must confess iniquity and I am troubled by my sin my foes are vigorous and strong and many hate me wrongfully my good and evil with evil they repay when I seek good they slander me O Lord do not abandon me do not be far from me my God come quickly to deliver me because you are my saviour Lord verses 15 to the end of psalm 38 the tune is rocking on and now may grace mercy and peace from God the Father Son and Holy Spirit rest on and abide with us and with all whom we love this day and forevermore

Amen Amen to theaken of God because of your Freiheit are on you know to me to the