



II. THE MERCIES OF GOD (Lamentations 3:21-36)

A. The Renewal of Hope (Lamentations 3:21-23)

1. The introduction of hope (Lamentations 3:21)
 - a. The previous absence of hope (Lamentations 3:18)
 - (1) The people are in captivity to Babylon.
 - (2) The children are starving to death in the streets. Newborns, mostly premature babies, are being eaten by the mothers.
 - (3) Priests and prophets are being slain in the sanctuary.
 - (4) The prophets have seen and prophesied false burdens for the people.
 - (5) The neighbouring nations are mocking both God and His people.
 - b. The source of renewed hope
 - (1) Not a change in circumstances; everything mentioned above remained the same.
 - (2) But a change in thinking
 - a) When we think upon ourselves, we lose hope.
 - b) When we think upon our circumstances, we lose hope.
 - c) When we think upon others, we lose hope.
 - d) When we think of the LORD, we have no choice but to increase hope (see Isaiah 26:3).
2. The work of God's mercies (Lamentations 3:22)
 - a. Judah was not consumed.
 - (1) Things were not as they had wished.
 - (2) But they were survivors and would continue to be so.
 - (3) God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David kept Judah from being consumed.
 - b. Because of the unfailing compassions
 - (1) The modern concept of *compassion* is "a deep awareness of and sympathy for another's suffering."
 - (2) The biblical definition is much deeper than this. Consider the meaning of the word *passion* as found in Acts 1:3.
 - (3) Biblical compassion is not just an awareness of someone else's sufferings.
 - (4) This can be seen by a simple breakdown of the word *compassion*. *Com* means "with," while *passion* means "suffering."
 - c. Based upon God's foundational mercies
 - (1) The Lord's mercies keep us from being consumed, because His compassions do not fail (Lamentations 3:22).
 - (2) The Lord's compassion is according to the multitude of His mercies (Lamentations 3:32).
3. The reminder of God's goodness (Lamentations 3:22-23)
 - a. The specific praise—God's mercies and compassions
 - b. The generic praise—"great is thy faithfulness."



B. The Benefit for Man (Lamentations 3:24-32)

1. The LORD's goodness to the seeker (Lamentations 3:24-25)
 - a. The choice of one's soul (Lamentations 3:24)
 - (1) The choice—"The LORD is my portion."
 - a) This phraseology is distant from the mind of the average person living today.
 - b) To those living in the past, however, it was a declaration that touched the very core of one's culture.
 - c) The word *portion* is found exactly 100 times in ninety-four verses. The emphasis in scripture can be traced through verses like Genesis 31:14; Joshua 17:14; Joshua 19:9; Job 20:29). In fact, the historical meaning of the word *portion* was an allotted part or share.
 - d) The beginnings of the nation of Israel were joyful. They were removed from Egypt with a guarantee to be planted in a land that flowed with milk and honey. When they were planted in the land, God ensured that each tribe would have a lot or inheritance in the land. This lot or inheritance was often identified as their portion.
 - e) At this point in history, the northern kingdom of Israel had been removed from their portion, lot, or inheritance. Many from the southern kingdom of Judah had likewise been physically removed from their portion.
 - f) With little stake in a piece of physical property and nothing to write home about concerning a physical inheritance at this time in history, the prophet plainly and soberly declared that the portion of his inheritance was not a piece of land marked by landmarks, but a person—the LORD.
 - g) Historically, this had been said of Levi who had no physical inheritance (Joshua 13:33) and now it was said of Judah as a whole. Historically, David had also come to understand the spiritual beauty of this truth in his own life (Psalm 16:5; Psalm 142:5).
 - (2) The source of the choice—"saith my soul"
 - a) This was not a whimsical decision.
 - b) It was a decision from the decision maker—the soul.
 - (3) The benefit of the choice—"therefore will I hope in him."
 - a) It mattered not that our land had been conquered.
 - b) The LORD could be the portion for those
 - i) In captivity spread throughout Assyria
 - ii) In captivity in Babylon
 - iii) And those who remained in the land of promise
 - c) This was said of those who had lost all the good earth had once offered them, but Babylon could not take God away.
 - d) No wonder the prophet and the nation found hope in this truth.



- b. The expression of the benefit of the choice (Lamentations 3:25)
- (1) The desired outcome—"The LORD is good unto them."
 - a) The goodness of God serves as a means of general revelation (Matthew 5:45; Luke 6:35; Acts 14:17; Romans 2:4).
 - b) Goodness is part of the name by which God makes Himself known (Exodus 34:6).
 - c) It could be argued that the highest level of God's glory is to be seen in the attributes of His goodness.
 - i) God is not good because He is great but He is great because He is good.
 - ii) Of the attributes of God's goodness, three seem to be central to all the others: holiness, truth, and love.
 - (a) Holiness: righteousness, justice, and beauty
 - (b) Truth: wisdom and faithfulness
 - (c) Love: mercy and grace
 - (d) Note: Of the three central attributes of God's goodness, His holiness seems to be the central attribute of God.
 - d) In the end, there is a sense in which God is good to all. This sense is plainly declared by the scripture:
 - i) "The LORD is good to all" (Psalm 145:9).
 - ii) "Thou art good, and doest good" (Psalm 119:68).
 - iii) "[H]e maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).
 - e) However, there is another sense in which God's goodness is accessed in the lives of those who seek for it and call for it.
 - i) The Lord gave man statutes that if obeyed they would work for man's good (Deuteronomy 6:24).
 - ii) The Lord who rejoices to do good will destroy if need be (Deuteronomy 28:63).
 - iii) Good and evil are choices set before men (Deuteronomy 30:15).
 - iv) God's goodness comes with requirements.
 - (a) Seeking Him (Ezra 8:22; Psalm 34:10)
 - (b) Fearing Him (Psalm 31:19)
 - (c) Cleanness of heart (Psalm 73:1)
 - (d) Walking uprightly (Psalm 84:11; Psalm 125:4; Micah 2:7)
 - (e) Calling upon God (Psalm 86:5)
 - (f) Loving God (Romans 8:28)
 - f) God is good to all, but His goodness is only applied to those who access it. This matches salvation (John 10:11).
 - (2) The requirements
 - a) Them that wait for Him
 - b) To the soul that seeketh Him