

God's Never-ending Mercies

Lamentations 3:22—33

Introduction

(Read **Lamentations 3:22—23**) To read about God's mercies in Scripture isn't surprising. But to read this passage in the middle of **Lamentations** gives us something to think about. These words are especially relevant for us today, as popular preachers proclaim prosperity and living the "Good Life," psychologists push guilt-free living, and politicians paint a rosy picture with soundbites. This is all about having faith in God and trusting in His mercies in the middle of suffering, the reality of life.

Lamentations: Background and Description

Lamentations is a book of five poems written by the prophet Jeremiah after he saw Jerusalem destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. **Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 5**, and the first and last parts of **3** are all about destruction, suffering, and grief. These twelve verses in the middle of the book are the only ones offering hope. Since so few Christians read, let alone study, **Lamentations**, these are the only ones we are aware of, and that through hymns like **Great Is Thy Faithfulness**, we sang earlier.

The Suffering Is Real

But if that is our focus, we miss the point of the book. Make no mistake, the suffering is real. Jerusalem has been destroyed, with its walls and temple; many have starved to death during the siege; mothers have boiled and eaten their children; priests, prophets, and kings have been killed; the young and healthy have been taken away in chains; and those who they thought were allies merely scoff at them. We dare not minimize the suffering in our life. It is real. And it is there we see God's mercies. The land being reduced to sand by the ocean at the shore does not minimize the continent. Neither does the ocean being reduced to small waves on the shore minimize its depth and breadth. Suffering and God's mercies are both very real.

Mercy and Mercies

Notice, we're using the term *mercies* and not *mercy*. Mercy is an attribute of God, while mercies are the tangible ways He shows that attribute. We cannot see His mercy, but we do see and experience His mercies.

Faith, a Window to Hope

God's mercies give us hope. All who suffer experience His mercies. So, why do many live without hope? Faith is the window to hope. The only way to see hope in God's mercies is with the eyes of faith. But there is more to it than that.

Memory, a Mental Discipline

But I call this to mind, and therefore I have hope (v. 21). This kind of memory is a mental discipline in the face of emotional distress. Recalling His mercies in the past, we have hope that we will experience them again.

Wait for It

But these mercies do not come quickly and easily (read **v. 25—27**). In the hope of God's mercies, we wait patiently and quietly.

Reasons for Hope

Jeremiah gives us three reasons for this hope:

- God rejects His people as an act of judgment – yes, but not forever (**v. 31**).

Whatever suffering you are experiencing, it will end.

- God does cause grief – yes, but He will have compassion (**v. 32**).

It's not that God vacillates between causing grief and having compassion, He shows His compassion in our grief.

- God does afflict – yes, but not willingly (**v. 33**).

This last thought points us to the Law and Gospel answer to suffering.

Law & Gospel

The Law shows our sin, directs us to the Christ of the cross, and drives us to our knees to confess our sins and beg for forgiveness – think **Confession and Absolution**. Suffering drives us to our knees, and remembering God's mercies, hope for them again – think **Kyrie Eleison**: *Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.* For in our suffering, we have hope in **GOD'S NEVER-ENDING MERCIES**.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
