

## Ceaseless Love

Javina dripped the last bit of water from her kitchen sink. She needed a plumber, not only for her kitchen sink, but also one of her bathroom sinks and the plumbing stack in the basement.

Her house, which was not very old, still needed sizable repairs, like a new roof and some electrical work. Javina intended to rent out her house and do repairs with the extra income. But that had been when she was engaged to Ty, and the two had planned to move into his condo.

Emotionally, she was still reeling from Ty breaking the engagement, and today was the first anniversary of her mother's death. As an only child, Javina had no other sibling to grieve with. She and her mom had been inseparable.

And to top it all off, one of her good friends, Kerri, had ghosted her. Kerri had blocked her calls. Javina didn't know why. She could feel herself sinking into depression and despair, and she couldn't seem to get a foothold.

As she fell into bed for the night, Javina let a whimper come out of her soul. "Lord, help me," she prayed quietly. "This is all too much. I don't know what to do. I'm so hurt."

As she closed her eyes, she was not looking forward to the coming day; but she knew the Lord and His mercy would be there.

- 1.** *As a Christian, what despair has challenged your faith in God the most?*
- 2.** *How did that despair impact your life?*
- 3.** *How did the Lord deliver you from that despair?*

## A Downcast Soul

*Lamentations 3:16-20, KJV*

16 He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes.

17 And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity.

18 And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD:

19 Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.

20 My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

*Lamentations 3:16-20, NIV*

<sup>16</sup>He has broken my teeth with gravel;  
he has trampled me in the dust.

<sup>17</sup>I have been deprived of peace;  
I have forgotten what prosperity is.

<sup>18</sup>So I say, "My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the LORD."

<sup>19</sup>I remember my affliction and my wandering,  
the bitterness and the gall.

<sup>20</sup>I well remember them,  
and my soul is downcast within me.

Although Babylon had destroyed Jerusalem, Jeremiah acknowledged that God Himself was using Babylon to punish the southern kingdom of Judah for its sins and rebellion against Him—just as He had used Assyria more than a century earlier against the northern kingdom of Israel. Judah had watched its sister nation be destroyed, yet had not learned its lessons.

As he had for the previous first two and a half chapters, Jeremiah not only cried over the destruction of Judah but detailed his own personal pain—and again, laid the responsibility upon God: "I became the laughingstock of all my people; they mock me in song all day long. He has filled me with bitter herbs and given me gall to drink" (Lam. 3:14-15). In verse 16, he expanded further: "He has broken my teeth with gravel." Israel's conquerors had literally driven them into the dirt.

Also, whatever food was left to eat was likewise riddled

with dust and gravel. God had indeed left Jeremiah to cower in ashes—with the ashes not only reflecting a state of repentance (Job 42:6; Jonah 3:3-8), but also the literal state of Jerusalem as a devastated city.

Jeremiah then moved from details about his personal condition to details about his general state of mind. The “weeping prophet,” even more than he already had during the many times the leaders of Israel had persecuted him, had “been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is. So I say, ‘My splendor is gone and all that I had hoped from the LORD’” (vss. 17-18). At least while Jeremiah had prophesied against Judah, there was still hope that the nation would repent and that God would restore them, despite what he had suffered at their hands. Now even that hope had been completely removed.

The prophet concluded this part of his lament by again remembering all he had suffered: “I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me” (vss. 19-20). Put simply, Jeremiah was despondent. Everything he had endured, for decades, to warn Judah now appeared to be all for nothing. The hope that the people of Judah had once had in the Lord had disappeared.

**4.** *How did Jeremiah describe what God had done to him and to Jerusalem (vs. 16)?*

**5.** *How did Jeremiah describe his own personal state (vss. 17-18)?*

**6.** *What did Jeremiah remember (vss. 19-20)? How did this affect him?*

## **A Hopeful, Waiting Soul**

*Lamentations 3:21-24, KJV*

21 This I recall to my mind,  
therefore have I hope.

22 It is of the LORD's

*Lamentations 3:21-24, NIV*

<sup>21</sup>Yet this I call to mind  
and therefore I have hope:

<sup>22</sup>Because of the LORD's great

mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

23 They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.

24 The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.

<sup>23</sup>They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

<sup>24</sup>I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."

All seemed truly lost. And yet, despite his obvious despair at the destruction around him, Jeremiah's frame of mind took a sharp turn in verse 21. Something else had finally entered this grim picture: hope—specifically, hope in the only One who could provide hope in this seemingly hopeless situation. Therefore, instead of focusing on "my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall" as he had in verse 19, Jeremiah now declared, "This I call to mind and therefore I have hope"—hope in a truth that was even greater than the devastation of Jerusalem, and in a power greater than any leader or army.

The truth Jeremiah now "call[ed] to mind" was this: "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" (vss. 22-23). Judah had been thoroughly beaten down, but had not been "consumed." Outward circumstances would not have the final say. There was still a remnant of those who honored God, and therefore there was still hope. Jeremiah, and ultimately Judah itself, would survive even this intense suffering. God still loved them; while each day brought hardship and discipline, it also brought a fresh appearance of His mercy, unfailing compassion, and great faithfulness. As long as God was present, Jeremiah asserted, all could never be entirely lost.

With these truths firmly reestablished in his mind, Jeremiah realigned his focus and resolve: "I say to myself, 'The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him'"

(vs. 24). All Judah had left was the Lord—and the Lord, as always, was enough. The leaders of Judah had failed to deliver the nation because they and the people had chosen to disobey their true deliverer. Nonetheless, God would be faithful to them, even though they had been faithless toward Him (2 Tim. 2:13). While God had removed His protection from Judah and allowed it to suffer fully for its sins and rebellion, He had not abandoned them fully. His presence, and His compassion, were still with them. Therefore Jeremiah, and the faithful ones left in Judah, would “wait for him.”

Bible commentator Warren Wiersbe was once given a short rhyme that he said became a source of personal encouragement:



*Rembrandt's painting of Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem (1630) shows the despair of the prophet, while in the left background people are fleeing the burning city.*

*Photo: Dennis Jarvis*

encouragement:

“Look at yourself and you’ll be depressed.

Look at circumstances and you’ll be distressed.

Look at the Lord and you’ll be blessed!”

Our circumstances change, and so do our feelings about them, but God is always good, loving, merciful, and kind, and He never changes.”

**7. What changed in Jeremiah's words and state of mind, starting in verse 21?**

**8. What did Jeremiah “call to mind” about the Lord (vss. 22–23)?**

**9. What did Jeremiah declare in response to God's faithfulness?**

## Clinging to God

When the prophet Jeremiah saw the ruins of the holy city of Jerusalem, he clung to the Lord. When he saw God's people slain and cast into bondage, he clung to the Lord. When he himself was scorned and mistreated, he still clung to the Lord his God. Truly, Jeremiah is an exceptional model for each believer in Christ.

Adversity comes to all of us. As surely as there is evil in the world, our faith in Christ will be challenged. It may be subtle and unexpected, such as someone sideswiping us while we are driving; or it may be catastrophic, such as the prolonged death of a loved one. No matter the situation or the circumstances, we must cling to God's love and faithfulness if God's promises to us will ever have any enduring meaning for us.

When Joshua gave his farewell speech to the leaders of Israel, he told them to "hold fast to the LORD your God" (Josh. 23:8). When the psalmist needed the Lord, he said, "I cling to you; your right hand upholds me" (Ps. 63:8).

Why did Joshua exhort God's people to cling to God, and why did the psalmist declare his clinging to God? Both knew the character of the Lord—that He is a merciful and loving God, that He is faithful to His promises, that He is steady and unchanging and always able to uphold us.

Therefore, take your despair and all your other burdens to the Lord and cling to Him, for He can handle it: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest," Jesus says to each one of us. "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

**10.** *How do you present your despair to the Lord?*

**11.** *How does the Lord handle your despair?*

**12.** *Why is clinging to the Lord vital in your walk with Jesus?*

## Confession and Gratitude

Jeremiah lamented the destruction of Jerusalem and the devastation of God's people. Although he understood that the rebellion of the people was responsible for God's judgment, he was also confident in God's loving compassion. So, he presented his despair to the Lord, just as we should do, being confident that He is always faithful and able to handle our own personal despair.

► *Write a prayer letter to Jesus. Thank Him for always being not only present to listen to your problems but also ready to bear them for you. Next, give to Him whatever despair you're experiencing or might be at your doorstep. Finally, praise Him for His love for and His mercy toward you.*

### KEY VERSES

**This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.**  
—Lamentations 3:21-22, KJV

**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.**  
— Lamentations 3:21-22, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

#### Week of July 8 through July 14

**(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)**

- Mon.** 2 Corinthians 2:12-17—The Fragrance of Knowing God.
- Tues.** Psalm 107:1-9—The Testimony of the Redeemed.
- Wed.** Psalm 107:10-22—Sing of God's Deeds with Joy.
- Thurs.** Colossians 1:3-12—Hope Laid Up in Heaven.
- Fri.** Ephesians 3:1-13—Proclaim Christ's Boundless Riches.
- Sat.** Psalm 71:1-11—Refuge in the Lord.
- Sun.** Psalm 71:12-21—Hope and Praise Continually.