

But Though HE Cause Grief

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Bible Text: Lamentations 3:32

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If you turn to our text this morning, I'll read that text and I'll ask the Lord's blessing on it. I have to apologize for the voice this morning. As you know, I've been under the weather for a few days and just thankful the Lord has given me a voice and pray that he carries us through this message. Our text this morning comes from Lamentations 3:32

"But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies."

Let us pray.

Dear heavenly Father and most gracious and holy Lord, how excellent is thy name. O Lord, I thank thee that thou art Lord, sovereign over all things, O Lord. I pray, Lord, that as you bring us through this hour, that thou would you bring us away from the sickness, from the afflictions, from the things that are traveling in our mind, the have-to's, the want-to-do's, the must-do's. O Lord, may you bring us to thy feet this morning. Prepare us. Prepare our hearts. Humble us before thee this hour and the hour to come and, Lord, may you prepare our hearts with thy grace, with thy mercy, to receive that which thou has ordained before the foundation of the world, the Gospel for thy people. O Lord, may you speak it to our souls in this hour and, Lord, may you be pleased and glorified and may your name be exalted above all every other name, for it is worthy. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Our text, once again, Lamentations 3:32, "But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." I want to direct this sermon today and I want to direct it to the exercised souls in the room, those who the Lord has graciously brought through 2014 and as he brought them to the cusp of 2015 and as the Lord has worked tremendously in the lives of his people, he brings us to sit at his feet, to anticipate, to look unto him for what the next day holds. I know that it is customary in this land, it is customary in many places across the world to look at a new year, to be giddy about it, to be so happy about it and say, "Well, all has passed away and all things are new," but if all things are not new in Christ, you have nothing new. The Lord Jesus Christ is the life of his people. He brings them to see that everything consists in him.

He brings them to sit at his feet to show them that he brings everything into their life and as I read this text this morning, maybe some of you out there were a little concerned with it. Maybe we stumble over those words at the beginning "but though he cause grief." Maybe that causes some of you out there to say, "Well, I've never looked at it that way. I've always thought the devil had his dominion, he had his reigning and the devil, of course, made me do it for the devil brought calamity." Maybe those are the thoughts of your mind or the innermost thoughts of your heart. But as I address this message to the pilgrims on this earth who have experienced the Lord in their soul, who know that he is the first cause of all things, the afflictions that we go through, it is by our Lord's hand. The trials that we are brought to, it is by our Lord's hand. The events that unfold in our lives, it is by our Lord's hand and we don't shy away from a passage like this "but though he cause grief." Though he cause grief. He is the great Causer of all events.

I love this passage, this verse, because of the 2 little words "though" and "yet." They connect each other. Though the Lord is sovereign in the ways that he does and the strangeness from our perspective. There is a lot of strangeness to the Providence of God. It makes us sit and question at times, "Why is the Lord doing what he's doing?" But then there's the "yet." They yet always explains the faithfulness of our Lord. He brings us grief to show us his mercy. He brings us grief to show us his love. But why is there grief? Why is there grief? And that's what we want to look at today. He brings us to see that he is gracious in all of his dealings with his children and he's righteous in all of his judgments.

So as I said, we'll look at Lamentations 3:32 today as our text, "But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." This text divides 3 ways. It divides in the first part "but though he cause grief." I want to speak about the strangeness and the sovereignty. The second part I want to speak about is the depth of his love, "yet will he have compassion." And the third part, his will and purpose, "according to the multitude of his mercies."

But before we go there, my prayer now, my solemn prayer, my hopeful prayer, my crying out to the Lord now is that he takes us in our souls by the blessed third person and he calls us now to see why the prophet wrote what he did. The prophet, of course, is Jeremiah. Jeremiah wrote this book, Lamentations, because his soul was in great sorrow. He had grief. That's what it means. "Lamentation" means "experience of sorrow." But what was he sorrowing over? He was sorrowing over the sins of Israel. He was sorrowing over the Lord bringing judgment to them and carrying them away for 70 years in exile because of their sins against him. That's what the beauty of today's passage is: Jeremiah as the prophet here, he's not looking out at the people, the Lord has made him look within. And for the child of God, the true child of God, that's where it always begins: between his Lord and his soul. This is experiential. And were going to show you, I pray, that the Lord opens up this passage, this chapter, how we got to verse 32. An entire part of this chapter, the first part, is singly, between Jeremiah and the Lord. It's about him. It's about what the Lord has shown him and then the whole rest of the chapter is about the sins of the people as a nation as a whole, the church if you will. But today, today, I pray that the focus at the beginning of this message is between you and the Lord. As you sit in that seat this morning, that the Lord shows you, is this how he operates in your life? Can

you identify with the prophet? Can you see that this is what the Lord as you trace out his work in your soul, has it gone like this? Has it gone something like this?

So today we back up to the beginning of Lamentations, chapter 3, and I'm going to pick a few verses to show you the progression of how we get up to 32. Let's start in verses 2 and 3, "He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light." Has your soul, has your exercised soul been brought to the feet of your Lord to see that it is he who brings the light and brings the darkness into your life? Is that something that blows you away? Are you one of those easy believers? Those ones that aren't exercised in their soul at all? This whole passage that we talk about today, it's such a great picture of true conversion, of how the Lord brings us to see and sorrow over sin and to grieve over sin. He causes grief and it's needful for our souls to be exercised and our souls, to grieve over sin.

I too, I too, as I sat there on January 1st, as I sat there and in my mind, I thought about this last year and I thought about how good the Lord has been to me. And then I started examining myself and as I think about how good the Lord is, I always think about how far short I fall to him. How I don't give him the time. How I don't pray enough. How I wrestle with the world. How I wrestle with sin. How I lose to the world. How I lose to sin. How I lose to Satan. How I lose to my old nature. And that troubles me. And my old nature wants to rise up and say, "I'll be better. I'll resolve today. It will be a new year. It will be a new way in my life. I'll read more. I'll study the Scriptures more. I'll pray more." And I fall right into the trap of all of religion out there today who do not have a sovereign Lord who has performed all things for them. And the Lord must bring you to the end of yourself: your self-will, your self-conforming, your self-desires, your self-improvements because you will never reform your old nature. Never. And you can't touch your new nature because it's in Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit in this Triune Lord is the only power, is the only one who can lift you out of yourself. Who can lift me out of myself to sit at his feet to be instructed in a humble place at his feet and to see that he has led me and he has brought me into darkness.

It is by his loving hand, that's the point of this message. The world would look at a message like this and say, "Oh God is cruel." He's not cruel. He is a loving Lord to his people and if we are left to ourselves, we will explore the depths of our depravity and we will fall into sin and we will sin and sin and sin some more. We stand in dire need of our Lord to show us what it is that darkness is, to reveal to us that he is light and that he is the only light.

"He hath led me and brought me into darkness but not into light." It's the Lord sovereignty in the afflictions that we suffer. He has brought this dark moment into our life but why? Why? We all want to run and say, "Well Lord, it's because you're merciful," and it's true, he is merciful in love and that is what this message is about. But he is so faithful to reveal how we fall short to the glory of him, how much we need him every hour, how much we need him every moment.

"He hath led me, and brought me into darkness." Can you identify with the prophet? Can you? Can you sit there today as you're examined in your soul and say, "Yes, my Lord has brought me there to reveal his light because he doesn't leave me there"?

"He hath led me, and brought me into darkness." He has brought me into these afflictions. He has brought me into this hard path in life. He has brought me into this single path. He has brought me into the ridicule of this world and he has done it to reveal his light and his mercy. But we haven't gotten there yet. He hasn't been brought there yet.

"He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light. Surely against me is he turned." Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever experienced in your soul of souls that the Lord has turned his hand against you? That maybe you're not God's child? He has turned against you,

"He turneth his hand against me all the day." And this is what the Lord brings you to the end. This is the stripping room that Berridge wrote about. To strip us of all creature comforts, of all relying on the creature, to be led out of ourselves. That's my question for the end of 14, for the beginning of 15: has the Lord ever done this in your soul? Has he ever brought you where he's brought this prophet? It's a sickness. It's a sickness which is in dire need of the physician, the balm of Gilead, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Samaritan, to take us up and put us upon his back and shoulders. His beast, to pour the oil in our wounds. To lift us away from self. Self is a killer. Self is undefeated. You will never overcome self. Only Christ can. Only Christ does. And only Christ is faithful to do it.

"Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day." Look at verse 7, "He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy." Now, I want you to understand our text today, verse 32, "But though *he* cause grief, yet *he* will have compassion according to *his* mercies." It's all of him. I pray the Lord shows you today if your life is hid in Christ Jesus, that it's all of him. That's the debt you owe. All of him.

"He hath set me in dark places," that's 6. "He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy." He has. The great Lord. The great Lord of our souls. The Bishop of our souls. All of us have gone astray but we are led back by this great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, the Lord Jesus Christ.

"He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy." Look at verse 18, "And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD." Do you hear that? That's the stripping room. That's where the Lord has brought you to the end of yourself. He has stripped you of all your comforts, all your have-to's, all your gotta-dos.

"And I said, My strength and my hope is perished." My hope in myself is perished. My hope in my performing is perished. My hope in my creature doings is perished. Look at 19, "Remembering mine affliction and my misery." I was reading a blessed book I got for Christmas. It was letters of Bradbury and it was of his early ministry at at Haydock and

one of the things that he said and I truly believe that I read in one of his sermons was that mercy never comes without misery. Understand that. The Lord reveals your misery to reveal his mercy. Think about all the times that we say that the Lord is merciful. I said it when I got up here, "It's by the Lord's mercy I'm here this morning. It's by the Lord's mercy I have a voice to speak, the strength to stand up here." I've had great misery the last few days. And that's the way it is in our soul. We have to experience the darkness to experience the light. We have to experience what it is without him to experience what life is in him. That's what I ask you today: are you in the number with the vast multitudes running to the wide gate? That the Lord is just the Lord of their life and they have no struggle over sin and have no grief over sin because he has not caused grief in their life. Everything is just tiptoe through the tulips. "Oh, the Lord is so good." But have they experience the Lord in their soul? Have you? Have I?

"Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall." Misery. Without that misery, the Lord's mercy will never be seen.

So here we have it, the prophet being brought to the end of himself and then the blessed words that we read a lot up here. I do. I love these words starting in 21. It's almost like the prodigal who was standing there in the midst of the mire and about to eat what the pigs were having and then all of a sudden he came to himself. How does that happen? How does that happen? We know how it happens: the Lord comes to your soul. It's the light coming in the dark moment. It's the Lord's faithfulness to shine through at that moment. He doesn't leave us destitute. He does not leave us without hope.

"This I recall to my mind," verse 21, "therefore have I hope." How, Jeremiah? How did you get here? You were carried to the banqueting table for his banner over you was love. The Lord brings his people to feast of himself and all of the goodness that's in Christ. That's where our hope is. He is the anchor of our soul. He is the one. The anchor means it will not be moved. He will not be moved. You and I are swayed. We're swayed with the temptations; we're swayed in the trials; we're swayed to unbelief. But he is faithful.

"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed." It is of the Lord's mercy that he sent his Son to die in my place because if he did not, I would be consumed. The Lord is long suffering toward me because he died for me. It is a mercy to leave his Father's dwelling, to leave a place of no sin and to lay down his life for me. It is of his mercy that I'm not consumed. It is of the preservation of his grace that his wrath is not poured out upon me because I still sin. And it's his mercy to cover those sins past, present and future.

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." Do you know what compassions are? Love. Love from empathy. Love from sympathy because of the condition, condition that we are in. He remembers our frame that we are dust. He knows that what the fall has plunged us into. He knows what we are left to ourselves.

"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." Do you see where he's brought the prophet? Has he brought you there? Has he brought you to see that the chain is heavy, that it causes grief? That he is the first cause? And that it's for your soul? To show you how the depth of his mercies never fail? We could go to that blessed Psalm that has 26 verses that ends in the same way, "For his mercy endureth forever." Every verse, 26 times "for his mercy endureth forever." And it does. And we can't use up that mercy even though it seems like we try with our waywardness. His mercies are new every morning. They are new every morning. Great is his faithfulness. What a blessed truth.

"The LORD is my portion, saith my soul." The Lord is my portion. Do you see what the Lord does? He brings you, he empties you of you and he fills you with himself. Is that your testimony today? Is the Lord your portion? Not some Lord that is up here on the shelf that you take him off in your time of need but does he fill your soul in the good and the bad times? And I use that on our terms. Romans 8:28 tells us there are no bad times. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."

"The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. The Lord, that's why I started this message from 14 to 15. What are you coming out to see? What is 15 to you? What is the new year to you? Is it a Lord who changes not? Is it another day in Christ? Is it looking to some kind of notional thought that you're going to be something better? Or does he bring you to look to his finished work? And does he bring you to sit at his feet to see his will unfold before your eyes and to teach you more of him?

"The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him." And how can we seek him without him seeking us? Oh, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him." Do you see how the Lord lays his children low? Maybe you want to rebel against that. Maybe that easy believism is going to come up in your mind and say, "No, no, no, I don't need that. My Lord, he wouldn't do that to me. It is all love and fluff." Okay.

"He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope." O Lord, put my mouth in the dust to wait upon you. Fill my mouth, Lord with Gospel conversation, not the things of this world.

"He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach." If you don't see the Lord's work in this, you and I aren't capable of this. We must be brought to the end of ourselves. That's what this is,

"For the Lord will not cast off for ever." He's faithful to the end. He is faithful to the performance to the day of Jesus Christ in your so and that could be each day of your life as he is pleased to reveal it.

Now we come to our text, Lamentations 3:32, "But though he cause grief," you see how he's brought here now? "But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." I want to briefly look now at each part of this.

"But though he cause grief." Praise God for grief over sin. Praise God that he brings the child of God to mourn over sin. Praise God that he brings grief to our soul. We're only going to go to 2 places today so hold your finger there in Lamentations but one of them is over here in Psalms. I want to read you Psalm 94, 3 verses out of Psalm 94 before we go to these 3 headings. Psalm 94:12, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law; That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity." Do you see that? The Lord's rest is in his chastening. For though he causes grief, it's a dire need of our soul to be shown the waywardness that we are. And chastening, Hebrews tells us, is by a loving Lord, "for whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." And it also tells us that it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness, of Christ' righteousness.

"Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law; That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked. For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance." Isn't that what we just said? Isn't that what the prophet said over here in Lamentations? Isn't that what he said "for the Lord will not cast off forever"? It's a true statement. We spoke about that the last time from this pulpit, faithful is he. Faithful is he to call his people and faithful is he to do it. Amen and amen to that.

I want to look at this "but though he cause grief." I want to go, well I'm not going to 3 places, I actually have them written down so the first one is in Genesis 9:14. You can go there if you would like. I want to read this to you under the heading "but though he cause grief." Genesis 9:14 says this, "And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud." What a precious promise. I want you to see, I pray the Lord opens your eyes to see that he brings the cloud, that it is of the Lord's mercy to bring the cloud, to bring the hardship, to bring the affliction because we do go astray.

"And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow." Now, I hope we've all been taught in our souls that the bow is the promise. It is a picture of Christ. It is a picture of Christ in our soul. As the Lord brings the grief as this passage tells us, yet he has compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. When he brings the cloud over the earth, the bow shall be seen in the cloud. Our Lord is always seen in the cloud. Maybe not in the beginning of the cloud, maybe not as the rain is falling, but the Lord is faithful to reveal himself as the bow.

Stephanie and I used to walk a lot in the neighborhood and after rains we would stop. She always stops for rainbows, "Look, there's the rainbow." We always look at each other and think the same thing and say the same thing, "There's the Lord's promise." The Lord's promise in your soul today is his Son. He is the promise and he is the promise keeper because faithful is he who has done all things for his children

The second text I want to look at is Isaiah 45:7. These should be very familiar texts to you on the sovereignty of our Lord. Isaiah 45:7 says, "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." Now, I want you to understand something. I hope the Holy Spirit opens this up experientially for you. Now, it's easy to see that out in creation when the Lord brings tsunami, when the Lord brings a hurricane and we stand and we say, "Yes, that is by my Lord's hand who has brought that." And the world says, "Oh, mother nature." Whatever, but listen, what does it say to your soul? That the Lord in his love for your soul brings all of these things to wean you from that 3 headed enemy: to bring you away from the world; to bring you away from the devil; and to bring you away from self. And if you don't believe it, you don't understand his sovereignty.

"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things." That's Romans 8:28. That's everything he performs, he has done out of love for those that are called. This is all things that he has worked together for the good to them that love God, to those who are called according to his purpose. That's what that is. "I do that," the Lord says. And what a disservice it is and what a borderline blasphemy it is to sit back and say, "Wow, you know, the devil made me do it," or, "I'm led away." Listen, and I want to make this distinction: I'm not talking about sin here. What I'm talking about is what the Lord brings into our lives, all events, okay? I'm talking about the Lord's sovereignty over all things. Is he sovereign over sin? You'd better believe it. Does he allow sin in the world? You had better know it. Has he overruled sin for his people? He has in his Son. That's good enough for me.

But I want you to understand the sovereignty in your soul. Sometimes I think where the Lord works in our soul, we think we're looking for prosperity all the time and the prosperity events. Oh, we find this or we're led to this or we have good help and we say, "Wow, you know, I can see the Lord in that." But what about the sickness? What about the troublesome times? Do you see the Lord in that? Do you see his purpose in it? Because for his children, he does have a purpose in it, to take you off of yourself and to bring you to him.

The last one is Isaiah 54:16, "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy." Now listen, that is a blessed passage. That is rest for the child of God for all of these idols that we set up in our lives and all of this worldly stuff that we run after every day, the Lord has created a waster to destroy them and praise be to God he has because we certainly won't do it. We're in dire need of that waster to come and destroy all the earthly comforts and all the things that we pour our lives into. The Lord must put them down and destroy them to lift up himself and praise be to God when he does.

Then we go to our second heading "yet will he have compassion." Yet will he have compassion. The grief in what the Lord has brought into our lives and the causing of the grief but yet he does it out of love. Yet, there is the long-suffering of our Lord. There is the faithfulness of our Lord. He overrules the grief by his love. Philippians 3:10 says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." You see, he brings grief. He brings sorrow to conform us unto his death, to participate in the fellowship of his sufferings. But what does Paul say in that passage? That I might know him and to experience the power of his resurrection over death, over trial, over calamity, over affliction. That's what he does in the soul of his children.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." Psalm 86:15 says, "But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." Do you know this Lord? Do you know the Lord that is full of compassion? I stumble sometimes, I think, you know, sometimes I think that well, I look at the compassion of the Lord and I say, "Wow, I need to have more compassion." And every time I try to go and have more compassion to people in the world, the Lord stops me in my tracks because the Lord's compassion is for his people. I think of Jesus and the multitudes that came to him to feed them and no, I'm not saying all the multitudes were God's people, certainly not, but he had mercy on those that were in there. He has mercy on whom he will have mercy and the Lord at times in my life has led me to have mercy on such horrible reprobate people and that's how I know it's his work because I know when I go to try to perform things in myself, they don't end well and not only do they not end well, but they don't glorify my Lord. Isn't that what we're here for? Isn't that the purpose? To glorify him? That's what Jesus said, to glorify the Father.

Finally, the last part of this passage "according to the multitude of his mercies." I love those 2 words "according to." I always think about his purpose, I always think about his finished work when I hear "according to." Ephesians is full of those 2 words "according to, according to." In fact, we've read Romans 8:28 three times already today, "according to his purpose." According to his purpose. Everything is according to the will of God.

"According to the multitude of his mercies." He purposes, he performs, he perfects. That's what the Lord does. He does it in his children's souls, he does it for his children, he does it according to himself because he could swear by no other. He is rich in mercy. Ephesians 2:4 tells us that, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us." He is rich in mercy. He delights in mercy. Micah 7:18 tells us, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." His mercy endures forever because he delights in mercy. He delights in shedding mercy upon his people. He delights in being a merciful Lord to his people and great are those mercies, at least that's what the Psalmist tells us in Psalm 119:156, "Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments." Quicken me, Lord, to know thee.

As we now stand at the beginning of a new year at least by the calendar, so to speak, what man goes by, I often wonder what that means. What does that mean to you sitting out here? What does that mean to me? What does it mean to the people of God? What vanity there is in new years because the only thing new is in Christ as he reveals it. Man looks to self and man looks to self-help and it's a terrible place to be. But when the Lord brings us here, in the message of Lamentations 3:32, "But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." May the Lord's compassion and mercy be upon you as he reveals his sovereignty in your life for every event and may he lead you out of yourself to the foot of him to be instructed of what is pleasing to him, what is glorifying to him and what life in Christ truly means for this year and every day to come as he is pleased to give us those days according to his purpose and his goodwill.

Dear heavenly Father, may you add thy power and thy clarity. May you bless this message to the souls of thy people but for the glory of thy name and thy name alone. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.