

God's Great Faithfulness in Our Great Sufferings Lamentations 3

One of the great promises of God is also one of our greatest treasures as believers.

Someone has said you can live a lifetime without luxuries, but only 40 days without food, 3 days without water, 3 minutes without air, *and only a few seconds without Hope.*

We _____ to the God of Hope

We have been given present hope, we have been promised eternal hope, we have been made the personal representatives of the God of Hope.

Tonight we are learning from lesson 6 the **Biblical Basis for** _____. That is what all of us are spending this entire month immersed in as a part of our preparation to be Biblical Counselors & Disciplers.

On the first page of the lesson we see the outline for the month;

1. Biblical Principle: Biblical Basis for Change
2. Three Levels of Problems
3. Biblical Hope
4. Biblical Basis for Peace & Joy

Understanding This _____

So that is what we are doing together for 30 days. That is the course work. This BC&D Course has two parts: the text and the lectures. What we do in this lecture portion of the class is how to apply those truths. So just for you to see the big picture:

- We gather weekly to focus on the "HOW it works" portion of the course. This is personal application, from the Word of how to communicate truth to others in a BC&D session.
- We study through the course materials each day of the month for the "WHY it works" portion of the course. This is the systematic explanation of the doctrines of BC&D.

So this evening we are looking at that third piece of this month's course work. The title of that section is Biblical Hope. Tonight we are spending an evening together to learn how to personally apply Biblical Hope to my life, and then, how to communicate the promised truth of Biblical Hope to those in need around us.

Experiencing _____ Hope

If you ever meet someone that you discern needs a good dose of hope, this session is what you need to prayerfully understand, obediently live out, and then prayerfully share with them.

First, turn with me to Romans 15. We started our BC&D course right here in this chapter. Here Paul says that we as born-again believers are all to be in various stages of becoming ministers of the Scriptures into the lives of those around us. We all need the Word applied, and God uses other believers around us in that process.

Look first at Romans 15:14 (NKJV):

Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to **admonish** one another.

Notice the key word "admonish", the Greek *noutheteo*. This word describes the calling from God we each have:

*To prayerfully share God's Scriptural _____,
that we have _____ learned and experienced,
to impact the _____, and then, the _____ of those in need, around us.*

That is the heart of nouthetic counseling.

Now where does ministering HOPE come into the equation? Look back at v. 13:

Now may the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may **abound in hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.

That is what we amazingly have been called to: HOPE. We were saved by the God of Hope who has come to live within us and by the Spirit of God's power, we abound in hope!

Now, back up to Romans 15:4, and see the first key element of our Hope.

For whatever things were written before were written for our **learning**, that we through the **patience** and **comfort**¹ of the **Scriptures** might have **hope**².

God's Word Teaches us _____

God works in us through us learning the doctrine of His Word. The word “learning” from Romans 15:4, is the same word translated “doctrine” in 2 Timothy 3:16-17:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for **doctrine**, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, **thoroughly equipped** for every good work.

God's Word Trains us in _____

Next look at the second key element of our Hope in Romans 15:4. It is found in the word “patience”.

God's Word trains us in “patience”. See that phrase? That “we through the **patience** and comfort of the **Scriptures** might have **hope**”.

God has made us partakers in His Hope by the Scriptures that lead us into patience, which could also be described as “waiting in hope”.

This word “patience” in Romans 15:4 is a big word in the Scriptures. In all three of the passages below it is the verb form of Greek noun **hupomone** from Romans 15:4. In the verses below, we can feel the Biblical sense of meaning for this word:

God's Word can train us to endure whatever comes. 1 Cor. 13:7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, **endures** all things.

Isaiah 40:31 But those who **wait** on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.

Lamentations 3: 21, 25-26 21 This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have **hope**.
22 Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. 24 “The Lord is my

¹ Comfort is the Greek paraklesis, from which we get the name of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, the one called (kaleo) to come alongside us (para). So the Word of God comforts us because God uses His Word, by His Spirit to “come alongside of us” each time we open our lives by faith to listen to God's voice through His Word!

² This word translated “hope” is also the key word in these passages: 1 Cor. 13:13 “now abides faith, hope, love”; Romans 5:2, 4, 5; Ephesians 4:4 “one faith, one hope”; 1 Peter 3:15 “reason for this hope”; Hebrews 10:23 “hold fast hope”; Titus 2:13 “blessed hope”.

portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I hope in Him!” 25 The Lord is good to those who **wait** for Him, To the soul who seeks Him. 26 It is good that one should hope and **wait** quietly For the salvation of the Lord.

God is the One Who _____ Hope

Do you see that amazing truth of how God brings us to Hope? It is as His word **teaches us** doctrine, then from that doctrine, **trains us** in patience. Then, as we are taught and trained, God fills us with the hope that He alone **dispenses to us**. Look at these verses together:

Romans 15:13 Now may the **God of hope** fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may **abound in hope** by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:4 For whatever things were written before were written for our **learning**, that we through the **patience** and **comfort of the Scriptures** might have **hope**.

Biblical Hope

In Lamentations 3, we find one of the greatest reminders in all of God's Word that **when** there are great sufferings, **during them** we can find the assurance of God's greater faithfulness.

Lamentations is a book that is about what it sounds like its about—the lamentations of a person in deep suffering. Do you remember all of the weeping prophet Jeremiah's woes?

His testimony is the 25th book of God's Word, and it is aptly called Lamentations. Does that title suggest anything to you? It is the cry of a troubles soul. It is the testimony of a man who knew pain, weakness, and much sorrow.

Jeremiah the _____ Prophet

But before we turn to Lamentations 3, look at the prior book, named for the prophet Jeremiah, and let me briefly sketch the life of this incredible servant of God.

Jeremiah must have had an incredible childhood. The Scriptures tell us God had chosen him before his birth to be a prophet. His family was notable in their service for the LORD. Life was exciting for this son of a priest living in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah 1:1 The words of Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, (NASB)

One of the great blessings of Jeremiah's life was that he was alive when the lost book of the Law (2 Kings 22:8) was found, which may be reflected in his joy at "eating" the words that were "found" (Jer. 15:16).

How Jeremiah's love for the Word showed through in his life as God's prophet. But even the great family heritage, and calling of God did nothing to prevent horrible sufferings. In fact Jeremiah's life could be described as one of the most difficult lives of hardship and woe found in the pages of Scripture. How does God work with someone:

When Troubles _____ in Overwhelming Waves

Jeremiah's woes were unimaginable to our relatively peaceful lives. He lived through the death throes of the final days and hours of the nation of Judah.

- From an earthly perspective ***Jeremiah's life was a _____***. During his lifetime as God's Prophet he watched the decay of God's chosen people, the horrible destruction of Jerusalem and the deportation of the nation to Babylon.
- He preached for 40 years and ***saw no _____ result among those he served***. Instead those countrymen he warned for God sought to kill him if he wouldn't stop preaching doom (Jer. 11:19-23). He had virtually no converts to show for a lifetime of ministry.
- He had ***no one _____ joy and comfort with*** as his own family and friends were involved in plots against his (12:6).
- He ***never had the joy of a godly home*** because God never allowed him to marry, and thus ***he suffered incredibly agonizing _____*** (16:2).
- He ***lived under a constant _____ of death***, as there were plots to kill him in secret so no one would find him (18:20-23).
- He ***lived with _____ pain*** while he was beaten severely and them bound in wooden stocks (20:1-2).
- He ***lived with _____ pain*** as his friends spied on him deceitfully and for revenge (20:10).

- He **was** _____ **with sorrow and shame** and even cursed the day he was born (20:14-18).
- **His life ended with** _____ **relief** as he was falsely accused of being a traitor to his own country (37:13-14). Jeremiah was arrested, beaten, thrown into a dungeon, and starved many days (37:15-21). If an Ethiopian Gentile had not interceded on his behalf he would have died there.
- **In the end, tradition tells us he was exiled to Egypt, where he was stoned to death by his own people.**

Perhaps the most striking feature of this book is the fact that despite the terrible woes of the life Jeremiah was called to (1:5), he saw that it was all at the Master Potter's Hand (18:1-6). At the point of near despair over his failed ministry, God asked Jeremiah to go to the Potter's house and there he would get a message from the Lord (18:2).

Although Israel had failed so grievously, the heavenly Potter was able to bless them again if they would but repent and yield to his Perfect Touch.

So for us who have heard Christ's reminder that we will suffer just because we belong to Him; and for us who live in the times approaching the end of days, we can learn a great truth to live by.

Jeremiah's life is a wonderful canvas, across which is painted the truths that you can see and display God even more clearly:

When your _____ Life Hurts

In Lamentations 3, what are some of the Biblical afflictions God uses, manages, allows, and most of all, what are some of the hurts that HE can handle?

Jeremiah's life and testimony clearly describe a huge spectrum of the afflictions and troubles that God allows to come our way so He can be closest and dearest to us. These are what Jeremiah faced, starting in v.4. He had:

1. THE HURTS OF _____ PHYSICAL HEALTH:

Lamentations 3:4 He has aged **my flesh** and **my skin**, and **broken my bones**.

2. THE HURTS OF DEEP _____ STRAIN:

Lamentations 3:5 He has besieged me and surrounded me with *bitterness and woe*.

3. THE HURTS OF PERIODS OF DARK DEPRESSION:

Lamentations 3:6 He has set me in *dark places* like the dead of long ago.

4. THE HURTS OF DESPERATION AND BURDEN OF BEING _____:

Lamentations 3:7 He has *hedged me in* so that I cannot get out; He has made *my chain heavy*.

5. THE HURTS OF FEELING OUT OF _____, DISTANT FROM _____ AND LEFT _____ IN LIFE:

Lamentations 3:8 Even when I cry and shout, He *shuts out my prayer*.

6. THE _____ OF FRUSTRATION AND CONFUSION:

Lamentations 3:9 He has *blocked my ways* with hewn stone; He has made *my paths crooked*.

7. THE HURTS OF _____ AND _____:

Lamentations 3:17 You have moved *my soul far from peace*; I have *forgotten prosperity*.

8. THE HURTS OF PHYSICAL _____ AND HOPELESSNESS:

Lamentations 3:18 And I said, "*My strength and my hope have perished* from the Lord."

9. THE HURTS OF _____ AFFLICTION AND _____:

Lamentations 3:19 Remember *my affliction and roaming*, the *wormwood and the gall*.

Those nine verses describe some of the deepest woes, struggles, and trials imaginable. If you have known any or all of them, then you are in good company. Jeremiah faced all of them at once and did so completely alone (remember God made him stay single and never get married).

So what comes next is vital. Jeremiah shares with us the cure He found, that kept Him from being destroyed by these immense sorrows. He shares them with us, like:

A _____ from The Great Physician

So what possible blessing could ever come from such a desperate condition of affliction and hurt? Look back at this passage because it contains the greatest message of Hope in all of God's Word.

This is what our Faithful God offers:

Hope Giving Truth 1: IN SPITE OF ALL OUR _____, God always offers HIS UNFAILING _____

Lamentations 3:22 Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.

Jeremiah didn't say he was perfect, he said I know that I am weak; and what the Lord revealed to him is even while we fail, God's love never fails.

The Lord's mercies, his compassions, never fail. God is never eclipsed by our troubles. God never is caught off guard by the immensity of our problems. He loves us with an unfailing love.

Hope Giving Truth 2: INTO OUR MONOTONOUS _____, God promises HIS DAILY _____

Lamentations 3:23 They are **new every morning**; Great is Your faithfulness.

Have you ever thought about how monotonous life could be without God's faithfulness, His newness and His freshness? Basically, many of us do the same thing every day at work. I have done the same thing for my entire life's work, for over 35 years, every single day.

Each day I have to spend a large portion of my time wrestling with this Book. It is the same Book, by the way, that I have been reading for a lot more than 35 years. But vocationally for 35+ years, full time, this is what I have done. I know a lot of men in ministry who say it's so monotonous—we have to find something new—and they are always trying to find something different.

Look at this 23rd verse, this is what Jeremiah says: *God's Words are new every morning.*

Into our monotonous lives, God wants to insert daily freshness, if we will allow Him to.

There is such newness in our walk with Christ everyday, because He is faithful and when we are afflicted, we realize how faithful He is. Look at verse 24:

Hope Giving Truth 3: IN OUR _____, God gives us a PERSONAL DOSE OF _____

Lamentations 3:24 “The Lord is **my portion**,”

Bonnie & I fed 8 children from their first meal onward, until they were able to feed themselves. Remember the stages they go through? When they stop the milk regimen they move into the real food, as we called it.

I remember how we sat there and: chop, chop, chop this way, then you chop, chop, chop that way. Some times you mash, mash, mash some of those peas and squash in there when they are not looking, into the potatoes so they will get a good balanced meal.

I remember that we would have this little tiny spoon that was just right for them. We didn't use the serving spoon, we didn't use the ladle to put in to that little mouth. We know what portion they would be able to handle so they wouldn't choke on it.

Look what he in verse 24 “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, He knows the personal dose of strength I need in my weakness “Therefore I hope in Him!”

He said my soul is weak, the Lord knows the dose or portion I need. Therefore I hope in Him.

Hope Giving Truth 4: IN OUR OFTEN _____ LIFESTYLES, God Pours out His _____ OF BLESSINGS

Lamentations 3:25 The Lord is good **to those who wait** for Him,

You want a great study? That word “wait” is one English word and you will find that word all the way through the Old Testament. There are 8 different Hebrew words translated into English—wait. You know waiting is really important to God. Waiting is very foreign to us.

One morning years back in Tulsa as I drove to church, a fancy big black, jacked up SUV blew by me on the highway called 169.

I pulled up beside him as I was toodling along, at the stop light on the exit a mile later. He had passed me minutes before, but the traffic at the exit was so heavy, and that light is so long—we met.

I edged up a bit so he would notice me—and before the light turned, he ran the red light and squealed around me. I thought—Americans, we don't like to wait. He couldn't wait for the speed limit, he couldn't wait for the light, he couldn't wait for anything.

You know what God says? The Lord is good to those *who wait* for Him,

Waiting is so important there is 8 different Hebrew words that are translated in our Old Testaments by the one word “wait”.

Our lives are often frantic but God promises a blessing to those who wait for Him, who don't try and run away from the affliction, who don't try and run away from the hard time, who don't try and escape it.

God brings us to a place where we'll say, “I know that in faithfulness you are allowing this in my life, so I just lift up my antenna and I say what is the message, Lord? Speak, Lord, thy servant heareth.”

The LORD *is* good to those who wait for Him, To the soul *who* seeks Him.

Hope Giving Truth 5: INTO OUR _____ LIVES, God's Gift of SALVATION _____ QUIET HOPE

Lamentations 3:26 It is good that one should **hope and wait quietly** for the salvation of the Lord.

Jeremiah is telling us what he learned in his affliction.

What did he learn when he had broken physical health, deep emotional strain- verse 5, dark depression- verse 6, when he had desperation and felt trapped- verse 7, and when he felt out of touch and distant from God in verse 8 of chapter 3?

What did he learn when he was frustrated and confused in vs. 9, when he was anxious and sad in vs. 17, when he was physically weak and hopeless in verse 18 and when he had bitter affliction in verse 19, what did he learn?

He said this is what I learned:

- v. 22 when I fail, God's love never fails.

- v. 23- when my life is monotonous and awful, His freshness pervades my life. Every single time we open this Book, it's like a breath of fresh air. Did you know, every time you open this Book, in the hot, triple digit temperatures of life, there is a freshness that comes, if you wait on the Lord. The Lord is the One who gives freshness every morning-- Great is His faithfulness if we will allow Him to.
- In our weakness- His personal dose of strength, verse 24, he is our portion.
- In our frantic lives, verse 25, his promise of blessing.
- In to our anxious lives, verse 26, we hope and wait quietly.

Hope Giving Truth 6: INTO OUR _____ LIVES, God writes HIS _____ PLANS

Lamentations 3:33 For He does *not afflict willingly*, Nor grieve the children of men.

He says this is not just capricious, it is not roulette living, it's not happenstance, God has a plan.

A Testimony to God's Faithfulness & His Perfect Plan

One special servant of the Lord who endured much trouble in life, was Thomas Obadiah Chisholm (1866-1960).

Born in a humble log cabin in Franklin, Kentucky, on July 29, 1866; without the benefit of high school or advanced training, he began his career as a schoolteacher at the age of sixteen in the same country schoolhouse where he had received his elementary training.

By age 51 Tom wrote out his personal testimony of consecration in song. This poem, prayer, and consecration hymn has been the pathway of thousands who have sought to deepen their devotion to Jesus. "Living for Jesus" was published that same year in a hymnal, in 1917.

The words of this hymn were written when the author was 51, unable to finish the career he studied to do, weak and sickly, unemployed, and trying to make ends meet selling things door to door.

Remember this hymn was his testimony of how he made it through life when it seemed everything was going against him, and the world around him was crumbling.

What year did he write these words? **1917**. What was happening in the year 1917?

Lenin was conquering Russia and World War I was grinding on across Europe. Hundreds of miles of trenches oozed with millions of fighting men in a river of death, gas warfare, and plagues.

Now look again at those words written in some of the darkest hours of human history. And from those times come one of the greatest Hope-filled hymns of our time!

"Living for Jesus"

Living for Jesus a life that is true, striving to please Him in all that I do, yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free—this is the pathway of blessing for me.

Living for Jesus who died in my place, bearing on Calv'ry my sin and disgrace—such love constrains me to answer His call, follow His leading and give Him my all.

Living for Jesus thru earth's little while, my dearest treasure the light of His smile, seeking the lost ones He died to redeem, bringing the weary to find rest in Him.

Chorus: O Jesus, Lord and Savior, I give myself to Thee, for Thou in Thine atonement didst give Thyself for me. I own no other Master—my heart shall be Thy throne: My life I give, henceforth to live, O Christ, for Thee alone.

Just 6 years later Tom published the result of what life was like from a life that had sought to follow that prayer "Living for Jesus". The testimony he penned and shared with the world in 1923 was that grand hymn of the faith, "Great is Thy Faithfulness".

"Great is Thy faithfulness"

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father;
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been, Thou forever will be.

Great is Thy faithfulness!
Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided;
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above

Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a 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!

How God wants to use Affliction in our lives Today

God wants to teach us something, He wants to teach us that He is faithful. The way He teaches us He is faithful is, He brings affliction into our lives.

If we will wait quietly before Him, and say Lord, I want what You are teaching me. He will bring into our lives everything that we just saw from verse 22 all the way down to verse 33 of Lamentations.

- Into our failures He will bring His love
- Into our monotonous lives he brings freshness everyday, he will open the windows of blessing
- Into our weakness, He will give us a little spoonful of what we need, our personal dose of strength
- Into our frantic life styles, He promises blessing if we wait for Him
- Into our anxious lives with anxiety, He gives us a quiet hope that is serenity in the midst of the storm
- Into our confusion, He says I have a perfect plan