

## Finding Hope in Times of Sorrow

**Intro:** This week we read together from the Lamentations of Jeremiah. Undoubtedly it is from the five elegies of this book that Jeremiah has gotten the designation “the weeping prophet”. He has from ancient times been considered the author of these moving acrostic poems.

It was a time of great sorrow for Jeremiah. His sorrow existed for two reasons: First he had experienced great mistreatment for his prophet work in foretelling the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Second he suffered in simply seeing the devastation of the people and the city that he loved. The first lament focuses almost entirely upon the suffering Jeremiah sees and one can almost feel in its expressions the pain of the prophet at what he sees.

However in the third lament (chapter 3) we can read one of the most stirring and reflective responses to sorrow and suffering in the entire Bible. Let’s consider it together as study the lesson, “Finding Hope in Times of Sorrow”.

### Jeremiah’s Sorrow and Response

*Jeremiah begins the third lament with a moving description of his sufferings and sorrow that came from his mistreatment by his fellow Jews. In poignant phrases he describes his suffering:*

*He has driven me and made me walk in darkness and not in light.  
(Lamentations 3:2)*

His circumstances are prison from which there is no escape:  
*He has walled me in so that I cannot go out; He has made my chain heavy. (Lamentations 3:7)*

He seems to search in vain for relief with no hope of recovery.  
*And my soul has been rejected from peace; I have forgotten happiness.  
So I say, “My strength has perished, and so has my hope from the Lord.” (Lamentations 3:17-18)*

Yet in spite of these painful feelings, Jeremiah is able to look past his pain and have hope again.

*This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. (Lamentations 3:21)*

For Jeremiah consolation was not found in merely in venting feelings, but in thinking—in spiritual remembrance. But what was it that gave Jeremiah hope in suffering?

### ***Jeremiah found hope in the character of God***

In the lovingkindness of God  
*The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease (Lam. 3:22)*

In the compassion of God  
*For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning;  
(Lamentations 3:22-23)*

In the faithfulness of God  
*Great is Thy faithfulness. (Lam. 3:23)*

In the provision of God

*“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “Therefore I have hope in Him.” (Lamentations 3:24)*

In the goodness and salvation of God

*The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him. It is good that he waits silently for the salvation of the Lord. (Lam. 3:25-26)*

In the discipline of God

*It is good for a man that he should bear the yoke in his youth. Let him sit alone and be silent since He has laid it on him. Let him put his mouth in the dust, perhaps there is hope. Let him give his cheek to the smiter; Let him be filled with reproach. (Lamentations 3:27-30)*

In the turning of God

*For the Lord will not reject forever; for if He causes grief, then He will have compassion according to His abundant lovingkindness. For He does not afflict willingly, or grieve the sons of men. (Lamentations 3:31-33)*

## **Our Sorrow and Response**

***We too may have times in life when we feel the same way Jeremiah did. Could you relate to those words of sorrow? Sorrow can affect us physically, emotionally, and spiritually. We may at times feel imprisoned in darkness with no escape, so overwhelmed with grief we may wonder if there will ever be a happy day again. What does Jeremiah’s experience teach us?***

Keep focusing on the character of God

*Though our circumstances may be different from Jeremiah, our God is the same unchanging God. He is gracious, compassionate, faithful and good. He never enjoys seeing His people suffer; but He may use it to accomplish greater purposes.*

Learn the lessons of suffering’s experience.

*I was particularly struck by the statement, “It is good that a man bear the yoke in his youth”. Why does a young person in particular need to “bear the yoke”? Jeremiah apparently thought that young people would find an advantage in going through adversity early in life as a life-lesson for the whole of their lives.*

*Suffering teaches us!*

Suffering sometimes teaches us that our actions do have consequences.

Suffering teaches us not to take so much for granted.

It teaches us to seize the blessings and opportunities of every day.

It teaches us to value what is good around us and be thankful for it.

It teaches us how to console others.

Be patient and wait on the salvation of God

*There is a saying, “time heals all wounds”. Maybe, but could I take the liberty to change that a little bit. “God heals all wounds in time”.*

*Jeremiah commends three actions:*

Seek Him

Wait on Him

Hope in Him

**Conclusion: One of our songs has put into words many of this part of Jeremiah’s third lament: “Great is Thy Faithfulness”. Let’s sing it together.**

**Life has many sorrows; but there is hope for those who trust in God. Do you have such a relationship with Him?**