

Study Notes: Lamentations 3:19-24
Thanksgiving Sunday: November 22, 2020: “I Call This to Mind”
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Background: The book of Lamentations is traditionally attributed to the prophet Jeremiah, and was written at the fall of Jerusalem. The book is a series of poems of lament, recounting the problems that the city and the prophet himself experienced. In the middle of the book, however, the prophet spoke of the hope that is found in remembering that the Lord is still merciful and compassionate towards His people.

***I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.***

***I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.***

- Throughout the book of Lamentations, Jeremiah recounted some of the afflictions and bitterness that he experienced. Many times, Jeremiah was referred to as the “Weeping Prophet,” because of his words and what he endured during his life.
- When Jeremiah mentioned “...the bitterness and the gall...,” he was using imagery to represent the emotions he was experiencing. The NLT study Bible explains, “Wormwood (translated as bitterness) is a plant with a bitter taste; here it represents the emotional intensity of inner agony. Gall is a poisonous plant that causes severe physical pain if eaten; it is a powerful symbol for extremely stressful emotions. The survivor seems to be at a dead end from which he cannot escape.”
- The experiences of affliction and wandering burned into the mind of Jeremiah. Each time he was reminded of them, they served to depress and sadden him greatly.

***Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:***

- In the midst of remembering everything that caused stress, anxiety, and depression, Jeremiah chose to turn to the truth. This, in turn, provided him with hope. The verb translated as “call this to mind,” means “to bring back or return.” By returning to what is true, the Lord’s love and compassion, Jeremiah could obtain hope.
- With this verse, there is a shift in tone of the prophet. The New American Commentary states, “At the moment of his deepest despair and as he recalled his bitter affliction, a remarkable transition in his attitude took place. His hopelessness expressed in vv. 18–20 turned to hope as he remembered the Lord.”

***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.***

- Though there was great distress around him, Jeremiah saw the love and compassion of the Lord as his hope. The mercy of the Lord was revealed to Jeremiah even in the midst

of a situation that seemed inescapable. With each new morning, Jeremiah experienced the faithful love of the Lord.

- The Hebrew word which the NIV translates as “great love” is *chesed*. The Faithlife Study Bible says, “The Hebrew word *chesed* can sometimes refer to kindness or mercy. It can also refer to faithfulness or loyalty. Most often it is translated as ‘steadfast love.’ *Chesed* is often used as a characteristic of God. God’s *chesed* is an essential part of His character. When He appears to Moses, God describes Himself as abounding in *chesed* and keeping *chesed* for thousands (Exod 34:6–7). His *chesed* is associated with His covenant love for Israel. In the Ten Commandments, God describes Himself as showing *chesed* to those who love and obey Him (Exod 20:6; Deut 5:10). This description is echoed throughout the OT (Neh 1:5; Dan 9:4; Jer 32:18). Solomon praises God’s *chesed* that He showed to David (1 Kgs 3:5). He also asserts that there is no God that is *chesed* like God, fulfilling all His promises to David (1 Kgs 8:23–4).”

***I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him.”***

- Jeremiah reminded himself that the Lord was his inheritance. He remembered that ultimately, when this life passed away, he would still have God. Therefore, even in the midst of suffering, Jeremiah chose to wait and trust the Lord.
- Of this statement, the Expositor’s Commentary notes, “The poet’s choice of words invites the first audience to reflect on the significance of saying, ‘Yahweh is all I have — and all I need.’ His use of the expression ‘the Lord is my portion’ draws his audience back to the narrative of the book of Numbers, where Aaron and his priestly descendants are told that while the rest of the family would receive a ‘portion’ of the land as an inheritance, they would not. Rather, Yahweh told them, ‘I am your share [portion] and your inheritance — that is, you have me! (Nu 18:20).”
- Following these verses of Scripture, the pain and suffering that Jeremiah experienced did not end. He would go on to continue to lament about what was happening around him, and would then call the Lord to act on his behalf. However, these verses provide a point of hope in the midst of the lament, and reminder of what is true.