



April 7, 2019

“Every Morning is Another Chance”

Lamentations 1 – 5

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The book of Lamentations is a book that “laments” the destruction in Jerusalem in 586BC by the Babylonians. This book describes the tragic and terrible results of a people who rejected God – a people who refused to turn from idolatry and sin and turn to God. The consequences for their sin were devastating, but in the middle of all the sin and destruction and devastation emerges a passage from chapter three about the love, mercy, compassion, and faithfulness of God! When we realize our own sinful condition and how it can leave us feeling discouraged, bitter, discontent, and distant from God, it’s important to remember that we can run to a God who is loving, compassionate, merciful, and faithful. Lamentations 3:23 reminds us that all of those qualities about God are new every morning! In other words, every day is a new day and another chance with the Lord! Whatever your past might be – whether yesterday or long ago – there is a fresh batch of God’s love, mercy, and compassion for you today.

Historical Background

1. Bible scholars believe that Jeremiah wrote the book of Lamentations as an epilogue to the book of Jeremiah.
2. The theme of the book is a lament about the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586BC.
3. The traditional understanding is that Jeremiah wrote this book while sitting in a cave, located just north of Jerusalem, watching the city burn.
4. Jeremiah was known as the weeping prophet because he was often brought to the point of tears over the way the people to whom he had ministered for more than 40 years had not heeded his messages of warning and exhortation.

- a. **Lamentations 1:16** - *“This is why I weep and my eyes overflow with tears. No one is near to comfort me, no one to restore my spirit. My children are destitute because the enemy has prevailed.”*
5. Thomas Chisholm, who wrote the hymn *“Great is Thy Faithfulness,”*¹ was inspired by the fact that no matter the depth of sin, destruction, depravity, heartache, and sorrow we may experience in life, God’s mercy, compassion, faithfulness, and love are greater still!
6. The cave from which Jeremiah watched the destruction of Jerusalem is called Jeremiah’s Grotto, and this cave is situated on the same hill as Golgotha, the place where Jesus was crucified.
7. Pastor Gary said: “Even as Jeremiah [was] looking at the destruction of the city, [which happened] because of the sins of the people, [he appealed] to the compassion and the faithfulness and the mercy of God. Six hundred years after Jeremiah [wrote] these things, Jesus would bear the sins of the world on that very hill... You talk about the personification of mercy, compassion, and faithfulness, [it’s] Jesus Christ dying for the sins of the world.”
8. Today, Jewish people read the book of Lamentations on the 9th of Av, which corresponds to the month of August on the Gregorian calendar.
9. In the Hebrew Bible this book is given the title Eichah, which means “How?”
- a. The book is given this name because chapters 1, 2, and 4 begin with the word “how.”
- i. **Lamentations 1:1** - *“How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations!”*
- ii. **Lamentations 2:1** - *“How the Lord has covered the Daughter of Zion with the cloud of his anger!”*
- iii. **Lamentations 4:1-2** - *“How the gold has lost its luster, the fine gold become dull! The sacred gems are scattered at the head of every street. How the precious sons of Zion, once worth their weight in gold, are now considered as pots of clay, the work of a potter’s hands!”*
- iv. Pastor Gary said: “The word that hangs over the book of Lamentations is how... and it’s not a word that begs a question; it’s a word that makes an observation. Jeremiah [was] making the observation with the word, how, basically saying, ‘How terrible things have gotten for the Jewish people. How the splendor of the city [had] vanished. How the strength of the city [had] crumbled. How the sanity of the people [had] evaporated.’ ”

¹ <https://hymnary.org/text/great-is-thy-faithfulness-o-god-my-father>

- b. After eighteen months of being under siege by the Babylonians, the conduct of the people in the city sank to horrific lows.
 - i. **Lamentations 4:10** - *“With their own hands compassionate women have cooked their own children, who became their food when my people were destroyed.”*

10. Pastor Gary said: “The sad truth is that it didn’t have to get this bad. If the [Jewish people] had heeded the warnings of Jeremiah and the other prophets, they would have been spared... In rebellion against God, the Jewish people decided that [they like their idols, and their lives without God], and so they continued to live this way year after year after year, until it finally caught up with them. ... Friends, we need to understand there are consequences for sin. Sometimes devastating consequences [for sin]. Lamentations is a book that serves to be a reminder for us that sin carries with it a heavy weight of sorrow and grief and shame and misery. Oh, and it may not be immediate. It wasn’t immediate with the Jewish people, [who] managed to get away with their sin for 40 long years, while they continued to turn a deaf ear to Jeremiah... All of us will eventually experience the devastation of our sin if we don’t get right with God. ... We can only sin against God for so long before we become completely miserable in our sin.”

- a. **Lamentations 1:5** - *“The LORD has brought her grief because of her many sins.”*
- b. **Lamentations 1:22** - *“... you have dealt with me because of all my sins.”*
- c. **Lamentations 3:39** - *“Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins?”*
- d. **Galatians 6:7** - *“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”*

11. Pastor Gary said: “When you’re not right with God, you feel it, don’t you? It doesn’t feel good. ... When you are not right with God, you feel afflicted in your soul, don’t you? ... You can start to feel like you’re just wandering aimlessly without direction or purpose when you are distant from God. ... [People] who are very successful in their life without Christ can feel this way too. ... He is saying that sin makes us sour, because we become bitter about life, [people, and God]. When things don’t go well for us because we are distant from God, we can tend to be bitter when we live in disobedience to God... Sin can take a person to a very dark place. It can be very gloomy and very dark when you are disobedient toward God. [The] natural result of sin is guilt, and the natural result of guilt is shame, and the natural result of shame is feeling downcast and depressed. And, in addition, when you start to withdraw from God because you’ve been disobedient to him, you can begin to feel the isolation of the soul, and great loneliness kicks in, on top of [feeling downcast and discouraged and depressed]. This is the nature of sin.”

- a. **Lamentations 1:20a** - *"See, O LORD, how distressed I am! I am in torment within, and in my heart I am disturbed for I have been most rebellious."*
- b. **Lamentations 5:15-16** - *"Joy is gone from our hearts; our dancing has turned to mourning. The crown has fallen from our head. Woe to us, for we have sinned!"*
- c. **Lamentations 3:19-20** - *"I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me."*

12. Praise the Lord for the message of hope!

- a. **Lamentations 3:21-23** - *"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. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."*

God's Great Love (Mercy)

13. Pastor Gary said: "God is a merciful, loving God. ... God's love is great for us. It is immeasurable for us. He is a loving, merciful God, abounding in love."

- a. **Psalms 103:10-11** - *"[He] does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us."*

God's Great Compassion

14. After David sinned with Bathsheba, he wrote Psalm 51, and one of the first things he wrote about was God's great compassion.

- a. **Lamentations 3:21-23** - *"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. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."*
- b. **Psalms 51:1-2** - *"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin."*

God's Great Faithfulness

15. Praise the Lord for his great faithfulness!

- a. **Lamentations 3:21-23** - *"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. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."*
- b. **Psalms 145:13b** - *"The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made."*

c. [Psalm 36:5](#) - *“Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.”*

16. Pastor Gary said: “Don’t miss this part of verse 23, because it’s the most important part to all of this. [God’s love, compassion, and faithfulness] are new every single morning! Every single morning! When you got up today there was a whole new fresh batch of God’s love, mercy, compassion, and faithfulness for you. ... Some of you need to receive this today, because you’ve been carrying around a lot of shame [and] a lot of guilt, [and] your soul is downcast. You would describe yourself, perhaps, similarly [in that] there is a bitterness of your soul. You feel afflicted. You know you’re not right with God. This is the nature of sin. But, here’s the good news in the midst of all of this, [and] it’s extended even unto us today out of the pages of Lamentations chapter three! ... Today is a new day for [each of us] to receive mercy, compassion, and love from God!”

a. [Psalm 143:8a](#) - *“Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you.”*

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Lamentations 1:1-5](#); [3:19-24](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Provide an overview of the historical background Pastor Gary shared in his message. (See #1 through #9 above)
3. Read and discuss Pastor Gary’s remarks about the way sin and rejection of Jeremiah’s messages of warning and exhortation brought the Jewish people to a place of misery. (See #10 above)
4. Read and discuss [Galatians 6:7](#). (See #10d above)
5. Allow the people in your group to share experiences about the ways they have seen the truth of this Scripture played out in their life.
6. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary’s comments about not being in right relationship with the Lord will bring depression, discouragement, etc. (See #11 above)
7. Read and discuss [Lamentations 1:20a](#); [5:15-16](#); and [3:19-20](#). (See #11a, #11b, and #11c above)
8. Read and discuss [Lamentations 3:21-23](#). (See #12 above)

9. How would you describe the hope you have in the Lord?
10. Read and discuss [Psalm 103:10-11](#). (See #13 above)
11. What are some of the ways you've experienced the mercy of the Lord in your life?
12. Read and discuss [Lamentations 3:21-23](#) and [Psalm 5:1-2](#). (See #14 above)
13. What are some of the ways you've experienced the compassion of the Lord in your life?
14. Read and discuss [Psalm 145:13b](#) and [Psalm 36:5](#). (See #15 above)
15. Close your time together by reading and reflecting on Pastor Gary's comments about the good news of the daily supply of love, mercy, compassion, and faithfulness that the Lord makes available every single day! (See #16 above)
16. Close your time in prayer and allow the Holy Spirit to lead.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984)