

# Explore the Bible: August 27

*Good • Lamentations 3:19-33*

*By Don Schuman*



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**From Despair to Hope (Lamentations 3:19-24).** Jeremiah lived through the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. He saw his nation taken into captivity and carried off into foreign lands.

Such external devastation would also devastate the soul. Psalm 137 describes the despair of captivity in Babylon. Weeping and bondage replace the joy and song Israel once had.

Jeremiah asked the Lord to remember the traumatic misery and bitter destruction that he and the people of Judah experienced, not that the Lord would forget but so that He would act upon their despair with hope.

In his despair and lamentations, Jeremiah turned to hope in the justice and mercy of the Lord for His people. The Lord declared his justice and mercy in Jeremiah 50 (see last week's lesson). The Lord restored His remnant to the land after 70 years, just as He promised.

Where would we be without the Lord's great compassions and mercies? We would be consumed in His wrath!

Like Jeremiah, believers in Christ do not blame God for His just discipline or fiery tests of faith. Instead, when we experience great tragedy, we look by faith in hope of God's mercies and faithfulness to His promises.

A. W. Tozer wrote: *Faith is confidence in the character of God, and hope is the sweet anticipation of desirable things promised but not yet realized.*<sup>1</sup> He went on to explain that the hope of a Christian is a lively or living hope (1 Peter 1:3) because it is founded upon the character of God and the redeeming work of Christ.

Such hope is far more sustaining than any that the world has to offer. Our hope is based on the Lord's abilities, character, and purposes – not on our inability to undo or forget our tragedies.

Our hope is that the Lord can and will work all things together for His people's good (Romans 8:28).

**From Waiting to Seeing (Lamentations 3:25-30).** As Jeremiah vented his despair and turned to hope, he acknowledged the importance of waiting on the Lord. He had to trust the Lord's perfect time and ways. He knew pain was permanently etched into his life, but the debilitating effects would gradually ease according to trust and patience in the Lord.

F. B. Huey makes an important point about the levels of suffering described in these verses: *There is a progressive severity in these verses: first, accepting the burden in silence (which is the easiest), then, burying the face in the dust but maintaining hope (which is more difficult), and finally, accepting physical abuse and disgrace for one's faith (which is the hardest of all to accept).*<sup>2</sup>

By waiting in the Lord, Jeremiah could see that his life could go on for the glory of God. More importantly, Jeremiah gained insight into God's good character that he could not see apart from his suffering.

**From Rejection to Compassion (Lamentations 3:31-33).** If you're going through a difficult time right now, know that you are not alone. People of God faced difficulties throughout the Bible, and people of God face difficulties today.

God knows your difficulties and has given us plenty of hope, encouragement, and compassion in His Word to overcome, rather than be overcome: *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect*

*work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James 1:2-4).*

Our trials in life prove our faith but also the great faithfulness of God to see us through them.

I was talking with my house contractor Tuesday as he was installing a shower. We got on the subject of spiritual things and suddenly he said that if he was able to give any last words on his deathbed, he would say, "God is faithful."

I stood there and marveled for a minute at the timing and profundity of those three words: God is faithful. Great is the Lord's faithfulness! Perfect are the Lord's compassions and mercies!

Let us thank Him for His goodness to sustain us morning by morning.

*Schuman is pastor of Temple Church, Myrtle.*

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<sup>1</sup> A. W. Tozer and Harry Verploegh, *The Size of the Soul* (Camp Hill, PA: WingSpread, 1992), 75.

<sup>2</sup> F. B. Huey, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, vol. 16, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 475.