

Attributes of God
God's Great Faithfulness - Lamentations 3:1-23

I. Introduction

A. This morning I want to talk about a truth that can sustain you when all others seems to fail you.

1. This is no matter what's going on in your life right now - stress, health problems, failing finances, wishing you'd never heard of Covid-19, desperately wanting to see real racial reconciliation and peace, a child who choices cause an ache in your soul, the unexpected death of someone you love.
2. Whatever pain you are in this morning, God's Great Faithfulness to believers will never, ever end. Every day, He has brand new supplies of it!

B. The definition and description of God's Great Faithfulness is captured in three specific focuses in Lamentations chapter 3.

II. God's Great Faithfulness - Lamentations 3:1-23

A. Focus on self: I am in conflict with the LORD?- (vv. 1-18).

1. The one who feels afflicted **by** the LORD - (read vv 1-9).

a) *I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath:*

(1) In Lam.1 and 2, Jeremiah writes mainly as Jerusalem personified. Here he begins to write as an individual sufferer of God's just wrath.

(a) Lam. describes the sufferings of Judah's people as though one person experienced them. We can see this chapter as a record of the Jeremiah's feelings, or as a personification of an unknown individual or even as the nation of Judah's sufferings.

(b) Jeremiah's personal lament is a reminder suffering is always personal. When nations go through times of tragedy and tribulation, the greatest suffering always takes place at an individual level.

(2) What stands out the most in this chapter is Jer.'s identification with the people of Judah and with God. He suffered with the sufferers.

b) *He has led me and made me walk in darkness:*

(1) This can seem the hardest part of our situation, that God would lead us into a dark place without any easy way out.

(2) Yet that is the **best** thing about our trial. If the darkness is in the place God has led us, it is best for us to be in that dark place - with God!

c) *Surely He has turned His hand against me:*

(1) Jeremiah did not stay in this dark place, but he would not deny it being there. Many bad times he saw God as his adversary, not his friend.

(2) This = metaphor of oppression (being beaten with on all sides) = like a blacksmith does with a red-hot iron on the anvil till he has shaped it.

d) *He has besieged me:*

(1) As Jerusalem was besieged, so Jeremiah (and many others) felt themselves surrounded by bitterness & woe, slowly being strangled by God.

(2) *He has hedged me in:* May refer to lines drawn round the city during the siege. They also point out their "oppressed & distressed" state.

(3) *He has made my chain heavy:* As convicts used to be limited by a ball & chain, so Jer. felt God weighed him down so he couldn't move.

e) *He shuts out my prayer:*

(1) When things are right with our relationship with God He is our refuge and defense in affliction.

(2) In their depths of affliction, this was not the experience of Jeremiah and the people of Judah. They were surrounded, hedged, and blocked.

2. The one who feels God has become an **adversary** - (read vv. 10-18).

a) *The Lord has been like a bear lying in wait...* Jeremiah next vividly describes the many ways Judah felt God opposed and even attacked them.

(1) *He has bent His bow:* "This figure shows the power of the archer's arm, which transfixed the poet with arrows." (Ellison)

(2) *He has broken my teeth with gravel:* This figure expresses the pain and inability to eat food. Instead of bread one must eat *small pebbles* till all your teeth are *broken to pieces*. May also have been the last contaminated and very gritty sweepings off the threshing floor. Yuck!

(3) *To pierce my loins:* Both human and animal kidneys were thought to be one of the locations of life in Jeremiah's day. Others thought that joy and sorrow were sourced in the kidneys as well. May your kidneys be ever joyful!

b) *My strength and my hope have perished from the LORD:*

(1) No wonder Jeremiah and Jerusalem said, "*With God as adversary, what strength is there? What hope is there of either peace or prosperity?*"

(2) Jeremiah's mention of 'the LORD' begins to break the spell of misery that had bound him.

B. Focus on God: Can I see hope in God's help? - vv. 19-23.

1. The sinking soul finally comes to the end of itself - (read vv. 19-20).

a) *Remember my affliction and roaming:* Jeremiah did not prescribe positive thinking for this deep affliction. He actually felt it useful to remember it, to understand it for what it was, and not pretend it wasn't there.

b) *My soul remembers and sinks within me:* It was good for Jeremiah's soul to sink, to find its lowest point so he could build on the right foundation.

(1) A bitterness of **complaint** gives rise to a bitterness of **adversity**. It's not appealing in mankind when under the disciplinary hand of God; Worse, as mankind focuses on bitterness, hope flees.

(2) But here there is a different feeling; Mankind *humbles* themselves under the mighty hand of God, and only then does their *hope* revive.

2. New mercies from a faithful God - (read vv. 21-23).

a) Having sunk low in his soul (Lam. 3:20), Jeremiah now remembers something that starts hope within.

(1) "In a magnificent expression of faith in the unfailing mercies of God, the writer looks to the distant future with renewed hope."

- (2) "At the south of Africa the sea was generally so stormy, when the frail barks of the Portuguese went sailing south, that they named it the Cape of Storms; but after that cape had been rounded by bolder navigators, they named it the Cape of Good Hope. In your experience you had many a Cape of Storms, but as you weather them, let them become a Cape of Good Hope to you."
- b) *Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed:* This = one thing Jer. remembers. He recalls as beat down & defeated as the people of Jer. and Judah were, they weren't completely destroyed. There was a remnant, with a promise of restoration. Wherever God leaves life, He leaves hope.
- (1) The original in v 22 is speaks of the Lord's great love (mercies), coming from His covenant love & loyalty and leading to compassion & mercy.
- (2) Jer. gets comfort; seeming to say, "*Bad as this is, it could've been worse & I might've been destroyed if the Lord's compassions had failed.*"
- c) *Because His compassions fail not:* Even in the severity of correction God's people endured there was evidence of His compassions. There was rich comfort in realizing that the tender affection of God was not completely spent; these compassions were new every morning.
- (1) "The passage is full of beauty, as it deals with that tender compassion of God which had never been absent even in the work of punishment."
- d) *They are new every morning:*
- (1) Each dawning day gives mankind hope in fresh mercies and compassions from God. We need a constant supply and God has promised to send them without fail. No matter how bad the past day was, God's people can look to the new morning with faith and hope.
- (2) These mercies are always new because they come from God. "Our treasures are stagnant pools on the face of the earth; God's treasure (from heaven in His providence and grace), is like a crystal fountain welling up from the eternal depths, and is always fresh and always new" CHS.
- (3) *Every morning ends the night, brings a new day, brings new provision for the day, brings new forgiveness for new sins, and brings new strength to stand against new temptations, duties, and trials.*
- e) *Great is Your faithfulness:* All this made Jeremiah consider the great faithfulness of God; that He never fails. Even in Judah's catastrophe, God was faithful. He faithfully announced His judgments and performed them, and God would prove to be just as faithful in His promised restoration.

C. Focus on God: What does His faithfulness bring to us?

1. Many things we hold as solid & precious are built on the truth God is faithful to Himself & His children. Because He is faithful in character and action:
- a) God has the last word on **all** things.
- (1) Isaiah wrote: "*For just as rain and snow fall from heaven, and do not return there without saturating the earth, and making it germinate and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat, so My word that comes from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please, and will prosper in what I send it [to do].*" (Isaiah 55:10-11)
- (a) In other words, whatever God speaks, happens. He is eternally consistent. If He wasn't He could not be eternally faithful! Jesus Himself put an exclamation point on this truth: "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away.*" (Matt. 24:35)
- (b) The Word of God is His bond. He will always keep all His promises & will fulfill every prophecy He has made.
- i) A.W. Pink wrote, "*He never forgets, never fails, never falters, never forfeits His word. To every declaration of promise or prophecy the Lord has exactly adhered, every engagement of covenant or threatening He will make good*" (Num. 23:19).
- (2) Because God is perfect, He never changes. What He said thousands of years ago will be just as true a million years from now! Count on His promises to you. Rest in His prophecies. They are as good as done and done! Here's a second truth we love: Because He is faithful . . .
- b) God will **keep** me.
- (1) Jeremiah wrote: "*...the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases* (we are **never** in danger of being cut off and left alone as believers).
- (a) Paul said to a broken Corinthian church, "*(He) will confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.*" (1 Cor. 1:8-9).
- i) "*Jesus will confirm you to the end*" = "establish you, make certain." This guarantees that if you are a believer you will be saved.
- ii) "**Blameless**" = "**nothing** can be brought up against you" in the day of judgement because of Jesus Christ your Savior.
- (b) The assurance of your salvation is not that God will save you if you **stop** believing, but that God will personally see to it that you **keep** believing - that is He **faithfully** sustains you to the end; He **faithfully** makes your hope firm and stable to the end. He **faithfully** causes you to persevere. That's His **faithful** promise to you as a believer.
- (c) "*God is faithful; by Him you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*" (1 Cor. 1:9)
- i) What is the basis of this promise? God took the **initiative** in our salvation. He calls us "*into fellowship with His Son...*"
- ii) Truth: He's will never **abandon** what He started. He'll bring us across the finish line because "Great is His **faithfulness!**"
- (2) Jesus said this plainly in John 6: "*Everyone the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will never cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me: that I should lose none of those He has given Me but should raise them up on the last day.*" (John 6:37-39)
- (3) Paul writes confidently in 2 Tim. 1:12, "*But I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day.*"
- (4) God will keep me because the great and **faithful** God commits Himself to completing my salvation. He is **faithful!** That's our God!

III. Conclusions

- A. We could go on mentioning the benefits that flow from being related to God: Because He is faithful we can conquer any temptation (1 Cor. 3:10-15). Because He is faithful, He keeps up His side of the relationship even if we falter or stumble (2 Tim. 2:13).
- B. Because He is faithful, I can - as a believer - depend on Him, count on Him, and look for Him to come through for me in every circumstance.