

Gleanings of Grace

Lamentations 3

Lesson 31

The book of Lamentations was written for the purpose of being recited. Each chapter has 22 verses (the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet), with each chapter beginning with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, continuing to the last verse which has the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Lamentations 3 has 66 verses, 3 sets of 22. Three lines are assigned to each letter. Although chapter 5 contains 22 letters, it is not an acrostic. The fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the temple, and the captivity of the nation were unbearable crises to the Jews and they were free to express their sorrow. But at the same time, Jeremiah called upon his people to be sorrowful for their sins, confess them, and return to the LORD, noting, as we will especially see in this chapter, His unfailing mercies.

OBSERVATION: Lamentations 3

1. Read Lamentations 3 using the Observation Worksheet (the last page of this homework). After reading through the chapter, what would you say to someone if they asked you what it is about?
2. Key words help us to better understand the verses. We have listed below key words. Mark each one in a distinctive way (either with a symbol, highlighting, or some form of boxing, circling, or underlining). Mark each of the key words each time they are used in the text. Remember to mark any personal pronouns/titles that refer to *LORD*.
Key Words: *LORD, hope, soul, good, because,* and the phrase *let him/us*
3. The term of conclusion, *therefore*, is used two times in Lamentations 3. Mark the word. Choose one instance and record what it is based upon.
4. The contrasting word *yet* is used in verses 29 and 32. Mark the word and record what is being contrasted.

Background:

1. It is commonly believed that Jeremiah penned the words of Lamentations soon after Judah was taken captive by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Both 2 Kings 24,25 and 2 Chronicles 36 record those events. Scan 2 Chronicles 36:15-21 and summarize the events.
 - a. Verse 21 mentions *the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah*. Using Jeremiah 25:9-12, what was Jeremiah's warning to the people of Judah?

2. Before Jeremiah launched into his personal pain and distress, he described the plight of the people and the city of Jerusalem. Read Lamentations 1:1-11 and record a few phrases that describe their condition.
 - a. As you consider the state of the people, what are your thoughts?

Read Lamentations 3:1-18 - The Sorrows of Jeremiah

1. How does Jeremiah describe himself in verse 1?
 - a. Jeremiah had seen personal *affliction* and the *affliction* of his people. List some synonyms for the word *affliction*.

2. As God's prophet to the people, Jeremiah had experienced much *affliction*. Read his lament in Jeremiah 20:14-18 and summarize his words.
 - a. What do you think can cause a person to feel this kind of despair?

3. Using Lamentations 3:2-17, list five of Jeremiah's conclusions about God.

- a. Reflect upon God's heart and intentions for His people as you record the following verses:

Isaiah 9:2

1 Chronicles 29:12

Psalms 32:10

Isaiah 42:16

Challenge: Add Scriptures that reflect God's gracious intentions for His people.

4. At times when you are feeling hopeless, what truths do you use as reminders to help you get a true perspective?
5. Consider the desperate statement of Lamentations 3:18. Add to this by recording Job's cry of hopelessness in Job 17:15.
 - a. Meditate on the words of Psalm 39:7. How does what we *wait* for often determine how our *hope* is affected?

Read Lamentations 3:19-38 - The Confidence of Jeremiah

1. Jeremiah turned from talking about the LORD, to talking to Him. What did he ask God to *remember*?
 - a. What was God's warning to the people, if they did not repent? Jeremiah 9:15
 - 1.) *My soul still remembers and sinks within me* (Lamentations 3:20). Jeremiah had remembered God's warning and now, with his people, was a victim of the consequences of their rebellion. What do you think Jeremiah was pondering as he wrote those words?

2. Lamentations 3:21 reflects a transition in Jeremiah's attitude. What did he do?
 - a. Personally define the meaning of the word *recall* as it relates to things pertaining to the LORD.
 - 1.) What was the effect of *recalling*?
 - a.) In what ways has *hope* been the result of your *recalling* actions or attributes of the LORD?
3. Jeremiah had previously listed the many things that prompted him to lament. Using verses 22-27, list the many things that prompted *hope*.
 - a. Using your own words, briefly describe:
 - God's *mercies*
 - The *greatness* of God's *faithfulness*
 - In what ways the LORD is your *portion*
 - The *hope* you have in the LORD
 - An example of experiencing God's *goodness* because you *waited for Him*
 - b. The New Living Translation paraphrases verse 27 as: *it is good for people to submit at an early age to the yoke of his discipline*. What are your thoughts?
4. Each verse in Lamentations 3:28-30 begins with the two words, *Let him*. List the actions called for.
 - a. These verses speak of taking an attitude of submission and humility not only towards God, but also towards others who are inflicting harm. What can we learn from this?

5. In verse 31, we have a glorious reminder. What is it?
 - a. What comfort do you derive from the promises of Isaiah 54:7-10?

5. Rejoice in the truths about the LORD as recorded in Lamentations 3:32,33. How might you apply them in times that the LORD is chastising you for rebellious choices?

6. Israel may have been blaming God for their adversity, as if He delighted in it. Verses 33-36 describe some of what they had been subjected to. These verses are couched in two phrases that remind us of God's thoughts about their suffering. Of what does the first part of verse 33 and the last part of verse 36 remind us?

7. Meditate on the power of God displayed in verses 37,38. What do you see?

Read Lamentations 3:39-54 - The Prayer of Jeremiah (repentance)

1. In light of all God is, Jeremiah posed a question in verse 39. What did he ask?
 - a. What is your answer?
 - 1.) In reality, what do your actions reveal to be your answer at times?

2. Lamentations 3:40,41 again contain the two words *let us*. What did Jeremiah recommend to be the correct response to God's correction?

3. Verses 42-47 present God's reaction to a people who had *transgressed and rebelled*, and were *not pardoned*. Record them.
 - a. Soak in the sadness of the words of verse 44. What are your thoughts?

4. Lamentations 3:48-54 contain descriptions of the effects of these afflictions upon Jeremiah. Although the LORD had in many ways cut off His benefits from His people, read verse 50 and record what Jeremiah knew he could wait for.

Read Lamentations 3:55-66 – The Prayer of Jeremiah (vindication)

1. In the midst of such dire affliction, Jeremiah knew to *call on the name of the LORD*. Using verses 56-62, what did Jeremiah realize about the LORD?

2. Jeremiah's lamentation closed with a prayer for vengeance. Earlier in the chapter, Jeremiah called for submission and humility. He closed with leaving the payment for wrongs done to the LORD. What can we learn from this?

REVIEW: Lamentations 3

1. Using the reflections and counsels of this chapter, what advice would you give yourself in times of affliction, especially as it is imposed by others?

2. What valuable lessons have you gleaned from Lamentations 3?

*I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever;
With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations.
- Psalm 89:1*

Observation Worksheet

Lamentations 3

¹ I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. ² He has led me and made me walk in darkness and not in light. ³ Surely He has turned His hand against me time and time again throughout the day. ⁴ He has aged my flesh and my skin, and broken my bones. ⁵ He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and woe. ⁶ He has set me in dark places like the dead of long ago. ⁷ He has hedged me in so that I cannot get out; He has made my chain heavy. ⁸ Even when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer. ⁹ He has blocked my ways with hewn stone; He has made my paths crooked. ¹⁰ He has been to me a bear lying in wait, like a lion in ambush. ¹¹ He has turned aside my ways and torn me in pieces; He has made me desolate. ¹² He has bent His bow and set me up as a target for the arrow. ¹³ He has caused the arrows of His quiver to pierce my loins. ¹⁴ I have become the ridicule of all my people-- their taunting song all the day. ¹⁵ He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drink wormwood. ¹⁶ He has also broken my teeth with gravel, and covered me with ashes. ¹⁷ You have moved my soul far from peace; I have forgotten prosperity. ¹⁸ And I said, "My strength and my hope have perished from the LORD." ¹⁹ Remember my affliction and roaming, the wormwood and the gall. ²⁰ My soul still remembers and sinks within me. ²¹ This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. ²² Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. ²³ They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. ²⁴ "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I hope in Him!" ²⁵ The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. ²⁶ It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. ²⁷ It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. ²⁸ Let him sit alone and keep silent, because God has laid it on him; ²⁹ let him put his mouth in the dust-- there may yet be hope. ³⁰ Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him, and be full of reproach. ³¹ For the Lord will not cast off forever. ³² Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. ³³ For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. ³⁴ To crush under one's feet all the prisoners of the earth, ³⁵ to turn aside the justice due a man before the face of the Most High, ³⁶ or subvert a man in his cause-- the Lord does not approve. ³⁷ Who is he who speaks and it comes to pass, when the Lord has not commanded it? ³⁸ Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that woe and well-being proceed? ³⁹ Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? ⁴⁰ Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the LORD; ⁴¹ let us lift our hearts and hands to God in

heaven. ⁴² We have transgressed and rebelled; You have not pardoned. ⁴³ You have covered Yourself with anger and pursued us; You have slain and not pitied. ⁴⁴ You have covered Yourself with a cloud, that prayer should not pass through. ⁴⁵ You have made us an offscouring and refuse in the midst of the peoples. ⁴⁶ All our enemies have opened their mouths against us. ⁴⁷ Fear and a snare have come upon us, desolation and destruction. ⁴⁸ My eyes overflow with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. ⁴⁹ My eyes flow and do not cease, without interruption, ⁵⁰ till the LORD from heaven looks down and sees. ⁵¹ My eyes bring suffering to my soul because of all the daughters of my city. ⁵² My enemies without cause hunted me down like a bird. ⁵³ They silenced my life in the pit and threw stones at me. ⁵⁴ The waters flowed over my head; I said, "I am cut off!" ⁵⁵ I called on Your name, O LORD, from the lowest pit. ⁵⁶ You have heard my voice: "Do not hide Your ear from my sighing, from my cry for help." ⁵⁷ You drew near on the day I called on You, and said, "Do not fear!" ⁵⁸ O Lord, You have pleaded the case for my soul; You have redeemed my life. ⁵⁹ O LORD, You have seen how I am wronged; judge my case. ⁶⁰ You have seen all their vengeance, all their schemes against me. ⁶¹ You have heard their reproach, O LORD, all their schemes against me, ⁶² the lips of my enemies and their whispering against me all the day. ⁶³ Look at their sitting down and their rising up; I am their taunting song. ⁶⁴ Repay them, O LORD, according to the work of their hands. ⁶⁵ Give them a veiled heart; Your curse be upon them! ⁶⁶ In Your anger, pursue and destroy them from under the heavens of the LORD.