

Lamentations 3: "I" Moving from Depression to Hope  
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What hope is there for people whose lives are in ruin and have faced the day of reckoning? The problem is yesterday's news and nothing we can do can change the reality of the situation.

Judas comes to mind. He was one of Jesus' disciples. He did all that the disciples did, but his heart was not on the same page as Jesus. He stole money given to Jesus to help the poor and kept it for himself. He complained to Jesus about others use of money. When Jesus warned that we cannot serve God and money, Judas ignored the warning. He sold Jesus out for 30 pieces of silver. Then his world came tumbling down around him. When he saw what Jesus looked like and saw that he had betrayed Jesus, when he saw that the religious leaders were intent on killing Jesus, he became consumed by his own guilt and duplicity. Judas' life was ruined, he faced his own day of reckoning, and the pressure was so great, he committed suicide.

Lamentations 3 focuses on the pronoun "I." Here Jeremiah speaks about what is happening inside his own heart. He is describing the inner impact the ruin of Jerusalem had on his own life. He bares his soul.

### **Depression**

Jeremiah was depressed.

#### **Lamentations 3:1 ESV**

"I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath;"

What happened to Jerusalem affected him. He is afflicted personally by all that happened to Jerusalem.

This is the way it is. Children grow up; do terrible things and what is the response of the parents? "Where did I go wrong?" It's the kids that went wrong, but our identification with those we love is so strong that we hurt over them. I wonder what Judas' mother and father felt when they heard the news of his death.

Jeremiah is a good guy. He is a prophet who warned others of the need to follow God. But he is not immune from the pain that came when the day of reckoning came for those who rejected his message.

**Lamentations 3:2 ESV** “he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light;”

**Lamentations 3:3 ESV** “surely against me he turns his hand again and again the whole day long.”

There is no light at the end of the tunnel. Jeremiah sees that with the fall of Jerusalem is the fall of the nation. With the fall of the nation, irreversible harm has been done. Conquered nations rarely revive. The loss of his homeland was on his mind all day long.

**Lamentations 3:4 ESV** “He has made my flesh and my skin waste away; he has broken my bones;”

This sounds like Jeremiah couldn't eat and started to experience medical problems because of the stress related to the fall.

**Lamentations 3:5 ESV** “he has besieged and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation;”

Jeremiah was bitter. He warned people and they didn't listen. The judgment of God was very hard. He questioned God's justice.

**Lamentations 3:6 ESV** “he has made me dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago.”

Jeremiah felt like a walking dead man. We live in an age of displaced people. Those who have fled Syria, Afghanistan, the Sudan and other places have lost their home, jobs, countries and especially their dreams.

**Lamentations 3:7 ESV** “He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has made my chains heavy;”

In the midst of all of this, Jeremiah feels alone. There is no way of escape. God is not answering his prayers.

**Lamentations 3:9 ESV** “he has blocked my ways with blocks of stones; he has made my paths crooked.”

Life is not smooth. Everything Jeremiah would like to do has some obstacle connected with it. He has to work through and walk around these stone. Nothing is easy.

### **Lamentations 3:10–13 ESV**

“He is a bear lying in wait for me,  
a lion in hiding;  
he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces;  
he has made me desolate;  
he bent his bow and set me  
as a target for his arrow.

He drove into my kidneys  
the arrows of his quiver;”

Even though God attacked Jerusalem and is punishing the nation for her sins, Jeremiah feels the effect of this personally. What God is doing to Jerusalem he is doing to Jeremiah, at least in Jeremiah’s eyes.

### **Lamentations 3:14–17 ESV**

“I have become the laughingstock of all peoples,  
the object of their taunts all day long.  
He has filled me with bitterness;  
he has sated me with wormwood.

He has made my teeth grind on gravel,  
and made me cower in ashes;  
my soul is bereft of peace;  
I have forgotten what happiness is;”

I don’t know if you have ever been where Jeremiah is, but when your soul has no peace and you can’t remember the last time you were happy, you are truly in a depressed state.

**Lamentations 3:18 ESV** “so I say, ‘My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD.’ ”

Jeremiah is being truthful. In his depressed state, he has no energy to keep on. He has no hope from the Lord. God has not promised to fix the ruin that has happened

## Lamentations 3:19–20 ESV

“Remember my affliction and my wanderings,  
the wormwood and the gall!  
My soul continually remembers it  
and is bowed down within me.”

In his soul, in the innermost part of his being, he remembers his afflictions, his move from Jerusalem to Egypt, the constant struggles and oppositions, and he is brought very low.

This is a quote from the Maine Suicide Prevention Program.

**“Did you know that in Maine alone, there were 689 deaths by suicide between 2011 and 2013? That is an average of 229 suicides a year.**

**Further, between 2011 and 2013, suicide was the first leading cause of death for Maine adolescents between the ages of 10 and 14,**

**second among Maine residents between 15 and 34 years of age, and fourth among Maine residents between the ages of 35 and 54.1.”**

Many of you have been this low. You have faced depression and have wondered if life is worth living.

### **Move from Depression to Hope!**

God wants you to move from depression to hope.

**Lamentations 3:21 ESV** “But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:”

Jeremiah reminds us that the real battle is between our ears. It has to do with how we think. When we think of how two different people in a family deal with a crisis, we find that the differences between how they cope is determined by the differences in how they think.

When someone is as low as Jeremiah, it’s hard to know what to think. Life is in ruins. The day of reckoning has come. You are depressed.

Jeremiah stops and takes his focus off from Jerusalem and puts his focus on God. Jerusalem is in ruins. But what is God like?

**Lamentations 3:22–23 ESV**

“The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;  
his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.”

The path from depression to hope is to take your eyes off the ruin and put them on your redeemer. Take your eyes off the mess and put them on the master of the universe. Stop looking at the junk and look at Jesus.

God’s steadfast love never ceases.

God’s mercies never end

Every single morning the fact that we wake up is because of God’s love and mercy to us.

God is faithful.

God is faithful to himself. His steadfast love is part of who he is. He is faithful to his promises. He will both keep his promises to bless as well as his promises to bring ruin. Listen to God. He means what he says and says what he means. He is faithful to his word.

Jeremiah spells this out.

**Lamentations 3:24 ESV** “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”

**God is our portion!**

“The Lord is my portion.” What a powerful phrase.

**Numbers 18:20 ESV**

“And the LORD said to Aaron, “You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel.”

Instead of land, the Levites had God. God made provision for them to live in the land of the other tribes. The tribe of Levi had no territory, only God.

How fitting for Jeremiah. The land is gone. Babylon had come and destroyed Jerusalem. What was left for Jeremiah? The Lord! The Lord was his portion.

How different this verse is than the one that started the chapter. He moves from

**Lamentations 3:1 ESV** “I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath;”

To

**Lamentations 3:25–26 ESV**

“The LORD is good to those who wait for him,  
to the soul who seeks him.  
It is good that one should wait quietly  
for the salvation of the LORD.”

It is bad now, so wait... Don't make rash decisions. Don't despair of life. Don't quit. Don't hurt yourself or someone else. Wait!

The Lord is good to those who wait for him. He hasn't shown up yet. You feel that. He is coming. Wait. **It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.**

Don't live on how you feel, live in light of the Word of God. Wait! Wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Your hope is not going to be found in the rebuilding of the ruins. Your portion is not in the past. Your portion is in the Lord.

Your circumstances may be the result of something someone else did or something you did or something you neglected to do. Turn to Jesus. God is a God of mercy. His mercies may be new to you this morning. He wants to come into your life and help you. Let him in.