

## **The Hope of Eternal Life**

Sunday, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1984

### **Lamentations 3:21-26**

*“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.”*

Here is a passage of Scripture that I will be reading from in the Old Testament. I’ll be reading from the book of Lamentations Chapter 3:21. Actually, I am going to be speaking from verses 21 through 26. Let me read verse 21 to sort of capture your attention and to introduce my subject: “THE HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE.”

The prophet Jeremiah said; *“This I recall to my mind, therefore, I have hope.”*

My friend; the prophet Jeremiah is speaking here of his hope of eternal life. He knows some things. He was called of God, inspired of God, and sent of God. He knew that life on this earth is but a fleeting shadow.

Life is like a flower that blooms for the moment and then it is gone; it is here just for a brief time. He knew that and he knew *“that it was appointed unto men, (all men), once to die.”* Jeremiah knew that and all of his friends and his relatives had died. He knew *“that is was appointed unto men once to die.”*

He knew this; he knew that after death there is a judgment of God in which an account shall be given according to the things written in God’s Book, he knew that.

He knew that after death and the judgment that there was an eternity. There was an eternal existence for all men, either in the presence of God, or either eternally separated from God. He knew that and you know that.

Job kept saying, *“If a man die, shall he live again or is he like the tree that you cut down and it falls and never grows again?”* No, man will live again.

Jeremiah knowing these things felt in his heart that he had a hope of eternal life and eternal glory in the presence of God. His hope to enjoy that glory and to share in that

inheritance was in his heart and therefore, he wrote this; *“when I call all of this to my mind, therefore, I have hope.”*

It ought to be interesting to us, (you and me), to read what this man wrote concerning his hope. He tells us that he has a hope of eternal life. He gives us a reason for that hope. It ought to be interesting to you and me, especially, since we know that he wrote under divine inspiration.

The apostle Peter exhorted us to be able to *“give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason for the hope that is in us and to do it with meekness and fear, glorifying God.”*

Jeremiah says, *“I have hope of eternal life.”* He is going to tell us the foundation of that hope. He is going to tell us why he had such a strong hope.

My friend, it is possible for you and I to have a strong hope of eternal life. Somewhere between proud presumption (which I fear), and dead despair, (and I flee that), there is a blessed hope. Somewhere between proud presumption and dead despair there is a blessed hope.

Somewhere between the fleshly familiarities with God, of which we are seeing so much of today, there is a blessed hope. Somewhere between, where God told me to do this and God told me to do that, there is a blessed hope.

We seem to be talking like God lives next door and we have a private telephone line between the two houses. Somewhere between that fleshly familiarity with God and slavish fear there is a blessed hope.

Somewhere between modern decisions where a man makes a decision and decides that he is going to heaven when he dies, somewhere between modern decisions and cold fatalism, there is a blessed hope.

Jeremiah gives it to us here; this is one of the richest passages of Scripture on assurance and confidence to be found anywhere in the Word of God. He said, *“When I call this to my mind, I have hope.”*

Let me show it to you. Get your Bible and look in Lamentations chapter 3:22. Jeremiah, what is the first reason for your hope of eternal life, your hope of eternal joy?

First of all: In verse 22, listen carefully; *“It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed because His compassion, (His love), fails not.”*

In other words, when Jeremiah speaks of hope, the hope of eternal life, the first word he uses is *“the Lord’s mercies.”* Jeremiah’s hope for eternal life is based on God’s mercy.

Jeremiah’s hope was not based on his merit but on His mercy. It was not based on his morality but God’s mercy. It was not based on his works but His mercy. This was his hope for eternal life. *“When I call this to mind, I have hope. It is the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed.”*

You know, a man can build his hope of eternal life either on his merit or on God’s mercy, but not on both. You cannot do it. That is what Paul said, *“Salvation is all of grace or all of works”* but not both.

If you will look back in verse 19 of this 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Lamentations, the prophet said; *“I remember my affliction. I remember my misery. I remember the wormwood and the gall.”* In other words, he knew himself to be a sinner in need of God’s mercy.

In Psalm 51, listen to David’s prayer, it is the same thing; David said, *“Have mercy upon me O Lord, according to thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies; blot out my transgression.”*

My friend, this is what the Publican who was justified, prayed in the temple. He said, *“Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner.”*

So, when Jeremiah says, *“When I call this to mind; I have hope,”* what is the source of his hope? What did he call to mind? He called to mind God’s mercy. *“God delights to show mercy. God is plenteous in mercy.”*

*“This is a faithful saying that Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief.”* He said, *“The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.”* In Romans 5:8 it says, *“Yet God commended His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”* Our Lord said, *“I didn’t come to call the righteous; I came to call sinners to repentance.”*

When you ask a truly inspired person, a person who knows God, who knows he is a sinner, who knows that his sin comes short of God’s glory, what is your hope of eternal life? The first thing that he said was, the mercies of the Lord; *“it is the Lord’s mercies that I am not consumed.”*

There was an old preacher in Richmond, Virginia, a black man, during the Civil War who preached to huge audiences. People came from everywhere to hear this man preach. He was a great preacher of the Gospel.

Someone asked John Jasper one time; “when, you get to heaven and they stop you at the door, what right have you got to be here; what right have you got to be here in this celestial city, in the abode of God, in the majestic heavens? What right have you got to be here; what are you going to say?”

John Jasper said, “I am going to say; “I ain’t got no right to be here at all. I am not here on my rights; I am here on the righteousness of Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour. I am here on the mercy of another;” my friend; that is the foundation of our hope, the hope of eternal life, the Lord’s mercies.

Look if you will at verse 21; Jeremiah says, “*When I call this to mind I have hope. My hope is the Lord’s mercies.*”

In verse 23, listen to this; Jeremiah had hope of eternal life because “*God’s love, is new every morning. God’s compassion fails not; it is new every morning. Great is His faithfulness.*”

My friend; God’s love is everlasting. God’s love is infinite. God’s love is as old as the beginning. Whom He loves now, He has always loved. His love is as old as the hills, the morning stars, and the everlasting covenant. Yet, “*His love is new every morning.*” Do you see that? He is faithful; God is faithful.

Jeremiah didn’t boast of his own faithfulness. When he talked about his hope of eternal life he didn’t say, “I have been faithful.” He said, “*God is faithful. Great is Thy faithfulness.*”

I will tell you this, my friend; if our hope of eternal life is based on our faithfulness, we have great cause to doubt and fear. People will say, “I am just full of doubts and fears.” You have every reason to be filled with doubts and fears if you are basing your hope of eternal life on your faithfulness.

I will tell you this; “*He is faithful.*” That is what Jeremiah said; “*I have hope because God is faithful and great is His faithfulness.*” He said in Malachi 3:6; “*I am the Lord; I change not.*” He does not change. Everything about us changes but God does not change:

“Change and decay  
In all around I see  
O Thou that changest not  
Abide with me.”

In Romans 11:29, the Scripture says; *“The gifts and calling of God are without change.”* Hebrews 13:8 says, *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”* God is faithful.

What is Jeremiah’s hope of eternal life? His hope is God’s mercies and God’s faithfulness. God is faithful to His Word. In Numbers 23:19 says; *“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”*

God is faithful. *“Great is His faithfulness.”*

God is faithful to His purpose. He has a purpose. In Romans 8:29 it says, *“Whom He foreknew, He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son: And whom He did predestinate, He also called and whom He called, He justified and whom he justified, He glorified.”* That is His purpose and He will be faithful to it.

*“What shall we say to these things; if God be for us, who can be against us?”* He cannot fail. He cannot deny Himself. *“The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal; the Lord knoweth them that are His.”*

God is faithful to His Son. In John 6:37, our Lord said; *“All that My Father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. I came down from heaven not to do my will but the will of Him that sent me. This is the will of Him that sent me that of all that He hath given me; I will lose nothing.”*

When Israel came out of Egypt, there wasn’t even a dog left behind. The whole nation came out. The whole nation of the redeemed, the whole nation of the elect, and the whole nation of God’s eternal covenant will be redeemed by Christ; *“He is faithful.”*

That is what Jeremiah says; *“When I call this to mind, I have hope. God is merciful to sinners and God is faithful.”*

Thirdly: In verse 24 Jeremiah had hope because he said; *“the Lord is my portion.”*

What do I mean? I mean that the Lord is our life. The Lord is our provider. The Lord is our nourishment, therefore, *“I will hope in Him.”* He is our Father. He will not fail us.

Christ said, *“If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?”*

He is my Husband. He has entered into an eternal relationship with me. He is my Surety. He will fulfill my every need. The Lord Himself is my salvation and my hope.

My friend; this is where the modern religionist has missed this whole thing called “salvation.” Salvation is not a thing, it is a person. I know that salvation is an experience but experiences are not salvation. Christ is salvation.

People today talk of pardon. They do not talk of the person who pardons. People today talk of the place. They will say, “I can take you to the place.” I think I have heard of a song that goes like that; “I can take you to the place.”

They do not talk about His presence. They talk about the place and not His presence. They talk about the gifts but they don’t talk about the giver. They talk about the blessings but they don’t talk about the one who blesses.

Do you know that the sons of Levi, the priestly tribe, didn’t own any property? They didn’t have any property, any land. God was their inheritance. God was their portion; they lived on God and by God.

When a great violinist picks up a violin and plays it, the music is not in the instrument but it is in the violinist; it is in the hands of the master. A violin is just a piece of wood put together in a certain shape with strings and all on it.

Left alone, the violin will stay there forever and never sound a note. It will never alone sound a note. Some amateur may come up and pluck on it and it will sound terrible, just terrible. There is nothing worse than a terrible violinist.

When the master picks it up and plays it, the music is in him, in his hands. I say to you; the music of the life of God is in God and not in me or in you.

Try if you can to lay hold upon this; *“The Lord is my portion, the Lord Himself is my portion.”* He is my life, my nourishment, and all things. *“The Lord is my portion.”*

Someone wrote this poem years ago; I don't even know where I found it or who wrote it. I cannot give credit to the author because I don't know who the author is. Someone who wrote this found something out and they found out what I am trying to say. This person wrote:

“Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord  
Once it was the feeling, now it is His Word  
Once the gifts I wanted, now the giver I own.

Once I sought for healing, now I seek Him alone  
Once it was my working, His it now shall be  
Once I tried to use Him, now He uses me.

Once the power I wanted, now the Mighty one  
Once for self I labored, now for Him alone.”

Do you see what I am saying? Jeremiah said, *“When I call to mind these things I have hope and these things are the Lord’s mercies.”* It is not my merit but His mercies. I’m talking about the Lord’s faithfulness to His covenant, to His purpose, to His name, to His Word, to His Son, and the fact that *“the Lord Himself is my portion.”*

If the Lord Jesus Christ is my life and my portion, He is the Vine and I am the branch. He is the Head and I am the body. He won't be in heaven and leave me behind. You see; He is our fore-runner. He has already, for us, *“entered within the veil,”* and occupied glory.

Christ said, *“I go to prepare a place for you.”* Being one with Christ, where He is, I am. What He has I have. Do you see that? *“He is my portion.”* That is the thing that I want you to see more than anything else I have said; *“the Lord is my portion.”*

Fourthly: In verse 25, Jeremiah had a good hope of eternal life because he knew *“the Lord is good unto them who wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him.”* The Lord is good and the Lord is merciful. The Lord is gracious. *“The Lord is good to them that wait for Him.”*

The Lord is good to them that seek Him. Why is this? I will tell you why:

First of all: Those who seek the Lord’s mercy, the Lord’s grace, and the Lord’s person, do so with a deep sense of need.

Sin seeks forgiveness. Guilt seeks grace. Misery seeks mercy. We seek the Lord because we need Him. It is just like blind Bartimeus who said; *“Jesus, thou Son of David; have mercy on me.”*

Like the woman with the issue of blood that tried all the physicians and *“was no better but grew worse,* said; *“if I can get to Him, if I can find Him.”* She was seeking Him. I need Him and I come to Him because I need Him. Do you see that? The seeking sinner comes out of a need. Christ meets and honors that need.

Secondly: Those who seek the Lord, seek Him only in Christ.

Charles Wesley wrote these words:

“Jesus lover of my soul  
Let me to Thy bosom fly

While the nearer waters roll  
While the tempest still is high.

Hide me, Oh my Saviour, hide  
Til the storm of life is past

Safe into the haven guide  
Oh receive my soul at last.”

It is only in Christ. The Lord is merciful, the Lord is gracious, and the Lord is *“good to them that wait for Him.”* They are not satisfied with anything else. They won’t take anything else; they want Him.

Thirdly: They wait for Him and they seek Him *“with all their hearts.”*

They seek the Lord sincerely. He said, *“You shall seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart.”* It is a heart seeking and a heart pursuit.

Fourthly: Those who seek the Lord do so continually like Jacob of old who said; *“I will not let thee go except thou bless me.”*

My friend; this goes with the thing of waiting for God, those that wait upon Him, those that linger at His doorstep. This goes with things like Mary who sat at His feet; they wait on the Lord.



You cannot find many in this generation who are willing to wait on the Lord. They want everything instantaneously and want everything right now. They will just let men give it to them instead of waiting upon God.

I am going to sit at His feet. I want to hear Him say, *“Thy sins be forgiven thee.”* I want to hear Him say, *“Rise up and walk.”* I want to hear Him say, *“Well done, thy good and faithful servant.”*

I just want to sit at His feet. I will be patiently waiting at His feet. I want to do business with the King. *“The Lord’s good to them that wait on Him.”*

David wrote this in Psalm 27:13 and 14; *“I would have fainted except that I believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”* All the things about me, the circumstances, the environment was against him; all hope was just about gone.

David said, *“I would have fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait, I say, on the Lord.”* Again he said, *“Wait on the Lord.”* The Lord is good to them that wait on Him. Are you willing to wait at His feet? He is good to them that seek Him.

I will tell you this; those who wait upon Him and seek Him, know that He is the only source of mercy. He is the only source of forgiveness and pardon. There is no other source; I will not be satisfied with anything else; I must get to Christ. I must lay hold on Christ.

I seek Him because He has the mercy. I seek the Lord only in Christ and I seek Him sincerely. I am not playing games. Don’t play games with this now; don’t play games. You better be sincere. Christ said, *“You will find me when you search for me with all your heart.”* Do it continually and don’t give up. Don’t be discouraged or distracted.

Listen to this; those who seek the Lord will find Him. He said, *“Blessed are those that hunger and thirst for righteousness; they shall be filled.”*

Fifthly: In verse 26, Jeremiah had a good hope because he knew this; *“Salvation is of the Lord.”* Listen to verse 26; *“It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.”*

Oh my friend; that is where your hope is. Do you see those five things?

Jeremiah knew his misery. He knew his affliction and he knew of the wormwood and the gall. He knew the flesh and he knew the world. He knew all of these things.

Jeremiah knew that there was a life to live, a death to die, and a judgment to face and an eternity to spend. *“This I recall and therefore I have hope; I recall the Lord’s mercies, His loving kindness and tender mercies.”*

I recall that *“He is faithful;”* He will not fail. He is faithful to His purpose. He is faithful to His Son. He is faithful to His Word. God is faithful. He shall not fail. He is faithful in all things.

He is my portion. I have cast my lot with Him. I have committed my soul to Him. He is my portion. He will not disown me. He is my portion. I know this; those that wait on Him, He is good to them.

Someone last week said, “No sinner has ever perished coming to the door of mercy as a beggar. No sinner has ever perished casting himself at the feet of Christ.” *“He is good to them that wait for Him.”*

Don’t believe any other kind of religion. Don’t you have any other kind of hope; sit at His feet. *“He is good to those that seek Him.”*

Last of all: You can have all the confidence in the world of an eternal hope if the salvation which you have is of the Lord. *“Salvation is of the Lord”* in its planning; He planned it and purposed it in Christ Jesus.

From before the foundation of the world, God Almighty ordained that there would be a *“new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.”* That new heaven and that new earth would be populated by a people redeemed by the blood of His Son.

That is His everlasting covenant. Christ is the Surety and the great Shepherd of that everlasting covenant. God planned it.

Not only that; God executed this salvation. *“In the fullness of time, He sent His Son into the world, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were born under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”*

*“It pleased God to bruise Him,”* to nail Him to a cross for our sins, for the salvation of our soul; *“Salvation is of the Lord”* in its execution.

Salvation is of the Lord in its application; the apostle Paul said, *“When it pleased God who separated me from my mother’s womb to reveal His Son in me.”* God revealed Christ to the apostle Paul. God did it; He applied that salvation; *“salvation is of the Lord”* in its application.

Salvation is of the Lord in its sustaining power; *“we are kept by the power of God through faith.”* God keeps His people. He will not suffer us to fall. Though we stumble, we shall not, ultimately, be cast down. *“He upholdeth us with His hand.”*

God will sustain that salvation. *“He that hath begun a good work in you shall finish it (perfect it, shall finish it, shall complete it) in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

Watch this: Salvation is of the Lord in its ultimate perfection. Some day He shall take us out of the grave and take us to glory. He will make us into the exact image of His Son and we *“will forever reign with the Lord.”*

*“Salvation is of the Lord!”*