

(Lam. 3:1-20) - The whole book of *Lamentations* is mainly a chronicle of Jeremiah's sorrow and mental anguish over the fall of Judah and Jerusalem. He truly cared for the people to whom he preached. He spoke the truth concerning their sins and of the impending judgment of God that they were soon to face. His warnings went mostly unheeded, and he responded to Judah's rebellion with tears of mourning (*Jer. 13:17*). Jeremiah has been dubbed "the weeping prophet" because of the gloomy nature of his message and the grief he expressed for his people. In His humanity, our Lord wept for the people (*Luke 19:41-42*). He had pity on them, but remember, though He wept over Jerusalem, He executed just vengeance upon it. He will surely bring to pass His justice on those who neglect His salvation. By weeping He showed us that we need to recognize that our salvation is totally by God's grace, and we are no different than those who perish in their sins. God chose us, justified us, adopted us, redeemed us, and gave us life all by His grace and power in and by the Lord Jesus Christ. And we need to have compassion on the lost. We have nothing of which to be proud and nothing in ourselves in which to boast. We glory in Christ and His cross alone (*Gal. 6:14*).

When we consider human suffering in this sin-cursed world, we need to make proper distinctions. There is suffering common to all humans. All men suffer as this is the consequence of sin and the infirmities of the flesh (*Job 14:1*). There is suffering common and unique to all believers. This is suffering sometimes for their sins and sometimes for Christ's sake, for righteousness's sake (*Matt. 5:10-12*). The difference between suffering common to all humans and suffering unique to believers is that for the unrighteous, those who live and die in unbelief, it is a manifestation and foretaste of God's eternal wrath and damnation (*John 3:36*). For the righteous, those who believe in Christ, it is the loving chastisements from our heavenly Father for correction, growth, and to wean us away from the world and drive us more and more to Christ and His Word for our peace and comfort (*Heb. 12:5-15*).

(Lam. 3:21) - It is truly a sovereign and powerful work of God's grace within us as His people that throughout our lives here on earth, He always brings us to remember to focus on Christ in Whom we have hope. This is the certain assurance of full salvation, deliverance from all that would harm us, and the certainty that Christ will bring us to final glory (*Php. 1:6; 2:12-13; 2 Tim. 1:12; Jude 24-25*). Our prayer and desire are that the Lord will cause our suffering to lead us to and make plain the HOPE WE HAVE IN CHRIST (*Col. 3:1-4; Heb. 12:2*).

(Lam. 3:22) - This is that "peaceable fruit of righteousness" that God always brings to our minds in showing us that if not for His grace given us through the righteousness of Christ freely imputed to us and received by God-given faith, we would surely perish (*Heb. 12:10-13*). Salvation is of the LORD, and it is given to us out of His compassion. It is not of our works or our wills. "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not" (*Exod. 33:19; Rom. 9:15-16*). We are also assured that as we stand IN CHRIST (washed in His blood and clothed in His righteousness imputed) we cannot be charged with sin, we cannot be condemned, and we cannot be separated from God's love which is our salvation (*Rom. 8:33-39*). We must realize continually that if the LORD would impute our sins to us, we would not stand (*Psa. 130:3-4*). Our hope is in Christ Who suffered in our place for our sins and purged them away on the cross. Our hope is in Christ Who is our righteousness by Whom we are justified and from Whom we have spiritual and eternal life.

(Lam. 3:23) - The Gospel truth is always new and fresh to God's children. We never tire of hearing of God's compassions, His grace, mercy, and love for us in Christ. It reassures us that our salvation is secure because great is HIS faithfulness. We are commanded to be faithful to the LORD, and, by His grace and power, we will be faithful (*Php. 2:12-13; 1 John 2:20-3:9*). But the assurance and hope of our salvation is because of HIS faithfulness. Christ has always been faithful to His covenant promises to save us, keep us, and bring us to glory (*Rom. 3:21; 2 Cor. 1:20; Gal. 2:16; 3:22; Php. 3:8-9; Heb. 10:23*)

(Lam. 3:24) - Christ as our Savior, husband, brother, and friend, has undertaken our total care spiritually and eternally. He even cares for us physically in this world as we are HIS sheep and dwell in HIS pasture. He ever lives to make intercession for us so that no harm can separate us from His love (*Rom. 8:33-39*). Christ is our "*portion*," i.e. our part and inheritance from Whom we receive all spiritual blessings and benefits by God's grace (*Matt. 6:31-34; Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:3*). If the Lord indeed by His own choice and by God-given faith is my "*portion*," and He is so for every true believer, then I will "*hope in Him*" alone and in no one else but Him.

(Lam. 3:25) - The certain evidence that we are objects of God's love and goodness is that we have been given the gift of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Waiting for Him is the equivalent of believing and resting in Him for all goodness and blessing. This God-given faith is given to all who "*seeketh Him*." No sinner by nature, or of his own will, will seek the Lord. But God the Holy Spirit brings God's elect to seek Him in His Word, and, ultimately to seek Him in Christ as Christ is revealed in the Gospel of God's grace conditioned on Christ and by Whom all conditions are fulfilled for His people. All who seek Him shall find Him (*Jer. 29:13*).

(Lam. 3:26) - Man's natural measure of goodness is much too low. God's Word tells us that, in his natural spiritual deadness and depravity, man will always call good evil and evil good (*Isa. 5:20*). We see, then, according to God's Word, that among men and women by nature, "*There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; THERE IS NONE THAT DOETH GOOD, NO, NOT ONE*" (*Rom. 3:10-12*). Given this is the state of all men and women by nature, there are three things that we must see in order to seek, find, and wait upon the LORD:

(1) All goodness must be measured by God's standard, not man's. God's standard is Himself as He is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Righteousness and goodness can only be measured by Christ, God manifest in the flesh, and by His perfect work of redemption for His people (*Acts 17:31; Rom. 10:4*).

(2) All goodness must come from God by His grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

(3) Any goodness that comes through us is by God's grace in Christ and is only accepted with God by the merits of Christ imputed to us (*Eph. 1:6-7; Heb. 4:14-16*).

We see, then, that "*it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD*." This is the work of God in us by His Spirit through Christ Who our only righteousness before God. This is the fruit of Christ's righteousness imputed to us and from which we receive spiritual life.