

THE BELIEVER'S HOPE

LAMENTATIONS 3:18-26 • TV057B

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By
HENRY T. MAHAN

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Zebulon Baptist Church
6088 Zebulon Highway
Pikeville, KY 41501
PH: 606-631-9053

Lamentations 3:18-26

“And I said, my strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. 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.”

Over in the Old Testament there’s a little book called **Lamentations**. It’s a little book that follows the book of **Jeremiah**. It’s one of the riches Books in the Bible.

And I’m taking my text today from that little book of **Lamentations**. I’m going to speak to you on the subject entitled: **“THE BELIEVER’S HOPE.”**

Now in **Lamentations chapter 3:19-24**; listen to the prophet Jeremiah who says: *“I remember mine afflictions. I remember my misery, the worm wood and the gall. My soul hath them, that is (my afflictions and my miseries and sins); my soul hath them in remembrance and is humbled (or bowed down within me). This I recall to mind. Therefore I have hope. It is of the Lord’s mercies that we’re not consumed because His compassions fail not; they’re new every morning and great is thy faithfulness. Therefore, I have hope in Him.”*

And that’s our subject: **“THE BELIEVER’S HOPE.”** Do you have hope, a good hope? You know somewhere between proud, religious, presumption, (and there’s a lot of that) even at the

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Judgment they're going to say; *"Lord; we preached in your name and cast out devils and did many wonderful works."*

That's proud presumption to hold on to that even to the Judgment. But somewhere between that proud presumption and dead despair; I don't like that either, do you, where a fellow says, "Nobody can know whether he's saved or not till the dust dies down and the smoke clears and Judgment's over and then we'll wake up either in heaven or hell." I don't like that.

But somewhere between that proud presumption and that dead despair is the believer's hope. Somewhere between what we have so much of today, fleshly familiarity with deity, "Me and Jesus got a good thing going," you know; I don't like that; that's too familiar with the Lord. I don't care for that at all.

"Build me a house next door to Jesus and tell the angels I'm a coming home," you know; I don't care for that. That's too much familiarity there with a Holy God. There's no reverence and no awe and no fear.

But I don't like that slavish fear either that dares not to come to God even in prayer, dares not to call Him, "Father." Somewhere between what we have so much of today, this fleshly familiarity, and that dead despair and cold fatalism and slavish fear; there's the believer's hope.

Somewhere between modern decisionism where people walk down the aisle by the thousands and shake a preacher's hand and decide to go to heaven when they die and that cold, dead, fatalism, you know; somewhere between that is the believer's hope.

Someone said one time; "God has hedged us in on one side with His precious promises lest we despair and on the other side with warnings lest we presume." Did you get that? Think about it a few moments.

"God has hedged us in on one side with the precious promises lest we despair and on the other side with the warning after warning lest we presume."

I've been with John Newton in my mind when he sang:

**"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now I'm found
I was blind but now I see.**

**Tw'as grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed."**

I've entered into that amazing grace of God.

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But, I've also entered into what he was saying when he wrote this song:

**“Tis a point I long to know
And oft it gives me anxious thought
Do I love the Lord or no?
Am I His or am I not?”**

Have you experienced both feelings? Have you had both experiences? I have, I think many of you have.

You know, I've read in the Scriptures so many times of those who the Scripture says, *“Turned and walked no more with Him.”* That frightens me!

I read about Judas who sold out to the religionist. I read about Demas who loved this present world, who left the Lord, he was a firebrand for a while, but he left the Lord because he, *“loved this present world.”*

I read about Hymenaeus and Alexander who made a shipwreck of the faith. They were in there for a while, yea, and they were companions of the apostles for a while. And they ran a race for a while but they made shipwreck of the faith.

And then I read about Simon Magus whose heart was not right with God. And then I read about those in John's epistles of whom he said, *“They went out from us. They were not of us; had they been of us they would no doubt have continued with us.”* And I read Paul's warnings in the Hebrews, *“Take heed brethren lest there be found in you an evil heart of unbelief.”*

Oh my, I've been in the ministry 31 years and I've seen preachers, deacons, Sunday school teachers, church members, and professing believers. I've seen them lose interest in the Gospel.

I've seen them lose interest in Christ. I've seen them lose interest in the Word of God. I've seen them wind up in the gall of bitterness, in the pit of loneliness, wrapped in a false refuge and wrapped in a false faith, wrapped in martyrdom and loneliness and self-pity but depart from the Gospel.

And that doesn't frighten you? The Scripture says, *“Take heed, brethren, lest there be found in you an evil heart of unbelief.”* *“And if a brother be overtaken in a fault, you which are strong or (mature); you restore such a one in the spirit of meekness considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”*

Paul said, *“I keep my body and bring it into subjection lest when preaching to others (I the writer of the epistles, founder of churches, chosen of God, an apostle to the Gentiles), lest I become a castaway.”*

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Do you dare examine your hope? Do you dare examine your faith? Do you dare to examine yourselves as the Scripture says, *"Whether you be in the faith?"* Do you dare make your calling and election sure?

Do you dare to submit your hope to the Word of God? What is your hope? I'm not talking about your experience. Satan can give you experiences and dreams and visions. He's the great imitator. He's the great imposter. He's the great counterfeiter.

I'm not asking you to examine your feelings; feelings depend a whole lot on circumstances. Feelings depend a whole lot on health, comfort, sickness, sorrow, death, and all of these other things. Feelings are influenced by a lot of things other than God.

I'm not asking you to examine your doctrine or your tradition. It's possible to have religious orthodoxy and not know God. The Pharisees had religious orthodoxy. Christ called Nicodemus, *"A master of Israel."*

And I read about these fellows being a master of theology and a doctor of divinity and all that. And I say you can be a master of theology and not know the Lord. I'm not asking you to examine your theology.

But let's examine our hope, our present hope. What is my hope? What is my hope of forgiveness? What is my hope of pardon? What is my hope of eternal life? What is my hope of the resurrection?

What is my hope? What is the believer's hope? Go back to the text. Oh, Jeremiah sounds a beautiful note here doesn't he? He says, *"I remember my afflictions. I remember my misery."* My sins, like David, *"Are ever before me,"* my guilt.

"My soul has them all in remembrance and my soul is, humbled within me (bowed down). Then, I call to mind;" four things. Here he gives us the fore-fold foundation of the believer's hope; here it is:

I call to mind (four things) and therefore I have hope. That's right! It couldn't be clearer. Just mark that in your Bible; it's **Lamentations 3:19-26**. "I have four things that give me hope," Jeremiah said. Here they are; I'll give them to you one at a time, **verse 22 of Lamentations 3**.

First of all: *"It is of the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed."*

My hope is not in my merit; it's in His mercy. My hope is not in my works; it's in His mercy. *"It is of the Lord's mercies, that I'm not consumed."*

The Lord's mercies; that's what the sinner needs. That old Publican knew what he needed. He came to the temple. He was like Jeremiah. His sins were before him. His heart was bowed down within him and his soul was in misery. And he cried, *"O God, be merciful to me the sinner."*

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That Canaanite woman knew what she needed. She came to the Lord and she said, *“Lord; have mercy on me.”*

My friend; I hear Christ offered today on radio and television and from the pulpit. Now don't get offended, (now you listen to me). I hear Christ offered as a solution for life's problems.

“Oh come to Jesus; He'll solve your marriage problem. Come to Jesus and He'll solve your financial problems. Come to Jesus and He'll solve your health problems and your wealth problems and He'll make you prosperous. And He'll give you happiness and He'll solve your drug problems and solve your drinking problems.”

Let me tell you something, the apostle Paul never had any problems until he came to the Lord. That's right! He was at the height of the religious ladder. *“He was a Hebrew of Hebrews, a Pharisee of Pharisee's. He exceeded many his equals. He was in the tribe of Benjamin.”* He had no problems. He rode a white stallion. He was a conqueror. He was a leader. He was an intellectual. He was respected. He was admired.

But when he came to know Christ, he spent half his time in prison. He was kicked around. He was stoned and he was beaten. He was shipwrecked. He was scourged and later martyred.

The apostle Peter never had any problems until he met the Lord. That's right and then his trials began.

So these people that will tell you that Christ came to solve your financial problem; Christ didn't come to solve your financial problem; He came to save your soul. He came to bring mercy from the hand of God.

Actually, if you come to know Christ, your trials may increase. Do you know what our Lord said; He said, *“Think not that I'm come to bring peace to this earth. I came not to bring peace but a sword. I've come to set a man at variance against his own (his in-laws and his own people). A man's foes shall be those of his own household.”*

My friend; don't come to Christ to solve your financial problems. Come to Christ to save your soul. You need mercy. Jesus Christ the Lord didn't come into this world to solve your problems; He came to save your soul.

“This is a faithful saying that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners of whom I'm chief,” not to solve your problem. He said, *“In this world you'll have tribulation. Count it not strange when fiery trials come upon you.”*

Christ didn't come to heal your body and your bank account; He came to save your soul. *“I'm come to seek and to save them that are lost,”* He said. *“Call His name Jesus (Joshua, Saviour); He shall save His people from their sins.”*

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I'm saying to you, young man; you embrace Christ. I'm not saying your financial problems or your marriage problems or your health problems or any other problem will be solved.

You may be like David Brainerd who was one of God's greatest preachers; he died when he was 29 years old. Robert Murray McCheyne and Augustus Toplady who wrote, "Rock of Ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee;" he was dead at 38 years of age.

Some of God's greatest soldiers of the cross have had to endure the greatest suffering. And that's what makes it so foolish for you to wear a sign around on your lapel that says, "It's fun being saved."

Men and women have been called upon to die for their faith and to die for Christ. Maybe God will prosper you and maybe God will bless you. Maybe God will add to your family. Maybe God will give you health and maybe He won't.

It's all in His good providence. It's all for His glory and it's all for your good. But whatever it is; *"We know all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to His purpose."*

So whether it rains or shines I need His mercy, whether I'm in sickness or health, I need His mercy. Whether I am poor or rich I need His mercy. Whether I am successful or a total failure I need His mercy. Whether in life or death I need His mercy.

"To live is Christ and to die is gain." This world doesn't offer anything but misery and heartache and sorrow when it's all over. But I'll tell you eternity offers plenty.

And one moment in heaven will make this life here on earth to seem as just a vestibule leading into the hall of eternity, just a snowflake compared to a blizzard, just a drop of water compared to a flood. There's nothing to it.

And I know there were a lot of people in the New Testament who followed Him because of the miracles they saw; but in **John 2:20-23** Christ said, *"He did not reveal Himself to them."*

And there were people who followed Him because He fed them. He gave them loaves and fishes and they followed Him and He did not reveal Himself to them. But I'll tell you, every sinner that needed salvation and needed forgiveness and needed mercy; He revealed Himself to them.

The woman, the harlot, that bathed His feet with her tears, the woman at the well, old Zacchaeus up the tree, the thief on the cross, the leper who came and worshipped Him and said, *"Lord, if you will, you can make me clean;"* those people found mercy.

They sought mercy. That's what I'm saying to you. *"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."* And if you haven't come to the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy you haven't come at all. That's right!

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If you haven't come to Him for mercy, you have never been saved; if you've never been lost and you've never been found. If you've never been stripped, you've never been clothed with His righteousness. If you've never seen yourself a sinner, a condemned sinner, you've never been justified. You can boast of your religion till you die and God passes judgment on you but if you've never come to Him for mercy, you have not been saved.

What's the believer's hope? It is God's mercy, His mercy.

Second: Here is the believer's hope, the second foundation; that's what Jeremiah said, "*Great is thy faithfulness.*" We are not consumed, this is why we have hope, because, "*Great is His faithfulness*"

Now note this, Jeremiah didn't say, "great is my faithfulness, I'm going to remain faithful, I'm going to be loyal, and I'm going to continue." No sir; he says, "*Great is His (the Lord's) faithfulness.*" That's my hope. My hope is His mercy and His faithfulness.

Listen to **Malachi 3:6**; "*I am the Lord; I change not. Therefore, you sons of Jacob are not consumed.*" Now you change and I change. And I don't know what's going to take place tomorrow, but the Lord never changes.

Listen to **Romans 11:29**: "*The gifts of God and the callings of God (and salvation is a gift) is eternal life.*" And salvation's a calling, "*The gifts and callings of God are without change.*"

God is faithful to His covenant. That was David's hope. Do you know the last words that David ever spoke on this earth? David was dying. In **2 Samuel 23** it says: "*These be the last words of David, (sweet Psalmist of Israel, king of Israel, a man after God's own heart). He said, "The Lord hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, and this is all my salvation and all my desire."*" God will keep His Word.

What does **Numbers chapter 23:19** say? "*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? Hath He spoken? Shall He not make it good?"*

God said, "*I will do all my good pleasure. I'm the Lord; I change not.*" God will be faithful to His covenant and God will be faithful to His purpose, "*Whom He foreknew, He predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son. And whom He predestinated He called, and whom He called He justified, and whom He justified He glorified. Why shall we say then to these things?"* Well I'll tell you what we say, "*If God be for us, who can be against us?"* He won't change. He's faithful to His purpose.

And then He's faithful to His Son. Our Lord Jesus said in **John 6:37-39**; "*All that my Father giveth me shall come to me. And him that cometh I'll in no wise cast out. I came down from heaven, not to do my will but the will of Him that sent me. And this is my Father's will, that of all which He hath given me I'll lose nothing but raise it up at the last day.*" Read this carefully.

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He's faithful to His covenant. He's faithful to His purpose and He's faithful to His Son. That's my hope, that's my hope, God almighty is faithful.

Here is the third one now, which is my hope: *"It's the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."* That's our hope. God is faithful to His covenant, to His purpose, and to His Son. God will keep His Word.

Thirdly: Verse 24 of Lamentations 3: *"The Lord is my portion saith my soul; (the Lord Himself is my portion) therefore will I hope in Him."*

What does the word portion mean? It means my inheritance, it means my delight, and it means my joy. The Lord Himself is my joy, not just His Word, not just His doctrine, not just His blessings, but the Lord Himself.

And this is so important; will you hear me today? I believe this is where most people miss salvation; they stop at the means. They say, "Well I love the Word of God." Do you now? But do you love the Lord who wrote the Word?

Somebody says, "I love the sovereignty of God." But do you love the Lord who is sovereign? "Well I love the church of the Lord Jesus Christ." But do you love the Lord of the church? You see, it's mighty important.

People today talk about His pardon but not His person. You can't have the pardon without the person. The people today talk about His blessings but they don't talk about His being and you can't have His blessings without having Him.

And people today talk about the heavenly place, going to that heavenly place, but they never talk about that person who reigns in that place.

Our Lord said to the thief on the cross who begged for mercy; He said; *"Today thou shalt be with me in Paradise."* Paul said; *"I have a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far better."*

Do you remember the poem by A. B. Simpson that people use to quote years ago? I haven't heard it lately but it goes like this:

**"Once it was the blessing
Now it is the Lord
Once it was the feeling
Now it is His Word,

Once His gifts I wanted
Now the giver I own
Once I sought for healing
Now Himself alone."**

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Don't miss Christ. Don't stop at the means. Don't come to an altar; come to a person. Don't come to a pool; come to a person. Don't come to a doctrine; come to a person.

When we have Christ by faith we have all that Christ is. When we have Christ, when we are in His body; His grace belongs to us. When we are complete in Christ we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies and we have all that He is.

So this is Jeremiah's hope.

First of all: He says the believer's hope is the Lord's mercy. *"It's the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed"*

Secondly: It's the Lord's faithfulness.

Thirdly: And then our hope is the fact that the Lord Himself is our portion.

Am I in His body? You can't separate a member of His body from the head. You can't separate a branch from the vine that grows in the vine; that belongs in the vine.

Oh you pick up the withered branches that have been knocked off and are lying along the side road there and throw them into the fire. But those in the vine are living branches and bringing forth fruit. We're in Him.

Fourthly: In **verse 25**, is also our hope: *"The Lord is good unto them who wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him."*

That's His promise. So, the four-fold foundation of the believer's hope is the Lord's mercies, the Lord's faithfulness, the Lord's person, and the Lord's promise.

Not many people wait on the Lord do they, not many of us. How many of us are really seeking the Lord? Are you seeking the Lord? David said, *"As the thirsty deer panteth for the water brook, so panteth (so seeketh) my soul for thee the living God."*

As in a dry and thirsty land I'm seeking the living water. Are you seeking the Lord?

I'll tell you five marks of people who seek the Lord; are you interested?

First of all: Those who seek the Lord do so under a sense of need!

That's right, feeling guilty they want pardon. Feeling far off, they want fellowship. Feeling sinful they want forgiveness. They have a need. Everybody who came to Christ; (read your New Testament), everybody who came to Christ came with a need.

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They had sick children, they had guilt, they had sin, and they had all these needs and all who came to Him came with a need. The woman with the issue of blood came with a need and that need was met when she touched the Lord.

Secondly: Those who truly seek the Lord do so in faith, believing not in themselves but in His Word, *“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of the Lord”*

Those who seek the Lord do so in faith, not on the basis of their works, but solely by faith. He said, *“Look unto me, and be ye saved.”*

**“Turn your eyes on Christ
Look full in His wonderful face
And all the things of this earth
Will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace.”**

Thirdly: Those who truly seek the Lord do so sincerely.

Now you listen to me, there's no insincerity or hypocrisy but a diligent concern for my soul. Now you can't play with this thing of seeking the Lord, sincerity.

Fourthly: They that truly seek the Lord do so continually.

Jacob said, *“I won't let you go till you bless me,”* continually; they don't quit.

Fifthly: Those that truly seek the Lord are found of Him for He said; *“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness; they shall be filled”*

That's His promise and that's the foundation of our hope!