



Part 2: Surviving Tough Times

As Jeremiah witnessed the sudden destruction of his city in 586 B.C., he kept a journal-- the Book of Lamentations. It shows how to find hope in tough times.

Lam. 3:1- "I am the man who has seen affliction..."

Jeremiah's experience with despair:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of spiritual life
<i>"...when I cry for help, he shuts out my prayer." v. 2a, 8</i> • Loss of mental sharpness
<i>"... I walk in darkness, not light." v. 2b</i> • Loss of health
<i>"He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones." v. 4</i> • Broken heart
<i>"He pierced my heart with arrows..." v. 13</i> • Loss of hope and vision
<i>"My strength has perished and so has my hope from the LORD." v. 18 NASB</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of dignity, loneliness
<i>"I became the laughingstock of all my people; they mock me in song all day." v. 14</i> • Bitterness
<i>"He has filled me with bitter herbs..." v. 15</i> • Loss of prosperity
<i>"I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is." v. 17</i> • Loss of strength
<i>"My strength has perished..." v. 18 NASB</i> |
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Four simple acts that help in tough times

1. _____ with God
"I remember my affliction and my wandering, the bitterness and the gall. I well remember them, and my soul is downcast within me." Lam. 3:19
2. _____ on God

"Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope: Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." Lam. 3:19-23

- God's _____ never ceases
- God's _____ never ceases
- God's _____ never ceases

3. _____ for God

"I say to myself, 'The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him.' The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him." Lam. 3:24-29

- Wait _____ "seeks him..."
- Wait _____ "wait quietly... alone in silence"
- Wait _____ "bear the yoke..."

4. _____ from God

"For men are not cast off by the Lord forever. Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men." Lam. 3:31-33

"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners... to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion-- to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor." Isa. 61:1-3

Daily Meditations

Here's a chance to "take it home": Thought provoking questions about this weekend's topic!

This week's memory verse: *"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth." Job 19:25*

Monday

Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt distant from God? What happened?

Read Lamentations 3:1-33. What parts of this passage do you identify with?

Look back over the outline from this weekend's message. Which of the four points are difficult for you to put into practice?

Which are easiest?

Bring to God your struggles right now. Pray for others who are struggling. Thank God for His promise of comfort and sustenance.

Tuesday

In Lamentations chapter four, we see these characteristics of calamity.

- Sense of surprise

"The kings of the earth did not believe, nor did any of the world's people, that enemies and foes could enter the gates of Jerusalem." Lam. 4:12

- Sense of overwhelming helplessness

"...from our towers we watched for a nation that could not save us... Our end was near, our days were numbered, for our end had come..." Lam. 4:17

- Sense of being exposed

"Men stalked us at every step, so we could not walk in our streets... Our pursuers were swifter than eagles in the sky." Lam. 4:18

- Sense of being beyond comfort

"Our eyes failed, looking in vain for help..." Lam. 4:17

Has there ever been a time you felt these symptoms of despair? When?

What helped you?

How would you counsel someone in tough times and despair?

Ask God to help you stay sensitive to those going through tough times. If you're experiencing these symptoms today, talk to the Lord-- and a Christian brother or sister-- about them.

Wednesday

Look over the bullet points on page one of this weekend's notes-- the symptoms of Jeremiah's despair. Check any symptoms you may be experiencing right now.

Now read through Jeremiah 3:19-13 again. Where did Jeremiah find hope?

How is this helpful to you?

Bring to the Lord your struggles. Purposefully bring to mind the facts of the Lord's compassions and mercies. Thank God that you are forgiven and will be redeemed.

Thursday

Sin has consequences: That is one theme of Lamentations, as well as the book of Jeremiah. Many of the tragedies recorded in these books were a direct result of rejection of God. While tough times are not always a direct result of sin (they weren't for Job, as we saw last week), sin does frequently lead to tough times. Read Lamentations 1:18-22. Why do you suppose we continue to sin even though we've been warned of the likely undesirable consequences?

What sin has a grip on you these days?

What are the undesirable consequences which could result from indulgence?

Bring to the Lord your struggle with specific sin today. Bring to mind, as Jeremiah does, that the mercies of God never fail-- they are new every morning! Thank Him for his forgiveness and mercy toward you even as you ask His strength in resisting temptation.

Friday

Read Isaiah 61:1-3. Isaiah, about 200 years before Jeremiah, wrote this passage during a similar time of exile and stress for Israel. But this classic passage brought comfort. Then in Luke 4:16-21, Jesus reads this very passage and says he has come to fulfill it! How did Jesus fulfill these words of Isaiah for His followers then and now?

How has Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's words in your life?

Thank the Lord for His kindnesses to you! Dwell on how He has accomplished the truth of this verse in your life!

Saturday

Complete any devotions you may have missed and polish up the memory verse. *Please pray for the services this weekend. Thanks!*