

The Goodness of the LORD

Lamentations was written at the time that Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. Tradition assigns the authorship to Jeremiah, and he is a very good choice. He certainly was a capable poet and did write in the style of poetry common to Lamentations (see 2 Chronicles 35:25). Many of the pictures and images found throughout Jeremiah's prophecy also appear in Lamentations. In chapter 3 the author mentions his own life's troubles and applies them to the nation. They match well with some of the troubles we know Jeremiah himself experienced. In the face of Jerusalem's destruction, the prophet encouraged the believers to keep on clinging to the Lord. The nation was without excuse. It had had plenty of time to repent, but it chose the path of sin. Now its sins had brought the present terror. On its own the nation could not deliver itself. Its only hope lay in a return to the Lord.

The words that the apostle Paul would later speak about himself and his fellow apostles apply well to the condition of Jeremiah and the handful of believers who remained after the fall of Jerusalem: *"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed,"* (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

It seemed to Jeremiah and his fellow Jews that they could fall no lower. They had no visible resources, either from within or from without. The whole world had declared them a loss. They were thrown back upon their one last resource - in truth, their first and only resource - the LORD. At the very centre of his lament, Jeremiah broke out of the gloom by turning his attention to the character of the LORD, whose Word he had come to know and whose person he had learned to trust.

Because of the LORD's great love, God's people would survive. God's loyal love, which first made them His people, would keep them and protect them. By an oath and a promise, the Lord had separated them from all other nations. Purely by grace He had called them to belong to Him. Because of His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He had rescued them from Egypt. Because of that same promise, He had kept them through 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Because of that same promise, He had loved them down to the very end, always trying to reach them with the Word that would change their hearts and lead them to appreciate how much He cared for them.

His love had shown itself in His actions again and again. He could not help Himself. His love fired His compassion so that out of His deep feeling for them, He was stirred to come to their rescue time after time. Their history was a record of His love and action on their behalf. Every morning, every week, every year of their national and personal existence,

they had received new evidence of God's mercy. Nevertheless, they brought themselves to this desperate condition. They had failed. They had broken faith on their part. Even so, they could still rely on their God. He does not break faith. He keeps His word. They could still confess joyfully, "*Your faithfulness is great*"!

Deprived of all, they still had an inheritance. It is an inheritance richer than any person could supply. The Lord Himself was their portion. As the psalmist says, "*The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places,*" (Psalm 16:6). As members of the Lord's family and His heirs through faith, His people simply and quietly waited for the riches that would surely come to them. They already had the greatest possession: they belonged to the LORD. Sitting in the ashes of their ruined city, they could wait with confidence and hope, knowing that He would not disappoint them.

Jeremiah was certain of what the future held. He himself had experienced the goodness of God. To those who hope in Him, He is good. To those who seek Him, He gives good things, for He has promised, "*Seek and you will find.*" Knowing that He is good and knowing that good will surely come, it is good for us to wait in silence for the salvation of the LORD. His goodness will not fail.