

Calm in the Chaos!

When we experience chaos in life, 2 questions arise:

- 1) Did this really happen? I wish it did not happen.
- 2) Where is God? Does He even care?

Often our response and corresponding thoughts are:

- 1) It did not happen, as it hurts when we must deal with the reality.
- 2) God's mercies are not for me. How do I know if He is faithful

Sometimes, it is easier to deny the reality to avoid disappointment. Truth is, we need to accept both as reality!

Lamentations 3 (ESV)

- Heart of the book (3:22-26), Jeremiah expresses confidence that God will never reject when we call out to Him.
- Although Israel sinned in the past and there is judgement, yet His mercies never end, for great is His faithfulness.
- Lamentations discuss and explore both realities. Jeremiah expresses:
 - God's affliction over Jerusalem and its people
 - God's commitment, mercies, and faithfulness, are "new every morning."

Background

- Lamentations is made up of 5 poems, reflects on the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587/586 BC

- Describes the severe suffering and grief of the people. The strong language of the book, with no reference to their eventual return, indicates it was written very close to the aftermath.
- Jewish and early Christian tradition identifies Jeremiah as the author. There are some scholarly disputes. Though some passages suggest his authorship:
 - **2 Chron 35:25** *Jeremiah also lamented for Josiah. And to this day all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their lamentations. They made it a custom in Israel; and indeed they are written in the Laments.*
 - **Jer 9:1** *Oh, that my head were waters, And my eyes a fountain of tears, That I might weep day and night For the slain of the daughter of my people!*

Three principles to achieve calm in the chaos:

1) Release your burdens Lamentations 3:1-20 (ESV)

¹I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath; ²he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light; ³surely against me he turns his hand again and again the whole day long.

⁴He has made my flesh and my skin waste away; he has broken my bones; ⁵he has besieged and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation; ⁶he has made me dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago.

⁷He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has made my chains heavy; ⁸though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer; ⁹he has blocked my ways with blocks of stones; he has made my paths crooked.

10 He is a bear lying in wait for me, a lion in hiding; 11 he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces; he has made me desolate; 12 he bent his bow and set me as a target for his arrow. 13 He drove into my kidneys the arrows of his quiver; 14 I have become the laughingstock of all peoples, the object of their taunts all day long.

15 He has filled me with bitterness; he has sated me with wormwood. 16 He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes; 17 my soul is bereft of peace; I have forgotten what happiness is; 18 so I say, "My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD."

19 Remember my affliction and my wanderings, the wormwood and the gall! 20 My soul continually remembers it and is bowed down within me.

1 Peter 5:6-7 *6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, 7 casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

2) Restore your hope Lamentations 3:21-23 (ESV)

21 But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

22 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;

23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

Mercies = hesed = covenant loyalty

Isa 25:1 *O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you; I will praise your name, for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.*

Isa 55:10-11 *10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the*

sower and bread to the eater, ¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

Exodus 16:4, 31-36

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.

³¹ Now the house of Israel called its name manna. It was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. ³² Moses said, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, so that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’” ³³ And Moses said to Aaron, “**Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the LORD to be kept throughout your generations.**” ³⁴ As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the testimony to be kept. ³⁵ The people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan. ³⁶

Rest in God's portion Lamentations 3:24-26 (ESV)

²⁴ “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”

²⁵ The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him.

²⁶ It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

Deut 10:9 ⁹ Therefore Levi has no portion or inheritance with his brothers. The LORD is his inheritance, as the LORD your God said to him

Psalm 73:25-26 ²⁵ *Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.* ²⁶ *My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever*

Conclusion

- 1) Release your burdens
- 2) Restore your hope
- 3) Rest in His portion

Through God's endless mercies and God's unchanging character, we have calm in the chaos.