

“Depression” // Lamentations 3:1–30 // *Smoke from a Fire* #1

Series Intro

Let me apologize in advance for the **potential incoherence** of this message. I have spent the last 4 days at Summit Kids’ camp as a counselor for these fellas. **Pic.** We were assigned one of the **un-air-conditioned cabins**. In NC. In August. So, we didn’t get much sleep. I lost a lot of weight. But we had a great time and I got to know the kids a lot better. A little girl from our Apex campus said, “*Pastor J.D., you’re fun. On the screen you look boring. But here you’re fun.*” (I’ve got to start using some more props.)

Lamentations 3. This week I am going to begin a month-long series called ***Smoke from a Fire: How Our Emotions Reveal What is Really Going On.*** The title comes from a metaphor I have used over the years in my teaching here that I take from St. Augustine, a 5th century Christian theologian (perhaps the most important a theologian in the Christian church after Paul the Apostle). Augustine said that our **emotions often function like smoke from a fire**—they tell us what is really going on in your heart.

If you smell smoke in your house, it’s never wise just to whiff it away.

- In **our previous house** the smoke alarm near the kitchen was crazy-sensitive and crazy loud. So, when you burned the bacon even a little bit, it sounded like air raid sirens going off. So, you’d rush over and open the door and take your towel and start waving it around the smoke detector—which made the alarm stop, but

Works consulted:

A Theology of Emotions, Jimmy Roh

The Great Emoti Con, Steven Furtick

Trusting God in Darkness, Tony Evans

Getting Unstuck from Depression, James MacDonald

until you removed that pan and the burning grease, the problem would continue.

- **In the same way**—emotions are not usually the problem. They are *indicators* of the problem.

With that image in mind, we’re going to take the next few weeks to look at **4 or 5 emotions** that should function like smoke in your house. **As with the smoke,** the wise thing to do with these emotions is not to try and whiff them away, or suppress them, medicate them or even to manage them. The Bible would point us first to **read them as indicators** of what is going on down in there.

I think the **next few weeks have the potential to impact your life as much as any sermon series we’ve ever done here:** think about it: Your emotions determine how happy you feel about life, how much you enjoy life, how you see the world, and how you treat others!

The first emotion we’re going to look at is “depression.” Now, let me say right out of the gate—**depression, like all of these emotions, is complex.**

First, depression operates along a continuum. On one end of the **continuum** is discouragement, which we all feel from time to time, and on other end is depression.

- Between here and here a lot of different factors come together—**spiritual factors**, physical/**biological** factors, **psychological** factors or even **social factors**.
- *In this sermon series, I’m going to focus primarily on the spiritual ‘factors.’ But that doesn’t mean I think it’s the only contributor, or even always the **primary contributor in depression.** God made us a “**psychosomatic unity,**” which simply means it is impossible to*

separate, at least on earth, our souls and our bodies, and what happens in one inevitably affects the other.

- **For example—very simple example.** You ever realize how unspiritual you get when you haven't gotten enough sleep, or when you are hungry? I told you a couple of weeks ago, I can get really impatient and rude with people when I'm hangry. Now, in one sense, you could call that a spiritual problem, right? Nothing should justify my being rude. But the truth is, **my rudeness—which is a soul problem—is being triggered** and exacerbated by my physical condition. That doesn't mean I shouldn't pray for more patience, just that I should probably also take a nap and eat a Snickers bar. It's like 1 of my professors used to say, *"Sometimes the best thing that you can do for your spiritual life is get a good night sleep."*

(Now, to be clear, I'm not saying that what I experience when I'm hungry is the same as what you experience if you're walking through depression or that it can be fixed as simply. I'm just making the point that there is **a lot going on in any emotion**, factors both spiritual and physical (and psychological and social!))

- **And like I said, in this series** I'll be focusing mainly on the spiritual dimensions, but **for some of you who are really struggling with this, you need more than what I am going to offer from the pulpit up here**, and so to that end, I want to recommend our G4 ministries, which help people struggling with anxiety, depression, addiction, and other struggles.
- And, **our pastoral counselor who is in charge of that**, Brad Hambrick, will also be putting out some really helpful resources you can link to in this series that you can link to off my blog, jdgrear.com.

Emotion 1: Depression

OK—like I said, **depression begins with discouragement**. You get discouraged about something that really starts to change your outlook on life.

- Your **marriage just** is not getting better. You've had occasional glimmers of hope but now you've finally resigned yourself to the fact it's never going to be the family you've always wanted.
- **Or something has happened that really shattered** your sense of who you are—you got cut from the team; denied entry to the school; passed over for the promotion.
- Somebody **broke up with you and their insults** have really gotten into your head.
- A **loved one passed away and you're lonely**. And the pain of their loss doesn't seem to be going away.
- You're **still single**. Or single again.
- Maybe it's a **chronic illness**.
- Or maybe **you've messed up again**—you've blown another opportunity, destroyed another relationship, or lost another job. You are **convinced you're never going to get victory** over a particular structure.

Whatever it is, **when you look into the future**, all you feel is a suffocating darkness that keeps you from even wanting to get out of bed: **things are bad now** and you don't see how they will ever get better.

Which brings us to **Lamentations 3**. (Some of you **didn't know this book was in the Bible**. You were like "Lambda what?" and you are still trying to find it from when I told you at the beginning to turn there—it's in the middle of your OT right after the Psalms.)

The book will **surprise you** when I tell you about it. It's a book of laments—poems about how bad everything is—**5 of them** of the prophet Jeremiah.

- **(The book, btw, is a work of art.** If you have your **Hebrew Bibles** this weekend you noticed that each of the poems is an **acrostic of**

the Hebrew alphabet where every verse corresponds with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. (That's why each chapter has 22 verses, because the Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters.)

- The **exception is chapter 3, the chapter we are going to look at this weekend, which is a triple-acrostic**, which means each letter has 3 verses associated with it, which is why it is 66 verses.)
- What **Jeremiah is trying to show us** is that he's **describing suffering, so to speak**, from A–Z.
- The **other exception to this 22-verse acrostic is chapter 5**, which has 22 verses, but Jeremiah has abandoned the acrostic scheme, as if to show us that things have totally come off the rails and lost any sense of rhyme and reason.)

IOW, the very form of the book is **suffering from A to Z** that has descended into total chaos. Some of you can **already relate**.

Jeremiah lived during a time when Israel was being delivered over to exile for their sin. Israel had hardened their hearts to God so many times that God was finally exiling them from the land he had promised to them.

During his life, Jeremiah witnessed multiple, **violent** deportations of friends and family from his beloved Jerusalem to Babylon. He watched as **Solomon's Temple, the symbol of Israel's faith** and pinnacle of her cultural life, was torn down.

Jeremiah was one of the **remaining survivors in Jerusalem**, and **everybody that was left kept telling themselves** that the worst was over. But **God told Jeremiah that the worst** was yet to come, and Jeremiah was given the task of telling everyone the armies of Babylon would keep coming until nobody was left. (**Imagine that being your job**—to tell people around you that you love who have seen unspeakable tragedy that the worst was yet to come!)

To make matters worse, nobody believed Jeremiah; they called him a traitor and put him in a dungeon where Jeremiah 38:6 says he **sunk up to his armpits in mud**.

- It was from this hell-hole that Jeremiah **composed** these poems. **Is it any wonder** they are so dark?

All that to say, **if you think you're in a bad situation**, trust me, **Jeremiah gets it**. Your friends may not understand. But Jeremiah would have understood.

So, let's **dive down into the middle of this mud pit with him**:

Lamentations 3:1-33

¹ I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath; ²he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light;

- **"driven"**: the word in Hebrew means *driven like an animal*, as in with whip. He's probably recalling how he's seen his people—family members and friends—driven away into captivity.
- He's driven me into a place of **"darkness without any light."**
 - A few years ago, I read a book about **Ernest Shackleton's failed mission** to be the first explorer to cross Antarctica. His plan was to sail as far South as he could, and then walk a hundred or so miles across the South Pole. But there was an **early freeze** and the ship got caught in polar ice several hundred miles from their destination and crushed. They were **too far in** to walk back but **not far enough** to make it to the other side. **For over a year, they fought to just stay alive in subzero temperatures**. But the book said that the worst thing for these men was **not the temperature but the darkness**. At the South Pole, you see, the **sun goes down in Mid-May** and doesn't come back up until August. Those who have experienced this say that there is no **desolation so devastating** as the polar night. **Darkness all the time**. Days upon days of no light at all.

- **That's how Jeremiah feels. No light. No hope.** Maybe you can relate.

³ surely against me he turns his hand again and again the whole day long.

- Now, **important question**: who is the "he" that Jeremiah is talking about? **God**.

⁴ He has made my flesh and my skin waste away; he has broken my bones; ⁵ he has besieged and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation; ⁶ he has made me dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago. ⁷ He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has made my chains heavy; ⁸ though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer;

- **You ever feel like that?** Like God is not listening? Even more, you wonder, "**God, are you behind this?**" At the very least, you're not doing anything to *stop* it."
- *Here's the thing: Jeremiah knows that this feeling is not true.* He'll *show you that in a minute*. But regardless, this is **how he feels**.
- *Some of you have gone through dark chapters and thought these same things but you've suppressed those emotions telling yourself, "Real Christians don't ever feel like this."* **The prophet Jeremiah was a real Christian** and he felt that way.
- **Charles Spurgeon was a real Christian** and he told his 15K-member congregation: "I have spent more days shut up in depression than probably anybody else here." He **was said by many to be the greatest preacher** ever to live and he frequently considering quitting the ministry he was so depressed.
- **Martin Luther** was a real Christian and he went through times so dark that his wife would remove all the knives from their home for fear he'd kill himself: "*For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell,*" he wrote. "*I trembled constantly. I could find no thoughts of Christ, only of desperation and blasphemy of God.*"

- **One of our church planters, Trevor Atwood**, tells the story of when he first felt called to ministry, how he resigned from his job in Tennessee and moved his family to NC to come to seminary only to have everything fall apart. His marriage came within inches of destruction; he went into bankruptcy. The worst, he said, was holding his newborn son as he died in their arms. He said, "*I had no words. All I could ask God during that season was, 'Why?' I didn't want to talk about God or preach the words of God. I only wanted to rage against God. All I've done is I try to follow you and this is how you treat me?*"

Can you see **you are not alone** in your thoughts?

⁹ he has blocked my ways with blocks of stones; he has made my paths crooked.

- Every time I see a way out and start to make headway **GOD** crushes it.

¹⁰ He is a bear lying in wait for me, a lion in hiding;

- What's your **favorite image** of God? Is it *this one*? A **bear waiting** to maul you; a lion waiting to devour you?

¹¹ he turned aside my steps and tore me to pieces (IOW, I prayed for direction and instead he destroyed me); he has made me desolate;

¹² he bent his bow and set me as a target for his arrow. It's like God was hunting me!

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. This has all driven me to self-doubt. Maybe there is something wrong with me!

¹⁵ *He has filled me with bitterness; he has sated me with wormwood.*

Wormwood, btw, is a bitter herb that to Jews represented the judgment of God.¹

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..."* ²⁰ *My soul remembers (all of this) and is depressed within me."*

(vs. 20, CSB)

This is Jeremiah, ladies and gentlemen, the prophet of God!

Let's close in prayer.

No, seriously, is this going to be the **next passage** you commit to memory?

- **Some of you, as we're reading this**, may be tempted to pick up your Bible and be like—**is this the Bible?**
- **Shouldn't an editor** have weeded this out? "Jeremiah, this is not you at your best. Why don't you **take a nap and a shower** and take another swing at this tomorrow?"

So, **let's talk about that** for a minute. God **chose** to include this in the Bible.

- God **could have edited this out**. You know, what we need are more **positive and encouraging Psalms** like David's about the Lord being our Shepherd and still waters and cups running over and lions laying down with lambs and stuff like that. That's what the people like. That's what sells."
- Or, "You know, **Solomon's wisdom is pretty hot right now** and **we can't keep his sex manual**, *Song of Solomon*, on the shelves, so

give us that kind of stuff because that's what the people want.

Nobody is going to buy a collection of poems where the prophet rages against God, Jeremiah and says '**My hope has perished** from the Lord and God seems like a bear waiting to maul me.'

But God put this book in there, even though it's depressing and most of you will never memorize it because he wants those of you who suffer to know that he knows how you feel. And **it's ok for you to express** these emotions to God.

You see, this lament is honest even if it is not accurate. (It is an honest reflection of how Jeremiah feels even if it doesn't fully account for everything that God was doing.) And **I point that out because I want you to see** that it's ok to be honest, deeply honest with God.

Sometimes, in fact, I think **we can be too quick** with our answers in church: "*Are you feeling 'sad?' That can't be from God! Pop-on some K-love cause everything in the Christian life should be positive and encouraging all the time.*" No disrespect to K-love—it's a great station.

- It's just that **sometimes you need a God who walks through pain** with you.
- **And that's what you'll find in chapters like these.**
- **The greatest Christians in history were not those** that God delivered from all pain and misery but those he delivered *through* pain and misery.

Faith starts with honesty before God. But it doesn't stop there:

²¹ **But this I call to mind,** (This might be one of the most profound transitions in the Bible. I want you to see Jeremiah, in his dungeon, sunk up to his armpits in mud, thinking about a child he lost, or a

¹ Prov. 5:4; Amos 5:7; Jer. 9:15; Rev. 8:11. Cf. Matt 27:34

wife, wrestling with the prospect that he might never see them again, and saying DEFIANTLY “**But this I call to mind.**” and therefore I (choose to) 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.

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.

³¹ For the Lord will not cast off forever, ³² but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; ³³ for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men.

(Keep in mind, these are the middle verses of the middle chapter in a book that is **otherwise completely filled** with despair. This is the **anchor point** for the whole book of misery).

This is **Jeremiah’s answer to the spiritual dimensions** of depression. He shows us **what to do in the midst of despair.***

1. Call to mind the goodness of God (vs. 21)

(*This I call to mind*, says Jeremiah, and therefore I have hope: ²² The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases... ²⁵ the Lord is good to those who wait for him... ³³ for he does not afflict from his heart or grieve the children of men.”)

(vs. 33) What does Jeremiah call to mind? That **God’s steadfast love** never ceases and he does not *afflict from his heart*.

- What this means is that like any good father God allows his child to go through some pain but he never enjoys and he only allows it because he knows that the pain will ultimately produce greater joy later.
- One of the most traumatic experiences of my life was when I took my 1st daughter in for her round of shots at 1 year old. I know it is bad for the kid, but they should offer a class and a support group for us as parents...

Jeremiah said, “**In my pain, I cling to the goodness of God.**” And how do I know God is good?

- Because of what his word reveals about his character.
- How we saw him save the children of Israel from slavery when he didn’t have to.
- How he sent Jesus to die for our sins when he didn’t have to.
- In the **life of Jesus, we saw his heart break over every lost sinner** and healing and compassion flow to all who approached him.
- **We know from these things** that he’s a good, good Father, and we CHOOSE to believe that even when we can’t see or feel it right now in our circumstances.

“**Call to mind**” means this thought is not naturally in there—we have to put it in there. It’s what **D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones called** *preaching to yourselves*. He said, “...there is a sense in which the primary task of the Scriptures is to teach us how to talk to ourselves.”²

Your emotions, you see, don’t have brains. They can’t think. They can’t show faith. You have to think for them; you have to show faith; and then you tell them how to feel.

Here’s a phrase I want you to remember: We must never *feel your way* into our beliefs; you have to *believe our way* into our feelings.

² D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression*, 116

A lot of Christians get that we walk by faith, not by sight, but they don't get that we walk by faith and not by feeling. For many Christians, what they feel is their most reliable indicator of what is true. *I feel like God has forgotten me. I feel distant from him.* Jeremiah says, "I feel all those things but God's word tells me they not true" and I choose to believe him even though I can't feel it."

Luther used to call this **drowning out the voices of despair with the louder word of the gospel**. At times he would physically shout at the devil: *NO! I have not been abandoned. I have not been forsaken. God's word tells me and Jesus's death proves it!*

Maybe you should do that. Go somewhere it is quiet, so people don't think you are crazy and shout, "God is good! And call to mind his many acts of faithfulness."

And if you can't recall them, have someone do it for you. (This is why Christian community is so important. Because, inevitably, there will be times where I lose my way and I'll need someone else to call to mind the promises of God and remind me of them!)

2. Learn any lessons God is trying to teach you (vss. 26–28)

I want to be careful with this one because I don't want to imply that in whatever suffering you are going through God has you in it because he has some grand lesson for you to learn and he won't let you out of it before you learn it.

There are many times that is not true. There is nothing, in fact, that indicates that Jeremiah's suffering was any kind of response to what he'd done. Jeremiah had been a faithful prophet of God since he was a young man.

But still, look at what he says:

²⁶ *It is good* that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.
²⁷ *It is good* for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. ²⁸ Let him sit alone in silence when it is laid on him...

It is good because God often does his best work in us when we suffer even when we don't know why we suffer.

Here are a few things he might be doing:

- **Sometimes in our suffering God is trying to take out some idol from our lives.** **Psalm 119:71**, "My suffering was good for me, because it taught me to pay attention to your decrees." Sometimes God uses suffering to get our attention. (When this happens, you usually know exactly what it is, because the Holy Spirit lets you know what he's doing.)
- **Sometimes God might be trying to humble you:** A passage I think about a lot: **2 Sam 16**, David was on the run, having been falsely accused of something he didn't do. This guy **Shimei** comes out and starts following David on the road, shouting and spitting at him and pelting him with stones. One of David's men is like, "Let me go and relieve this guy of his head." David says, "No, even though I don't deserve this, I think God told him to do it," just to humble me and teach me. God will pay him back.
- **Sometimes God uses times of waiting to prepare you for ministry.** I have pointed out that times of waiting in Scripture are so common I would call them standard!
 - Moses
 - Paul
 - David
 - ²⁶ *It is good* that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.

Sometimes through pain God is giving you the ability to relate to others in ways you couldn't without the pain!

- **Spurgeon (who, again, told his congregation** that he was confident he'd spent more days in depression than any of them),

said, “I would gladly go into the depths of depression a hundred times in order to learn how to cheer a downcast spirit, that I might better know how to speak a word in season to the weary.” **Charles Spurgeon**

- **This is what Paul said**, God broke me so I could learn to comfort other with the comfort wherewith I have been comforted.
- **It reminds me of the statement by A. W. Tozer**, “For God to use you greatly he must first wound you deeply.”
- **Some of you have experienced that recently**—God has let you go through some painful chapter so that you can identify with and minister to someone else. You have lost a child, walked through the tragedy and pain of abortion, dealt with cancer, been cheated on—all so you could minister to people in those same situations!
- You see, sometimes the **good lesson God wants to teach is not even in you!** A few months ago, I told you about the cardboard testimony... **Jeremiah is telling us that there is coming a day** when we all flip over our cards and say “worth it!”

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

3. Realize that God’s plans are ultimately for good and for blessing (vs. 24, 32)

There are 2 different extremes different kinds of Christians gravitate toward in the midst of suffering:

- **Some in the midst of suffering will say**, “Well, Jesus told us in the **world we’ll have tribulation** and that we would carry his cross—which means there is no use praying for things to get better. We should expect only pain and misery and disappointment but God will help us get through it. People who lean this way usually identify as “Reformed” and love deep theology books.
- Others of you say, “**No, God has appointed us to walk in blessing. It’s like the story of Joseph.** You might be in prison now, but

that’s just temporary. He’s just using the prison to prepare you for the palace. The blessing is right around the corner so hang on—in just a few days I’ll be appointed the king of Egypt.” Those of you who lean charismatic tend to gravitate toward these answers.

Both answers are partially correct; and both are incomplete by themselves.

Notice what Jeremiah says. First, he says,²⁴ “The Lord is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in him.”

- **Portion is a word that the Jews used to refer to their allotment of land**, the inheritance passed down in a family from generation to generation.³:
- Jeremiah is saying, “I don’t have any land left. The Babylonians stole it all. But God himself is my portion.” He’s my inheritance and he’s better than land.
- Think of **blessing like a pie**: This part represents health; a good marriage; prosperity in my job. **Which piece did you get?** Jeremiah says, “God’s presence—fellowship with him—that’s my piece.”
- There’s **nothing wrong with praying for the blessing of friendship**, or marriage, or a better job. But you know what? God is better than any of those blessings.
- In the pie of God’s blessing, **God is the best piece**, Jeremiah says. He is my portion.

But Jeremiah also says...³² **Though he cause grief, he will have compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.**

Let’s be clear: Jeremiah **wanted deliverance from prison**. He wanted **vindication in the eyes** of the people. He wanted **reunion with his loved ones** and **restoration and salvation** for the people. And he says, **I’m convinced God will change things** in the days to come.

³ Deut 32:9; 4:20.

Why does he think that? Because **God is a good of goodness and blessing.**

- In the account of the creation one of the most predominant words is the word “bless.” God created the world **to bless it**—which means to make it flourish and prosper.
- **When God gave Abraham** his promise to bring salvation to the earth, he expressed that promise in terms of restored blessing. He told Abraham, “I will bless you and make your name great and you will be a blessing to all the families on the earth!”

So, **we have every reason to look for bless** and restoration in our lives now.

- In fact, I shared this verse with you from **Psalm 27:13 a few weeks ago.** David said, “I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” It’s not just at death I’ll experience God’s goodness. It’s while I am living on the earth!
- Psalm 88:10 says that **God doesn’t just work wonders for the dead,** and it’s **not in the sweet by and by that we** experience God’s goodness. We experience it now!
- In fact, in **Psalm 30** rather boldly charges God, “**Can the dead praise you?** I want to praise you now—I want to be a **testimony to my generation today** of the strength of your right hand, so let me experience that deliverance *now!*”

Don’t get so spiritual that you overlook that God’s intentions for the world are good. Don’t just say, “*Well, Jesus is enough.*” Yes, **he is enough.** But Jesus came to do something on earth, and I want to see his **goodness and restoration** at work in the world now! In my life. In my family. In our community.

I’m tired of people who try to be more spiritual than the Bible.

Though **he causes grief sometimes, I know, ultimately, he plans to** show compassion. **The arc of history and my life may be long, but it will bend toward Jesus!**

So...

4. **Get up tomorrow and look for the goodness of God (vs. 22)***

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.

Don’t you love this image of the new morning? God’s mercies and faithfulness are like the sun coming up new every morning, **washing away** the shadows and the darkness of the night!

Today may feel like a terribly dark, never-ending night of mistakes and despair. But God’s mercies rise new and fresh every morning.

- I **used to cling to this verse when I’d have a day** where I really struggled with some sin. I’d feel totally defeated but I’d tell myself, “Tomorrow is a brand-new day of God’s mercies! The sun of God’s mercy is going come up, full of heat and light, as if it were the first day of my life, unaffected by the darkness of the previous day. And God will be ready to begin a new gracious work in me that very morning!
- Some of you may think you have messed up so bad there’s no more plan for you.
- **Let me tell you: If you’re not dead, God’s not done!** His mercies are brand new this morning—and they will be again tomorrow morning.

For those whose depression has a primarily spiritual root cause, **this is the hope that drives depression away.**

- **Your emotions may be telling you that there is nothing ahead** but darkness and despair, but **you must call to mind** that Jesus got out of the grave which means he has **good plans** for you and

your family, **and ultimately your story** will end in victory and not defeat.

- **(Preach this glorious gospel to yourself.** The most influential person in your life is you because you talk to yourself the most.)
- Call to mind that it is by **grace you have been saved through faith**, it was the gift of God, and because of that we know God has preordained good works that you should go and walk with them.
- Call to mind that we were **saved for a purpose**—to bless us and make us a blessing.
- **The fact that you came to know him** was not accidental. God has a plan for your life—to use you for blessing and not for pain. Before you born, **Psalms 139**, he knit you together in your mother's womb, and laid out all his plans for you in a book before you had lived even a single day.

You may feel, like Jeremiah, like you have been forsaken. But this you must call to mind: *“the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness, O God!”*

For many of you, this will be a **watershed** in your life. **Don't let your emotions** dictate reality to you. Your emotions don't have brains; they can't show faith. **Let's God word** dictate reality.

FACT/FAITH/FEELINGS

- **Don't** feel your way into your beliefs; **believe your way into your feelings**.

So, again, get up and look for the goodness of God!

Which brings up one, final question: How do you know God has steadfast love for you? Some of **you may wonder. You have a life filled with mistakes**, and you wonder whether God might be punishing you for some past sins.

- Here's how you know: Re-read this chapter again, but **put it in the mouth of Jesus**.
 - **Wasn't Jesus the one** who experienced real exile? Wasn't he the one driven from Jerusalem with a whip, from God's people, and from the presence of the Father he loved as he carried the cross?
 - Wasn't the **one whose body God tore, like a bear**, the one into whom God shot his arrows of wrath?
 - Wasn't the one who **literally drank wormwood** (remember vs. 19?). Matthew 27:34 says they gave him vinegar mixed with “gall.” Gall is the Greek word for ‘wormwood.’ Jesus drank the full cup of God's wrath, so that **all that is left for us** is the overflowing cup of steadfast love.
 - **IOW, Jesus lived in the darkness of Lamentations 3: 1–20 so I could live in the beauty and light of vs. 21–33**
 - Jesus **went into depression** so I could get out of it.
 - He **went through the pain** so I could get the joy.
- So, now, **when darkness seems to hide his face, I rest on his unchanging grace. In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil.** On Christ the solid rock I stand...!

So, once again: *Get up again tomorrow. Get up and look for God's mercy. **God is not dead...*** The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on earth, good will to men!

Spurgeon, one last time: “I find no better cure for my depression than to trust in the Lord with all my heart, and seek to realize afresh the power of the peace-speaking blood of Jesus, and his infinite love in dying upon the cross to put away all my transgressions.”

This I call to mind—the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning, new every morning. Great is your faithfulness, O God!

Conclusion

Where are you looking for hope?

