

“Hope in the Waiting” (Lamentations 3:21–26)

The Ache of Waiting

You check your phone. Nothing yet. Maybe it’s test results. Maybe it’s a kid who hasn’t called in three days. Maybe it’s a marriage you’re not sure will make it, a job you just lost, or a season you never would have chosen and can’t see the end of.

Here’s what nobody tells you about waiting: it isn’t neutral. It asks a question we’d rather not answer: What do you believe is true when you don’t know how this will end?

You know what it’s like to live between what was and what’s next, with no idea how long the in-between will last.

That’s why the book of Lamentations matters. It was written by a man who knew what it was like to wait with no clear ending in sight. Jeremiah watched his city surrounded, starved, and burned to the ground. Everything he loved seemed to be collapsing around him. And in the middle of the wreckage, before anything had been resolved, he sat down and wrote.

You’d expect despair. For twenty raw, unfiltered verses, that’s exactly what you find. But then something changes. Not his circumstances. Not his losses. His perspective.

And if hope can break through there, it can break through whatever you’re waiting on today. Turn with me to Lamentations 3.

A Book of Laments

Since many of us aren’t very familiar with Lamentations, let me give a little context.¹ It appears in your Bible after Jeremiah and before Ezekiel. “Lamentations” is a word we understand but rarely use outside of church. It simply means a collection of laments.² To lament is to give voice to deep grief, sorrow, or regret. And if that sounds heavy . . . it is.

The book of Lamentations is made up of five poetic funeral dirges.³ It may be the saddest book in the Bible. Some have called it “the wailing wall of Scripture.” The author of Lamentations is Jeremiah⁴—the man known as “the weeping prophet.”⁵

Jeremiah began his ministry around the age of seventeen and preached for forty long, hard years. He was mocked, rejected, beaten, thrown into a muddy pit, and treated like a traitor by his own people.

As far as we can tell, there was little visible response to his preaching. No conversions. No widespread repentance. Yet, his message never changed: Judah had turned from the Lord, and judgment was coming. God would use Babylon to discipline His people.

For decades, no one listened.

But then it happened.

Babylon invaded. Jerusalem was surrounded, its walls torn down, its temple destroyed. Many were killed; others were taken into exile. The city lay in ruins.⁶ It was one of the darkest moments in Israel’s history. Lamentations was written after all of this.⁷

Hope Recalled

In Lamentations 3,⁸ Jeremiah describes a season when it felt like God was his enemy. In 3:1–20, he speaks with painful honesty. He says God has “shut out” his prayer (3:8). He feels hunted, like prey before a bear or a lion (3:10–11). His words are intense and unfiltered.

And that teaches us something important: God invites honesty. He doesn’t require only happy talk and polished prayers. Frustration, fear, disappointment, anger, embarrassment—these are real emotions. We don’t have to pretend they aren’t there. Faith doesn’t mean hiding our pain. It means bringing it honestly to God.

But in 3:21,⁹ Jeremiah makes a stunning turn:

“This I recall¹⁰ to my mind, Therefore I have hope.”¹¹

The verb “recall” means “to return” or “to remember.” The Hebrew word translated “mind” is “heart”¹²—the center of a person’s inner life. In other words, Jeremiah deliberately brings truth back to the center of his being.¹³ He rehearses what he knows about God. And that discipline leads him to say, “Therefore I have hope.”

The Hebrew word for “hope” carries the idea of waiting with expectation. It’s enduring because you trust what’s ahead.¹⁴

Let me repeat that: It’s enduring because you trust what’s ahead.¹⁵

Biblical hope doesn’t come *from* your circumstances.¹⁶ It comes *despite* your circumstances. It’s rooted in what you know to be true about God, even when everything around you feels unstable.

That hope doesn’t shield you *from* suffering; it steadies you *in* suffering.

You survive by what you believe, not by what you see or feel. We must rehearse who God is, what He’s promised, and how He’s been faithful.

So how do you do that? By resetting your mind in two simple ways.

First, take responsibility for your mind. You can’t always control what pops into your mind. But you can choose what you dwell on. Don’t rehearse only your problems. Don’t fixate on people or circumstances. Preach truth to your own heart. Recall a verse. Remember a time God showed you mercy. Ask Him to help you stay anchored in who He is and what He’s done.

Second, know your Bible. You can’t call to mind what you’ve never put into your mind. The Holy Spirit will bring back to us verses we’ve stored away. If you want truth available in a crisis, you have to store it in a calmer season. Jeremiah teaches us that hope isn’t accidental. It’s cultivated. It begins by choosing to remember.

Loyal Love

So, what exactly are we supposed to “recall to mind”? Jeremiah tells us in 3:22a:¹⁷

“The LORD’S lovingkindnesses¹⁸ indeed never cease.”¹⁹

When you see “LORD” in all capital letters, it represents the name *Yahweh*—God’s covenant name. It speaks of His personal, promise-making, promise-keeping commitment to His people. The word translated “lovingkindnesses”²⁰ is better translated “loyal love”²¹ or “steadfast love.”²² Love that doesn’t quit.²³ Love that doesn’t walk away. Love rooted not in mood or emotion, but in covenant commitment.

Jeremiah is saying: God made promises—and He’s loyal to those promises. His love doesn’t depend on our performance. It rests on His character. He remains faithful because that’s who He is.²⁴ That means our ultimate hope isn’t in our ability to keep God’s commands perfectly. It’s in God’s ability to keep being God. He’s faithful to His people because He’s bound Himself to them—and He doesn’t break His word.²⁵

Perhaps one of the most painful sentences a person can hear is, “I don’t love you anymore.” Those words fracture hearts and futures. And when people experience betrayal, they often protect themselves by deciding never to trust love again. Sometimes that guardedness even shapes how they think about God.

But God’s love isn’t fragile like human love. His loyal love “never ceases.” It doesn’t run out. It doesn’t expire. It doesn’t come to an end.²⁶ Despair may cloud our vision. Suffering may dull our senses. There are seasons when we cannot see or feel His love clearly. But His love doesn’t disappear just because our feelings fluctuate. When we “call this to mind,” what felt invisible becomes visible again. Hope rises, not because circumstances change, but because we remember who God is.

Fresh Compassions

What reason does Jeremiah give for God’s loyal and steadfast love? How can we be sure He’ll keep loving us? Jeremiah answers in 3:22

“For His compassions²⁷ never fail.”²⁸

“Compassions” is plural. That’s unusual in English. We typically use “compassion” in the singular. But here, the plural form highlights abundance. This word points to the tender, deeply emotional side of love.²⁹ In the OT, it’s related to the word for a mother’s womb—the place where a child is protected, nourished, and intimately cared for.³⁰ It’s a picture of deep, personal, protective affection.

That means God’s love isn’t cold or mechanical. He isn’t reluctantly faithful. His compassions flow from His heart. He’s moved toward His people.³¹ And not with a sentimental, fleeting emotion. Not with a “goosebumps” love.

Biblical compassion is love in action. It moves toward need. It shows up. It acts. It helps. It restores. And God’s “compassions” never fail. They never run dry. They aren’t exhausted by our weakness or worn down by our failures. God will continue to act toward us in mercy. He’ll continue to move toward us in love. His compassion isn’t seasonal. It doesn’t expire. That’s why we can hope.

A natural question we ponder when in crisis is: *When* will God give us what we need? Jeremiah tells us in 3:23:

“*They* [God’s loyal love and compassions³²] are new every morning.”

Jeremiah literally exclaims: “New-things for-the-mornings!”³³ I like that! But what does Jeremiah mean that God’s loyal love and compassions are “new”? He doesn’t mean that they didn’t exist yesterday. Rather, he means that with each new day, we see evidence of God’s love and compassions, and they’re ready to be received.³⁴

The word means “fresh.”³⁵ God’s loyal love and compassions are like that. They never quit!³⁶ If God’s loyal love and compassions are “new every morning,” you can receive them every morning. Each day is an invitation to begin again. No matter what happened the day before. No matter how you stumbled. His love meets you at sunrise.

Our family used to live in Spokane. One of my favorite things there was the sunrise. I’d often sit on the front porch early in the morning with my Bible and coffee, waiting for the light to break over the horizon. Even in the darkness before dawn, there was hope because the sunrise was certain. It was only a matter of time.³⁷

Jeremiah is saying God’s loyal love is even more certain than that. His compassion rises on schedule. It’s as dependable as the morning light—and even *more* faithful. So, when you wake up tomorrow, expect new mercies. If you don’t immediately see them, ask God to sharpen your spiritual sight. Pray, “Lord, help me see Your fresh mercy today. Help me notice how You’re caring for me.”³⁸

Great Is Your Faithfulness

Jeremiah now summarizes everything that he’s written so far³⁹ by declaring in 3:23b:

“Great is Your faithfulness.”

The word “faithfulness”⁴⁰ comes from the same Hebrew root as our word “Amen.”⁴¹ It carries the idea of firmness, stability, certainty. When we say “Amen,” we’re saying, “That’s sure. That’s solid. That’s true.” Jeremiah is declaring that God is utterly dependable.⁴² He’s steady when everything else feels unstable. He’s reliable when circumstances aren’t.

This is the most well-known line in Lamentations. It’s been immortalized in the hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness.” And for good reason. These words were born in a season of devastation, not in a season of ease. They aren’t sentimental; they’re anchored in suffering. Jeremiah looks at the ruins around him and says, in effect: Everything else may have collapsed, but God hasn’t. So, what should we do when our path forward feels uncertain?

Find hope in God’s faithfulness.

The Lord Is My Portion

Verse 24 brings everything together:

“‘The LORD is my portion,’⁴³ says my soul,⁴⁴ ‘Therefore I have hope in Him.’”⁴⁵

Jeremiah is talking to himself. He’s preaching to his own soul: “The LORD is my portion!”⁴⁶ Why does Jeremiah use the word “portion”? We don’t normally use language like this to describe God. But when Lamentations was written (500–600 years before Jesus), each family in Israel had a portion of land. That land was their livelihood. It fed them. Sustained them. Secured their future. It was their inheritance and their survival.⁴⁷

So, when Jeremiah says, “The LORD is my portion,” he’s saying, God is my sustenance. God is my security. God is what keeps me alive.⁴⁸ He’s declaring that God Himself is enough. Sometimes God reduces what we rely on, so we rediscover what cannot be taken.

“The LORD is my portion!” indicates that God alone is sufficient for us. Therefore, if we’re not fully satisfied with God alone, we’re immediately seized with worry and despair when any calamity hits! We must battle the constant temptation to find our “portion” in other people, possessions, or pursuits.

Now, there’s nothing wrong with finding joy in our health, our marriage, our friends, or our finances. But God is better than any of the blessings He provides.

God is better than great health. Some of the greatest men and women who have ever lived struggled through chronic health issues. Sickness and pain drove them to make the Lord their portion.

God is better than marriage. Earthly marriage is just a shadow of the heavenly love we crave. The tenderness, affection, and security we long for are found in the God who sent His one and only Son to die on the cross. If you want to be married, but you’re not, God is your portion. If you’re married and want to be single, God is your portion.

There’s nothing wrong with praying for the blessing of money. But God is better than money. He provides more meaning and more security than all the money in the world. God never crashes or dips, and He’s promised to provide for all of our needs.⁴⁹

God Himself is the best of all His blessings. *Find hope in God’s faithfulness.*

You may have noticed that both 3:21 and 24 end with the word “hope.”⁵⁰ The use of “hope” in these two verses frames this passage. Jeremiah’s hope isn’t vague optimism. It isn’t hope that circumstances will improve. Verse 24 adds two crucial words: “in Him.” This significant inclusion makes clear where the foundation of Jeremiah’s hope lies.

How did Jeremiah survive a life and ministry that seemed hopeless? He understood the importance of hope *in God*. Do you? Amid utter despair, it’s God’s character and commitment that provide hope.⁵¹ There’s NO lasting hope apart from Him.

In your discouragement and despair, are you hoping in the Lord? Will you endure in your expectation? Will you hope in the Lord? I hope so because your hope springs eternal.

Hope in Christ

As you respond to this message, you may choose to write out your own lament—to pour out your grief or your anger honestly before the Lord. Say what is heavy. Name what hurts. Be real.

Then, after you’ve expressed it fully, sit with it for a moment. Feel the weight of it. And then, as an act of faith, tear it up.

Not because the pain isn’t real. Not because the sorrow disappears. But as a declaration: “The LORD is my portion.” My hope isn’t in fixing everything.

My hope is in Him. Even the act of releasing your written lament can become a physical reminder that you’re entrusting your sorrow to the God whose love never ceases.

Find hope in God’s faithfulness.

Good to Wait for Him

Our passage closes in 3:25–26⁵² with these reassuring words:

“The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the person who seeks Him.⁵³ *It is good that he waits silently* [quietly] *For the salvation of the LORD.*”

The LORD is good.⁵⁴ Having meditated on the depth of God’s covenant-keeping nature and its implications, Jeremiah concludes that God is indeed good.⁵⁵ He’s good “to those who wait for Him.”

To wait for the Lord means we look to Him for deliverance. We resist the urge to trust our own strategies, strength, or shortcuts.⁵⁶ We loosen our grip on other sources of security. Waiting isn’t giving up—it’s placing our confidence fully in God. Waiting may feel passive. In reality, it’s active trust.

Verse 26 adds that it’s good to “wait silently” for the LORD’s salvation. This silence isn’t despair or resignation. This is the silence of trust. It’s a settled, confident expectancy.⁵⁷ Jeremiah isn’t panicked. He isn’t frantic. He isn’t demanding immediate relief. He waits with steady confidence that God will act in His time.

So, the chapter that began in anguish ends in anchored hope. Amid suffering, there’s hope because of God’s person and plan.⁵⁸

We can move forward—not because everything is fixed, but because God is faithful. My hope and prayer are that we’ll *find hope in God’s faithfulness*.

But perhaps you’re not sure you actually have this kind of hope in God. You can settle that today.

Lamentations 3 points us to the character of God: His steadfast love, His compassions, His faithfulness. But the fullest expression of that love is found in Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells us that our deepest problem isn’t difficult circumstances or loss. It’s sin. We’ve all turned from God. We’ve trusted ourselves more than Him. And sin separates us from the God who is our true “portion.”

Yet the very God whose love “never ceases” acted in compassion toward us. God sent His Son, Jesus, to live the life we couldn’t live—perfectly faithful, perfectly obedient. Then Jesus went to the cross and bore the judgment our sin deserved. On the cross, He experienced the darkness, the silence, and the weight that we deserve so that we could receive mercy instead of condemnation. Three days later, He rose from the dead, proving that sin and death don’t have the final word.

That’s where hope is anchored. Not in your ability to clean yourself up. Not in your track record. Not in your strength to hold onto God. Your hope rests in God’s loyal love demonstrated at the cross. Salvation isn’t *achieved*; it’s *received*. If you aren’t certain you belong to Him, you can respond right now.

Simply place your trust in Jesus Christ alone, and you’ll be forgiven. You don’t need special words. You come honestly: “Lord, I know I’ve sinned. I cannot save myself. I believe Jesus died for me and rose again. I’m placing my hope in You alone. Be my Savior.”

When you do that, the promises of Lamentations 3 are no longer just beautiful poetry. They become personal reality. His steadfast love will not cease toward you. His compassions will not fail you. His mercies will meet you tomorrow morning.

And you'll be able to say, with confidence, "The LORD is my portion . . . therefore I will hope in Him."

If you're ready, you can settle that today.

Scripture Reading

Lamentations 3:21–26

Exodus 34:6–7

Deuteronomy 7:9–10; 32:1–4

Psalms 73:22; 77:11–12

Psalms 30:3–5; 36:5; 130:7–8

Isaiah 40:31

Psalms 103:8–10

Study Questions

1. When have you experienced an especially difficult season of suffering? How did you focus on the hope God provides rather than despair (3:21)? What scriptures have been especially meaningful to you as you continue to experience pain? Were there people or beneficial resources that helped you through the crisis? If so, who or what helped you persevere? How can you share the hope and encouragement you've found in God's faithfulness with others this week? Who might need to hear about God's mercy and love?
2. Why is it so important to "recall to mind" truths about God (3:21)? How do biblical authors encourage their readers to remember God's truths? Read Romans 15:15; Hebrews 2:1–4; 2 Peter 1:12–15; 3:1. What are some creative ways you can recall truths about God's character and attributes?
3. How have you experienced God's "loyal love" (3:22a)? What has helped you trust God's love through suffering in areas like health, family, work, finances, or church? How have you experienced God's "compassions" (3:22b)? How can you begin each day with gratitude, acknowledging God's love and compassion as "new" every morning (3:23)?
4. How has the Lord been your "portion" (3:24a)? What people, possessions, or pursuits compete for your attention and affection? How do you deal with these distractions? How have you found "hope" (3:24b) in the Lord alone? When has hope been especially difficult to find? How has God shown His faithfulness in your life during hard or uncertain times? How can you encourage others who are struggling to find hope?
5. What areas in your life do you need to wait patiently for God's timing (3:25–26)? How can you develop a heart of hope and trust as you wait on Him?

Recommended Reading

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression* (Pickering and Inglis Ltd., 1965)

Michael Card, *A Sacred Sorrow: Reaching Out to God in the Lost Language of Lament* (NavPress, 2005)

Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* (Crossway, 2019)

Soong-Chan Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* (IVP, 2015)

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Notes

¹ For an excellent treatment on the biblical theology of Lamentations, see Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., “A Theology of Jeremiah and Lamentations,” in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck and Eugene H. Merrill (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 341–63. For a solid exposition of the book, see Charles H. Dyer, “Lamentations: The Sorrow of Sin,” in *The Old Testament Explorer*, Swindoll Leadership Series, ed. Charles R. Swindoll and Roy B. Zuck (Nashville: Word, 2001).

² For more on “laments” in worship, see <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/bringing-our-pain-to-god-michael-card-and-calvin-seerveld-on-biblical-lament-in-worship/>.

³ The construction of these five poems of lament is intricate. Hebrew poetry structurally depends on meter and parallelism rather than on rhyme. Note that chapters 1, 2, 4 and 5 each have 22 verses and, except for chapter 5, they are acrostic: All the verses begin in order with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The intent seems to have been to communicate that God’s judgment is complete, total, and all-encompassing. Chapter 3 is structurally unique compared with the first two chapters. It is a triple-acrostic with 66 verses instead of 22 (so that 3:1–3 begins with *aleph*, 3:4–6 begin with *beth*, etc.). So, rather than sounding like A-B-C-D, the structure is A-A-A, B-B-B, C-C-C, D-D-D, etc. It seems to increase the intensity of what is being said.

⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 162 n. 39, “Traditionally Jeremiah has been identified as the author because 2 Chron. 3:25 refers to Jeremiah having composed laments for the death of Josiah and because of the similarities in message and vocabulary between Lamentations and portions of Jeremiah.”

⁵ See the outstanding sketch on the life and ministry of Jeremiah at <https://www.gotquestions.org/life-Jeremiah.html>.

⁶ The destruction of Jerusalem occurred under Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C.

⁷ The Babylonian captivity happened because of Judah’s disloyalty and faithlessness. God’s people made a complete wreck of their lives. The thousands who managed to survive the long march into captivity in Babylon must have felt that their lives were over and that death was imminent.

⁸ A summary of the entirety of 3:1–66 is as follows: In the first part of the dirge (3:1–20), Jeremiah identifies with the miseries and despair of his people and makes them his own, as he depicts the conditions of Jerusalem’s despair. However, in the next section of the dirge (3:21–40), Jeremiah offers hope in the midst of the people’s despair as he reflects on the loyal love of their compassionate God who longs to forgive. These truths enable Jeremiah to find comfort and hope in spite of the people’s apparent hopeless situation. The dirge then closes with the confession of God’s forgiveness and restoration (3:41–66). Stephen S. Kim, “Lamentations”: BE 104 Old Testament Prophets, Dallas Theological Seminary class notes, provides a helpful outline: (1) Conditions of Despair (3:1–20); (2) Confidence of Hope (3:21–40); (3) Confession of Forgiveness (3:41–66).

⁹ Verse 21 has been called both the “hinge” and “the apex” of the book of Lamentations.

¹⁰ Jeremiah’s use of the word “recall” (3:19, 21) naturally evokes the many places that Moses encouraged Israel to “remember” God’s past faithfulness. They are repeatedly told: “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out” (Deut 5:15; 15:15; 24:18, 22; cf. 7:18; 8:18).

¹¹ The NLT picks up the significance of Jeremiah’s words: “Yet I still dare to hope when I remember this.”

¹² The Hebrew noun *leb* can be translated: “inner man, mind, will, or heart.” The NETS renders *leb* “heart,” but most English versions prefer “mind.” Paul R. House, *Lamentations*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 402, prefers the translation “heart” as well.

¹³ J. Daniel Hays, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, Teach the Text Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2016), 342, “A literal translation of the Hebrew behind ‘I call to mind’ is ‘I caused to return [*shub*] to my heart.’” I would note: The Hebrew word *shub* is translated in various ways. One of the most notable is that of “repent.”

¹⁴ Andrew J. Dearman, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 440. Hays, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 342, “The verb translated as ‘I have hope’ (*yahal*) connotes ‘to hope,’ but it especially implies ‘expectant hope with endurance.’”

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ F. B. Huey Jr., *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 471, “It is important to bear in mind that Jeremiah wrote this passage in the midst of chaos and depression. He revealed a deep faith in the trustworthiness of God.”

¹⁷ Verses 22–24 aren’t included in the Septuagint (LXX).

¹⁸ The Hebrew word *hesed* is the first word in 3:22 for the purpose of emphasis. Jeremiah, in his darkest hour, recalls God’s “lovingkindnesses.” It is no coincidence that Jeremiah has saved this verse for the middle of his book. I like to

think that this should be at the middle of our lives when we're weary and struggling through middle age. Jeremiah pens a message of God's unending love.

¹⁹ John L. Mackay, *Lamentations: A Mentor Commentary* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2008), 138 n. 93, "The translation of this line is difficult. Following the Syriac Peshitta and the Targum, the ESV renders it as, 'The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases', and in a footnote suggests that the Masoretic text may mean, 'Because of the steadfast love of the LORD, we are not cut off.' This is virtually the same as the rendering adopted by the NIV, 'Because of THE LORD's great love we are not consumed', where 'because of' is a translator's supplement."

²⁰ There are many different renderings of the Hebrew term *hesed*: "loyal kindness" (NET), "steadfast love" (ESV, NRSV), "faithful love" (CSB, NLT), "great love" (NIV), and "mercies" (KJV, NKJV).

²¹ Mackay, *Lamentations*, 138–39, "Unfortunately it is difficult to find an adequate English rendering for this word. As well as 'steadfast love', translators have resorted to 'covenant love', 'lovingkindness', or 'constant love'. *Hesed* denotes the quality of the relationship between two parties as being one of goodwill and mutual concern by which a favourable inner disposition reveals itself in practical acts of assistance and support for the other party. This frame of mind and its complementary actions are not one-off displays of kindness, but constitute an enduring bond of fidelity. The *hesed* relationship may be initiated by the action of one party, but it inherently requires a reciprocal response. This reaction may be formally structured in a covenant which sets out the terms of the relationship between the two parties, and in such circumstances *hesed* is specifically 'covenant love'."

²² After a long discussion, Harris concludes: "The word 'lovingkindness' of the KJV is archaic, but not far from the fullness of meaning of the word." See R. Laird Harris, "*hesed*," in R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody, 1980), #698a. For centuries the Hebrew noun *hesed* was translated with words like "mercy," "kindness," and "love." The Septuagint usually uses *eleos* for "mercy." In the 20th century, however, some scholars began to understand *hesed* in terms of faithfulness to covenant obligations. But it's not that simple. *Hesed* is often used in parallel with words such as love (*raham*), goodness (*tob*), and mercy (*hannun*), words that don't necessarily have a covenant context. So, while *hesed* may include fulfilling one's ethical obligations toward those with whom one is in covenant, it is far more expansive than this. Yahweh's *hesed* is free, not obligated.

²³ See 1 Cor 13:7–8a: "[Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."

²⁴ Dearman, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 440, insightfully remarks: "*Hesed* is the kind of act that is not required by civil law but springs from the concerned character of the one who acts. A good place to see its focus is in the saying of Hosea 6:6, that God prefers *hesed* to sacrifice and the *knowledge of God* rather than burnt offerings. *Hesed* and knowledge of God are paired together in the poetic couplet, and both are contrasted with ritual acts that, while good and proper, must proceed from something deeper and more fundamental than a sense of obligation. Stated differently, sacrifice is a requirement of the Torah and therefore good and proper in context, but *hesed* is something that can be freely given but not defined by requirements."

²⁵ The term *hesed* is plural to intensify the character of God's love or, more likely, to point to the abundant instances of the LORD's loyal love.²⁵ The word *hesed* is used by God after the failure of the Israelites with the golden calf in Exodus 34. God was willing to restore His people and renew His covenant with them because He is "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Exod 34:6 ESV). In Deuteronomy 30, God tells His people that even after they sin, He'll have compassion on them when they turn to Him (Deut 30:3).

²⁶ HALOT s.v. *tamam* 4.

²⁷ The term "compassions" (*racham*) occurs only here in Lamentations.

²⁸ The NIV and KJV render 3:22b as "Because of the LORD's great love/mercies we are not consumed," while the ESV, NRSV, and NASB render it: "The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases." I prefer these latter translations because they support the clear parallelism between 3:22a and 3:22b.

²⁹ See Gen 49:25: From the God of your father who helps you, And by the Almighty who blesses you With blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that lies beneath, Blessings of the breasts and of the womb [*rechem*]." See also Dearman, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, 441.

³⁰ The word "compassion" comes from the Hebrew word "womb" and shows us the gentle feeling of concern and care that God has for us. The verb literally means, "to be moved in the heart out of love for another." God's compassion emanates from deep within Him and floods our lives. Isaiah 49:15: "Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion [*racham*] on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you."

³¹ The verb "to have compassion" refers to deep love (usually of a "superior" for an "inferior") rooted in some natural bond." When used of God, the word incorporates two concepts: (1) The strong tie God has with those whom He has called as His children. (2) God's unconditioned choice: He is gracious and merciful to whomever He chooses (Exod 33:19). See Leonard J. Coppes, "*raham*," TWOT #2146b.

³² House, *Lamentations*, 414, states the antecedent can include both or just acts of loyal love. Mackay, *Lamentations*, 140, suggests, “The antecedent of ‘they are new’ is ‘acts of steadfast love’, rather than ‘compassions’ which describes a constant, prevailing attitude.”

³³ See also Robin A. Parry, *Lamentations*, Two Horizons Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 101.

³⁴ House, *Lamentations*, 414–15.

³⁵ HALOT s.v. *hadash*: “new, fresh.”

³⁶ Mackay, *Lamentations*, 140, “Each day presents a new struggle for which there is no surplus from the previous day’s supplies. Moreover, ‘new’ presents a note of surprising, unanticipated provision. It is not a matter of presumption, but grateful recognition of the unforeseen ways in which the goodness and wisdom of God are displayed time and again when he imparts resources to cope with the challenges of life.”

³⁷ See a similar illustration in Steven Smith, *Exalting Jesus in Jeremiah, Lamentations*, Christ-Centered Exposition (Nashville: B&H, 2019), 284.

³⁸ This passage can be summed up in the LORD’s words to Moses in Exod 34:6: “The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (cf. Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Pss 86:15; 103:8–10; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Mic 7:18).

³⁹ Hays, *Jeremiah and Lamentations*, 343.

⁴⁰ HALOT s.v. *emuna* 2: “trustworthiness, faithfulness.” The background of the word includes “firmness, fidelity, steadiness.”

⁴¹ The Hebrew word is *aman*.

⁴² Jack B. Scott, “*aman*,” TWOT #116e.

⁴³ There are parallels between 3:21–24 and Psalms 73. See Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Lamentations: Honest to God*, The Bible Speaks Today (England: Inter-Varsity, 2015), 111.

⁴⁴ NET note 57: “*Heb* ‘My soul said...’ The term *nafshi*, ‘my soul’ is a synecdoche of part (= my soul) for the whole person (= I).”

⁴⁵ House, *Lamentations*, 415, “This verse [3:24] completes the speaker’s change of attitude from despair to nascent hope.”

⁴⁶ Psalm 73:26 puts it well: “My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

⁴⁷ Some people might lease their piece of land, and they would take the income and buy food to feed their family. Or, if they were farmers, they would farm the land, raising crops and livestock on it. That’s what kept them alive.

⁴⁸ See also Steve Mathewson, “God Is Still Loving” (Lam 3:1–30);

<https://www.preachingtoday.com/sermons/sermons/2011/february/godstillloving.html>.

⁴⁹ See Phil 4:19: “And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

⁵⁰ The wording of the two clauses in 3:21 and 24 is identical, except 3:24 adds the prepositional phrase, “for Him.” The verb *yachal* (3:21, 24) has an adjective *yachil* (translated “waits”) that is used in 3:26. The noun form of this word occurs in 3:18, translated as “hoped.”

⁵¹ Mackay, *Lamentations*, 141.

⁵² Each of the three verses of 3:25–27 begins with “good” (*tob*). There is an alphabetic acrostic format of the chapter, which has now reached the Hebrew letter *teth*.

⁵³ Wright, *The Message of Lamentations*, 114 n. 34, “Indeed, the Poet emphasizes his point by triple repetition of the word *good* (*tôb*) at the start of every line of the stanza beginning with the Hebrew letter *tet* (25–27)—*good ... good ... good*. This stanza and the next but one (31–33; *for ... for ... for*) are the only two stanzas in the poem that use this device of triple repetition of whole first words, not just first letters. It gives significant weight and prominence to the content of these stanzas.”

⁵⁴ This truth hasn’t been mentioned yet in this book of lament.

⁵⁵ Abner Chou, *Lamentations*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham: Lexham, 2014), La 3:25.

⁵⁶ See Job 6:11; also 1 Sam 10:8; 13:8.

⁵⁷ House, *Lamentations*, 416; Parry, *Lamentations*, 104.

⁵⁸ Chou, *Lamentations*, La 3:31.