**A 5 Step Plan for Handling Adversity**

*Lamentations 3:19-33*

**Introduction**

1. After Hezekiah aided Babylonian envoys and showed them his wealth, God promised that Judah would be taken captive by Babylon – **2 Kings 20:16-18**
2. The city of Jerusalem was besieged, and it and the temple were destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC.
3. Lamentations is a collection of five interconnected poems, or laments, reflecting on the carnage and destruction witnessed by the people of Jerusalem at the hands of Babylon.
4. Key verses from each chapter which show the sorrow in the book:
	1. ***“Is any sorrow like my sorrow” (1:12).***
	2. ***“He has poured out His fury like fire” (2:4).***
	3. ***“He kindled a fire in Zion” (4:11).***
	4. ***“Remember, O Lord, what has come upon us; Look, and behold our reproach” (5:1).***
	5. However, despite all the gloom – ***“There may yet be hope” (3:29).*** (God had told them He would cause a remnant to return after captivity in Babylon.)
5. While the book concerns a people severely punished for unfaithfulness it provides a standard of facing tragedy and turmoil with confidence in God.
6. God’s unfailing mercies, compassions, and His great faithfulness will bring those who turn to Him out of despair, be it the consequences of sin, or the frailty of life under the sun.
7. Cast Your Care Upon the Lord **(vv. 19-21)**
8. A snapshot of the turmoil experienced and remembered prior to a change in the emotional current – **Lamentations 3:1-18**
9. **(v. 19)** – Throughout this text there is the first person reflection on the adversity, but here there is the reaching out to another with an imperative – i.e. telling God to do something.
	1. ***“wormwood”*** – bitterness; ***“gall”*** – poison
	2. Be mindful of my miserable state of suffering.
10. **(v. 20)** – his reflection on the present state causes a sinking of his soul – despondency.
	1. **However, verse 19 shows that the response of his downcast soul is to do the only thing left to do – put it on God.**
	2. **Psalm 42:6-8** – in a time of despair, and seeming distance from God, the downcast soul turns to God.
		1. **(v. 6)** – while he is far away, he can still remember God, and call on Him.
			1. **Land of the Jordan, heights of Hermon** – furthermost extent of the Jordan river where the Hermon mountain range is found. (Well north of Jerusalem – the place of worship) (Hill of Mizar unknown)
		2. **Psalm 42:1-2** – there is a deep thirst for God, which makes the turn to God natural.
		3. **(v. 8)** – the turn is with confidence in His ability and faithfulness to turn things around.
11. **(v. 21)** – His recollection of his adversity, and consciousness of his suffering, coupled with an honest estimation of it, and the action of giving it to God to bring to mind, leads him to hope.
12. **In time of despair and adversity, no matter how helpless we may seem, we always can do what is always most helpful and powerful – give it to God:**
	1. **1 Peter 5:6-11** – context of suffering, cast cares upon God who cares for you, He will work strength in you **(v. 10)** as you remain faithful to Him **(v. 9)**.
	2. **Philippians 4:6-7** – anxiety and worry accomplishes nothing but giving it to God in prayer is extremely effective, and grants peace.
13. Hope in the Lord **(vv. 22-24)**
14. This section extends the reason for the hope expressed in **verse 21** – casting cares upon Him brings hope because of Who He is.
15. **(v. 22)** – no amount of trial or tribulation can reverse God’s character and nature.
	1. **Mercies** – *ḥeseḏ* – covenantal love, loyal love, steadfast/faithful love.
		1. It is because of Jehovah’s covenant loyalty and faithful love that any from Judah were spared at all.
		2. The fact that they can reflect on their turmoil instead of being altogether consumed is a sign of God’s mercy being present.
	2. **Compassions** – *raḥam* – compassion, but “by extension, the womb (as cherishing the fetus)” (STRONG)
16. **(v. 23)** – regardless of the surrounding circumstances, each day offers a unique opportunity to experience the mercies and compassions of God.
	1. **No matter the change in climate, for good or bad, His character is only going to remain, and be enjoyed and understood in a different light, adding yet another dimension of blessing to the relationship with Him.**
	2. **Faithfulness** – *’emûnâ* – firmness, fidelity, steadfastness, steadiness (BDB)
		1. I.e. there is nothing that can move God from who He is. Reliability, constancy.
17. **(v. 24)** – the recollection of the frailty of life under the sun, and the shifty, inconsistent nature of physical existence, along with the constancy of Jehovah God awakens him to the understanding of his true lot in life – GOD HIMSELF.
	1. “In Lam 3, Yahweh does not appear; its testimony suggests that the faithful, if they are wise, will ‘with the one eye look upon their own miseries and with the other, upon the mercies of the Lord,’” (Goldingay, John, NIC Old Testament)
	2. **Psalm 73:25-28** – after reorienting himself from the envy of the wicked which almost destroyed him, the psalmist realizes that God is his everything.
18. **Habakkuk 3:16-19** – reflecting on the understanding of God using the Babylonians to punish his people, and the difficulty it would bring, the faithful prophet found contentment, strength, hope, and joy in God Himself.
19. Difficulty allows us to experience God in ways we would not know Him if we were spared – **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**
20. **He who has God and everything else has no more than he who only has God.**
21. Wait for the Lord **(vv. 25-27)**
22. In the Hebrew, the next 3 verses all start with the word ***“good.”*** These are things that are good for one to do who finds himself in a situation of pain, suffering, and adversity.
23. **(v. 25)** – it is good to wait on the Lord and seek Him.
	1. **Waiting is paralleled with seeking.**
	2. **It is not a passive activity of sitting around, moping, and doing nothing, but A POSITIVE ACTIVITY OF FAITTH.**
	3. Those Jews taken captive were to be patient, steadfast, and resolute IN THEIR FAITH – ex: Daniel and friends.
24. **(v. 26)** – it is good to hope and quietly wait for the Lord’s salvation.
	1. The waiting and seeking is with expectation of the Lord’s deliverance – that He will work good through this.
	2. **This manifests trust in God’s desired outcome – what He sees as important at the end of the trial far outweighs anything else.**
	3. **Quietness** – not loud, grumbling, and reluctant waiting, but confident pleasure in God’s will and ways – **cf. Isaiah 30:15**
25. **(v. 27)** – it is good to bear the yoke of adversity.
	1. The bearing of the yoke is advantageous to faith, and such experience at a young age strengthens one for the future.
26. **Knowing the great character and reliability of the Lord (vv. 22-24), the proper response in trials is to wait for Him in faithfulness:**
	1. **James 1:2-5** – He is trying to work something in us, and we must be patient, bearing it in faithfulness, and asking Him for help.
		1. Quietness – **James 1:19-20** – not lashing out at God – **Philippians 2:14-15** – not complaining.
	2. The result – **Isaiah 40:27-31** – waiting on the Lord will result in incredible strength and endurance which will allow one to make it through the present trial, and any that follow.
27. Humble Yourself Before the Lord **(vv. 28-30)**
28. In trial and tribulation, Satan tempts us to elevate ourselves in pride, as though we are too good to have to go through something like this, and that God is unjust in causing us to experience this – such will only exacerbate the problem.
29. **(v. 28)** – extends the theme of silence from **verse 26** – a thrashing and loud resistance against something you have no control over is the opposite of what God wants.
	1. God has allowed it to happen – **2 Corinthians 12:7, 9** – evil from Satan allowed by God to work good.
	2. **Regardless of whether we see the wisdom in such, or understand the “why,” we quietly accept it.**
30. **(v. 29)** – we lower ourselves to the dust in reverence and deference to God, but also lest we hastily lift up our voice against Him and undo the hope that remains.
	1. The hope is in Him – **(v. 24)** – not in spite of Him.
	2. **He remains in control, and we must remain under His control.**
31. **(v. 30)** – rather than fight against the adversity in vain, we must yield to it with the quiet confidence in God to endure.
	1. “There is a certain gradation in the three verses that it quite unmistakeable. The sitting alone and in silence is comparatively the easiest; it is harder to place the mouth in the dust, and yet cling to hope; it is most difficult of all to give the cheek to the smiter, and to satiate oneself with dishonour” (Keil & Delitzsch)
	2. **It is not in the resistance of the trial that we find victory in Him, but in the quiet and confident endurance of it.**
32. Jesus is the ultimate example of this – **Matthew 26:39**
33. Trials must be met with the sobriety of faith, and resolve to endure them in a way that is fitting before the Lord – **James 5:7-11**
34. The Lord will Lift You Up (**vv. 31-33**)
35. **(vv. 19-21)** – shows there’s hope in casting our burdens on God.
36. **(vv. 22-24)** – shows there’s reason for confidence and hope in God.
37. **(vv. 25-27)** – shows the practical side of these thoughts, wait on Him.
38. **(vv. 28-30)** – shows the nature of this faith, humble, submissive, patient, and hopeful.
39. **Here we see the grounds for this hope filled, quiet, faithful, submissive trust in the God of mercy.**
40. **(v. 31)** – the suffering and hardship is not forever. It will come to an end.
	1. Jehovah promised an end of captivity to the Israelites, and a return to their land.
41. **(v. 32)** – while He allows us to experience suffering, and even inflicts it in times of punishment, it is never without the intention to follow it up with compassion.
	1. The compassion that follows outweighs the sorrow.
42. **(v. 33)** – ***“he does not afflict from his heart” (ESV)*** – i.e. God takes not delight or joy in the suffering of His people, but does have enough love to allow it to produce needed fruit.
43. If we respond to trials and tribulations in the way described in these verses, God will lift us up – **1 Peter 5:6; James 4:10**
44. God wants us to be prepared for the glories of heaven, but in order to be exalted we must go through difficulty – **Acts 14:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Hebrews 12:11; Romans 8:16-18**

**Conclusion**

* + - 1. The inevitability of suffering trials in the flesh requires us to have a plan for facing them.
			2. God has given us numerous examples of what our response should be.
			3. These steps not only reveal what God expects and requires of His people in the face of suffering, but also the tried-and-true way to find immense blessings at the end of them.