

Episode 5: New Mercies

We often read the Bible to be lifted up, don't we? We want to be encouraged and reassured that everything's going to be okay. So, we open our Bibles to the middle pages, looking for an uplifting psalm, or turn to the New Testament, seeking words of encouragement from Jesus or His apostles. Not so for Lamentations. It's well known as a book of sorrow. Most believe this book of mourning was written by the prophet Jeremiah, sometimes referred to as the "weeping prophet." Due to his mournful mood, we don't read the book as often as we should. Who wants to hear all that negative stuff? And yet, today's passage springs to life in the midst of Jeremiah's woeful words. Remarkably, these verses often launch my soul into joyful songs of praise.

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul; therefore, I will hope in Him. (Lamentations 3:21-24)

Isn't that a great passage? I wouldn't want a Bible that didn't include those verses! Would you? The context is Jeremiah's deep sadness over his afflictions in the first half of chapter three. His words are filled with pain and sadness and he seems to have lost all hope. Have you ever felt that way? Have you ever experienced times that were so dark that you didn't think there was any way out? Jeremiah did. But then, in verse 21, Jeremiah reaches a turning point. He remembers God's mercy and writes, "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness." The phrase "steadfast love" is the Hebrew word "chesed." The English language doesn't contain a word like this. This powerful Hebrew word has many different meanings: faithfulness, mercy, steadfast love, covenant love, lovingkindness, and kindness. So, what happened to change Jeremiah's way of thinking? His circumstances didn't change. Life was still dark. But suddenly, Jeremiah recalled the steadfast love of the Lord and he had reason to hope: God is faithful. When you and I stop to consider God's deep and steadfast love for us—His kindness and His many mercies—we can begin to hope in Him yet again. His mercies are new *every* morning. God never serves us leftover mercies for breakfast; He gives us fresh, new mercies every day. Take some time to consider all of the many ways God has shown you favor in the midst of your own Jeremiah moments.

He has prepared new mercies today—just for you. And that's very Good News!

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