***Lamentations 3:1-23 I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. 2He has led me and made me walk In darkness and not in light. 3Surely He has turned His hand against me Time and time again throughout the day. 4He has aged my flesh and my skin,
And broken my bones. 5He has besieged me And surrounded me with bitterness and woe.
6He has set me in dark places Like the dead of long ago. 7He has hedged me in so that I cannot get out; He has made my chain heavy. 8Even when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer. 9He has blocked my ways with hewn stone; He has made my paths crooked. 10He has been to me a bear lying in wait, Like a lion in ambush. 11He has turned aside my ways and torn me in pieces; He has made me desolate. 12He has bent His bow And set me up as a target for the arrow. 13He has caused the arrows of His quiver To pierce my loins. 14I have become the ridicule of all my people - Their taunting song all the day. 15He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drink wormwood. 16He has also broken my teeth with gravel, And covered me with ashes. 17You have moved my soul far from peace; I have forgotten prosperity. 18And I said, “My strength and my hope Have perished from the Lord.” 19Remember my affliction and roaming, The wormwood and the gall. 20My soul still remembers And sinks within me. 21This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. 22Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.
23They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.***

We are back with Jeremiah tonight. Judah is falling to Babylon. Suffering is in the streets. The Prophet has been calling out for repentance and return to the Lord, but has been ignored and even hated for his work. Now, in chapter 3, we get what many scholars believe is a personal glimpse into the prophets feelings and trials.

Verses 1 & 2*I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath. 2He has led me and made me walk In darkness and not in light.* ***I am****the man who has seen affliction by the rod of His wrath.* ***–***This chapter begins with Jeremiah, the presumed prophet in view, speaking of the affliction he’s suffered during this time of judgement and calamity. Though this applies to all God’s people, the thought is that this is personal. He is quite probably speaking about the way he has been treated as he prophesied an unpopular message. *He has led me and made me walk In darkness and not in light.* ***-*** Light is often associated with peace and God’s presence, joy and hope. Darkness communicates separation, pain, and lostness. We know that Jeremiah was placed in a dungeon in Jeremiah 38 – the Bible tells us he was cast in and sank into the mire, that there was no water there. Jeremiah 20 tells us that Pashur, the priest of the Lord’s House, had Jeremiah beaten and placed in stocks. He has been in physically dark places, mentally dark places, given the calamities, trials, and tribulations he has witnessed.

 Verses 3-7 *Surely He has turned His hand against me Time and time again throughout the day. 4He has aged my flesh and my skin, And broken my bones. 5He has besieged me And surrounded me with bitterness and woe. 6He has set me in dark places Like the dead of long ago. 7He has hedged me in so that I cannot get out; He has made my chain heavy.* ***Surely*** *He has turned His hand against me Time and time again throughout the day.* In the course of the judgement of Judah, Jeremiah is caught in the providence of God. God’s people are not immune to suffering when a nation turns it’s back on God. God was kind and gracious, but the calamity overtaking Judah because of sin and disobedience is impacting Jeremiah as well. He is not just feeling the impact once, but for a prolonged period of time, *throughout the day*. Jeremiah sees this as God’s hand turned against him. Isaiah 1:25, also referring to the judgement of Judah, says in part - *I will turn My hand against you*. Jeremiah continues to describe the anguish he is feeling *He has aged my flesh and my skin, And broken my bones.*It’s as though the spiritual pain he is feeling takes on a physical feeling, as if all his bones are broken. *He has besieged me And surrounded me with bitterness and woe. He has set me in dark places Like the dead of long ago.* God has brought Jeremiah into a tight place where he feels trapped, hedged in by briars and thorns, unable to escape the bitterness and woe of his situation and unable to call out to His God. He is filled with grief and no rest is to be found.

Verse 8 *Even when I cry and shout, He shuts out my prayer.* When we cannot deliver ourselves and we have offended God, where can we turn? Nowhere. We must cry out for forgiveness and repent of our sin, then He, in His Grace and Mercy, hear us again. Psalm 80:4 *O Lord God of hosts, How long will You be angry Against the prayer of Your people?* But, we know that God tells Jeremiah in Chapter 7, verse 16 *Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you.* God can refuse to hear! Paul makes it clear that Christ’s work is not an invitation to sin. We must never take for granted the forgiveness of our God. We strive to be perfect, even as our Savior is perfect.

 Verses 9-13 *He has blocked my ways with hewn stone; He has made my paths crooked. 10He has been to me a bear lying in wait, Like a lion in ambush. 11He has turned aside my ways and torn me in pieces; He has made me desolate. 12He has bent His bow And set me up as a target for the arrow. 13He has caused the arrows of His quiver To pierce my loins.* ***He*** *has blocked my ways with hewn stone; He has made my paths crooked.*God has not only hedged the prophet in with briars and thorns, like Hosea 2:6 says - *Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns*, but God has blocked the way with hewn stone. The path forward is blocked and, no matter how the prophet tries, there is not a cleared path. Proverbs 3:5-6 *says Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths (or make them straight and smooth).* ***He****has been to me a bear lying in wait, Like a lion in ambush.* The prophet is in fear of being attacked and feels unprotected. *He has turned aside my ways and torn me in pieces; He has made me desolate.* God has torn down all the things that the prophet has depended on and taken all comfort from his soul. *He has bent His bow And set me up as a target for the arrow.* God is judging the full nation, but his children are caught in the calamities as well. *He has caused the arrows of His quiver To pierce my loins.*The result will be a mortal wound, a piercing of the heart and inward parts.

Verses 14-19 *I have become the ridicule of all my people - Their taunting song all the day. 15He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drink wormwood. 16He has also broken my teeth with gravel, And covered me with ashes. 17You have moved my soul far from peace; I have forgotten prosperity. 18And I said, “My strength and my hope Have perished from the Lord.” 19Remember my affliction and roaming, The wormwood and the gall.* ***I*** *have become the ridicule of all my people - Their taunting song all the day.*There are wicked people that celebrate the prophet’s misery and grief. It is reminiscent of the people ridiculing Jesus and telling Him to save Himself, if He was really the Son of God. *He has filled me with bitterness, He has made me drink wormwood.* God has given the prophet a bitter sense of the calamities. He has impacted the spirit and taken away all enjoyment. Anything he eats becomes bitter in his stomach. Afflictions have overwhelmed him. *He has also broken my teeth with gravel, And covered me with ashes.* ImagineGravel baked in with the bread or stirred in with the food, so as to break the teeth when it is bitten. Broken teeth add to the misery as nothing can be enjoyed due to the pain. The prophet goes into mourning, covered with ashes. *You have moved my soul far from peace; I have forgotten prosperity.*Because of sorrow and grief, my soul knows no peace. There is only misery, no comfort. *And I said, “My strength and my hope Have perished from the Lord.”* Of course, we know that strength and hope in God never perishes. It is the weight of despair that causes these doubts. *Remember my affliction and roaming, The wormwood and the gall.* Now, the prophet calls out to be remembered, believing surely God will remember. He is shifting gears here.

 Verse 20 *My soul still remembers And sinks within me.* Surely thou wilt remember. The prophet now affirms his belief that God will remember His people and deliver them from their afflictions. This has the idea of Jeremiah’s soul meditating within him and calling to his remembrance that God will remember mercy, even in His wrath. Asaph wrote in Psalm 77:7-13 *Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? 8 Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore? 9 Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah 10 And I said, “This is my anguish; But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.” 11 I will remember the works of the Lord; Surely I will remember Your wonders of old. 12 I will also meditate on all Your work,
And talk of Your deeds. 13 Your way, O God, is in the sanctuary; Who is so great a God as our God?* God is to be remembered for His goodness and mercy. We are to meditate on who God is and His goodness when we feel hopeless. We are to Trust and depend especially in the hard times.

 Verses 21-23 *This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. 22Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. 23They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.* ***This*** *I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope.* Now the prophet begins to express hope. He calls to mind his trust in God, and how God has always loved and delivered him. *Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.* It is only through God’s providence that we are not consumed, by His mercy and unfailing compassion that we rise in hope. *They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope.* God’s mercies are new each and every morning. This gives him hope and comfort. Psalm 68:*19 says Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loads us with benefits, The God of our salvation! Selah.* The continual mercies of the Lord do not fail and arrive new each day, He loads us daily with benefits… do we receive them?

 And so we leave Jeremiah this evening. He is suffering, as is all of Judah from the affliction that God is allowing. Yet, at the end, he understands that we serve a merciful and just God, perfect in all ways. God sees our sin perfectly, understands all our motivations, and still He is merciful each and every morning, offering us forgiveness with each new day. Who is so great as our God? Of course the answer is no one is as great as our God, great is His faithfulness unto those that seek His Face.