

## ***The Steadfast Love of the Lord***

It was the darkest days for the nation. The siege of Jerusalem lasted for several months. The population grew hungrier, the situation grimmer, and the unthinkable possible. Lamentations expresses grief for this destruction in a series of five poems. The Septuagint, the Targum of Jeremiah (1:1), and the Talmud (*Baba Bathra* 15a) attribute Lamentations to the prophet Jeremiah.

The first poem paints the picture of the siege and its aftermath. Jerusalem has become like a widow, like a slave (1:1). Exile and captivity are her lot. The princes of the city are hunted down like deer (1:6). The enemy has looted the precious things of the city (1:10). The people must search for bread (1:11). “In the street the sword bereaves; in the house it is like death” (1:20, *ESV*).

The second poem laments that God has scorned his own altar and disowned his sanctuary (2:7). The walls and gates of the city have been torn down. Jeremiah weeps and vomits at what he sees in the streets (2:11). Abandoned, hungry children are everywhere, and women have been reduced to eating their own infants (2:20).

The fourth poem presents the holy stones of the temple as scattered in the streets (4:1). The dire circumstances have brought out cruelty in people who are now worse than jackals (4:3). The siege has left people famished with their skin shriveled on their bones (4:8) – maybe those who died by the sword were more fortunate (4:9).

The last poem is a prayer for God to remember. In the midst of rape, torture, and forced labor, there is the realization that the Lord reigns forever. It is God who can restore and renew.

It is the third poem that is the longest and also at the heart of the book. Jeremiah feels that God himself has besieged him (3:5). God has blocked his ways. God has made him a laughingstock. It leads to even momentary doubt: “My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the LORD” (3:18). But it is in the midst of prayer, that the following thought comes:

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 3:22-24 , *ESV*)

We too live in the wilderness between our redemption from slavery to sin and our entrance into the Promised Land. Dark times can occur that test our faith and endurance. These words are a bright light shining out of dark times. May God’s faithfulness to the covenant and his many mercies remind us of our hope. “The LORD is my portion.”

-Russ Holden