

Faithfulness That Will Not Fail
Lamentations 3:21-24
By Randy Wages
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. **Introduction:**

- A. This morning I want to speak to you about a “Faithfulness That Will Not Fail,” as I’ve so titled today’s message. Be turning in your Bibles to Lamentations, chapter 3 where we will examine just that – a faithfulness that all of us need if we’re to be accepted before a holy and just God – a constant, perpetual faithfulness that never wavers – that never fails.
- B. Now if you are one of the blessed objects of our sovereign God’s saving grace, then know this: You either have already been or will be convinced of sin and that includes a recognition of this reality – that you and I are anything but faithful. And yet, if you are one of the blessed objects of our sovereign God’s saving grace, then also know this: You also either have already been or will be convinced of righteousness – of the reality that anything short of perfect, constant or continual obedience to all of God’s revealed will find you unacceptable before the presence of a holy God.
- C. So where does that leave us. We know that our impeccably holy God requires perfection. No need to turn there, but let me quickly cite 3 familiar passages that remind of this truth:
1. In Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5:20, He told us, ***“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”*** As many of you know the Scribes and the Pharisees were outwardly the best of the best. Most credible Bible commentators view them as perhaps the most outwardly moral, law keeping folks who ever walked on this earth other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and yet – Christ tells us – it takes a perfection far beyond that which even these could produce.
 2. At the end of that chapter, in verse 48 He tells us how just how much our righteousness must exceed theirs when He concludes with this command, ***“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”*** How perfect? As perfect as God.
 3. So as we consider this “Faithfulness that Will Not Fail,” keep in mind that by definition one who is truly faithful is one whose allegiance is continual, uninterrupted, and never fails. And lest we doubt that God requires such a continual, flawless perfection, recall from James 2, verse 10, these words, ***“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”***

D. We need an unfailing faithfulness. God, the almighty Creator and Sovereign of this universe is indeed great and deserves to be constantly worshipped. Our minds (our thoughts) should at all times be consumed with nothing but the honor of His glory, marveling at His majesty and greatness in a spirit of constant worship and praise. As God, He deserves no less.

E. Now I don't know about you (No – actually I do know about you). I know that you, like me, fall miserably short of that sort of perpetual, faithful allegiance. I'm ashamed to say that when I do take time to think on the things above and go to God in prayer that I can't even seem to finish praying without my mind wandering off, contemplating the things I need to do or perhaps just daydreaming about one thing or another. But in spite of the fact that such occasions continually remind us that we are anything but truly faithful, it does not mean that God lowers His standard to accommodate our sinful weaknesses.

II. Background scripture – Lamentations 3:17-20: Now this morning in Lamentations, chapter 3, we are going to read about a faithfulness that will not fail – a faithfulness that every sinner desperately needs if they are to be accepted into God's holy presence in heaven.

A. Before we dive into our text, let me provide a little background. The book of Lamentations, like all scripture, is authored by God the Holy Spirit. God used the Prophet Jeremiah to pen these words for us and here, Jeremiah is lamenting the sad circumstances that had come upon Jerusalem and the whole Jewish nation. To lament something is to cry out in great sorrow and grief and regret – often with a sense of utter despair and agony, as does Jeremiah. This book was written after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and in contemplation of the sad state of affairs brought on by the sins of the priests and the Jewish people. And as we get to chapter 3, the prophet also speaks of his own personal afflictions and distresses along with the national calamities that had fallen upon Jerusalem and Judea. And as we consider the words of Jeremiah, keep in mind that he, a sinner saved by grace, is a personification of the redeemed church of God, spiritual Israel – all who likewise are brought to ultimately share in Jeremiah's good hope of eternal salvation in Christ our Savior.

B. To capture the sense of Jeremiah's grief, let's begin reading back a few verses prior to our text, beginning in Lamentations 3:17, as Jeremiah is crying out to God saying, "***And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. ¹⁸And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: ¹⁹Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. ²⁰My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.***" Clearly, Jeremiah seems to be in an almost hopeless state of mind. In our part of the country, someone might say, "Why, he's lower than a snake's belly in a wagon rut." You can't get much lower.

C. And yet, as we reach our text in verse 21, we will see how that Jeremiah, as one of the objects of God’s everlasting love, mercy, and grace, was actually blessed by these very calamities over which he grieved. His very circumstances, while stripping him of hope in this life, served to turn his heart and mind to a remembrance of the certain eternal blessings he possessed through the faithfulness of the promised Messiah, the faithful Substitute, Surety, and Representative of all who are saved.

D. When considering how God used these tragic circumstances for Jeremiah’s good, I was reminded of the truth of Romans 8:28, “...*that* <truly> all things <even the most tragic of circumstances that come our way, things we would never choose for ourselves) *work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*”

III. Lamentations 3:21-24: So Jeremiah, in grieving over these calamities, is brought to recall his certain salvation, based on the faithfulness of God as we see beginning in verse 21 of Lamentations 3 where he says, “*This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.* ²²*It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.* ²³*They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.* ²⁴*The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.*”

IV. Hope:

A. Now verse 21 begins with “*This I recall to my mind,..*” Your bible may have the same note as mine, indicating that this recalling to his mind could be translated as “made to return to his heart.” And he proceeds to tell us in verses 22 and 23 what his heart and mind recalled.

B. And he says “therefore” or because of what is brought to his heart and mind’s attention, he has hope. Now recall that back in verse 18 he had just written that his hope had perished. So like us, Jeremiah was anything but faithful if judged by his own words and thoughts. The word “hope” here in both verses 21 and 24 refers to his certain expectation of eternal salvation. Most religious folks have a hope – they have an expectation of being saved, of going to heaven when they leave this earth.

1. The Validity of your hope: Before we move past this, I want to discuss with you how we might evaluate the validity of our own hope. This is very important because the scripture is clear that most expectations of being saved (that is – the hope of many) shall not be realized. Our confidence in being saved, our sense of assurance of being saved, our hope – often fluctuates, just as we see in God’s prophet Jeremiah. Now that tells us that the determination of whether our hope is valid or not, whether our hope is a good hope is not at all determined by how “saved” we feel. Jeremiah was brought to remember where his heart was – that is, what his hope was based upon. And it is that – the basis or ground of his good hope (this certain assurance) that is set forth in verses 22 and 23. And it’s that basis that makes it a good hope – a certain assurance.

2. The Basis of your hope: So we judge the validity of our own hope by examining just what it is based upon. What is the basis or ground of your salvation? And with that I want to pose a question to all who hear this message. Due to the reach of our media ministry, the messages we preach here go out far and wide to many more than just those of you in our congregation this morning. And so to all who hear this message, I suggest to you this simple exercise to help identify where your heart is with regards to your hope of salvation – for thereby (if God is so pleased) you can know now (before it is too late) if your hope is indeed valid or rather a false one – an expectation that would have tragically failed to be realized. All who are saved discover just that and by God’s grace repent from their former, false notions.

So here’s a pretty simple question for you to consider this morning. If you have a hope, an expectation of being saved, of going to heaven to be with the Lord when you die, then why? In your heart of hearts, honestly answer in your own mind why you count yourself as saved and among those bound for heaven’s eternal glory. Now I once had a hope of salvation (an assurance in my own mind) – but thankfully God graciously revealed to me that my hope at that time was a false hope. And he did this through the preaching of the very gospel of grace that I bring to you this morning. But prior to that time the basis of my hope was pretty much the same as the vast majority of those who profess to be of the Christian faith. So this is an important consideration. Where is your heart on this matter?

And here is the test: Is the ground or basis upon which you expect to be saved the same as God’s choice servant and prophet Jeremiah? Note again that in his Holy Spirit inspired words, he writes that that he recalls something specific and “therefore” (or on that basis) he had hope. That suggests to us that the ground or basis for our hope had better be the same as Jeremiah’s for there is only one gospel – one way of salvation, one way to heaven. Christ said that way was a narrow one that few entered into. Well the rest of this sermon will deal with this subject – what a good hope is based upon.

V. The Lord’s Mercy: Jeremiah wrote, ¹*This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.* ²²*It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed ...*”

A. Great calamity had fallen upon Jeremiah and the Jewish nation and yet Jeremiah knew that God would not finish them off according to his gracious promise to Abraham and his descendants. He left them a remnant according to the election of grace (as they are referred to in Romans 11) from which the mercy of the Lord, the promised Messiah, would come. So while Jeremiah and the other believing Jews experienced grave circumstances due unto their sins (as is the case with all of us to varying degrees) they were not consumed or cut off due to their sins.

- B. Likewise, spiritual Israel (not this chosen nation but those chosen from among all nations in Christ for eternal deliverance, God's elect) shall never be consumed. All of their earthly belongs may be consumed, their bodies may be wasted away by disease and ultimately they all shall be consumed by physical death, but not their souls. For it is well with the souls of those chosen in Christ, their Surety and Substitute – chosen to be blessed in Him with an eternal salvation – an inheritance in heaven's glory.
- C. Such or not consumed or cut off due unto their sins because the Lord Jesus Christ put an end to their sin so that the saved sinner's hope is that of David's as we read of in Romans 4:7-8: *“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, ⁷Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. ⁸Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”* That is, the blessed of God have their hope in their sins being covered, totally put away by the blood payment of their Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ, who bore the guilt due unto the demerit of all of their sins. Blessed is the man whom the Lord does not charge with sin, having instead charged all of the demerit of their sins to the only One who could and did pay that debt to God's strict and holy justice, providing the very righteousness – the perfect satisfaction to the Father's justice which they must have – the righteousness made theirs by God's gracious imputing or accounting of it unto all for whom Christ lived and died.
- D. Now only those truly convinced of sin by God the Holy Spirit, can see themselves as sinners deserving to be utterly consumed by a holy and just God –deserving utter destruction if judged according to their very best deeds and efforts. And sadly, many of the honest answers often given to the question I posed earlier as to why one expects to be saved reflect an ignorance of the depth and depravity of our sinfulness. Many expect to be saved because they believe they struck a deal with God and fulfilled what was required in order for them to be saved. They will recall a profession of faith, perhaps a baptism, or a spiritual event in their lives in which they sincerely dedicated themselves to their god as they perceived him to be. And on that basis, the basis of their presumed faithfulness – their free will choice to follow Jesus, what they did – they expect to be saved. No doubt, that is the sincere hope of many. But that is not a good hope but a false hope. Though sincere, they are sincerely mistaken.
- E. Knowing that our own faithfulness falls so terribly short of the true, continual, perfect faithfulness that is required by a holy God, why would one imagine that we sinners could muster up any so-called “decision for Jesus” that would find us acceptable before God? To imagine such actually denies the need for Christ's saving work on the cross. To many, He merely made salvation possible, while actually not truly redeeming – not paying in full the sin debt for anyone. Many even imagine that most for whom He died shall perish in hell anyway.

And such a widely held view – a view that was once shared by many of us – actually exposes that at the time we didn't see the depth and depravity of our sins. God had not yet convinced us of sin as He always does in true regeneration and conversion. In our minds, at that time we knew we weren't perfectly sinless, but we didn't think we deserved to be consumed. In our minds we weren't such bad sinners, not so bad that we couldn't (by our own sin tainted decisions or efforts) save ourselves.

F. No, those who would truthfully answer that they expect to be saved because of their faith, their decision to accept or receive Jesus, in other words their faithfulness (not His), do not yet share in the certain hope of those blessed with Jeremiah. If salvation is conditioned in any way or to any degree on you the sinner, then know this – such a salvation is not of the Lord's mercies. You don't need mercy. Mercy, like grace, speaks of a favor bestowed freely and without any merit found in the object and recipient of His mercy and grace. If Christ's righteousness – His obedience unto death – failed to save even one sinner for whom He lived and died, then toss this book out because that would mean contrary to its clear assertions, salvation is not by grace nor is it of the Lord's mercies.

Many sincerely believe that they are trusting in Jesus while at the same time believing that the ultimate determining factor in their salvation (what distinguishes them from the lost) is something done by, or in, or through them the sinner – not solely the doing and dying of the Lord Jesus Christ as a successful Substitute for all whom He saves. That is faith in faith, not faith in Christ. Such do not need mercy but rather just need to fulfill whatever condition is set forth by their particular denomination and get themselves saved when they get ready. That presumed false way of salvation is not grace and it is not of the Lord's mercies and it is not the good hope of Jeremiah and all of his spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ.

VI. Unfailing Faithfulness: So this begs the question concerning your own hope. In whose faithfulness have you placed your trust? As Jeremiah wrote, ***"This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. ²²It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed because his compassions fail not. ²³They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."***

A. That word "compassions" refers also to the Lord's mercies. It means His goodness, kindness, or mercies toward the objects of His everlasting love are likewise constant and everlasting. They fail not.

B. And note that Jeremiah is saying that they are not consumed because His compassions fail not. Here he is citing that it is because of who God is. Is this the God you worship? His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. Great is HIS faithfulness.

I encourage all who hear this message to not spend another day expecting salvation based on your own faithfulness. What you need and what is brought near in the very Gospel of God's grace is His faithfulness in establishing a righteousness for us. We read of that in Romans 3:20-22a: ***“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. ²¹But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; <including the Prophet Jeremiah> ²²Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe:...”***

That is speaking of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to fulfill all that the Father required for the everlasting objects of His love to be saved by establishing a righteousness for them. This righteousness is preached or declared unto all and it has been put upon or imputed to all them to whom He grants the gift of faith that they might believe on Him – find their hope in His faithfulness to produce for us what none can produce for themselves – a perfect righteousness.

C. Lamentations 3:22 and 23 describe the only true God. In John 17:3, Christ in His high priestly prayer before ascending to the Father prayed this: ***“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”*** The saved come to know God as He is revealed in the Person and work of Christ. Here, we are dealing with an attribute of God that identifies the God saved sinners come to know. Through Jeremiah's words we see that the hope of the saved is a good hope because of where (or better in whom) the saved place their trust. This character attribute of faithfulness is very similar to God's attribute of immutability – the fact that God changes not. The attribute of God's faithfulness, like God's holiness and immutability, is coupled with and cannot be separated from every other attribute of God. We know that God's love is a holy, immutable, faithful love. We know that God's justice is a holy, immutable, faithful justice. And we could say the same of every attribute of God's character by which we know Him.

So if God is faithful without wavering, that means He cannot change for change suggests that He learned, became, or responded to something that He (the all-knowing God) didn't know before or that He reacts to something that would prompt Him to change His all wise, eternal purpose or course of action (Him – the sovereign God of this universe who is said to declare the end from the beginning and to work all things according to the counsel of His own will). If he changes, He must change either (1) for the better (and therefore was not quite God previously) or (2) for the worse (which means He would then cease to be God) – the eternal, everlasting God. No – by definition, God does not change. God is faithful to Himself for He cannot deny Himself and still be God.

- D. His compassions fail not for He is the eternal God. His love is an everlasting love. His compassions are new every morning. They are constant and perpetual. He faithfully keeps us and chastises us and as in the case of Jeremiah here, He so orders our lives to insure that our hearts always return to a sense of the blessings we have in Him – of the good hope of salvation according to His mercy and grace, according to His faithfulness – not our own.
- E. As God says in Malachi 3:6, “*For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.*” Here too, we see that elect sinners are spared the just eternal wrath of God because of who He is – because He is the unchanging, immutable, perfectly faithful “LORD” – the word Lord there being the same as our passage in Lamentations, Yahweh or Jehovah who saves.
- F. Now for those who insist that salvation is conditioned on their free will decision to accept Jesus as their personal Savior (their presumed faithfulness to meet some condition rather than His great faithfulness), know this – the god you worship is not the Lord – not Jehovah who saves for He, the true and living God is one who does not react in response to what you the sinner does or does not do. He does not save any sinner because that sinner believes. A sinner who truly believes does so because he or she is saved by the redeeming work of Christ. If God saved you because you believed, He would not be faithful to Himself.
- G. Think with me. If God reacted to the sinner and changed His mind about that sinner’s eternal destiny because that sinner believed, then what would such an unfaithful, reactionary god do when that same, less than perfectly faithful sinner, had a moment of doubt? Would not such a god react to that doubt and change his mind again about that sinner’s eternal destiny? No – our God is not a mutable, reactionary and therefore an untrustworthy and unfaithful God. God brings those He saves to repent of these God-dishonoring notions, causing us instead to look to Christ alone for all of our salvation.
- H. God bestows His mercy and grace freely upon those He saves in order that He might receive all glory and honor. It’s all about Him! Oh – those He sent Christ to die for shall come to Him in faith as Christ said they would in John 6:37a saying: “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;...*” They will come by God-given faith in belief of His Gospel – the good news that all of the conditions of their salvation were fully met by the doing and the dying of Christ their Substitute as He faithfully fulfilled the terms of the everlasting covenant of grace – God the Son’s compassions failing not toward these for whom He took on the responsibility to redeem – these objects of God the Father’s everlasting, electing love. And as John 6:37b continues it gives us all the reason in the world to forsake the god and jesus of our imaginations (of our false hope) and instead flee to the Christ of the Bible for all of salvation for as Christ said, “*...and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*”

VII. Closing:

So let me ask again, where is your heart on this? Where is your hope? Is the Lord your portion? Look again at the last verse of our text, Lam. 3:24 where Jeremiah writes, “***The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.***” Here, the Prophet, upon consideration of who God is – of His unfailing mercies, compassions and faithfulness – concludes that he has a sure inheritance or portion in the Lord –Yahweh, Jehovah God who saves!

To identify with Jeremiah in claiming that the Lord is his portion means simply this: It is for your very soul (in your heart of hearts) to be convinced that the Lord is your lot in life, that He is your inheritance. It is to have been convinced by God the Holy Spirit through His saving grace of the necessity of having been made one with Him – linked to His destiny in having the righteousness of God in Christ made to be yours.

And only those objects of His everlasting love – those for whom Christ faithfully lived and died – only these are given the spiritual eyes and ears of His blood-bought gift of faith to see and hear the gospel of God’s sovereign grace so as to be convinced that His imputed righteousness (the merit of His finished work accounted to us) and that alone could and did get the job done. He purchased that very gift of faith for them by His shed blood. So any who come by faith to this Christ have this same, sure and certain hope.

When Christ died, I died (not personally) but in Him as my Representative. Likewise, when He arose, I arose in Him to be accepted by the Father as holy, unblameable, unprovable. He is my portion. His lot is my lot. His inheritance is mine for I am a child of the King. What grace! Here I am still a sinner, but as a trophy of God’s mercy and grace I’m declared not guilty by the judge of all – by God almighty, all based upon having the perfect righteousness of my Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ imputed or reckoned to my account.

Knowing this, the saved can say with Jeremiah, “...therefore will I hope in Him.” They have a good hope, a certain expectation of salvation – of deliverance from all their sorrows, difficulties and troubles – a deliverance that will find them ultimately enjoying a wondrous eternal future of joy, peace, and happiness in the presence of God in heaven’s glory as a joint heir with Christ their Savior. In Christ’s Person and finished substitutionary work, and nowhere else, we find a sure and certain assurance of eternal salvation because the faithfulness of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost is a faithfulness that will not fail!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God’s grace found in the only infallible source, God’s word itself – the Bible.