

WITH MERCIES NEW, REMAIN STRONG, AND PRESS ON!

I. Lamentations 3:22-26 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

A. As we enter a brand new year, the best place to start is the Scriptures. Many have made resolutions, set goals or made some specific plans. That's fine. Most of you here are seasoned veterans in this walk of life. You know your grandkids' new Peloton Bike may end up being an expensive clothing rack by Easter.

B. For those of us who feel like we've crawled across the 2019 finish line spiritually fatigued, Lamentations 3:22-26 (ESV) is encouraging: **22** *The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end;* **23** *they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.* **24** *"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in Him."* **25** *The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.* **26** *It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.*

C. Jeremiah, *the weeping prophet*, wrote Lamentations during a time when God's people, Judah, had been exiled to Babylon. Jerusalem and the Temple lay in ruins. The last of Israel had been subdued. We picture Jeremiah writing those inspired words with his tears wetting the pages beneath his pen. And yet in the midst of pain and hopelessness, he writes such words of hope and promise. Words for then, for sure, but also words for us now. Each day we begin anew. Love and favor we don't deserve and could never earn is granted those who seek and hope and call upon the Lord. *"Give us this day, Father, our daily bread!"*

D. So if I can offer anything that'll carry you into 2020 and each day of 2020, it's Lamentations 3:22-26. Don't just start the year or decade brand new, start each day brand new until the *Ancient of Days* appears again!

E. As we prepare to take Communion together for the first time this year, I also want to share a Scripture that will hopefully reinforce our mindset and modus operandi as a church family. These are rapidly changing times. Our nation is sorely divided. Our culture in many ways is imploding. Millennials have left the church in droves. Seasoned saints pass into glory daily. The church is wrestling with numerous issues regarding doctrine, faith and practice. Will it succumb to cultural pressures or remain true to the Scriptures? Time will tell. Pray and hope in God!

F. In today's text, the Apostle Paul is vying for the hearts of a church being seduced by false teachers, audaciously calling themselves apostles. These impostors are charismatic, money-hungry, doctrine-twisting, shysters, and they've even put their bad-mouth on Paul. In short, they're silver tongued devils. Paul has suffered enormously to proclaim the gospel to this church, to build them up, help them through their many struggles, and keep them from falling. So this letter is his passionate appeal and defense as to what is right and true and from God.

G. 2 Corinthians 4:1-6 (ESV) is a word also for us...

1) **V1: 1** *Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.* (Paul likely had Lamentations 3:22-26 memorized.)

2) **V2: 2** *But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, (The word "tamper" was a word describing wine-peddlers who watered down their product in order to swindle their customers.) but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. (i.e. 'Don't listen to the bad-mouthing, check out the lives we're living!')*

3) **V3-4: 3** *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4* *In their case the god of this world (**Satan**) has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (Do you know loved ones, neighbors, or friends whose spiritual eyes and hearts seem veiled as to who Jesus truly is? Pray God will lift that veil! Pray the Holy Spirit will open the eyes of their hearts! Pray! Pray! Pray!)*

4) **V5-6: 5** *For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6* *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (Paul gleans from Genesis: Just as light pierced that original darkness, Light must also pierce the darkness of a lost person's heart! Will you pray more fervently for that to happen? Sing instead: "Awake O sleepers, arise from the dead, and Christ will shine upon you!")*

H. Let's be clear about us: We stand upon the Word of God as inspired, inerrant, infallible, and totally relevant for faith and practice in our lives as believers. We stand committed to preaching and teaching the whole counsel of God without tainting or watering it down. We will continue proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ which is the power of God unto salvation. We will seek to advance God's Kingdom through this Gospel as Biblically directed and demonstrated and not by foolish schemes, manipulative practices, or disgraceful, underhanded ways. We affirm by Scripture alone that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. We will endeavor to do this by the power of the Holy Spirit and the sustaining grace God bestows upon His beloved children.

II. Communion

A. As we prepare to receive the Bread & Cup, let me reaffirm this Gospel Message.

* **1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (NIV)** *1* *Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2* *By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3* *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...*

* **2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)** *21* *God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*

* **John 3:16-18 (ESV)** *16* *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 17* *For God did not send His*

Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. 18 Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

B. The Bread & Cup remind us...

*** Pray & Serve Communion...**

*** Our Benediction: *With mercies new each day, let us remain strong, let us press on in Christ, and all this for the honor and glory of our great and glorious God!***

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

Lamentations 3:22-26 (ESV)

22 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; **23** they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. **24** “The LORD is my portion,” says my soul, “therefore I will hope in Him.” **25** The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who seeks Him. **26** It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

2 Corinthians 4:1-6 (ESV)

1 Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. **2** But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. **3** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. **4** In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. **5** For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. **6** For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4 (NIV)

1 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. **2** By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. **3** For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NIV)

21 God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

John 3:16-18 (ESV)

16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. **18** Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

[Video Clips & Important Articles](#)

"New Every Morning" - Audrey Assad

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WReXhV7Mpl0>

The Carnality of Churches Today - Paul Washer (Sermon Jam)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GH9UTldQJ7E>

What Does it Mean to Preach the Whole Counsel of God? - Dr Julius Kim

<https://www.wscal.edu/resource-center/what-does-it-mean-to-preach-the-whole-counsel-of-god>

What is the Whole Counsel of God? - GotQuestions.org

<https://www.gotquestions.org/whole-counsel-of-God.html>

[Bonus Stuff](#)

[Romans 1:16 \(NIV\)](#)

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. **17** For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed--a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

[Hebrews 4:12 \(NASB\)](#)

12 For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

[2 Timothy 3:16-17 \(NIV\)](#)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, **17** so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

[2 Timothy 4:1-5 \(NIV\)](#)

1 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I give you this charge: **2** Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. **3** For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a

great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. **4** They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. **5** But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

Quote by Charles Spurgeon

“The motto of all true servants of God must be, ‘We preach Christ; and Him crucified.’ A sermon without Christ in it is like a loaf of bread without any flour in it. No Christ in your sermon, sir? Then go home, and never preach again until you have something worth preaching.”

Quote by R.C. Sproul

“Your task, O preacher, is to make sure that you are faithful to the text, that you are faithful to the proclamation of that gospel, that you are faithful to set forth the whole counsel of God, and then step back and let it happen.”

Quote by Billy Graham

“When we preach or teach the Scriptures, we open the door for the Holy Spirit to do His work. God has not promised to bless oratory or clever preaching. He has promised to bless His Word.”

Quote by C.S. Lewis

"A man who first tried to guess ‘what the public wants,’ and then preached that as Christianity because the public wants it, would be a pretty mixture of fool and knave.”

Quote by David Helm

“Some preachers use the Bible the way a drunk uses a lamppost--more for support than for illumination.”

Quote by Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

"We all therefore have to face this ultimate and final question: Do we accept the Bible as the Word of God, as the sole authority in all matters of faith and practice, or do we not? Is the whole of my thinking governed by Scripture, or do I come with my reason and pick and choose out of Scripture and sit in judgment upon it, putting myself and modern knowledge forward as the ultimate standard and authority? The issue is crystal clear. Do I accept Scripture as a revelation from God, or do I trust to speculation, human knowledge, human learning, human understanding and human reasons. Or, putting it still more simply, do I pin my faith to, and subject all my thinking to, what I read in the Bible? Or do I defer to modern knowledge, to modern learning, to what people think today, to what we know at this present time which was not known in the past? It is inevitable that we occupy one or the other of those two positions."

Quote by John Wesley

"I now propose short, clear, and strong arguments prove the divine inspiration of the holy Scriptures. The Bible must be the invention either (1) of good men or angels, (2) of bad men or devils, or (3) of God. It could not be the invention of good men or angels;

they neither would nor could make a book, and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying, "Thus says the Lord," when it was their own invention. It could not be the invention of bad men or devils; for they would not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their souls to hell to all eternity. Therefore, I draw this conclusion, that the Bible must be given by divine inspiration."

Hymn Lyrics by John Newton

Precious Bible! What a treasure
Does the Word of God afford?
All I want for life or pleasure,
Food and medicine, shield and sword:
Let the world account me poor,
Having this I need no more.

The Whole Counsel of God - The ESV Study Bible

The whole counsel of God refers to the entirety of God's redemptive plan unfolded in Scripture. Even though parts of God's Word were unpopular or difficult, Paul did not omit any of them in his preaching. In refusing to pass over teachings that might have offended some, Paul gave a courageous example that is a model for all who would teach God's Word after him.

- Theological Note on Acts 20:27, *The ESV Study Bible*, Crossway, p. 2130.