

## Candles Burn Brightest in the Darkness

Have you ever felt like this? *"I am a man who has seen affliction...[I am] walled-in, and I cannot escape...my chains [are] heavy...though I cry for help, He shuts out my prayer...I have become the laughingstock of all peoples...my soul is bereft of peace."* (Lam. 3:1-17)

These are the last days. A darkness shrouds the earth. More and more, the shadows of despair fall on God's people, but we should not be shaken. Long ago, the Apostle Peter wrote, *"Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange is happening to you."* (1 Pet. 4:12)

Jesus said, *"take up your cross and follow me"* (Matt. 16:24). Somehow, suffering aligns us with the Savior. We tend to listen better and shine brighter when we are on our knees, and when we respond well when in the crucible.

James writes that we should not give up when difficulty seems overwhelming but take satisfaction and even experience "joy" in knowing that the trials of this world strengthen, refine, and develop our faith (James 1:2-4).

The italics font in the first paragraph was written by the prophet Jeremiah from the book of Lamentations 3. I find solace in knowing that even the greats in the faith had moments when they were discouraged (see also Jonah 4:3; 1 Kings 19:3-4; Numbers 11: 14-15). The key, however, particularly for Watchmen who are on the front lines, is to not stay in the deep water. When the storms of life come, call upon the promises of God, for they are sure.

When doubt demands a foothold in your mind, fall on your knees and praise God. Recount 10 good things God has done, or ten blessings you have received. If doubt remains, recount twenty. Pray! I have found that fervent prayer and fear cannot occupy the same space. Persevere.

Look again at the first paragraph of Lamentations 3. Yes, the opening verses communicate despair but note verse 21: *"But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope."*

The verses that follow is the foundation for the great hymn, *Great is Thy Faithfulness*. In Lamentations 3, Jeremiah notes what to focus on and believe, to move from pessimism to peace. His divine, inspired advice is, remember the Lord is faithful and merciful (v.22-23), put your hope in Him (v.24), be patient (v.25), know that the Lord can save (v.26), do not complain (v.28), believe the Lord will have compassion (v.32), know the Lord will bring justice to the downtrodden (v.33-36), and cling or return to the Lord (v.40).

Discouragement is a powerful weapon of the enemy. Armor up! Counterattack well. Shine bright and let the refrain of the old hymn ever be on your lips: *"Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! Lord unto me."*