

Dr. Leslie Allen, Lamentations, Session 8, Lamentations 3:23-33 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Allen, Lamentations, Session 8, Lamentations 3:23-33, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Leslie Allen's session on Lamentations 3:23-33 focuses on the themes of repentance and hope amidst suffering. He contrasts two approaches to God: the "front door" of righteous living and the "back door" of confession. **Allen argues that Lamentations emphasizes the latter, acknowledging the need for repentance as a path back to God's favor.** The passage explores how God's goodness and compassion offer hope even in times of deserved punishment, and that God does not willingly afflict or grieve. **Ultimately, the lecture sets the stage for a call to repentance, urging the congregation to seek God and embrace the possibility of a positive future.**

2. 16 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Allen, Lamentations, Session 8 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Lamentations).



**Allen_Lam_Session0
8.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 8, Lamentations 3:23-33

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from Dr. Leslie Allen's teaching on Lamentations 3:23-33.

Briefing Document: Dr. Leslie Allen on Lamentations 3:23-33

Source: Excerpts from "Allen_Lam_EN_Session08.pdf"

Main Theme: Lamentations 3:23-33 is a transition point, moving from personal lament to a broader call for congregational repentance and hope based on God's faithfulness and potential for future good. The passage emphasizes the need to accept punishment for sins as a necessary, though temporary, condition and to seek God through prayer and submission. It presents a theological basis for hope in the face of disaster, rooted in God's inherent compassion and steadfast love, and the possibility of salvation.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Repentance as the Key:** The mentor in Lamentations 3 is building towards a call for repentance. "Repentance is the key human factor that the mentor is going to stress as he moves on further in Chapter 3." This is seen as the way to regain God's favor and find grace, faithfulness, and compassion.
- **Two Ways to Acceptance by God (Front Door vs. Back Door):** Allen outlines two ways of being accepted by God: the "front door" (righteous living and good conduct) and the "back door" (confession of shortcomings).
- **Front Door:** "The front door is entered with good conduct when a believer has lived responsibly." This is illustrated by Psalm 34:17-19 ("When the righteous cry for help..."). 1 John 5 also speaks of acceptance through obeying God's commandments.
- **Back Door:** "The back door is used by believers who are facing up to a bad conscience and are ready to confess their shortcomings." This is related to Exodus 34:6 and 1 John 1:9 ("If we confess our sins..."). Lamentations is presented as dealing with the "back door" approach.
- **Pronoun Switch:** Allen notes a significant shift in Lamentations 3:23 ("Great is your faithfulness"), where the speaker turns directly to God in grateful appreciation. This parallels a similar switch in Psalm 23. "After these third-person

references to God, there's a sudden emotional switch, and the mentor feels driven to turn directly to God himself."

- **"The Lord is my portion":** The phrase "The Lord is my portion" (Lamentations 3:24) is traced back to Numbers 18:20, where the tribe of Levi was denied land but promised God as their inheritance. Allen explains that it's a spiritual affirmation of dependence on God: "God is my support system, and fundamentally, it's all the gift of God, and so there's this dependence upon God that I have, and I must take that seriously, and that can be a great comfort."
- **Testimony as a Bridge to the Congregation:** The mentor's personal testimony (up to verse 24) is a lead-in to a more generalized application to the congregation. It is a means to an end. "It's not just true of me; it's true of any believer the mentor wants to say, and it's true of you, and it's something you can apply to yourselves."
- **Sermon Style and Wisdom Literature:** From verse 25 onwards, the passage takes on a sermon-like style, drawing on wisdom literature (like Psalms 34, 37, 49, 73, 92, 112) and the teaching role of priests. However, unlike Psalm 34, Lamentations approaches God through the "back door" of repentance. "Here, he's giving some general theological teaching, and he's integrating past negative, bad experiences with the possibility of a good expectation."
- **"Good" as a Provocative Word:** The repetition of the word "good" in verses 25-27 is significant, especially in contrast to the earlier despair. It suggests a way forward involving goodness, even amidst suffering. "He sets the scene in verse 17 with that negative use of the word good. Outwardly, goodness was a thing of the past. But he wants to get beyond that and say, even now, there is a way forward that involves goodness."
- **Divine Sovereignty and Contingency:** The phrase "there may yet be hope" (3:29) introduces a sense of divine contingency. Allen argues that this is linked to God's sovereignty and is a common feature in biblical calls to repentance (Amos 5:15, Joel 2:13-14, Jonah 3:8-9, 2 Timothy 2:25). It emphasizes that positive change depends on God's will, not on human entitlement. It also serves as a rhetorical device – "There's a chance that's worth taking."
- **God's Character: Compassion and Steadfast Love:** Verses 31-33 highlight the temporary nature of God's rejection and the ultimate priority of his compassion and steadfast love. Allen emphasizes that God does not "willingly" afflict or grieve. "The Lord will not reject forever. Although he causes grief, he will have

compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love, for he does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone." This is rooted in Exodus 34:6.

- **Focus on enduring and interpreting rightly:** The congregation's experience is looked back on, calling them to believe their punishment was good and necessary, interpreting that they deserved it. "And here's looking back to that experience and saying, that was your experience, congregation, wasn't it? That was your experience. And it was good for you to bear that yoke because, again, it was fair and just that you should do so because you were being punished for your sins in point of fact."

Importance of Order: Allen notes that NRSV incorrectly translates Hebrew "bad and good" as "good and bad". "And nowhere is it good and bad. It's bad and good. That's the order that it needs to be. And such the overall purpose, beyond the bad, there is good."

4. Study Guide: Allen, Ezekiel, Session 8, Lamentations 3:23-33

Lamentations 3:23-33 Study Guide

Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What are the two ways of being accepted by God, as described by Dr. Allen?
2. According to Dr. Allen, what is the "back door" approach to God, and in what situation is it appropriate to use?
3. What is the significance of the pronoun switch from third person to second person in Lamentations 3:23, and how does Dr. Allen illustrate this point using Psalm 23?
4. What is the historical background of the phrase "The Lord is my portion," and what does it mean spiritually for believers?
5. How does the mentor use his personal testimony (verses 23-24) as a lead-in to addressing the congregation in the verses that follow?
6. Dr. Allen mentions wisdom psalms and wisdom literature. How does Lamentations connect with this genre, and what is the primary difference?
7. Why does Dr. Allen say Lamentations has to adopt the "back door" approach to God, unlike Psalm 34 or 1 John 5?
8. How does the mentor use the word "good" in verses 25-27, and how does this relate to his earlier statements in verse 17?
9. What is the significance of the order of "bad and good" in Lamentations 3:38 (as opposed to "good and bad"), and why is the New International Version (NIV) rendering preferred in this case?
10. What three aspects do we need to bear in mind when considering the word "perhaps" in Lamentations 3:29 and the need for repentance?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The two ways of being accepted by God are the "front door," which is entered through righteous living and good conduct, and the "back door," which is used by believers who confess their sins and shortcomings. The front door emphasizes

obedience and responsible living, while the back door acknowledges the need for repentance and forgiveness.

2. The "back door" approach to God involves confessing one's sins and seeking forgiveness. It is appropriate when believers are facing a bad conscience and realize they cannot approach God through righteous living or "good conduct."
3. The pronoun switch signifies a sudden emotional shift where the mentor turns directly to God in grateful appreciation, expressing "thank you God." Dr. Allen illustrates this with the example of a child who, when frightened, abandons speaking of their mother in the third person and directly reaches for her hand.
4. The phrase "The Lord is my portion" originates from Numbers 18:20, where the tribe of Levi was not given land but instead relied on offerings brought to the sanctuary. Spiritually, it represents a believer's dependence on God as their ultimate source of support and sustenance, even amidst earthly possessions and jobs.
5. The mentor uses his personal testimony to create a relatable foundation before generalizing the message to the congregation. By sharing his own experience of suffering and finding hope in God, he gains the congregation's attention and makes them more receptive to the sermon that follows.
6. Lamentations adopts the style of wisdom psalms, which are didactic and meant to teach, similar to the style of professional wisdom teachers like those in Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. The primary difference is that Lamentations is written and spoken by priests who are also responsible for worship.
7. Lamentations has to adopt the "back door" approach because the mentor and the congregation have been guilty of sins and are no longer righteous. Unlike the righteous individuals in Psalm 34 or 1 John 5, they need to confess their sins and seek forgiveness before they can experience God's favor.
8. The mentor uses the word "good" provocatively to suggest that there is still a way forward that involves goodness, despite the congregation's current suffering. This contrasts with his earlier statement in verse 17, where he had forgotten what happiness and goodness felt like, creating a sense of hope and positive expectation for the future.
9. The order of "bad and good" is significant because it emphasizes the progression from punishment to a positive future. The NIV rendering is preferred because it

accurately reflects the Hebrew order and maintains the theological point that beyond the bad, there is good.

10. The three aspects to bear in mind when considering the word "perhaps" and the need for repentance are God's sovereignty (it's up to God whether a positive reversal occurs), form-critical associations (linking repentance with uncertainty is common in the Bible), and rhetorical force (it's a persuasive device that challenges people to take a chance).

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of both the "front door" and "back door" approaches to God, providing scriptural examples to support your claims. Under what circumstances might one approach be more appropriate than the other?
2. Analyze the role of personal testimony in Lamentations 3:23-33. How does the mentor's individual experience contribute to the overall message of hope and repentance for the congregation?
3. Explore the relationship between Lamentations and wisdom literature. How does Lamentations draw upon and adapt the themes and styles of wisdom traditions, and what does this reveal about the book's purpose and audience?
4. Examine the use of the word "good" in Lamentations 3:25-30. How does the mentor redefine "goodness" in the context of suffering and punishment, and what implications does this have for the congregation's understanding of God's character?
5. Discuss the challenges of translating and interpreting Lamentations 3:38. Why is it important to preserve the order of "bad and good," and what does this reveal about the book's overall message of hope and transformation?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Repentance:** The act of sincerely expressing remorse for sins and turning away from them, seeking forgiveness and reconciliation with God.
- **Front Door (of Acceptance):** A metaphor for approaching God through righteous living, obedience to commandments, and responsible conduct.
- **Back Door (of Acceptance):** A metaphor for approaching God through confession of sins, acknowledging shortcomings, and seeking forgiveness in times of crisis.
- **Steadfast Love:** A key attribute of God, also known as *hesed* in Hebrew, representing His unfailing loyalty, mercy, and commitment to His covenant.
- **Wisdom Literature:** A genre of biblical writings that focuses on practical advice, moral principles, and reflections on the meaning of life, often using proverbs, parables, and dialogues. Examples include Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes.
- **Wisdom Psalms:** Psalms that share characteristics with wisdom literature, offering instruction, moral guidance, and reflections on the nature of God and humanity.
- **Divine Sovereignty:** The concept that God is the ultimate authority and has absolute power and control over all things.
- **Form-Critical Associations:** The study of literary forms and genres in the Bible and the associated conventions and patterns of speech.
- **Salvation:** In the Old Testament context, often refers to deliverance from crisis, rescue from a bad experience, and existential help from God.
- **Yoke:** A metaphor for being punished for sin and enduring a necessary burden.

5. FAQs on Allen, Ezekiel, Session 8, Lamentations 3:23-33, Biblealearning.org (BeL)

Here is an 8-question FAQ based on the provided text:

What is the significance of repentance in Lamentations, particularly in chapter 3?

Repentance is presented as a crucial element for restoring God's favor. It's portrayed as the "back door" to acceptance by God, a way for believers facing a bad conscience to confess their shortcomings and find grace, faithfulness, and compassion. It's the path back to God when the "front door" of righteous living seems closed.

What are the "front door" and "back door" approaches to acceptance by God, and how do they relate to Lamentations?

The "front door" represents acceptance by God through righteous living and obedience to His commandments, exemplified in Psalm 34 and 1 John 5. The "back door" signifies acceptance through confession and repentance, as highlighted in 1 John 1.

Lamentations, acknowledging the people's guilt, emphasizes the need for the "back door" approach to reconnect with God.

What is the significance of the pronoun switch in Lamentations 3:23, from third-person references to God to a direct address?

This sudden shift indicates a move from general observations about God to a personal expression of grateful appreciation and thanksgiving. It's a turning point where the speaker, the mentor, directly acknowledges God's faithfulness. This parallels a similar switch in Psalm 23, where a moment of anxiety prompts a direct appeal to God for comfort.

How does the concept of "The Lord is my portion" in Lamentations 3:24 relate to the tribe of Levi and its broader spiritual meaning?

This statement originates from Numbers 18:20, where the tribe of Levi, lacking a land inheritance, is told that God Himself would be their share and possession. Spiritually, it signifies a believer's dependence on God as their ultimate source of support and provision, even amidst material possessions or employment. It reflects a profound trust in God's goodness and providence.

How does the mentor in Lamentations use his personal testimony to address the congregation's situation?

The mentor's testimony about his own suffering and eventual hope serves as a lead-in to a broader message for the congregation. He shares his experiences and realizations to encourage them to apply similar principles of faith and repentance to their own lives. By showing his vulnerability and eventual renewal, he hopes to inspire them to seek a positive future despite their present crisis.

What is the significance of the word "good" in Lamentations 3:25-27, especially in contrast to the earlier expressions of despair?

The repeated use of "good" in these verses is provocative. It contrasts with the mentor's earlier feelings of lost happiness and prosperity (goodness), as mentioned in verse 17. It represents a theological declaration of God's inherent goodness and the possibility of a positive future, even amidst suffering. It introduces a new expectation rooted in God's character and faithfulness.

How does Lamentations address the tension between God's justice and His compassion in verses 31-33?

These verses explain the concept of God's "goodness" mentioned earlier. While God may cause grief, He does not do so willingly or forever. His compassion and steadfast love are abundant, suggesting that punishment is temporary and not His natural inclination. This underscores that God's inherent nature is to show compassion, and He only afflicts when justice and fairness require it.

What is the significance of the phrase "there may yet be hope" in Lamentations 3:29, and how does it relate to the call for repentance?

The phrase "there may yet be hope" (or perhaps there will be hope) acknowledges a divine contingency. While hope is offered, there is no guarantee, reinforcing God's sovereignty. This mirrors similar phrases used in the Old and New Testaments when discussing repentance, highlighting that the positive reversal of circumstances ultimately depends on God's will. The phrase is also rhetorical, challenging the audience to take a chance on repentance.