

## Lament: Surrendering our Grievs and Questions to God

### 1. Introduction

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### 2. What is wrong in this world?

a. Sin saturates this world

b. We face the consequences of our own sins

c. We face the impacts of the sins of others

d. We face the effects of sin on this world in general

e. We still want to live well in this sin-stained world

Revelation 21:4

*<sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.*

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### 3. How do we respond?

Response #1:

Response #2:

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## 4. Lament is the right response

### a. What is lament?

#### Psalm 13:1–2

*<sup>1</sup> How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? <sup>2</sup> How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?*

#### Psalm 10:1

*<sup>1</sup> Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?*

#### Psalm 22:1–2

*<sup>1</sup> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? <sup>2</sup> O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest.*

Definition: **Lament is a believer's heartfelt prayer, taken to the Lord in a manner that expresses the depths of our pain, and the confusing questions we have, while affirming the trust we have in the Lord and in His ability to work in the midst of the situation.**

- *Believer's heartfelt prayer*
- *Taken to the Lord*
- *Expresses the depths of our pain*
- *(Expresses the) confusing questions we have*
- *Affirming the trust we have in the Lord*
- *(Affirming) His ability to work in the midst of the situation*

#### Psalm 62:8

*<sup>8</sup> Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.*

### b. Lament is unfamiliar to the modern-day church

### c. How is lament helpful?

## 5. Examples of lament

### The life of David

#### Psalm 13:

##### **a. Statement of pain**

*<sup>1</sup> How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? <sup>2</sup> How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?*

##### **b. Plea for help**

*<sup>3</sup> Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, <sup>4</sup> lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.*

##### **c. Affirmation of trust**

*<sup>5</sup> But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.*

##### **d. Expression of praise**

*<sup>6</sup> I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.*

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## 6. Components and structure of lament

Four key components:

- **Calling** – "O God"
- **Crying** – "I'm hurting"
- **Asking** – "Would you please"
- **Trusting** – "I trust in You"

### **a. Calling**

### **b. Crying**

### **c. Asking**

### **d. Trusting**

## Confession

- We might need to confess our own sins.
- We might need to voice the sins that others have committed – whether sins against us personally, or sins against someone we love.

### 1 John 1:9

*<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

## Formats of lament

### 7. How to personalize a Lament Psalm

Praying Psalm 13

*<sup>1</sup> How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?*

*<sup>2</sup> How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?*

*<sup>3</sup> Consider and answer me, O Lord my God; light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death, <sup>4</sup> lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed over him," lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.*

*<sup>5</sup> But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.*

*<sup>6</sup> I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.*

Consider praying these lament Psalms: 10, 13, 22, 77, or 86.

### 8. Lamenting with others

#### Matthew 18:19–20

*<sup>19</sup> Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup> For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.*

#### a. Praying with one other person

- **If you are the one who is hurting...**
  
- **If you are the one who is approached by a hurting person...**

Galatians 6:2

*<sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

**b. Praying with a small group**

**c. Praying as an entire church family**

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**How is lament beneficial?**

Matthew 11:28–29

*<sup>28</sup> Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

1 Peter 5:7

*<sup>7</sup> casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.*

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**9. Where do we go from here?**

**Further Resources**

I highly recommend these:

- The Psalms – particularly these (just a partial list): 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, 17, 22, 25, 28, 31, 39, 42, 43, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 70, 71, 77, 86, 140, 141, 142
- *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament*, by Mark Vroegop (Crossway, 2019)

There are many other helpful resources, but because I want to keep this list simple, I will stop with these.

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## Further Thoughts about Lament

Brian T. Whitaker  
2.7.26

In our session today we talked about the topic of biblical lament. There were additional things I wanted to include, but we had limited time to work with. I hope these further thoughts about lament will bless you – and maybe even challenge you – in your walk with the Lord.

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### Laments in Scripture

When we met, we talked a good bit about David's laments. But other Psalmists also expressed laments. Take time to read through the Psalms on your own, and notice how words of praise are intermixed with words of pain. Here are some key lament Psalms you may want to start with: 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 13, 17, 22, 25, 28, 31, 39, 42, 43, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 70, 71, 77, 86, 140, 141, and 142.

Other people in the Bible also lamented. Here are a few examples:

- **Job** lamented over the catastrophic loss and pain he felt, without even knowing that it was a direct attack from Satan. He had questions. Unfortunately, he also had friends who were misguided in their theology, and unhelpful in their advice. But God met Job in the midst of his questions, and challenged him to think more accurately (and humbly) about God's power and goodness.
- **Naomi** lamented, as we read in the book of Ruth. Having lost her husband while living in a foreign land, and then ten years later also losing her adult sons, Naomi was devastated. She implored her two daughters-in-law to leave her and let her return to her own homeland, where she wanted to be called Mara, which means "bitter."
- **Isaiah** lamented over the sin of His people and the coming judgment of God that would lead to the people's exile into a foreign land.
- **Jeremiah** (sometimes called "the weeping prophet") wept over the sin of his people, and the painful consequences they would suffer. Jeremiah stayed in Jerusalem after the Babylonians destroyed the temple and the city, having captured many people and taken them to Babylon. His laments are in the book that bears his name, as well as in Lamentations.
- The apostle **Paul** shared his many struggles, including some kind of physical ailment (his "thorn in the flesh" – see 2 Corinthians 12:7-10). He lamented this pain before the Lord, and the Lord reminded him that His grace would sufficiently give Paul all the strength he would need.

There were also times when **Jesus** lamented.

- He lamented the way Jerusalem persecuted the prophets, knowing that He too would soon be persecuted as part of the crucifixion (Matthew 23:37-39).
- He lamented the pain caused death when Lazarus died (John 11:33-36).
- He lamented in the Garden of Gethsemane, bringing His pain and anguish to His Father in prayer, in such distress that he sweated blood (Matthew 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46).
- From the cross, Jesus prayed the opening words of a lament psalm, Psalm 22: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46)

Even knowing all things, and perhaps at times because He knew all things, Jesus lamented. He lamented the pain caused by sin. He lamented the deep grief people felt over death. He lamented the sinful choices people made in rejecting Him and eventually crucifying Him.

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## Knowing Jesus Understands

Because Jesus felt some of the sorrows we ourselves feel, He understands sorrow and pain.

In Isaiah 53 we read about the Messiah (Jesus) being the “Suffering Servant.” Here is Isaiah 53:3-5:

<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. <sup>4</sup> Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Through His time on earth, especially the time between His arrest and His death on the cross, Jesus suffered pain, abuse, indignity, shame, torture, ridicule, and all kinds of injustice. Hardest of all, Jesus – the perfectly sinless One – took on our sins so we might be forgiven.

So we can confidently bring our pain to Jesus, because He understands! As we read in Hebrews 4:15–16:

<sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Although in context this is talking about temptation, it also applies to anytime we want to come to the Lord and express our needs. We are welcome to come. He understands our weaknesses and pains. He receives us gladly because we belong to Him. He can sympathize with our pain because of the pain He experienced.

Jesus invites us to bring our burdens to Him, as we read in Matthew 11:28–29:

<sup>28</sup> Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

**The One who suffered injustice and pain is the One who comforts us in our own suffering.** So we can – as we read in 1 Peter 5:7 – cast all our anxieties on Him, because He cares for us.

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## Bringing our Pain to Him

So we return to the value of lament in our lives as Christ-followers. Lament doesn't take away our pain, but it aligns us with the One who can help us bear that pain.

As we emerge from our lament, we know we have cast our burdens on the Lord. We know the pains and problems and questions are in His hands. In the process of lament we have reaffirmed our faith and trust in Him, and even reviewed some of biblical truth that we cling to.

Of course, this does not mean the pain instantly goes away! As an analogy, we cannot expect to leave the operating room and immediately be free from pain. Pain is rarely taken away all at once. Rather, it is a process that takes time. Likewise with our emotional pain, our lament will likely be repeated, reformed, and re-prayed many times.

- We may lament over a physical ailment that will never fully heal. But God gives us the grace to keep living even with whatever limitations that ailment might bring.

- We may lament over a broken relationship, which may take months or years to heal – or may never heal. But as we place that relationship, and that person, in the Lord's hands, He will work in us as well as in the other person.
- We may lament over a terminal diagnosis, knowing that our time on this earth is drawing to a close. But as we surrender that fear and uncertainty to the Lord through lament, we can walk through that health journey in faith and trust, knowing He is empowering us to persevere through the hardships of the present, as well as through the future as our physical health declines. We are still in His hands!

When we lament, our circumstances may not change at all, but our perspective on those circumstances may undergo a radical change. Even when Jesus lamented the approaching pain of His betrayal and crucifixion, it didn't change the plan, but it allowed Him, in His humanity, to face the coming pain with confidence and peace.

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### **Seeing Purpose in Pain**

Part of our healing from pain is the understanding that the Lord will use our pain in some way. Jesus told us that we should expect to suffer as His followers (Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:18-20; John 16:33).

But we also have the Lord's assurance that...

- He is with us in our suffering
- He is using that suffering to make us more mature in Christ (Romans 5:1-5; James 1:2-4)
- He invites us to draw near to Him in deeper trust
- He empowers us to live faithfully even as we suffer
- We can bring glory to Him in all circumstances

The Lord also uses our suffering to help us relate better with other believers when they face similar kinds of pain. Beyond that, we can relate to people who don't know Jesus, and are facing similar kinds of pain without any of the hope they could have if they would turn to Jesus.

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### **Bearing One Another's Burdens**

We ALL face brokenness of some kind. Nobody is immune from the impact of sin in our world, or in our lives. We all suffer various consequences from sins in our own past, or the sins of others who have hurt us.

Can we simply be honest about our brokenness with one another? Can we share the burdens we feel, as we also help others with the burdens they feel (Galatians 6:2)? Can we, together, take these things to the Lord through lament, grieving together while also expressing our mutual faith in the Lord's power and goodness?

In order to do this, we want to fight against thoughts like these:

- Nobody can understand what I've been through
- Nobody else has suffered the way I have
- Everyone else in church has it all together, but I'm the only one falling apart
- If someone knew this about me, they'd be disgusted, or even run away from me

These are messages of SHAME, and they are direct from the enemy! They move us toward isolation, and (if we give in to them) render us mostly ineffective in the Kingdom of God. If we belong to Christ, we won't lose our salvation, but our effectiveness in the Kingdom of God will be hindered when we voluntarily sit on the sideline (or in the locker room) rather than doing our part with the team.

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## Living in Victory

It is best to take time to lament, as we continue to move forward in faith and trust, living for God's glory.

We want to remember...

- We are in God's hands
- He is accomplishing His great work in the midst of – or in spite of – or even through – our pain
- We want to focus our attention more on Him than on our pain
- With His strength, we can persevere through whatever we may be facing (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

Do you have cancer? Turn to the Lord and cry out for His help. Draw near to Him, and ask Him to use even this to draw your heart closer to Him. Look for ways to use the cancer to share with others about your faith and trust in Jesus.

Are you in financial debt that seems impossible to overcome? Turn to the Lord and ask Him to meet your needs and show you new ways to honor Him with your finances.

Do you have broken relationships in your family? Pray for every one of those people, regularly bringing them to the Father and interceding for their faith and their life. Look for ways to make amends wherever you can, confessing your own sin and failures and expressing your hope that someday the other person can forgive you.

Are you captivated by your past, or worried about your future? Take that to the Lord, and ask for healing from the past and courage for the future.

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When we have taken the journey of lament, and grown in our understanding of the Lord and His care for us, we can continue through our lives with faith and trust. We can walk faithfully with Him and live our lives for His great glory.