

How to Lament - Turning to God

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- [0 : 0 0] Now, last week's Sunday school lesson was part of a different study, but we might consider it an introduction to the new study we begin this week.
- At the start of last week's lesson, I talked about the troubles we inevitably face, injury, disease, heartbreak, loss, death. We could probably list a long list of tragedies.
- Now, based on the conversations that followed throughout the day, I got the impression that that message resonated with many of you. And I'm not terribly surprised because, again, man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.
- In a sermon about the inevitability of suffering, Horatius Bonar said, The road to the kingdom is not so pleasant and comfortable and easy and flowery as many dream.
- It is not a bright, sunny avenue of palms. It is not paved with triumph, though it is to end in victory. The termination is glory, honor, and immortality.
- [1 : 0 9] But on the way, there is the thorn in the flesh, the sackcloth and the cross. Recompense later, but labor here. Rest later, but weariness here.
- Joy and security later, but here. Endurance and watchfulness. The race, the battle, the burden, the stumbling block. The oftentimes heavy heart.
- We all know what it's like to suffer to some degree or another. Some have suffered disease or disability. Some have suffered the loss of a loved one.
- Some have suffered a fire or a car accident or some other unexpected calamity. Some have suffered through material troubles, financial troubles, marital troubles, the rebellion of a child.
- Some have suffered with depression and anxiety or addiction. Some have suffered loneliness or infertility. I mean, the list goes on and on.
- [2 : 1 1] The point is, we all have troubles, yet we're not always great at dealing with them. For example, one of our tendencies is to minimize our troubles.
- We say to ourselves, things could always be worse. Other people have bigger problems than I do. Why should I complain? That's not really a biblical approach, though.
- Consider what Paul tells the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 4. He says, Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.
- When Paul pulls out his scales, he doesn't place his troubles on one side and someone else's troubles on the other side. Instead, he places his troubles on one side of the scale and the eternal weight of glory on the other side.
- So if we're going to make any kind of comparison, we don't compare our problems with someone else's problems. I'm not even sure how we evaluate such a thing, which one's bigger, which one's worse.
- [3 : 2 6] No, if we make any comparison at all, we weigh our troubles next to the promises of God. We don't need to minimize our suffering in order to do that.

Another tendency we have is to use the promises of God to more or less sweep our sufferings under the rug. And I've heard this done at Christian funerals before.

I remember one funeral in particular where a widow, she had lost her husband of 40 years, and she is just weeping loudly all through the service.

And I know it was probably distracting, especially for the pastor. And the pastor essentially called her out for it. He said, Sister, don't you believe your husband's in heaven?

And she kind of nodded. And he says, Well, you don't need to cry like that. Just be happy for him. And I think, to give him the benefit of the doubt, he was trying to encourage her.

[4 : 26] But I really wanted to interject and say, Why can't she be happy for him and miss him terribly at the same time? When tragedy strikes, we like to tell people, you know, all things work together for good.

We recite the first promise of God that comes to our mind, and that's a good thing. But sometimes we do it almost unintentionally as a way to push away the ugliness of the situation.

You know, no, no, no, no, no, don't cry. There is this promise of God. But sometimes it's not that easy to just turn off how you feel.

I mentioned last week that my mom was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. And unsurprisingly, she was pretty upset. And when I was speaking with her about it, at one point I said, You know, I would love nothing more than to tell you everything's going to be fine.

Everything's going to be okay. But we don't know that. We don't know what the Lord's will is in this matter. And as hard of a time as I had saying that to my mom in that moment, believe it or not, she replied, That's why I'm talking to you.

[5 : 39] If I had called one of your sisters, they would have said, Everything's just fine. Everything's going to be okay. And I understand why they would say that. And God willing, everything will be just fine.

But first of all, we can't necessarily give someone that kind of guarantee. And second, and more to the point, my mom, she wanted to lament.

She wanted to embrace the hardship that she's currently in. She did not want to hear somebody say, Don't worry, everything's going to be okay. God will take away your cancer.

He won't give you a problem bigger than you can handle, that sort of thing. She wanted to face the situation head on. And as she was describing some of her prayers, she was in the middle of a stage of lament.

The problem is that the biblical pattern of lament is perhaps unfamiliar and sometimes very uncomfortable to many of us. Because, again, we'd rather sweep sorrows under the rug.

[6 : 47] We want a quick fix. We want to avoid the ugliness of suffering, if at all possible. When we do, however, we may very well hinder what is a very natural grieving process for the believer.

And I'm talking about believers in particular. We effectively neglect a very precious and a very helpful gift from God, and that is lament.

And that's what this current study is about. Over the course of four weeks, we will consider the subject of lament. Better yet, we will consider the grace of lament, if I can call it that.

In short, lament is all about getting from the point of suffering, of trial, to firmly trusting in God's sovereignty.

It's about how we bring our problems to God. It's something that, if we don't understand the biblical practice of lament, there may be times when we struggle to cope with pain and with hardships, and we may struggle to help others cope with pain and hardships.

[8 : 03] So I'll begin this morning by addressing how to lament. We'll talk about how to lament this week and next. Then we'll see what we learn from lament after that, or what we can learn through lament.

And finally, we'll conclude with some practical application. Now, I never gave this subject much thought until I was studying through the Psalms several years ago now.

And when I came to Psalm 22, I got stuck for quite a while. Psalm 22 is likely familiar to most of us. It begins, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Specifically, I got stuck on that first line. Now, imagine we're all gathered together for corporate prayer when someone prays, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Despite reading that line from David in the Bible, there was a time in my life when I think I would have really cringed to hear someone pray that.

[9 : 15] Why? Because it's clearly untrue, right? It's theologically inaccurate. No matter what a believer is going through, we all know God has promised, I will never leave you nor forsake you.

It seems terribly audacious for us to voice a question like that, to voice a doubt like that. Why have you forsaken me?

By no means, he would never forsake his people. Yet here it is in God's breathed out scripture. David not only asked the question, but we know that God inspired him to ask the question, and there's some prophecy in that, as we understand from Jesus on the cross.

But putting that aside, as contradictory and paradoxical as it seems, God inspired David to ask, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Now, obviously, David is very upset when he writes Psalm 22. He's hurting. Perhaps he's fearful. His precise emotions, I'm not sure, are the most important thing.

[10 : 31] The most important thing is to realize that he's speaking these emotions. Emphasis on emotions. He's not trying to be theologically accurate.

He likely knows he's being theologically inaccurate. That's not his primary concern here. He's not writing a systematic theology textbook, you see. He's speaking authentically about what he feels.

Specifically, he has approached God with how he feels. And this is the first aspect of biblical lament. We turn to God in prayer.

So if you're taking notes, that's your first big bullet point. We turn to God in prayer. Throughout scripture, namely the Psalms, which is where we're going to begin our study, we see a distinct pattern to lament, which generally includes four parts.

So when we lament, we, number one, we turn to God. We pray to God. Number two, and I want to put a little asterisk next to this, we give our complaints to God.

[11 : 40] And that's for a lack of better term. And we're going to talk about that more eventually. We do not want to assume we can say just anything we want, complain anything we want, accuse God of anything we want.

That's not what I mean by complain, but we'll come to that. Number three, we make a request to God. And number four, we express our trust in God and even praise him.

Go with me, if you will, to Psalm 77. Psalm 77. I'll begin reading at the first verse.

Asaph says, Prayer is the first aspect of lament.

Now, these words are a bit paradoxical when you stop to really think about them. On the one hand, this is a raw, honest cry from Asaph.

[13 : 07] He's hurt. He's troubled. He says, My soul refuses to be comforted. When I remember God, I moan. On the other hand, Asaph doesn't avoid God, does he?

He's not crying out into the void. He's not talking to himself. He says, I cry aloud to God. Despite hurting so badly that he doesn't feel that he can even be consoled, he still turns to God in prayer.

He still realizes God is his source of hope. That's embedded in the fact that he goes to God. Now, we see the same kind of paradox in Psalm 22, don't we?

David feels as though God has forsaken him. Yet, whom does he turn to with his pain? He turns to God. Again, he says, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me from the words of my groaning? Oh, my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer. And by night, but I find no rest.

[14 : 24] In his book, Rejoicing in Lament, Todd Billings writes, It is precisely out of trust that God is sovereign that the psalmist repeatedly brings laments and petitions to the Lord.

If the psalmists had already decided the verdict that God is indeed unfaithful, they would not continue to offer their complaint. Why would someone complain to God if he doesn't believe God cares?

Why turn to God if you believe he's powerless to do anything about your situation? You see, the authors of the psalms aren't lacking faith. That's not really the issue here.

They know God is sovereign. They know he is wise and good. A lack of faith really isn't the issue, but that may be one of the reasons why we would be uncomfortable with lament. Even if we feel that God has forsaken us, we may be prone to bottle up that feeling, to never voice it, to never go to God with it, because number one, we know it's not true, and number two, we fear that that would express a lack of trust in God.

If Asaph lacks faith in God, why does he turn to God in prayer? Despite all appearances, lament is actually rooted in belief.

[15 : 50] Now, it may be a weak faith. It may be a situation where somebody says, I believe, Lord, but help me with my unbelief. But somewhere in the root is belief.

It's rooted in our trust in God. Otherwise, we wouldn't turn to God in our laments. We may cry. We may complain. Some people become angry. They voice their emotions to their friends.

But we wouldn't turn to God in the way that these psalmists do unless we knew him and his promises. As we'll see, lament serves to bridge the gap between our pain and a renewed hope in God and his promises.

That's the idea. Frankly, prayer is not just one aspect of lament. Biblical lament doesn't happen apart from prayer.

One can cry out. He can grieve. He can hurt without prayer, right? You take a young child who's just been born. What's the first thing that child's going to do? Cry out.

[17 : 00] As I've heard it said, to cry is human. To lament is Christian. There's a difference. Crying out may be technically a form of lament, but Christian lament, that requires prayer.

It is crying out to God. My God, why have you forsaken me? I cry aloud to God, Asaph said. Biblical lament is a painful prayer.

It may be full of theological inaccuracies. It is certainly raw, and it's authentic. But it is prayer, and it is prayer to God. In Psalm 77, Asaph, he's not just talking.

He's not just complaining. He's crying out to God in this prayer. I cry aloud to God, and He will hear me. I seek the Lord. My hand is stretched out.

That last part, I suppose, describes his posture as he prays. Perhaps he's laid on the ground, stretched out. Regardless, he's earnestly praying to God.

[18 : 06] He's speaking to God. And while this kind of honest, deliberate pleading with God may feel a little uncomfortable for us, consider the alternative.

Someone might argue that lament is somehow irreverent. The way these questions are phrased, they might deem them inappropriate. They might say it suggests a lack of faith, but really what requires more faith?

Turning to God in times of need or not turning to Him in times of need? Alexander McLaren, a 19th century Baptist pastor, once wrote, Doubts are better put into plain speech than lying diffused and darkening like poisonous mists in the heart.

A thought, be it good or bad, can be dealt with when it is made articulate. Again, I think even Alexander McLaren would have some disclaimers, some clarification on what is appropriate to say to God, but we'll come to that.

In other words, it's better to speak to God than to remain silent. Silence is spiritually dangerous when you're hurting and when you're confused.

[19 : 33] It is far better to cast your cares upon the Lord even if your thoughts are unclear or possibly misguided. Did God forsake David?

Absolutely not. But did that prevent David from going to God and asking, My God, why have you forsaken me?

The most important thing here is that David took his fears. He took his troubles straight to the Lord. Now, why would David and Asaph and others turn to God in their struggles?

David feels forsaken by God. Asaph claims he'll never be comforted. He can't be consoled. So, why did these men even bother to pray?

Well, despite what these men feel and despite what they initially say in their prayers, they still know, number one, God is sovereign. And number two, He's their only hope.

[20 : 42] These are desperate men. We should remember that lament is a process that doesn't end and begin, or begin and end, I should say, with questions, with complaints.

If lament feels wrong to us, it's probably because we don't realize that biblical lament is meant to be a process leading to that renewed trust and hope in God.

We're not supposed to get stuck in the state of sorrow and desperation forever. That's not the point. And for that reason, silence is far more dangerous.

It will always be better to take our struggles to the Lord. Now, obviously, lament is not a quick fix if that's what we're looking for. Asaph says, verse two, in the day of my trouble, I seek the Lord.

In the night, my hand is stretched out without wearying. He's praying both day and night, and yet he acknowledges, my soul refuses to be comforted. Then in verse four, he says, you hold my eyelids open.

[21 : 53] I am so troubled that I cannot speak. He talks as though he's been praying so long and so hard that he eventually runs out of words. He doesn't know what else to say.

In fact, he prays so long and hard without an answer from God that he begins to wonder whether it's all in vain. Look at verses seven through nine. Will the Lord spurn forever and never again be favorable?

Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?

These are very uncomfortable questions. It's like David's question at the start of Psalm 22.

These are the kinds of questions that would probably make us cringe a little bit if we heard a brother or sister praying them out loud. And of course, tone and intention can go a long way.

[23 : 00] But we probably want to turn to that person and say, no, no, brother, sister, you shouldn't say these things. Of course, God has not spurned you. Of course, his steadfast love hasn't ceased.

But we have to remember that these questions are not spoken out of defiance. These questions are not an act of willful rebellion or anything like that.

These questions are asked out of deep pain. Deep pain. This is what heartbreak, this is what fear sounds like when they speak.

And as we'll see in a moment, Asaph, he still believes the Lord is good. He still believes the Lord is loving. He knows the Lord is still gracious, but he's speaking honestly for a moment about what he feels.

Emphasis on feels. He's not trying to articulate the truth here. He's expressing his emotions. And we know how fleeting and even chaotic our emotions can be.

[24 : 14] It's not too far, it's not the same, but it's not too far from the prayer of Christ himself in the garden. Jesus, if you remember, he fell on his face and he prayed, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.

Of course, he goes on to say, Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. So, though it's condensed down to this one sentence, Jesus does something similar to Asaph in his prayer.

Before he acknowledges the truth, that is, the Father's will, he gives voice to what he's feeling. He prays, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Now, to be very clear about this, Jesus always remained willing and he always remained determined to go to the cross and die just as the Father's will dictated.

But, for that moment in the garden as he prayed very intimately to his Father, he was honest about the fact that he dreaded the thought of suffering, sin, and its consequences. Understandably, he did not want to suffer the wrath of God. If there was any other way, he prays, but, not as I will, but as you will.

[25 : 36] So, you see, there's a kind of lament in that, I guess, a kind of voicing of emotion and feelings, and yet, it's completely reverent and understanding in understanding God's will and understanding the truth.

You know, it takes a lot of faith to lay that depth of pain before God and to open up ourselves to that kind of vulnerability. Now, notice what happens immediately following Asaph's uncomfortable questions.

He's approached God with all of his pain and his confusion, and then in verse 10, he says, I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.

I will remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, I will remember your wonders of old. I will ponder all your work and meditate on your mighty deeds. Do you see what's happening here?

After all of that painful lamenting, day and night, Asaph, he starts to think about what God has done in the past. Now, this doesn't immediately solve his current dilemma, but it's a wonderful start.

[26 : 59] Furthermore, it happens quite naturally because Asaph is speaking to whom? He's speaking to God. He's gone straight to God with these things.

And as focused as he's been on his particular problems, he can't help but let God enter into his thoughts because he's lamenting to God. Now, this might not have happened had he turned away from God rather than turning to God in his suffering.

Asaph says, now that I think about it, Lord, you've done some wonderful things in the past. Amazing, mighty things. Then he says in verse 13, your way, O God, is holy.

What God is great like our God? Now that I really think about it, Lord, not only are your works wonderful, but so are you.

You see how his focus now has shifted from his pain to the previous works of God to the character of God. Now God's front and center in his mind's eye.

[28 : 05] Compare verse 13 with those questions I read in verses 7 through 9. Pretty big difference. But do you see the tension between them?

In his heart of hearts, Asaph knows God is sovereign. He knows God is good, which is why he has turned to God in the first place. Meanwhile, his painful circumstances have kind of called God's character into question, at least in his own mind.

His heartache has kind of suppressed the truth for a moment. Is God really sovereign and good? My experience seems to be indicating otherwise.

And yet, the process of the lament here is drawing out that truth once again. Do you see that happening in Asaph's prayer? Think of it this way. Let's say you have a young child at home and he's being very disobedient and discipline is necessary.

And you carry out that discipline and inevitably that discipline hurts, but your child is young, not fully mature, doesn't quite understand the situation, so he or she may sincerely wonder in their minds, does dad or mom still love me?

[29 : 31] Now, one of two things might happen at that point. He may say nothing at all and he may go to bed that night thinking, does mom or dad still love me?

Or he might ask, mom, dad, do you still love me? Now, if your child were to ask you that, how many of you would be angry?

How dare you question my love? No, I think we would understand that that anger comes from immaturity, misunderstanding.

Instead, what would we do? We would jump at the chance to reaffirm our love. We would immediately say, of course I love you. I love you more than you would ever know.

Of course, it would also be a wonderful opportunity to explain how that discipline is actually an act of love. I'm reminded of the verses in the Gospels where Jesus says, if you who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give?

[30 : 42] If we don't turn to God in our suffering, we may miss out on a wonderful opportunity for Him to come in in that moment and reaffirm His love for us and His commitment to keep all of these promises He's made.

Now, I believe He understands why we might ask these theologically incorrect questions, why we may have misunderstandings and confusions, why we may lack faith in those moments.

And when we ask, we open up the door to hear His answer loud and clear and the encouragement that follows because we've gone to God with these things.

Notice what happens next in Psalm 77. As Asaph is thinking about what God has done as well as His holiness and His greatness, he begins to see God's tender mercy and His redemptive care in the past.

His mind goes back to the Israelites' slavery in Egypt and, of course, God's subsequent rescue of them. He says, When the water saw you, O God, when the water saw you, they were afraid.

[31 : 56] Indeed, the deep trembled. The clouds poured out water. The skies gave forth thunder. Your arrows flashed on every side. The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind.

Your lightnings lighted up the world. The earth trembled and shook. Your way was through the sea. Your path through the great waters, yet your footprints were unseen.

You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. In a moment of sheer terror, God delivered His people from the Egyptian army by leading them through the Red Sea.

They walked on dry ground as God held back the soldiers behind them and He held up the walls of water beside them. And I especially love verse 19.

Your way was through the sea, Your path through the great waters, yet Your footprints were unseen. That statement certainly implies a measure of trust, doesn't it?

[32 : 58] The Israelites, I don't know that they saw this rescue coming. How could they have predicted that God would slice a walking path right through the sea? And even as they walked the path God made, they didn't see Him, not tangibly, not with their natural eyes.

They wouldn't be sure whether or not the water would hold outside of believing, trusting in God's providence in that moment. They were walking by faith.

Now do you see how Asaph has lamented his way right into a renewed perspective of his situation? At the beginning of this prayer, he moans when he thinks of God.

He's struggling to trust God. He may very well be questioning God's faithfulness. Even so, he turns to God with these concerns, and when he turns to God, he thinks even more about God, and this leads him to think about what God has done in the past.

He thinks about God's good character, and then he remembers this particular moment in history when all hope seemed lost for the Israelites. They were between a rock and a hard place, between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea, and that's when God does the unthinkable.

[34 : 16] Though the Israelites couldn't see him with their physical eyes, he was there. He pulled back the water, and he led them right through that water, and they escaped the Egyptian captors once and for all.

Now, Asaph doesn't mention it in this psalm, but it's not hard to see how he would have found comfort in that. He finds himself in a similar situation, it would seem.

In the beginning, he talks like, there's no way out of my predicament. How will I escape? My soul refuses to be comforted. Yet he discovers comfort in the end.

Why? He's taken his lament to God. Pray. Pray. Pray. That's the first and perhaps most crucial aspect of lament.

Go to God. Don't wallow. Don't complain to everyone you know. Go to God. Seek his help.

[35 : 30] God. Second, we need to bring our questions. We need to bring our concerns. We need to bring even our complaints.

Again, there's caveats to that, to God. We turn to him in prayer, and we specifically bring to him what is troubling us. We need to be specific about what's troubling us.

Now, hearing me say that, especially using the word complaint, some would say, no, we never complain to God. Complaining is sinful, and complaining is sinful.

But I'm going to use that word again with caveats. On the one hand, there is definitely, absolutely a sinful way to complain.

On the other hand, lamenting isn't possible without a form of complaint. And that's the best word I know how to use.

[36 : 25] Read the Psalms of lament. They express fears and sorrows and frustrations and confusion. And that is what makes them Psalms of lament.

These complaints, if you will, can't be sinful because God himself inspired them to be written as Holy Scripture, yet we need to focus on how to how they are presented to God and what is presented to God.

These particular Psalms, of course, were once set to music. God's people have been singing these for generations. And by the way, I should mention that our own worship should probably leave room for lamenting.

Our own gatherings with the church. If we're not already, I pray that our church can grow comfortable with prayers of lament. And songs of lament. Perhaps one of my personal favorites is by John Newton.

I ask the Lord that I might grow in faith and love and every grace. Might more of his salvation know and seek more earnestly his face.

[37 : 32] It was he who taught me thus to pray and he, I trust, has answered prayer. But it has been in such a way as almost drove me to despair.

I hope that in some favored hour at once he'd answer my request and by his love's constraining power subdue my sins and give me rest. Instead of this, he made me feel the hidden evils of my heart and let the angry powers of hell assault my soul in every part.

Yea, with his own hand he seemed intent to aggravate my woe, crossed all the fair designs I schemed, humbled my heart and laid me low. Lord, why is this?

I trembling cried. Wilt thou pursue thy worm to death? Tis in this way, the Lord replied. I answer prayer for grace and faith.

These inward trials I employ from self and pride to set thee free and break thy schemes of earthly joy that thou mayest find thy all in me. I like how that hymn mirrors the lament psalms in a way.

[38 : 47] We should be comfortable singing songs like that. Comfortable praying prayers like that. You know, I've experienced my fair share of uncomfortable moments at funerals, but I remember one in particular where a woman had lost her husband.

She asked me to officiate the service, and I'd say that I delivered a relatively standard message. I spoke about God's grace.

I preached Christ and his gospel, and I focused especially on God's providence and his perfect timing because this woman had lost her husband very unexpectedly.

And I was bringing the service to a close. This woman stood up in the front row. She pointed her finger at me, and she says, I object to everything you just said.

To which I meekly replied, and I understand why. I called her the next day, and she apologized to me and admitted her frustrations were not with me.

[39 : 54] She said, I'm just struggling to know why God would take my husband from me. And so I spoke with her about lament, and I told her to take it to God.

Go straight to him. Ask him these questions. He'll understand, I said. Better yet, he can sympathize.

He cares. And I believe he will guide you through this if you trust in him. But you can imagine the horror on people's faces when she stood up at the funeral and said what she said.

It was very uncomfortable for everyone, me included. But there's a sense in which it shouldn't be. Now, it could very well be argued she did not go about that the right way.

And there is a wrong way to lament, which we will come to. But we can't find fault with her feelings. We can't find fault with her confusion, her sorrow.

[40 : 58] I mean, she lost her husband. And we shouldn't let sincere expressions of despair become taboo for us. Look at the Psalms.

God's people have been praying and singing laments for many generations. The natural response to suffering for some people, on the one hand, is anger.

They become angry at God, and they grow to resent him. The response of some on the other side is a kind of stoicism. You know, they live in a state of denial, trying their best to pretend everything's fine, even though they know they don't feel fine.

They're deeply hurt. And the problem with both of these approaches is they don't resolve anything. They don't fix anything. Biblical lament provides a healthy alternative to both.

We don't really have time, but when we pick this up next week, we're going to look at Psalm 10, and we're going to go a little bit deeper in the kinds of things we're taking to God in these prayers of lament.

[42 : 03] But if nothing else, I want to conclude with this quote from Michael Jenkins, who wrote a book in *The House of the Lord*. He writes, In other words, these psalms that we read in Scripture give us permission to lament.

In fact, they encourage us to take our struggles and our concerns and our pains and our heartbreak and lay them before God.

Let me stress again that this is not where a lament ends, but it is part of the process, and we'll consider the rest in coming weeks.

Let's pray as we close. Gracious Father, we acknowledge that there are seasons of lament where our souls cry out in anguish and uncertainty.

Yet we're reminded in the midst of suffering that your steadfast presence remains with us. Lord, we ask you to cultivate within us a spirit that seeks you with humility and honesty.

[43 : 34] Even when times seem to be very dark, you are our only light. Help us to embrace the grace of lament as a pathway to deeper trust and greater reliance upon you.

May we always find solace and strengthen your promises, knowing that you are the God who hears, who understands, who holds all things together. So teach us, Lord, to lament with hope, grounded in the assurance of your unfailing love and the redemptive work of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

In closing, we pray that through seasons of lament, our trust in you would be renewed, our hope would be rekindled, and our spirits lifted high as we cast our cares upon you.

The one who cares for us more deeply than we can likely fathom. That's in the precious and holy name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.