

Lament & Hope

Processing 2024 & Anticipating 2025

Introduction

As another year comes to a close, we as believers do well to reflect upon the year that is behind us and to begin to think about the year ahead. Something that often hinders our ability to move forward into a new year is that we at times fail to truly reflect upon and process difficult things that we experienced in the previous year. God has given to us the biblical process of *lamentation* so that we might move forward in faith through seasons of difficulty.

“Christians affirm that the world is broken, God is powerful, and he will be faithful. Therefore, lament stands in the gap between pain and promise...Lament can be defined as a loud cry, a howl, or a passionate expression of grief. However, in the Bible lament is more than sorrow or talking about sadness. It is more than walking through the stages of grief. Lament is prayer in pain that leads to trust.”—Mark Vroegop, Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy

Main Point: As we stand on the cusp of a new year, we do well to reflect on the difficulties of the previous year and rightly _____ them so that we can move forward into the new year with _____!

Learning to Lament

- The Scriptures are filled with the _____ of lamentation.

Examples are found in the Torah (Exod. 2:23-24) and in the prophets (Lamentations, Hab. 1:2-4). Lament can also be observed in the Gospels (Mark 14:36; Matt. 27:46). It is in the OT writings, primarily the Psalms, where we find the most examples of biblical lament.

Psa. 4:1—Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have given me relief when I was in distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!

Psa. 44:26—Rise up; come to our help! Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!

- When the various examples of lament are considered, an instructive _____ can be observed.

“Most biblical laments follow a pattern as God takes grieving people on a journey. This poetic odyssey usually includes four key elements: (1) an address to God, (2) a complaint, (3) a request, and (4) an expression of trust or praise.”

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1. _____ to God in Prayer

Psa. 5:1—Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my groaning.

Psa. 6:2—Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled.

2. Bring Your _____

Psa. 10:1—Why, O Lord, do you stand far away? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

Psa. 22:1—My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

3. _____ Boldly

Psa. 22:11—Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help.

Psa. 60:11-12—¹¹Oh, grant us help against the foe, for vain is the salvation of man! ¹²With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes.

4. Choose to _____

Psa. 13:5-6—⁵But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. ⁶I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Psa. 71:10,14—¹⁰For my enemies speak concerning me; those who watch for my life consult together... ¹⁴But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more.

Key Point: Lament allows us to work through our griefs and pains with our focus primarily on the _____ rather than _____ and our _____.

Psalm 77

- The psalmist cries out to the Lord in the midst of _____ (v. 1-4)

Psa. 77:1-2a—*1 I cry aloud to God, aloud to God, and he will hear me. 2 In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord; “trouble”*

⇒ While the specific nature of the trouble is not described, it is affecting him both physically and spiritually.

“my soul refuses to be comforted”

“You hold my eyelids open”

“I cannot speak”

- The psalmist expresses his confusion and disappointment through a series of _____ (v. 5-9)

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?”

- The psalmist makes an intentional _____ and _____ upon the Lord’s faithfulness (v. 10-20)

Psa. 77:10—*Then I said, “I will appeal to this, to the years of the right hand of the Most High.”*

⇒ Various translations render this passage differently. The psalmists point is that God is powerful and has been faithful and has not changed, even if it might seem that way to the psalmist.

Psa. 77:11-12—*11 I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your wonders of old. 12 I will ponder all your work, and meditate on your mighty deeds.*

(1) He reflects generally upon _____ God is and _____ He has done.

(2) He reflects specifically on God’s great act of redemption in the OT, the _____.

Key Point: As believers reflect upon God’s works, they come to see that He has not _____ or _____ us even as we walk through times great difficulty.

2024—Reflection & Lamentation

1. What things do you need to lament from the past year?
2. What questions can you ask of the Lord in your lamentation?
3. How has the Lord been faithful to you in the past that assures you of His faithfulness in this present?

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