

# Biblical Lamenting |Psalms 77

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Date: 23 March 2021

[ 0 : 00 ] If you'll join me in Psalm chapter 7, verse number 13, it says, Who is so great as our God? That's just what the ladies just sung there, who is so great as our God.

Hope all of you are building your life upon that foundation of His love. What a wonderful song. November dates, Sunday night here at our church, 2020. We've been looking at different dates as we get ready for Celebration Sunday.

And this was a date that I will remember. And I think some of you will as well. That was the night that the Ashley family came to our church when Life Hurts Sunday. And after that service, I had conversations with Brother Eric Witholm and Danny Sykes and several people.

The conversation continued underneath the portico that night because the Ashley family talked about a topic that we often don't like to think about and we often ignore.

And it's about lamenting. And that's what this psalm is. It's a psalm of lament. It's good to see Adam here. Adam, if you wouldn't mind putting up that chart of the book to you. It just shows how the different books are divided out.

[ 1 : 03 ] And so this is the books of lament. You can't see anything, okay? But all those have numbers in them. But that big section are the chapters in the book of Psalms that are called lament chapters.

And that's what we are in tonight is one of those. And I'm going to read that to you here in a moment. But from that night with the Ashley family, them sharing their stories, talking to some of my brothers about some of the things that have gone on in their life, talking to my sister-in-law, Stephanie Cofield, about the loss of her dad, Pastor Ledford.

She recommended a book to me called Dark Clouds and Deep Mercy. I'm not Oprah, so you won't find the copy underneath your seat tonight. But I do recommend you can find it on Amazon or wherever books are sold.

I always thought, man, that's pretty impressive, isn't it? You know, anywhere books can be sold, the book can be found. But this book helped me think about lamenting. It's not really a word that I'd often used, even though there's all this category of books.

But it's something a lot of us haven't studied. Lament is a word that we don't often use to express sorrow, regret, or unhappiness about something. And as I said, many of us haven't been taught about lament.

[ 2 : 09 ] If you can go back to the first time you remember somebody dying that you knew or some great sorrow, I can remember a day at an elementary school, about fourth or fifth grade, and somebody that I'd went to school with passed away in a car accident.

And I remember this vividly, looking around the different people of how they were responding, because I knew as a young kid I didn't know how to respond to information like this. So everybody seemed to respond differently.

Some people would cry and some people would not respond much at all. But as we learn to lament, we must resolve to talk to God and to keep praying. You know that song they just sung that's perfect on a Thursday night?

It's a great song for this psalm about He is God alone, and that we'd be able to sing that. But you know that song is also sung when you're going through a difficult time. We see a lot of people in our church take steps of faith.

No one trusts that head in the Mozambique. That's certainly a step of faith. But one of the steps of faith that we don't often see that happens in the church is that some of you in your pain go back to God in faith and you keep talking to Him.

[ 3 : 10 ] But some of us don't. Some of us get silent when we are hurt and we don't go back to Him. That's what I learned from reading in this book that walked us through some psalms, some different ones, is that lamenting is saying, God, even when I'm hurting, I'm going to come to You.

He says that it's human to cry, but only a Christian can lament. Only a Christian can go to them. And so this psalm has really helped me to understand lamenting. Because if the Lord tarries and doesn't come back, I'm going to have more opportunities in my life to lament, to feel pain, and to go to God and trust Him with it.

But also our responsibility to you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, as you do to me, to help you lament, to help you take time to grieve and to go through things. So in Psalm 77, we see a meditation of God's great acts of deliverance.

I'm going to read it to you before I pray. I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice, and He gave ear unto me. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord, and my sword ran in the night, and it ceased not.

My soul refused to be comforted. That's a key line. My soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and I was troubled, and I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Salem.

[ 4 : 19 ] Thou holdest mine eyes waking. I'm so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night, and I commune with my own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.

Will the Lord cast off forever, and will He be favorable no more? Is His mercy clean gone forever? Does His promise fail to forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious?

Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Salem. Think about those six questions that were asked about God. Would you be willing to ask those of God when you felt those were upon your heart?

Asaph knew that God could handle those questions. And he said, What a turn around of events.

What a better question that we should ask. Thou art the God that does wonders. Thou hast declared thy strength among the people. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Salem.

[ 5 : 31 ] The waters saw thee, O God. The waters saw thee. They were afraid. The depths also were troubled. We're speaking of the Exodus here. The clouds poured out water. The skies sent out a sound.

Thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven. The lightnings lightened in the world. The earth trembled and shook. Look, thy way is in the sea.

And thy path is in the great waters. And thy footsteps are not known. Thou led us thy people like a flock by the hand. Heavenly Father, I ask that tonight that you would help me give a sense of this chapter. Help my brothers and sisters know how to lament in a biblical way.

And help others do the same. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. So Asaph gets to a place where he just has to cry out to God. He's been saying here that he's talking.

He's not just talking or complaining or whimpering. But he's crying out. More than crying out, as I said, as a believer or somebody with faith in God. He is lamenting. Not just during the day. But it says it also went into the night.

[ 6 : 29 ] And said that he was, he gave ear and he was sore. Ran into the night. And just that posture that he was in with his hands just out raised. That he's just been there so long that he was just tired.

His body was tired. He was sore from the position that he had been in praying. And he's reaching out to God. And when is he doing it? He's doing it in the midst of pain. He wanted a resolution.

Not just consolation. It says, my soul refused to be comforted. I just wasn't getting anything. I'm praying. And I'm asking God to take this from me. But the problems aren't going away.

And I don't feel like I'm being comforted. You know, it takes a lot of prayer to pray like that. I won't mention somebody's name. But I remember a time where a song was sung over here not too long ago.

Of a couple that had lost a child. And they stood and they sung unto the Lord. And people carrying things. They're saying, even though I'm in pain, I'm still going to God.

[ 7 : 25 ] Even though I'm in pain, I'm still going to worship Him. That's where we're supposed to go on. We all come here midweek and we say amen. But it's not what we do. Many of us have set in a silent despair towards God.

Because we went to Him, the resolution wasn't there. We didn't get all that we wanted. And so we decided that we weren't going to go back to Him. It takes great faith to continue to pray to God when you're in pain.

What's faith is simply taking God at His word. We're seeing pictures of it all throughout the Bible. Abraham, Romans 6, 18. Who against hope believed in hope. Who against hope believed in hope that He might become the Father of many nations.

According to that which was spoken so that thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, He considered not His own body now dead. When He was about a hundred years old. He said He took all the circumstances that should say that this isn't going to be true.

But He said, I'll take the promise of God. I will have faith. He had faith in God. He could be trusted. You know, in our word problems of life, when God gives us a promise. No matter what is going on, we can say, I will trust in you.

[ 8 : 30 ] Turning our prayer through lament is one of the deepest, the most costly demonstrations of belief in God. When we turn to Him, when we're hurting, it's a demonstration of our belief in Him.

1 Peter 2, 19 talks about people who respectfully submit themselves to suffering, even though it's undeserved. 1 Peter 2, 19. For this is thankworthy.

If a man for conscience towards God endured grief, suffering wrongfully. So if you suffer, and it's of your own choice and your own will, there's nothing thankworthy there.

But when a person's suffering and it's not of his own choice, and he is not deserving, it says here of a conscience towards God that it's a praiseworthy thing. It's a thankworthy thing. It's something that glorifies God.

When we suffer from the things of this world, we have an opportunity to bring God glory. Hebrews 5, 8. Though He were a son, yet learned the obedience by things which He suffered.

[ 9 : 27 ] Jesus suffered well so that we could learn how, and so that we could glorify God. So when you're hurting, and when other people are hurting, what is the story that we tell them?

It's to continue to go back to God in prayer. Our silence should be one of waiting and not one of unbelief. Giving God the silent treatment is one of the most, is the ultimate manifestation of unbelief.

I'm just not going to go back to God with that. I went to Him before, and I was hurting, and I got no answer, and so I'm not going to go to Him. I'm going to solve this on my own before I go back to God.

A quote by Alexander McLaren says, Doubts are better put in the plain speech than lying diffused and darkening, like poisonous mist in the heart.

A thought, be it good or bad, can be dealt with when it is made articulate. Which means that thing that's on your heart, you need to go to God and you need to talk to Him about it. You need to put words to it.

[ 10 : 25 ] You need to tell God what you're wondering and what you're asking. How many believers in here have stopped speaking to God because of their pain? Paul said he had a thorn in his flesh and said that he went to God three times about that, but he was continually going to God in prayer despite the pain.

We sit silently without the right words, and other people have also brought words to us that weren't the right ones as well. I said things before, the people that were hurting, and it felt good to say, but it isn't good to hear.

You know, when we say things like, here, she in a better place, it's theologically true, but sometimes it dismisses the way that they feel. They're in a better place, but that's not what we're dealing with. We're dealing with the fact that I'm not in that place, and I miss that person dearly, and it really hurts when we say things like, time will heal, which is to say that over time, your memory of that person will go away, and you say, that's not what I want at all.

I want healing from God. Here's some good biblical responses. Psalm 24, 14, to somebody that's hurting. Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thy heart.

Wait, I say, on the Lord. Don't go any other place. If you're hurting, and you're in pain, and you're lamenting, and you're crying out to God, there's no other place to go. If you don't find your strength in the Lord, you're not going to find it any other place.

[ 11 : 44 ] So we should encourage people to look no other place. Psalm 62, 5, My soul wait there only upon God, for my expectation is from Him. So we keep going back to Him in prayer, and lamenting, and saying, God, if you don't help me, I will not be helped.

What if people, what if they respond with this, my soul refused to be comforted. That was what was happening. It wasn't that God couldn't comfort, that their soul was refusing to be comforted in what was there.

They're waiting to be strengthened. And in their silence, we should help them become focused on the Word. Psalm 62, 11, and 12, God has spoken once, twice have I heard this, that the power belongeth unto God.

Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for thou renderest every man according to his work. Two things, two things God said here. He says, He is strong, and we may still be silent, but we're no longer in despair, because we know that our God is, He is strong, and He is also loving.

And sometimes that may be the only thing that you know. It's the only thing that you know. You have no idea what's going to happen the next day. You don't know if circumstances are going to turn out in your way. Somebody may want to tell you that everything's going to turn out exactly the way that you want, but you know that's not true.

[ 12 : 57 ] But you can hold on to those two things that was said here, that God is strong, and He is loving. And we can wait upon the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope.

Psalm 130, verse 5, that would be a great thing to say to yourself, I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and His word do I hope. That's when you're praying, which says, I'm going to keep coming back to you, God.

I'm going to keep coming back to you. And I know that I can find comfort in my soul, and that you are strong, and that you are loving. It's not just about getting people to change their emotions.

Rather, it's an invitation to rest and a place where we can find that rest, which is in the Lord. I've told before how I went to the funeral home, where I took the students there, and the guy told me how most people now don't have many funeral services that we move on so quickly, because we just want to move on, right?

We want the person to change their emotions. We want to be able to say something, but that's a wrong way to go about it. Hurting people should be given permission to grieve, but not aimlessly or selflessly, but we should point them to the word of God.

[ 14 : 08 ] And that's what Brother Ashley said that night in the word that so many of us just seemed to resonate with, was he was saying, you should hurt. That's what we were never created for this. We were never created for the type of losses that we feel.

We were never created to see people in our lives, for parents to bury children, for any of these things to go on. But we are supposed to grieve, and to feel the hurt, but we're supposed to trust God in it, knowing that He is loving, and that He is kind, and that as people were there, we give them permission to grieve, but not just in any direction.

We say, hope in the Lord. Find your help in the Lord. Wait upon Him. Continue to find your strength in God. These difficult prayers of lament are far better than silent despair.

I remembered God and was troubled, verse 3, and complained my spirit was overwhelmed. You ever felt that way before? Your spirit was overwhelmed? Some of you don't.

There's times that I don't when I hear a prayer like this. That's not where I'm at. Maybe God would give you something tonight that you could take and to help somebody else. But He says, my prayers are not working, but He still prayed.

[ 15 : 13 ] I'm overwhelmed. My soul is not being comforted. But I'm going to come back to you. Because if I don't come to you, where else would I go? He's praying, but He's not bringing immediate comfort.

My soul refused to be comforted. He's pouring out His soul before the Lord. Such a strong picture of that in 1 Samuel 1, verse 15. It says, And Hannah answered and said, No, my Lord, I am a woman of sorrowful spirit.

I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have poured out my soul before the Lord. That's what we should do in lamenting. That's where we should take it. We should pour out all the questions that we have.

We should pour out all the hurt that we're having. And we're going to see Him do this. He said, Thou holdest my eyes waking. Couldn't even sleep. He's up all night with this.

And He says, It's like, God, You're the one keeping me from sleeping. You're holding my eyes back. I can't have any comfort, Lord. I'm so troubled that I cannot speak. You know, in the Bible, there's different times where it speaks about people being silent.

[ 16 : 12 ] David in Psalm 131 verse 2 says, Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother. My soul is even a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and forever.

Stephanie and I have seen some kids come to our home who don't have the ability to self-soothe, is what they say. What David is saying, that is, I self-soothe myself. I got like a child, and I was upset, but then I was able to catch my breath.

Stephanie tells the kids to drink hot chocolate, pretend like they're drinking hot chocolate, to take some deep breaths. David was able to breathe, and he was able to self-soothe according to God's Word.

Not self-soothe, but able to look upon God's Word, and he was able to silence himself. That's not what Asaph says. Asaph says, I can't even speak. It's not that he doesn't have anything to say, but if we're going to look at his words here in a second, you're going to see that maybe it's not a lack of words, but maybe it's fear of saying what he is thinking that we will see.

He says, I've considered the days of old and the years of ancient time, and so it brings this tension. God, I've seen you work in times past, and you are good, but what I'm dealing with right now, it is bad.

[ 17 : 24 ] And so, God, I don't know what to do with that. I know that you're a good God, but I know what right here is bad, and it says that the music brought back remembrance to him. What an incredible encouragement to have Christian music in our life, because that singing or the instruments can bring back to you the memories of God and his goodness.

And he remembers these things, but it brings that tension. God, I know that you're good. I see them singing, and I see that they're happy. I know that that song's great. I know the person I'm standing beside is singing very loud.

I know that I'm supposed to be happy, but God, I'm not happy. I have some things I want to say to you. God, I want to say to you, are you going to cast this off forever? Are we not favorable? Do you not care about us anymore?

Has your mercy clear, clean, gone forever? What a strong way to say that. Is it gone? Do your promises fail? Have you forgotten to be gracious to us? The God that in Exodus 34 says that he's good and merciful and gracious, and that's how you described yourself?

God, have you forgotten to be gracious to me? But being willing to ask the hard questions is our path to praising him. These are unspeakable questions, and all of that leads to him getting to a place where he's just asking, God, have you changed?

[ 18 : 38 ] This honest, humble, painful questions are part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. He is not afraid of the questions, and we should not be afraid to ask them.

I'm going on a retreat to Sand Mountain tomorrow with some of our teenagers. We're going to talk about being alone with God. I was looking for a psalm that was a lament so that I could talk to them about it because I really believe that some of them don't want to spend time with God because they have some things they want to say, and they don't think that they can say it, so they're just kind of dealing with the problems their self.

I gave a testimony to the men the other night, told about how God did an incredible work in my stepfather's life, and he showed me what it meant to be a Christian gentleman with the last few decisions in his life.

But I've also shared with you before when I was a kid and I'd get off the bus and I would see that he was sitting in the chair that I wouldn't go into the house until my mom came home because I was afraid to be alone with him.

Because I didn't know that he loved me and I feared him. Some of you are afraid to spend time alone with God because you don't know that he loves you and you have some questions that you want to ask him and you want to say, God, where were you at when this happened?

[ 19 : 46 ] And you need to put words to these questions and you need to ask them of him so that he can answer you from his word and he can remind you that he is good and that he is strong.

And this is where lament and the prayer it turns and there's a resolution. And I said, this is my infirmity. This is my infirmity, whatever it is that he was dealing with, whatever it is that he's dealing with.

This is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most high. Holding in his hand very much his infirmity, but he says, God, I'm going to look to the years where you are the most high.

Everything begins to change when he begins to remember. He's looking back and he's reflecting on the works of God in the past. Three times he says, I will remember, I will remember, I will remember, which then leads him to say, I will meditate also.

And so as he is remembering all that God is doing, he begins to meditate on these things. And that's what we're supposed to be doing in times of lamenting. Ecclesiastes 7, 2 says, it is better to go into the house of mourning than to go into the house of feasting.

[ 20 : 53 ] And why is that true? For that is the end of all men, that the living will lay it to his heart. We're not supposed to take it and just set it aside. You know, the house of mourning is supposed to be a drive-through process, but it's supposed to be something where we take time and we mourn and we lay it to heart and we think about it.

And from that point, we talk to God, we tell him about what's hurting, and then we begin to remember what he's done. The focus shifts again from the historical works that God did to his character in verse 13.

The waves of God is in the sanctuary and he says, who is so great a God as our God? The same guy that just said in those six questions. When you read that, you really just say that to God.

He is now saying, who is like you? There's nobody like you, God. How did this happen? Because God did a work in his heart. The same one that said he wasn't being comforted, that his soul couldn't be comforted.

Guess what's happening now? God is comforting him. And why? Because he's lamenting and he's going back to God even though he's hurting. He's going back to God even though he has questions and he is living with this pain.

[ 22 : 01 ] The rhetorical questions now change to what, this wonderful question. What a comparison. Laments are possible only if you believe that God is truly good. God said two things, I am good and I am strong and we believe that.

The character of God creates a tension when we face these painful circumstances. Hebrews 11, 6 would be another great thing for us to remember when we're lamenting. But faith is, but without faith it is impossible to please him for he that cometh to God must believe that he is.

What is God? He is. He is all the things that the word says he is and he's a reward of them that diligently seek him. It's in times of suffering we should meditate on the goodness of God.

I've already read it to you but incredible poetry. Verses 16 through 19 are talking about the Exodus and it's saying, God, the waters were there and you saw them and they were afraid.

The people came upon the waters and the storm was coming and the clouds poured out the water and the sky sent out the sound and that arrows also. But then the voice of thy thunder was in heaven.

[ 23 : 07 ] That in all this chaos God confronts it and he brings order. He says, God, I remember the heart of the children of Israel when they came to this place in their life and their heart was going to beat out of their chest and I remember that you spoke and that you brought order out of chaos and Lord, I know I can trust you just like this miraculous passing of the Red Sea.

Lord, I know that you're going to walk me through this thing that I am dealing with as well. God can be working in big and mighty ways in our lives and it says, thy footprints are not known.

That God worked in that whole exodus but his footprints are not known but God did something that was incredible and they were facing this wall, right? They were facing this incredible impossibility.

They were facing all the motions but God did something. Do you see what is happening? Asaph is connecting probably the single greatest redemptive event in his life, the children of Israel and the exodus and he's connecting it to his problem and why does he do that?

Because it was in that deliverance that he knew about the character of God. It wasn't in the circumstances that he knew about the character of God because he knew he wasn't thinking straight. He knew his soul wasn't being comforted.

[ 24 : 21 ] He was saying that this right here and the way that I'm seeing it doesn't tell me the proper story of who God is but I can look to something else in my life that I know is true and is great deliverance.

That's why songs like It Is Well With My Soul is so special to us because it says things like that Christ yes he has regarded my helpless estate and he has shed his own blood for my soul and he nailed it to a cross and I bear it no more because as we're thinking about what takes our heart from not being well then we nail it to something that is secure.

Asaph anchors his hope into something that he knows that is true that is the exodus and that is the character of God. Paul takes a lament Psalm 44 and in Romans 8 36 he quotes it he says and it is written for thy sake we are killed all the day long that's Psalm 44 22 we are counted as sheep for the slaughter nay and all these things were more than conquerors through him that loved us for I am persuaded that neither death nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor depth nor any creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Even though we're killed all the day long and we're like sheep before the slaughter nothing can separate us from God not sorrow not disappointment not disease or betrayal can separate us from God.

Paul went from one of these Psalms of Lament straight into this because Jesus bought the right to make everything right. That everything's not right right now but God bought the right to make things right and we're fully persuaded not in the heartache we feel not the loss of a parent not the amount of doubts and confusions we have no medical test that we wait upon no loss of a job no extreme loneliness that we feel can separate us from the love of God we can know this that we can hold on to this fact when we don't know anything else at all.

[ 26 : 18 ] So I'd ask you tonight what are your six questions of doubt and how if you were to bring them to God He could change those for you if you'd be willing to go back to Him if you'd be willing to lament meaning saying God I'm hurting and I came to you before and I didn't get resolution I came to you and I prayed and I didn't leave feeling the way that I thought I was supposed to but I'm coming back to you again and I'm bringing my questions and God will work in your life and He can turn that into a place where you can praise Him and you can say is there any God like our God He's incredible lament is a prayer that leads us through personal sorrow and difficult questions into truth that anchors our soul last verse before I pray thou lettest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron sheep are helpless and vulnerable and they need guidance and we need to help people too we need to help them lament just like sheep we need somebody to help us look and be focused in our silence on the word of God we need to help them you should ask God tonight some of you



I don't know what's going on through something in your life and you're saying I know what my six questions are and I want to take back to Him on my pain and I want to talk to Him but others you're surrounded by suffering people you're surrounded by people that are hurting and you don't feel equipped to help them would you allow the word of God to equip you that you have something to say would you take them by the hand and would you lead them and help them get some understanding of who God is would you remind them of some of the verses that say I know these two things are true that God is loving and He is strong belief in God creates a challenging question and lament provides the opportunity to direct our hearts to what is truly true not what we just feel like is true in that moment so we need to talk to God we need to tell Him about our pain we need to ask Him our questions and we need to ask God to equip us to help other people lament in a way that would honor our Father our Father and we need to ask go closer to God God and we need to hope to answer on this child and we do the quism well to help other people

He is strong he is strong He is strong and we do think of Chief as one of the distances as one of the He is strong and we do equal passer to the correct to the correct Hussein and remember we do walk chase and we saw another 2 mand on this family and Paul it is remembering speak and we work to neck and help enable our