

Lamentations

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 October 2022

[0 : 00] Lamentations chapter number one. We won't get to it. We're going to look at an example, Lament and Psalm, and then we will look at 2 Chronicles 36 for a little bit, and then we'll end our night looking at Lamentations chapter number one.

And nothing that we will say tonight out of Lamentations will come contrary to the song that we just sung, that our God always continues to be good.

I believe Lamentations is written by Jeremiah, a little cartoon. If you will, that we just watched a little bit. It's an anonymous author, but it appears that it would be Jeremiah. And to better appreciate the book of Lamentations, it's best to understand the purpose of a lament.

And I could see some objections. Lamentations often isn't covered a lot of times in churches because, you know, what is the purpose? Why would we want to dig a deep hole of emotion and fall into it, right?

But that's not what we're doing. We are digging deep into God's Word to find a solid bedrock, and we will find hope. And the quick overview showed that to you, but God is always good, and we should never question that.

[1 : 12] So an introduction to lamenting first. So lament is an important and a biblical category, and so because of that, we need to understand it. We need to embrace it. We need, since lament is in the Bible, that's a reason we should understand it, but also because there's far more pain in our church than you may realize.

The world that we live in. In the book of Lamentations, we're going to see that a people that have been forewarned continue in sin, and now they're dealing with the consequences of it, and God still remains with them.

There's times in lives where you're suffering, and it isn't brought on to you in the same way in which that happens, but it's still true that He is with you. Some of the deepest hurts. I asked Dan, Dan Penrod asked me if I wanted to see the picture where he cut his hand, and I said, of course I do, right?

That's what guys do. We hurt ourselves, and before we bandage it, we got to get a good picture of it, right? I remember a few weeks ago when I heard Dan was, he hurt his hand. I thought I needed to reach out to him, and I was concerned, but honestly, I knew on that day that wasn't the deepest of wounds or the deepest of concerns that people might be dealing with, and Dan would know that as well, that things like that heal, and we move on, but we deal with deep wounds and deep hurts, and we need to go to the Word of God.

I lean heavily. I gave many copies of this book out called Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy. I have a few more copies. Several of you read it. Stephen and Stephanie read it as they get ready for grief share, and one line that comes up over and over in that that I really liked is that, to cry is human, but to lament is Christian.

[2 : 45] To cry is human, but to lament is Christian. If you want a birthday card for an eight-year-old, you can go to Hallmark. You can go to the card selection at Kroger. They do a pretty good job.

They're going to find a card for you, and a dog's going to pop up. It's going to do a pretty good job. If you really want to communicate something on a very deep level, on a biblical level, you're not going to be able to go to Hallmark.

They're not going to be able to help you. The world cannot express with the same sense of hope that we can as believers. And so lament, as it was said in the video, is a form of protest that gives voice and words to emotions and questions that believers face in the midst of suffering, pain, and hardship.

Lament wrestles with at least two questions, and we're going to see this in Psalm 77 in a second. Because where are you, God? That's one question that we ask. And secondly, if you love me, why is this happening?

Where are you, and if you love me, why is this happening? And so since the audience of the lament is always God, it is a prayer, and it's one that requires faith, where you continue speaking to God in your heart, and you keep going to Him as the only one that can provide any hope or any comfort for you, which means that if it's a prayer given to Him in faith, then it is an act of worship towards Him, recognizing that He is good, and He is strong, and we are needy.

[4 : 12] And it keeps us from two spiritual ditches, which is where we always seem to find ourselves, right? Going from one extreme to another. Well, the two ditches that it will save us from is telling God that you owe me, and that it's over.

When we don't want to talk to God, we buy this lie that it's just over. You've met people, have you not, who did not know how to communicate, something happened in their lives, and now they don't know how to, they have no relationship with the Lord, they do not speak to Him, they are bitter, there's been a violation of their justice system, and they never go to Him with their hurt and their pain.

Probably one of the hardest things we have as a human is to learn is how to express our pain. Probably one of the biggest problems that we have, I mean, in any relationship inside of a family, is how to communicate when we are hurting.

Men, we have a challenge oftentimes when something comes into our home that we're supposed to lead, right? And we're supposed to lead our family, but we are hurting ourselves in that moment. And having to learn how to process that is what we require a maturity in our Christian life.

It doesn't just come with age. You can find people on any age spectrum who do not have any form of maturity. They do not know how the process hurts, emotions, or disappointments.

[5 : 35] So, Christians can truly lament because we understand the full story of redemption. Lamenting will acknowledge the cause of suffering and longs for a promised resolution.

We know the full story of redemption. We know in the full story that in the darkest day of human history, when Satan was most assured that he had won, that the God of heaven had already left glory and had lived a perfect life fulfilling the law for us.

So, right there in the center of human history, at the darkest, God was not absent, but he was among us there on a cross. And so, we just view pain and suffering and the plan of God completely different than the world will ever do it.

He is never absent from us. He is there taking on our pain. He is there taking on our sin. So, crying expresses sorrow over pain. So, while Christian lament, it will go farther.

It interprets the cause and the trajectory of our pain. We know where this will end. We know that God has a plan for us. Before I get into Psalm 77, and I hope I don't fumble through this, but I want to make it real clear tonight to accuse God of ever doing wrong.

[6 : 57] You know, in the story here, when the children of Israel, and we see that they were overtaken, taken to Babylon, and we'll see that it's a result of their sin, and that sin brings the hurt into the story, that is true for you and I as well.

Our city that got overtaken, our city in which we were told, goes all the way back to the garden. And ever since in the garden, when sin was introduced into the garden, when sin came into the world, there has been pain, and there has been hardship, and there's been heartache.

So, when Jesus looks at the man who was born blind, and they say, whose sin is this? Yes, it's true that it was not the sin of this man, nor was it the sin of maybe his parents, and was he paying for the consequence of his sin, but all pain and hardship comes as a result of the fall.

It's not what we were created for. And so, when we meet with people, and they're hurting, it ought to give us a deeper hatred for sin. When we're meeting with people, and they're hurting, we have a deeper hatred for the devil, and for Satan, who wants to introduce more sin into our story.

And so, we ought to see that. There is not a direct parallel between our lives, and these people, but we ought to know that we live in a world that deals with the consequences, and the effects of sin.

[8 : 17] If I leave here tonight, go out and get drunk, have a car accident, I would not blame God, and His sovereignty, to say that He orchestrated that, to cause an effect.

I would say, I'm living out the consequences of my sin, and that He loves me despite my sin, and He died despite my sin, but I would not say that it was a story that He wrote, that I didn't have a choice in the matter.

So, Psalm chapter number 77. We looked at this some, many weeks, months ago. One of my favorite Psalms. It doesn't feel like it was that long ago, for me.

But, verse number one, I'm going to read a little bit for you, and then I'm going to, the things that I just told you that are true about laments, I'm going to show you where in this Psalm that this happens. Because, when you look at different Psalms, you can see a pattern, and those patterns are going to be true in this entire book that we have.

First of all, Psalm 77, verse number one. I cried unto the God with my voice, even unto God with my voice, and He gave ear unto me. There's this element of trust in knowing where to direct our calls.

[9 : 25] I cried out with my voice, and it was directed, not towards my friends, not towards my family. I didn't call somebody on the phone to vent. I directed my prayer to God, which shows that I trusted that He was the greatest in all of the occasions.

I direct my calls. Verse two. In the day of my trouble, I sought the Lord. My soul ran into the night, and ceased not. My soul refused to be comforted.

Man, it's such a strong statement. My soul refused to be comforted, acknowledging that there is a wrestling inside of my soul. That's why when you're struggling so much with pain and sorrow, somebody can come, and they're telling you things that you already know.

Counseling one another can be so difficult at times when we're going through this time of sorrow, because what we're saying to somebody is something that they probably said to us at another time, but they're wrestling with it.

And we're not allowing ourselves to be comforted with the Word. He refused to be comforted. Verse three. I remembered God, and I was troubled. I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.

[10 : 33] Selah, which means pause, and think about these things. The great enemy of lamenting in our day is a frantic pace to move on from our hurt. Where did lamenting go?

It went where everything else went. We just don't have any more time for it. So everything about hurting the day is how quickly do we move on from this. I've shared with you when we went through the Psalm 77 what the man said at Ingram Funeral Home to me, how few times there is a traditional funeral these days compared to people saying that we will eventually have a celebration, and they never have it, but people think, if I stop thinking about it, then it won't hurt me.

But that isn't true. Moving on from it doesn't keep you from having to deal with it. It just prolongs it. It just causes more problems in your lives.

And so he says, when I remembered God, he didn't say, I remember God and I was comforted. He said, I remember God and I was troubled because I know He's all-powerful, but this thing that happened to me is so bad.

Thou holdest mine eyes waking, and I am so troubled that I cannot speak. Can't sleep, cannot even communicate how bad that it hurts.

[11 : 48] I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. Verse 6, I call to remembrance my song in the night, and I commune with mine own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.

And here we're wrestling honestly with this tough tension related to the mystery of God's plan and His purposes. I commune, and I thought about God and His work in my own heart, and my spirit made diligent search.

Verse 7, Will the Lord cast off forever, and will He be favorable no more? This is how Lamentations ends. Is His mercy clean gone forever? Sounds like a good Georgia statement, doesn't it?

Just clean gone. All right? It's out of here. It's like a baseball, right? How far did it go? It was just clean gone. All right? Does His promise fail forevermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious?

Has He in His anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah, pause and meditate. You ask these questions, but you have to allow God to answer them because you're not accusing Him, you're asking Him.

[12 : 50] And I said, This is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember the works of the Lord. Surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work and talk of thy doings.

The way, O God, is in the sanctuary. Who is so great as our God? So the two questions, Where are you, God? And if you love me, why is this happening? He stayed.

He brought His questions to the Lord. He's praying. And now there's this transition we see in so many of these laments as He's been in the sanctuary. Not as, Where are you, God?

We're now saying, Who is so great as our God? Thou art the God that does wonders. Thou hast declared the strength among the people. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and of Joseph, Salem.

The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee. They were afraid. The depths were troubled. The clouds poured out. Waters were explaining them. The great exodus here. The sky sent out a sound.

[13 : 50] Thine arrows also went abroad. Lightning. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven. The lightnings lightened the world. The earth trembled and shook. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.

Thou led us, thy people, like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. Lament is both an act of worship and a means of leading us to worship. It ends with this great description of the things.

We have another psalm that describes it as the earth. It was like, when God came in, the mountains didn't have a choice to move. It was just terrifying. It was just awesome, right? And the water stands up on both sides.

But before that time, there was just, the enemy is behind me. The water is in front of me. I cry out to God. I feel like there's no place to go.

But God took me by the hand, and He walked me through it. And that's what's happening in this lament, is to remind us that when we go to God, that's what we are asking Him to do. We are crying out to our Father, and we're putting our little hands up, and we're trying to say, I can't walk out of this.

[14 : 55] I'm just going to be here. Until you take me by the hand, until you move the waters, until you do it, I am completely hopeless. And He gives a voice to our grief.

But the opposite of this lamenting, which is a despair or a prayerlessness that are often linked together as unbelief settles into the heart of a person who is in pain.

So a lament may express deep emotion and ask painful questions, but there's a difference between asking God and accusing God. It is a sin to accuse God as you sit in judgment of Him.

But lament wrestles honestly with the tough tension related to the mystery of God's plan and His purpose. Say, God, I know that you are great, but I need you to help me at this time.

And you wait on Him. So we have this book called Lamentations. It describes a funeral of a city, a tear-stained portrait of a once proud Jerusalem, now reduced to rubble, invading Babylon, and five poems, dirge, that exposes emotions, as we saw laid out for us, in an acrostic form, which is just incredible, just God showing off, right?

[16 : 08] Just how we write, how this is written, and then it's given there, that brings peace and comfort, and all of your chaos and your madness. God says, not only do I have an answer, not only can I bring hope, but I can do it in alphabetical order, right?

And we find comfort for us here. And it happens in the middle of chapter three, as we saw. So it gives voice to our grief. Although we, as I've said, you can't draw a one-to-one application from Israel's circumstances to ours, limitations can teach us to hear and speak the biblical language of lament, which is crucial to dealing with grief, which is when we had the panel up here the other day, and the thing that I asked them in the email was, will you help our church think and speak biblically about grief and sorrow?

More than anything that's happening in a grief share room right now in the book of limitations, is that we will say, when we talk to one another about grief and sorrow, that we will speak in a biblical manner.

We will use a biblical vocabulary for one another, because when we don't, we just give people, at best, trite cliches that really don't seem to help.

Because does time really heal? Because time doesn't seem to be my friend. No, God can heal over time, but time doesn't do anything for me. It just gives me wrinkles and a great beard, right?

[17 : 27] Time doesn't help any of us in that regard. Things like that. Or worse, we say things that are just anti-biblical, that they go against what God would have for us.

All of you would be aware of this. Your family never shows their theological beliefs any more clearly than we do around a funeral. If you really want to know what a family believes, you're not going to see it where they drive on Easter Sunday.

You're going to see it in that little break room that they have at a funeral home where we all get together and we decide what are we going to talk about and think about that is going to provide us comfort.

Five laments, five funeral poems here that give voice to grief. The book mourns the day warned about the prophets which God became like an enemy unto Israel, giving them over the Babylon because of their chronic disregard.

Sacred Chronicles that we're about to look at, 2 Kings 24 and 25, Jeremiah 52. It will give us many of the facts. The limitations is going to give us the emotions. Raw, honest, dark.

[18 : 34] It just shares it. Christopher Wright says about this portion of the Bible, says, Part of the horror of human suffering is to be unheard, forgotten, and nameless, thrown aside.

Lamentations is a summon to remember realities endured by real people like ourselves to bear witness, pay heed to their voice. The horror of human suffering is to be unheard, forgotten, forgotten, and nameless, thrown aside.

I told you a couple weeks ago how I told, when I was looking, I said, Carson, where's mom? And I said, I don't feel good. I need mom to know. And Carson says, I get that, right? And I, when you're suffering and hurting, you need somebody to know.

We too quickly move to one another before we go to God and say, God, and then, do you think that God was not aware of what was happening in Jerusalem? But they cry out to them and they'd say, God, we need you to know.

And more so than they needed God to make God aware, they needed to express that to him. 2 Chronicles, chapter 36, verse 11, a little bit of background of what we will see in Limitations about King Zedekiah, one of my favorite stories in the Bible, this kind of fake king where he was supposed to be just a placemat, holder, a placeholder as a king, but he really got to his head.

[19 : 50] And so he decided that he was going to really pretend that he was the king even though that wasn't what he was supposed to be doing. 21 years old, that explains the problem, right? All right? And when he began to reign and he reigned 11 years in Jerusalem and he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, his God, and he humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord.

Jeremiah has such a hard task given to him. He's told not to be married, will not have children. We see maybe two people come to faith through his ministry. It's just a tough life that he has.

So not Jeremiah the prophet speaking from the mouth of the Lord and he rebelled against the king Nebuchadnezzar who had made him swear by God, but he stiffened his neck and he hardened his heart from turning unto the Lord God of Israel.

You know what? The children of Israel and Jerusalem we were getting with Zedekiah, they were just getting a reflection of their heart. He was not going contrary to what they wanted. You know what we often will get in our country?

We are going to get a reflection of ourselves. If you really want to complain about any politician, you can complain for the 150 million people that voted for him. It's just simply a reflection.

[21 : 02] They do not get into that place without it saying something about us as a nation. Same with Zedekiah here. His stiff nakedness, him not listening to the warning of Jeremiah was just symbolic, which is living out what the rest of the nation had been doing.

Moreover, all the chief of the priests and the people transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen and polluted the house of the Lord, which had hollowed in Jerusalem. And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers rising up the times, that means before time, and it's a really good word.

We should bring it back. All right? Have you ever said, I woke up before my alarm, I woke up before I planned to? We already have a word for it. And sending, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place.

But they mocked the messengers of God and despised his words and misused his prophets until the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, until the judgment of the Lord rose against the people.

And then, these last words here, it says, till there was no remedy. Don't miss the weight of those words. Till there was no remedy. The nation had strayed far enough and long enough.

[22 : 12] God had reached the point where he could no longer allow the nation to continue and the time for judgment had come. Therefore he brought upon the kings of Chaldees who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion upon young men or maiden, old man or him that stooped from age.

And he gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God great and small and the treasures of the house of the Lord and the treasures of the king and of the princess and all these he brought to Babylon and they burnt the house of God and break down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all the palaces thereof with fire and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof and them that escaped from the sword carried he to Babylon where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the king of Persia to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah until the land had enjoyed her Sabbath for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath to fulfill three score and ten.

As I said, Jeremiah had this difficult assignment. Jeremiah 9.1 he says, My head were as waters and mine eyes were a fountain that I might weep day and night for the slaying of the daughter of my people.

In Lamentations chapter number 1 this daughter of Zion this daughter of Zion this woman that's being described she is the city that I just read about that's being personified.

Verse 1, How does the city sit solitary that was full of people? Remember in the video towards the fourth chapter there where you saw this is where they were and this is where they are at now.

[23 : 43] How has she become a widow that she was great among the nations and princess among the provinces? How has she become a tributary? How did she go from the top to now paying taxes or being under bondage to other people?

A widowed, childless, vulnerable woman who had endured mistreatment, affliction, and starvation during the siege and the capture of the city. They were surrounded.

That's what Zedekiah did. He didn't want to come out and in the middle of the night his friends will slip out through the door and the prophecy will be fulfilled but he gave you to a place where they were eating their own children.

They had been surrounded. The narrator and this daughter of Zion begin to dialogue in chapter 1 allowing us to hear and express her pain. She cries to all who pass by her looking for her comfort amidst her affliction though none is found.

She weeps with sorrow. Her strength fails. She's in distress. She groans continually. She cries to God all to no avail. You can't help but be moved by her pain and shame even though it is the result of sin.

[24 : 48] So before I give some words of encouragement tonight and pray for us and Ben lead us in a song if you will I'm going to just read to you here in Lamentation chapter number 1.

Young people take your Bible get beside somebody and follow along. You've had the background of what's going on. You should know what's being spoken about and please listen to it.

How does the city sit solitary that was full of people? How has she become as a widow that she was great among the nations and princes among the provinces? How has she become tributary?

She weepeth sore in the night and her tears are on her cheeks. Among all her lovers she has none to comfort her. All of her friends have dealt treacherously with her. They became her enemies.

Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction and because of the great servitude. She dwelleth among the heathen she findeth no rest. All her persecutors overtook her between the straits.

[25 : 45] The ways of Zion do mourn because none come to the solemn feast. All her gates are desolate her priests sigh her virgins are afflicted and she is in bitterness.

Her adversaries are the chief her enemies prosper. So the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions. Her children are gone into captivity before the enemy and from the daughters of Zion all of her beauty is departed.

Her princes are become like hearts that find no pasture and they are gone without strength before the pursuer. Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and her miseries all of her pleasant things that she has done in the days of old when her people fell into the hand of the enemy and none did help her.

The adversaries saw her and then mocked at her Sabbaths. Jerusalem has grievously sinned therefore she is removed. All that honored her despised her because they have seen her nakedness.

Yea, she sighed and turned backward. Her filthiness in her skirts she remembered not her last end. Therefore she came down wonderfully. She had no comforter. O Lord, behold my affliction for the enemy hath magnified himself.

[26 : 57] The adversary has spread out his hand upon all of her pleasant things for she has seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary whom thou didst command that they should not enter into that congregation.

All her people sighed. They seek bread. They have given their pleasant things for me to relieve the soul. See, O Lord, and consider for I have become vile. Is it nothing to you all you that pass by?

And behold, see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me. Wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of the fierce anger. Far above hath he sent fire into my bones and he prevaieth against them.

He hath spread a net for my feet. He hath turned me back. He has made me desolate and faint all the day. The yoke of my transgression is bound by his hand. They are wreathed and come up upon my neck.

He hath made my strength to fall. The Lord hath delivered me into their hands for whom I am not able to rise up. The Lord hath trodden under my foot all my mighty men in the midst of me.

[27 : 57] He hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men. The Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughters of Judah, as in a winepress. For these things I weep. Mine eye, mine eye runneth down with waters because the comforter which shall relieve my soul is far from me.

My children are desolate because the enemy prevailed. Zion spreadeth forth their hands and there is none to comfort her. The Lord has commanded concerning Jacob that the adversaries should be round about him.

Jerusalem is a minstress woman among them. The Lord is righteous for I have rebelled against his commandment. Here I pray you all, people, and behold my sorrow. My virgins and my young men are gone into captivity.

I called for my lovers but they deceived me. My priests and mine elders gave up the ghost and the city while they sought their meat to relieve their souls. Behold, O Lord, for I am distressed.

My bowels are troubled. My heart is turned within me for I have grievously rebelled. Abroad the sword bereaveth and home there is a death. For I have heard that I sigh and there is none that comfort me.

[29 : 02] All my enemies have heard of my trouble. They are glad that thou hast done it. Thou wilt bring that day thou hast called and they shall be like unto me. Let all their wickedness come before thee and do unto them as thou hast done unto me for all thy transgressions.

For my sighs are many and my heart is faint. This lament turns the heart towards worship and it awakes a slumbering heart. It's a bridge between pain and praise.

Lament is how a painful heart will turn, be tuned to sing God's song. Lament is how we will reorient our heart from anger and frustration and despair. Lament starts with a faith-filled path of worship.

We should join in as we just heard there. Romans 8.22 says where we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in the pain until now.

That's what we just read in Lamentations chapter number 1. That mankind joined in this groaning and travail and pain and calls out to God.

[30 : 06] So we understand the problem of sin and laments the effects of sin and we long for the day when sin will no longer have its horrific effects on this world. Lamentations is appropriately dark but it's not without hope and we remember in our story hope has a name and his name is Jesus and without him in our story there would be no hope but with him we have more than enough for the day and for all eternity.

Let's pray and then we'll sing together. Heavenly Father I thank you for this gift the book of Lamentations Lord even though it was not gift threat for us Lord we know that it comes specifically to believing people Lord to understand it and to see a people that were in a situation that is as bad as anything that we could ever imagine when we get to a place Lord that we could write a book about how hard and how dark the time is that we can come to you with our words we can cry out to you and that you do not turn from us and that in the midst of the darkest days of human history you're ever present and that we can go from this time of lamenting to a time of rejoicing Lord I pray that is what's happening in our church family I pray that you'll use this time in our lamentations and in personal study to take hearts that are broken and bring healing to take prayers right now that are saying where are you God and turn them in the prayers that say

God there is none like you in Jesus name I pray Amen