

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

“LAMENT: FROM DESPAIR TO TRUST”

For individual study or discussion

DATE: May 25, 2025

SPEAKER: Brian/Chad

SERIES: Summer in the Psalms

PASSAGE: Psalm 13

Family Dinner Table

The Puritans called the psalms “*the soul’s medicine chest*,” a rich treasure trove of prayer, praise, wisdom, and lament. The psalms of lament make up over a third of the Psalter. These laments typically express a sense of a loss of God’s presence and a longing for his return. Lament, according to pastor and TGC president Mark Vroegop, “*is a prayer in pain that leads to trust*.”¹ Vroegop goes on to say that lament is not only how Christians grieve; it is the way Christians praise God through their sorrows. Lament is the pathway to praise when life gets hard.

Honest Lament (vv. 1-2)

The voices of lament in the psalms are often brutally honest, displaying raw, unfiltered human emotions. In verses 1-2 of Psalm 13, we hear David candidly processing his feelings of abandonment to God. Author and theologian Kelly Kopic explains in his book *Embodied Hope* that the practice of lament invites us to carry our pain to God: “*Biblically, we discover that lament is a legitimate, even necessary form of fellowship with God when we are in a place of pain. The Bible repeatedly affirms lament to be an honest and expected expression of our battle with the brokenness of ourselves and the rest of the world.*”² David’s cry to God teaches us that lament is a necessity when we live in a fallen world.

- In verses 1-2, you can see David’s struggle in the fact that he writes, “*How long...*” four different times. Read Numbers 6:22-27, Psalm 11:7, Psalm 17:15, and Psalm 27:4. Describe what it feels like for God to hide his face from us in our daily life.
- In dark moments we tend to wrestle with the thoughts in our minds. One struggle for us can be listening to God’s Word but not applying it. Read James 1:22-25. How do you manage your emotions during dark times?

Heartfelt Plea (vv. 3-4)

Again David calls out God’s name, but this time he sets his plea in the context of relationship, “O LORD my God” (v. 3). In his petitions, David is calling on his covenant God to consider his plight and draw near to him in the midst of his suffering. Author and Bible teacher Nancy Guthrie writes, “*Have you ever wanted to get closer to Jesus? I know you wouldn’t have chosen this method [suffering] to get there. We wish we could get closer to Jesus by saying a prayer, going to a Bible study, reading a book or in some other convenient and controllable way. But the truth is, it’s uniquely through our own sorrow that we can draw close to the Man of Sorrows.*”³

- In verses 3-4, David asks God to look on him and answer. There is something powerful about people actually seeing us. Read Genesis 16:13, Psalm 80:14, and Matthew 8:5-13. Discuss the power of God seeing us.

Humble Trust (vv. 5-6)

David’s humble trust in God’s steadfast love leads him to place his hope in God’s salvation. David turns from despair to trust, certain that God will not forsake him but deliver him and bring restoration. Likewise, Kopic concludes *Embodied Hope* by encouraging his readers to be confident in God’s mercy: “*Even as believers grieve, lament, and wrestle amid pains and challenges, they can also experience genuine joy, love, and rest. Here Christians know there is a tension, for we do not look at tears, hurt, and grief as good things; these are the very problems God promises to one day liberate us from.*”⁴

- Hebrews 4:16 says, “*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*” How does this free us to approach God with everything, from our disappointments, hurts and struggles, to our praises, thanksgiving, and adoration?

How to Lament

Mark Vroegop—Psalm 13

How does one offer up laments to God?

1. **Come humble.** If you are going to offer your complaint to God you need to come humble. Come with your pain; don’t come with your pride.
2. **Pray the Bible.** You need the boundary of biblical language to keep your lament on track. When you’re in pain, start complaining by praying the Bible.
3. **Be honest.** Biblical complaint doesn’t work if you aren’t honest with God about your pain, your fears, your frustrations, and your struggles. So talk to God as a loving father who cares for you and remember that Jesus became flesh so that he could understand our struggles.
4. **Don’t just complain.** Complaint in lament was never meant to be an end in and of itself. Lament doesn’t give you an excuse to wallow in your questions or your frustrations. Complaint is a means to another end: trust.

Which of the four steps is easiest for you?

Why? Which step is the hardest for you?

Explain.

Vroegop, Mark. Psalm 13. March 12, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=wIPcSczwdCQ>

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¹Vroegop, Mark. *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament*. 2019, Wheaton, IL. Crossway. 28

^{2,4}Kopic, Kelly. *Embodied Hope: A Theological Meditation on Pain and Suffering*. 2017, Downers Grove, IL. IVP Academic. 29, 161

³Guthrie, Nancy. *Hearing Jesus Speak Into Your Sorrow*. 2009, Carol Stream, IL. Tyndale Momentum. 5-6