

Lamentation - New Terms For Us Under the Blood

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lament /lə-měnt/ - To express grief for or about; mourn.
“lament a death.”

We see David lamenting to God in the Psalms and should ask “Is this how I should lament to God today under Christ?” Nobody escapes difficulties, so how should we address God about this? David’s is a good model, but with a big exception for Believers today.

It seems best to address lamentation against the Biblical line of progression, from an acknowledgement of God, through the end goal of embracing a full trust of Him. This, after all, is His goal in Salvation, and the end goal of coming into His family under the New Covenant:

1. Beginning in rebellion or ignorance of God, we cannot deny the evidence of His existence and handiwork.
2. Through general revelation, He broadcasts His reality and expectations to all Creation.
3. By God’s grace, He reveals Himself to those He chooses, calling them to Himself in an inescapable way.
4. Providing the means, including the faith to turn to the Christ, the chosen are Saved.
5. We are assured of His close and direct presence, including His Spirit in us
6. Thus begins our tutelage, our training into knowing, following, and trusting Him.
7. The world, broken under sin, continues to be our habitation.
8. Under His direction and protection, Father superintends our lives and orchestrates all things towards our learning to know and trust Him.
9. Through this, our lives continuing in a painful world, under His care, we have ample opportunity to learn to choose how we will see things.

10. As novices, we traverse difficulties through complaint, avoidance, or lashing out.
11. Increasingly, learning of God through His Word and personal experiences, His children increasingly acknowledge His purpose and care as superior to our self-focused desires and the avoidance of the slaying of the flesh.
12. In this, we learn obedience to not only His Sovereignty, but to trust His love, intent, ability, and worth.

The path of Salvation begins with animosity towards God, and is designed to end in our animosity towards ourselves. This is the amazing gift He offers, that we be free of what kills us and be given what fulfills us.

Perhaps, any discussion of righteous lamentation - defined as the acknowledgement to God of things that grieve us, without accusing Him - needs to be framed through the above summary. To do so, the whole of Father's intent for us through Jesus must be conveyed in Biblical proportion.

Is life difficult? Of course it is, more so for some than others. Opportunity for grief due to sin is unavoidable, and lament is therefore a path every believer must travel. The lineage of lament and how it progresses is well seen pre-Cross, but it cannot end there if we acknowledge the results of Christ's work, even now.

Life during the time of the Psalms and life now under the New Covenant share the same opportunity for pain, and for lament. However, the remedy offered now under the Cross is superior to that available before Jesus was Glorified.

David cannot be called wrong in his writings. The Hebrews were told to obey, lest God would turn from them. David was correct in asking God how long He would turn away, and in finding relief by looking backwards and forward to God's faithful response to them.

However, a key component of this changed with the work of Christ. He tells us we are no longer under the obligations required for God's affection, closeness, favor, love, relation. Asking God where He is, why is He doing this, if He no longer cares for us is, by definition, blasphemous. It is contrary to His Word to those in Christ.

In this Age, we are offered the opportunity to be friends of, the children of, Father. His Spirit in us is the guarantee and evidence of His closeness and commitment. The God Who intended good for His chosen then is the same God we have now. However, we no longer have basis to ask, "Where are you?" Taking this position is misrepresentative of Father, His intent, His promises, His actions. It is a lie, is offensive, and is a grievous misrepresentation of Him and all Jesus tells us He stands for.

Do we still tread the path of difficulty? Yes, as long as sin remains. Yet, the path of lament - while appropriate and inescapable - should be an increasingly shorter one into the arms of Father for a child growing into Sanctification.

The path of lament is a narrow one. Acknowledging our grief is honest, and can fork into one of three routes: Denial of grief's existence; anger and rebellion towards God; or straight to Him in His Truth. The first two are through ignorance or denial of what He has promised us, or in rebellion towards Him in favor of idols rooted in our self-love over Him. The first two are rooted in Biblical ignorance, the third in faith of the Truth.

This path should be expected to grow ever shorter. While sin remains, it will not vanish. But, the remedy is faith in Truth, and running ever quicker to Him.

Jesus promised a new arrangement, a new relationship with Father. James tells us to flee quickly to Him and "count it all joy." Jesus says He will "never leave nor forsake us." Those under the New Covenant are brought in to the Family to learn the new realities of this life in Father's House. Those under the Old Covenant did not have this - they could only look forward to it.

This all said, it is good to look to the Psalms to reveal the workings of the Human experience through grief, towards God. However, and this is imperative, we must recognize that theirs was an inferior position to ours. If so, adopting David's lament while looking towards God, without emphasizing Jesus' Solution of being in the Family, threatens to mislead today's Believers into stalling on the path of lament. Worse yet, not underscoring the fork in the road, versus highlighting Father's superior answer to rush to Him, threatens the Believer with defaulting to the wrong alternatives.

If lamentation is rightly taught, then the far superior promise and reality of Father's love and care needs to be held up. If we fail to see the importance of this, and mistakenly emphasize the practice of lament, we mistake the means as an end. Yes, lament - the confession to Father that we hurt - is appropriate. But, take care not to make much of the path, rather than the destination.

Foxe's Book of Martyrs reports many, many followers of Christ who understood this. There appears not to be one victim of evil who turned to the left or the right on the path of affliction. Did they voice lament to the God they would soon meet? Often, yes. But by and large they comforted themselves in the knowledge of Father's Truth, His Sovereign love and goals. Without fail, they trusted Him. This is His high goal.

Do we see the superior choice they were reported to make? And do we understand and cling to the Gift of adoption our Lord made available? Do we hold highest how much Father loves us, how immediately close He attends to us? If we don't, it is our fault, not His. The Church exists to equip, and when this topic is misunderstood or misappropriated, Her members are maimed. It should not be this way; it is not what He wants for us.