

SESSION THREE

A God Who Earns Trust (*Psalms 13*)

"In bringing his [psalmist] plea before God he has been reminded of the reality of his spiritual situation and experience. He knows again what he has always known; he returns to his own position of equilibrium, which is one of faith and trust. God has spoken, therefore, by reminding him of the great things he has done for him in the past, and the adversity of the present pales into insignificance beside the thought of it."

~ Gordon McConville, "The Psalms: Introduction and Theology," 50

I. Overview

Lament psalms are petitions raised by individuals to God for divine assistance in areas of sickness, accusations, loneliness, persecution, fear, guilt, and overall personal challenges. Not surprisingly, there are over sixty-seven lament psalms, making this the largest single category of psalms in the psalter! Such examples include Psalms 13, 17, 22, 25, 31, 39, 52, 59, 70, 139, and 142. Typically, a lament psalm consists of the following five elements: (1) opening address, (2) description of the distress/crisis, (3) call for help from God, (4) declaration of trust, and (5) praise to God.

A lament psalm is not a list of personal injustices, a litany of bitterness, or a personal exposé on self-pity, but rather, a lament is a call for the removal of the suffering itself and a plea for the Lord to vindicate His reputation.

II. The Content

A. The Address and Description of the Crisis (vv. 1-2)

Four times in these first two verses the psalmist asks "How long?" This repetition highlights the exasperation of the psalmist.

1. "How long will you ignore me?" - The psalmist feels abandoned, questioning why the Lord has not come to his aid.
2. "How long will you pay no attention?" - The idea behind this figure of speech is one of withholding favor.
3. "How long must I worry and suffer?" - The psalmist experiences personal frustration and grief as his personal attempts to resolve the issue have failed.
4. "How long will my enemy gloat?" - The psalmist's demise results in the enemy securing their position of power and fueling their arrogance.

Note what the psalmist does not say:

One commentator observes that expressing a complaint need not indicate a lack of trust; nor does trust make a complaint unnecessary (cf. Boyles, *Psalms*, 313).

B. The Call for Help and Declaration of Trust (vv. 3-5a)

v. 3 – While the predicament is unspecified, this verse suggests that the psalmist is experiencing a protracted, grave illness.

“O LORD my God!” – As aptly noted by Mays, “The prayer is not interior reflection or meditative musing but direct address. The psalm speaks to God, using the name that God has given the people of God as self-revelation. The name bestows the possibility and the promise of prayer Nothing in the troubles of life and the experience of the absence of God cancels the privilege of faith to speak directly to God in confidence of being heard.”

The three imperatives, “look,” “answer,” and “revive,” counter the psalmist’s cry of God’s seemingly unresponsiveness.

“. . . give light [to] my eyes.” – This phrase speaks of a request for restoration of health and deliverance from grief (cf. Deut 34:7; Job 17:7). The psalmist longs not only for physical healing but also for the Lord’s countenance to shine upon him (cf. Ps 19:8; Prov 29:13).

v. 4 “the enemy” – while uncertain, the enemy is most likely death.

v. 5a - Despite the change in circumstances, the psalmist makes an unbelievable statement of trust in the Lord!

C. The Praise for Salvation (vv. 5b-6)

v. 6 – David’s past experiences created future hope. He even utilizes the perfect tense of the verb, “vindicates,” to indicate that salvation has already been completed.

This loyal love is “the LORD’s faithful covenant love for his people. In a world that is filled with oppressors and opposition, there is no better source of confidence—there is no other source of confidence. His expression of confidence uses the word “trust” . . . emphasizing that he has a faith that is holding fast to God for security” (Ross, *Psalms*, 1:368). Likewise in the New Testament, believers are promised that nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (cf. Romans 8).

Observe that the circumstances have not changed; there is only a change in the psalmist’s attitude.

III. Intersect

A. Life's circumstances cannot dictate our theology.

Psalm 33:20-22 -

Psalm 115:9-13 -

Proverbs 3:5-8 -

Isaiah 12:2-5 -

B. A proper perspective of God brings hope, despite the present circumstances.

Psalm 59:16-17 -

C. God's silence does not mean His lack of presence or absence of love.

Psalm 31:21-24 -

"Promises, though they be for a time seemingly delayed, cannot be finally frustrated . . . the heart of God is not turned though His face be hid; and prayers are not flung back, though they be not instantly answered."

~ Timothy Cruso