

Lament

One kind of Psalm is the lament Psalm. In a lament, people pour out their complaints to God in an effort to persuade him to act on their behalf, all the while stating their trust in him.

Laments can have seven parts:

1. Address to God (O God)
2. Review of God's faithfulness in the past
3. The complaint
4. A confession of sin or claim of innocence
5. A request for help
6. God's response (sometimes implicit)
7. A vow to praise, statement of trust in God.

Not all parts are present in each lament, and they are not always in the same order. Laments allow a person to fully express their grief, and even accuse God, but this is quickly followed by a statement of trust in God. This combination makes for very powerful prayers. The grief is not hidden, but the person does not stay in their grief – they call on God and express their faith in him. The laments encourage people to be honest with God, to speak the truth about their feelings and doubts. When they do, he can act.

In a lament, people do not attempt to solve the problem themselves, but they cry to God for help. They look to God, not the enemy, as the one ultimately in control of the situation. They ask God to take action to bring justice rather than taking action themselves or cursing the enemy (Psalm 28:3-4)

Read Psalm 13 and try to identify the different parts of the lament:

Psalm 13 (ESV)

- ¹ How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
- ² How long must I take counsel in my soul
and have sorrow in my heart all the day?
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?
- ³ Consider and answer me, O LORD my God;
light up my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,
- ⁴ lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over him,”
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken.
- ⁵ But I have trusted in your steadfast love;
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
- ⁶ I will sing to the LORD,
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Compose a lament about your painful experience. Use as many parts as you can. Make a song out of it. Share your lament with others as you are comfortable.

