

**EFCA One:  
Forum on Expository  
Preaching**

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July 1, 2013

**Going  
Negative  
Preaching  
Biblical Laments**

*Lament*

*Complaint*

**Three Main Genres**

Psalm of Descriptive Praise

Psalm of Declarative Praise

Psalm of Lament

**Psalm of Descriptive Praise  
(Hymn or Song of Praise)**

praises God for who He is and what  
He does as God

**Psalm of Declarative Praise  
(Thanksgiving Song of an Individual)**

praises God for what he has done  
in the life of an individual or for a  
community

## Psalms of Lamentation

### Individual Lament

PSALMS: 3-7, 9-10, 13-14, 17, 22, 25-26, 27:7-14, 28, 31, 35-36, 38-39, 41-43, 51, 53-54, 56-57, 59, 61, 63-64, 69-71, 86, 88, 102, 109, 120, 130, 139-143

FUNCTION: The individual lament offers oppressed and troubled individuals a means of unburdening themselves before God and opening themselves to receive His assistance.

## Psalms of Lamentation

### Community Lament

PSALMS: 44, 60, 74, 77, 79-80, 83, 85, 89 90, 94, 123, 126

FUNCTION: The community complains that the Lord has abandoned them to their enemies.

## Distinctive Features of the Lament Genre

- Mode of praying that merits imitation
- Form/structure as vehicle
- Large element of lament and complaint
- Defines legitimate dimensions of prayer
- Movement toward confidence/assurance
- Petitions for God's help
- Calls upon God to be God
- Functions as an act of protest

## Psalms of Lamentation Key Components of the Lament

- lamentation
- petition
- confession of trust
- vow of praise or statement of assurance

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### Key Components of the Lament

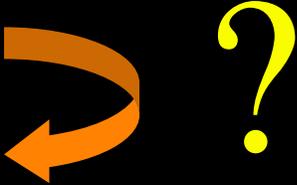
lamentation  
petition  
confession of trust  
vow of praise or statement of assurance



## Psalms of Lamentation

### Key Components of the Lament

lamentation  
petition  
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vow of praise or statement of assurance



## Psalms of Lamentation

### Psalm 13:1-5 [Eng.]

For the choir director. A Psalm of David.

- 1 How long, O Lord? Wilt Thou forget me forever?  
How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?
- 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul,  
Having sorrow in my heart all the day?  
How long will my enemy be exalted over me?
- 3 Consider and answer me, O Lord, my God;  
Enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death,
- 4 Lest my enemy say, "I have overcome him,"  
Lest my adversaries rejoice when I am shaken.
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My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation.
- 6 I will sing to the Lord, Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

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lamentation

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petition

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transition

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vow of praise

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an action,  
characteristic, or  
attribute of God  
moves the psalm  
from complaint to  
confidence and  
affirmation

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lamentation

petition

confession of trust

vow of praise

## Psalms of Lamentation

Psalm 13:1-5 [Eng.]

lamentation 13:1-2

petition 13:3-4

confession of trust 13:5a

vow of praise or statement of assurance  
13:5b-6

## Dynamic Movements within the Lament Psalms

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lament → praise

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lament → praise

lament → praise → lament → praise

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lament → praise

lament → praise → lament → praise

praise → lament

## Dynamic Movements within the Lament Psalms

lament → praise

lament → praise → lament → praise

praise → lament

lament → lament . . . no transition!

## Psalms of Lamentation

### Laments that Never “Turn the Corner”

PSALMS: 38, 39, 44, 60, 80, 88, 89, 90

These eight psalms do not contain the genre-typical shift to a statement of assurance or vow of praise, i.e., they never “turn the corner” from lament to praise. I.e., they start negative, and they stay negative!

## How Can *These* Laments Possibly Help Us?

These psalms *are* Scripture (!), and they offer a language for continued dialogue with God. These laments provide the difficult words necessary if relationship is to have any chance of survival.

These psalms reframe a present crisis within the broader context of God’s past faithfulness, providing both a broader context and perspective for renewal of trust.