

SABBATH THOUGHT 2025-07-12—LAMENTATIONS

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

This past week a tragedy occurred. Near the little town of Kerrville, Texas there was a storm that produced an unpredicted and unprecedented deluge of rain, which collected in the south fork of the Guadalupe River in the early hours of the morning of July 4. Families were gathered along the river basin in tents and campers and the local summer camps were filled with hundreds of children. Many were asleep when a thirty foot high torrent of water pushed through taking tents, cars, campers, and even cabins and houses with it. Boys and girls, men and women simply disappeared into the roiling waters that smothered life out of many.

LAMENTATIONS 1:16 “For these *things* I weep; my eye, my eye overflows with water; because the comforter, who should restore my life, is far from me. My children are desolate because the enemy prevailed.”

I am familiar with the area because it is where my relatives settled back in the late 1700s and early 1800s. They came from parts of the Black Forest region in Germany to Galveston, TX and established little towns such as Mason, New Braunfels, and Fredericksburg to eek out a living in the heat of south central Texas. They were true Texans, with names such as Uncle Billy Wayne, who raised their children and cattle on ranches or became preachers or doctors. Hardy, reliable, and loyal people with core values of God, faith, and family. This is a place where I could knock on most any door in town and be welcomed with joy and hugs as they collected nearby family for a feast even though it has been decades since I last visited.

LAMENTATIONS 2:11 My eyes fail with tears, my heart is troubled; my [inward parts are] poured on the ground because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, because the children and the infants faint in the streets of the city.

I doubt I knew anyone who died in the flood, but it was no small tragedy. Witnesses heard screams of people disappearing into the rapids or trapped in campers rolling down the river like bowling balls. Scenes like these were recounted through the choking words of helpless witnesses on the banks of the new shoreline that formed far from the expected boundaries of that usually mild river. As I watched the news, pictures of family members and little children were posted by loved ones as rescuers pulled the dead from clutches of trees or graves of mud covering their ravaged bodies, almost as if the river was trying to hide what it had done.

LAMENTATIONS 2:13 How shall I console you? To what shall I liken you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I compare with you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin *is* spread wide as the sea; who can heal you?

Last year, nature spun furiously at the loom of destruction, weaving the deadly hurricanes Beryl, Milton, and Helene; a string-of-pearls of 165 tornados that ripped open the country's midsection from north to south; and fires that vaporized parts of California in a furnace stoked by the Santa Ana bellows. Sadly, no one gives them a second thought anymore. Calamities such as October 7 in Israel; Lahaina, Hawaii; and 9/11 are, like most tragedies, now words covered in the dust on discarded notebooks of journalists. When it comes to calamities, news media audiences quickly switch to a sports channel and a beer to escape the violence that victims can never forget.

LAMENTATIONS 2:18-19 Their heart cried out to the Lord, “O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night; give yourself no relief; give your eyes no rest. 19 “Arise,

cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord. Lift your hands toward Him for the life of your young children, who faint from hunger at the head of every street.”

The world is replete with destruction and grief. There is not a year that goes by without the intertwined bloodshed of man and the cauldron of nature destroying the lives of people. International wars notwithstanding, 4-5 million human beings that no one knew or remembers were erased from the world roster in the last 20 years by starvation, disease, tsunamis, earthquakes, tribal warrings, and religious persecutions.

LAMENTATIONS 3:4-5 He has aged my flesh and my skin, and broken my bones. 5 He has besieged me and surrounded *me* with bitterness and woe.

But life will continue as it always does, including the irrational and inexplicable response of some so-called ministers. It takes a very disturbed individual to accuse both survivors and victims still dealing with horrific tragedies of being punished by God for their sins, especially if it is a preacher. One in particular never seems to miss an opportunity, adding to this despicable accusation in a recent monologue that Sunday-keeping Protestants are Satan-worshippers. It takes a complete absence of love to publicly voice such vile thoughts toward those who suffer.

Hatred is contrary to everything that IS God as Scripture says: “he who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.**” (1 John 4:8). But claiming that victims of tragedies are being punished by God is satanic! Think that is an overstatement? Not at all, since that is exactly how Jesus described it when the disciples wanted to call down fire from God to punish people:

LUKE 9:54-55 And when His [*Jesus’s*] disciples James and John saw *this [that the Samaritans did not receive Jesus]*, they said, “Lord, **do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them,** just as Elijah did?” 55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, **“You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.**

What is most baffling is that preachers of such hate have a following from within the *ekklesia*. Surprising since evil-speaking and hate are the ways of unconverted people:

TITUS 3:2-3 ... **speak evil of no one**, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men. 3 For we ourselves **were also once** foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, **hateful and hating one another.**

God’s true children are becoming agape love, not anger, hatred, and malice¹. Those who follow and condone preachers of hate put themselves in seriously grave danger because they will eventually begin to parrot them. The world is full of sinners, including the *ekklesia* before being called by God. The very reason that Jesus came was **“that the world through Him might be saved”** (John 3: 17), because “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But **go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’** For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” (Matt. 9:12-13). He came to HEAL people of sin, not condemn them. (There will be a time for that but it comes later.) Proclaiming that God is punishing sinners with tragedies and condemning Protestants as Satan-worshippers is completely contrary to Scripture. Jesus said, **“if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.”** (John 12:47). And neither should any converted person:

¹ Col. 3:8.

ROMANS 10:1-3 Brethren, my [Paul's] heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

Paul's heartfelt DESIRE and PRAYERS were for the salvation of Israel. Substitute *Protestant* for *Israel* and this verse describes the modern Anglo-Saxon nations. Many Protestants ARE zealous for God but too many in the *ekklesia* make a sport of condemning them for keeping Sunday. In doing so, they expose their ignorance of the Bible because GOD has prevented them from keeping the Sabbaths and holydays. Quoting from the Sabbath Thought of 2023-12-30:

"Hosea says something very interesting to the Ten Tribes regarding the keeping of the Sabbath and holydays:

HOSEA 2:2, 11 "Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; For *she [Ten Tribes of Israel] is not My [the LORD] wife, nor am I her Husband!* ... 11 *I will also cause all her mirth [delight] to cease [for] Her feast days, Her New Moons, Her Sabbaths— All her appointed feasts.*

"Because God divorced the Ten Tribes, He caused their "delight [*in the Sabbaths and appointed feasts*] to cease." This phrase in the Hebrew is *masows* (delight) *shabath* (to cease). Interestingly, *shabath* also means to "keep Sabbath." When God divorced the Ten Tribes, He literally took away the Sabbath and holydays and their delight and desire for them."

God removed the ability of the Ten Tribes to keep Sabbaths and holydays! Protestants "have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" because God put a veil of blindness and ignorance upon them. Are they sinning because they keep Sunday? Yes. But that makes them worthy of mercy and prayers, not condemnation. Preachers of hate are nothing like the true servants of God such as Jeremiah who wrote the book of Lamentations:

LAMENTATIONS 3:39-51 Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? 40 Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the LORD; 41 Let us lift our hearts and hands to God in heaven. 42 We have transgressed and rebelled; You have not pardoned. 43 You have covered *Yourself* with anger and pursued us; You have slain and not pitied. 44 You have covered Yourself with a cloud, that prayer should not pass through. 45 You have made us an offscouring and refuse in the midst of the peoples. 46 All our enemies have opened their mouths against us. 47 Fear and a snare have come upon us, desolation and destruction. 48 My eyes overflow with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people. 49 My eyes flow and do not cease, without interruption, 50 till the LORD from heaven looks down and sees. 51 My eyes bring suffering to my soul because of all the daughters of my city.

Jeremiah did not whitewash the sins of his people even while he wept for them. Instead of condemning them, he desired with all his heart that they would repent and return to God:

LAMENTATIONS 3:31-33 For the Lord will not cast off forever. 32 Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. 33 For He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

Condemning people who are not called actually rejects the sacrifice of Jesus Christ! He did NOT die just for the *ekklesia* but for a world of sinners and enemies that the Father loves! A calling

from God is special—a treasure of unspeakable value—but it is not a license to condemn the world because anger and vengeance belong only to God². Castigating people in the worst moments of their lives is not love. It is prideful boasting of self-proclaimed righteousness. Who among the *ekklesia* honestly thinks they will receive eternal life by hating and condemning others? Who among the *ekklesia* honestly thinks they will receive eternal life by applauding tragedies as punishments from God? The answer to these questions should be obvious but here is a clue: “**he who does not love does not know God**, for God is love.” (1 John 4:8).

If the Two Great Commandments to love God and love your neighbor are GREATER than any other points of The Law and Prophets³, then hating others is the WORST of all. The most severe judgment possible would be to hear God say, “**there is no love in you.**” That is exactly the judgment against the goats in the parable in Matthew 25:31-46—they had no love. Preachers and their followers who hate and condemn victims of suffering might think they are serving God in some perverse way but, without love, they are likely to hear this from Jesus Christ:

MATTHEW 7:21-23 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 “And then I will declare to them, ‘**I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!**’

If the Law is Love, then lawlessness is lovelessness. Hate and condemnation is a poisonous brew that kills those who drink it. God will call all sinners to repentance and He alone will deal with the incorrigible. The Firstfruits, however, are those who weep for the sinners of the world:

EZEKIEL 9:3-4, 6 ... And He [*God*] called to the man clothed with linen, who *had* the writer’s inkhorn at his side; 4 and the LORD said to him, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and **put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations** that are done within it.” ... 6 “Utterly slay old *and* young men, maidens and little children and women; but **do not come near anyone on whom is the mark**; and begin at My sanctuary.” So they began with the elders who *were* before the temple.

God does *not* spare those who hate and condemn sinners; it says He spares those who “**sigh and cry**” for their abominations. God is calling Firstfruits to help the world through their grief and loss with words that bind up and heal. They are compassionate, merciful, and loving. Those who are hateful and condemning need not apply.

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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² Rom. 12:19.

³ Matt. 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31.