

Crying and Sighing—Ezekiel 9

#0583

Study given by W.D. Frazee—November 29, 1963

I would like to study with you tonight a very practical problem. That is the problem of how to relate ourselves to the apostasy, and the worldliness all around us. How to relate ourselves to the fact that we are living in the midst of conditions which are not conducive to reaching the highest standard.

I was talking with someone not very long ago from half way around the world, a worker in our cause, and this very question was raised. I am thankful that as we studied and prayed together that we got some help. This is a very practical question that is facing many people. Some of you are facing it. If you are not tonight, you will be. So let us seek God's remedy.

There are two things that God doesn't want us to do. Satan's favorite method of dealing with honest souls is to present them with alternatives and say which will you take. If you were sitting in a restaurant, and somebody should say to you, Which will you have tea or coffee?, would you have to have one or the other? No.

These alternatives that Satan presents to you and to me are not the only choices we have. But they are made to look as the only choices. The first choice is going on with the worldliness, go with the tide. I could illustrate it with a great many examples, but I don't know that I should, it might get your mind on the details. The details are not what I am studying with you tonight.

The model of that spirit is when in Rome do as the Romans do. If the world is dressing in a certain way, and especially if most of the people in the church are dressing a certain way, dress that way. Oh don't go to extremes, of course. There is a little poem that is quoted approvingly by that philosophy:

Be not the first by whom the new is tried,
Nor yet the last to cast the old aside.

If it is in diet, it means of course that you probably wouldn't eat rattlesnakes or grasshoppers or snails, most people don't do that anyway. You would probably draw the line at pork. You might even draw the line at meat. It depends on where you live and the crowd you go with. But don't stick out like a sore thumb. And if you don't eat in between meals, that is alright ordinarily, but don't spoil a good party by being so tight-

bound and strict.

Go along with the crowd if it is a good crowd. Of course, don't drink whiskey, don't smoke cigarettes. Be like Daniel on those points. But if you are with a group of good Seventh-day Adventists do pretty much what they do. And it applies not merely in diet and in dress, but in music and reading, and in recreation and amusements, and education, in every detail.

My dear friends, I am not going to take time this evening to prove from the Word of God, and the testimonies of His Spirit, and the statements of our church leaders from time to time that we are far from the pattern, and far from the experience we must have if we are to receive the latter rain and give the loud cry. But I simply say if that is so then somewhere there must be some people who will not go with the crowd in matters of obedience to the Word of God and the testimonies of His Spirit.

There must be people who have enough backbone to do what God says regardless. Incidentally, there weren't very many that supported Daniel in his stand down there in Babylon, and it would today be considered as extreme and fanatical by many good people.

But now the enemy presents us with an alternative of that. When the Devil sees that you and I are disturbed over worldliness and world conformity, then he presents to us the alternative of criticism and faultfinding. When he sees that we are pulling away from the spirit of doing like the people around us, then he eggs us on, and says, that's right, don't do like the people around you. In fact, not only don't do like them, talk against them! Point out their sins! Cry aloud and spare not!

You say, I thought that verse was in the Bible? It is friends, but the great enemy has never shown himself unwillingly to quote scripture. He quoted scripture even to Jesus, didn't he? Yes. And so the enemy says, if you will not go with the crowd, then find fault with the crowd and criticize, and expose. In fact dear friends, I will say this, that leaving aside the other choice that I am going to bring from God's word tonight, you have got to do one or the other of those two things. You have got to criticize in order to keep your backbone stiff enough to resist the pressure of worldliness. Or else, if you fail to criticize, the very desire to please others, and to be winsome, will lead you to compromise.

Humanly speaking, the Devil has got you. Where all you have is two horns of a dilemma. That's all. He doesn't care a bit which one you hang on. Not a bit.

Thank God there is an answer friends! It is not in hanging on either horn. It is here in our text:

"He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every

man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughter weapon in his hand; and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side: and they went in, and stood beside the brazen altar. And the glory of the God of Israel was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he was, to the threshold of the house. And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" Ezekiel 9:1-4.

Now, as is obvious to the one who reads the whole book of Ezekiel, this is describing a situation in Jerusalem, literal Jerusalem, at that time. Read the eighth chapter, you will see the iniquities that were going on. But it is also obvious to the careful student that there are implications and applications that belong to us down here today.

And lest we should have any question about that, we have an entire chapter devoted in *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 5, beginning on page 207 to this subject entitled *The Seal of God*. And it applies this point after point to this last generation. To the crisis hour in which we are even now entering, and which will develop more fully in the very near future. Also in our Seventh-day Adventist Bible commentary, in its comments upon this chapter, makes it very clear that this applies not only back there in the days of Jerusalem, but down here today. It is a wonderful comment, you who have access to the comment read it.

Now what is the application down here today? Of course the central point of this whole chapter is the putting of the mark in the foreheads. Now you will notice in the next verse that after the marking man, come the slaughtering men. Who gets slaughtered? Everybody that isn't marked. Notice friends, you will either be touched by the angel with the mark or you will be touched by the angels with the sword. This is talking about Jerusalem the church, God's people.

Now, there is something very interesting about this expression "set a mark." You notice the margin says from the Hebrew "mark a mark." That word "mark" in the Hebrew is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, "taw." There were twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet and this was letter twenty-two. It was made like an "X" or a cross at that time.

So the angel is going around and he is putting in the last letter of the alphabet.

But I want to tell you this friends, he is never going to put the last there unless all the others have gone in. The last one represents completion. "Set a mark", "taw a taw." We would say, "Z a Z." Put a "Z" there. "A..B..C..D..", the whole alphabet of Christian experience has been put there in the mind and heart, and now comes the last letter. In other words, it is finished.

Oh what a picture that opens up of the completion of the work of the Gospel in the minds of the hearts in the 144,000. We get the picture again in Revelation the seventh chapter. The angel comes with a seal, it is called seal there, mark here, and the servants of our God are what? Sealed. Where? In the foreheads. The numbering? 144,000.

Now I am not concerned with their numbering tonight, I am deeply concerned with their character. We are told that we are to strive with all the power God has given us to be among the 144,000. (Maranatha, page 241). If we are, we will get this mark. We will have the "Z", if you please, put in there. Which indicates the completed work of the Gospel in our hearts. Won't it be wonderful friends, for God to look upon His people and say, It's a finished work, a completed work, a perfected work.

Now don't misunderstand me, we are not going to look at ourselves in the glass someday down here and say, well, we look pretty good now. No! No! Daniel didn't. When God in heaven said he was a man greatly beloved, we see Daniel down on his knees confessing his sins and the sins of his people. Daniel 9. And as long as we are in this world we will feel our helplessness, our unworthiness, and our deep need of the grace of God. But in heaven there is coming a day when it will be said, it is finished, it is done. The sanctuary will close because God has finished a certain work in the hearts and lives of His people. I want to be among the number. Don't you friends?

Now, notice what it hangs on, this question of who is marked. What does God say to the angel? The Lord said unto him:

"Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof" Ezekiel 9:4.

Set a mark upon the men that do what? Sigh and cry.

You know there is a time to be happy friends and there is a time not to be happy. There is a time to laugh, and there is a time to weep. I can tell you this friends, the people that laugh when they ought to be weeping are going to weep in agony, and howl in gloom and doom when they might enter into joy eternal forever. Some poor souls are so attracted by the light, chaffing laughter of the socials of this hour, that they think that is the place to go and have a good time.

Christian sociability?, yes, we need it friends. But listen. The people that get the seal are going to be distinguished, we are told in volume 5, in this chapter by their soul anguish which is expressed in lamentations and weeping. Now I didn't write this and you didn't, the Spirit of God wrote it. We are in no ordinary time. This is the judgement hour, and it is almost over. The message we need tonight is not some baptized boy scout program, or YMCA business. We need the sword of the Lord to come right down into our midst and deal with the deep things of our hearts and lives. Because the only people who will get the seal are those that are doing what? Sighing and crying.

We have heard so much talk about not being long-faced Christians friends, that some of us are almost afraid of anything that has a bit of sobriety about it. But the angel is looking in Jerusalem, and listening as he goes from house to house for those that do what? Sigh and cry. Over what? All the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. Now notice, it isn't those that are weeping just over the abominations in Egypt or Babylon or Sodom or Gomorrah. It is the abominations that are done where? In the midst thereof, in the midst of Jerusalem.

Read the comment in volume five. But I want to read it to you out of the SDA Commentary, because I want you to see friends that there is nothing narrow, or fanatical, or extreme about what I am giving you tonight. I want you to see that this is published in the official commentary of this denomination:

"It is not the outward observance of the Sabbath that constitutes the mark. The seal stands for that character qualification that all must have. Only those who have purified their souls will cling to the Sabbath in that awful time of trouble preceding the return of Jesus. Insincere Sabbath keepers will abandon the ranks of God's people, and unite with Satan against heaven, and join in the battle against the ruler of the universe" SDA Bible Commentary, Volume 4, page 607.

What does this say is going to happen in the approaching crisis? Are some Sabbath keepers going to abandon this movement? That's right.

"Thus only the genuine and true remain as the sole defenders of God's holy Sabbath. These are joined by others of God's true children, who until now have been scattered throughout the various communions of Christendom, but who under the increasing light of the loud cry, embrace the Sabbath and join God's remnant people"
Ibid.

Now that is good Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. You don't have to go to some

offshoot to get it either. You get it right here. Right here in the commentary. It is very clear that the rank and file of our people as we see them today are not going through as a great body. Many are going to be sifted out, and many others are coming in. But the church is going through.

Now watch:

“The mark is placed on those that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done. Those who belong to this cry have been described as distinguished by their soul-anguish over the declensions among God’s professed people” *Ibid*.

What is it they are crying so much about? The declensions among God’s professed people.

“They lament and afflict their souls because pride, avarice, selfishness, and deception of every kind are in the church. They feel powerless to stop the rushing torrent of iniquity, and hence are filled with grief and alarm. Those in the other class seek to throw a cloak over existing evils and excuse the great wickedness everywhere prevalent. They claim that God is too good, and too merciful to punish evil. The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil they say” *Ibid*.

Now listen. I am quoting from the commentary remember. They, this other class in the church that finally leave the church in the approaching crisis, but while they are still in the church listen:

“They assert the Lord does not expect so high a standard, and will be satisfied with a mere desire to do right. But the Lord cannot change His standard to do so would be to change Himself, rather He supplies grace for the acquirement of every virtue and the correction of every defect. He asks of every Christian that full advantage be taken of these provisions. He demands no less than perfection” *Ibid*.

Watch this point! Remember, I am reading from the commentary.

“He demands no less than perfection. Unless this is obtained, the soul will be found without the seal of God when probation closes” *Ibid*.

My friends, that is good Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. Remember you don’t

have to go to some offshoot to get it, it is right here. It is right here in the Bible. It is right here in the Testimonies, and it is right here in the SDA Commentary. I am thankful for that. Aren't you? Wouldn't you rather I would read it out of here, then read it out of some mimeographed sheet that came through the mail attacked out leaders, and trying to tear the church to pieces? Wouldn't you friends? I would.

Oh if we will hunt in the Bible, and we will hunt in the Spirit of Prophecy, and we will find in the things that God has given us in and through this church, I think we will find what we need to get ready for heaven. What do you say?

Now please watch this point, the angel is listening for those who are doing what? Sighing and crying. For what? The abominations. That are done where? In the church. That is what the Bible says, that is what the Spirit of Prophecy says, that is what the commentary says. That is the truth friends.

Now I want to ask you something. Could the true people of God be sighing and crying for abominations if there weren't any abominations going on? Why no, that would be nonsense! Do you see then that abominations all around us, in the church, do not prove that we are not on the prophetic track? They prove that we are on the prophetic track. God knew what was going to be, and told us so we wouldn't get discouraged and go overboard. He wants us to stay right on the train friends, for the train is going through.

But multitudes are going to be sifted out in the crisis. Why? Because, oh watch this, they have either joined in the abominations, or they have joined in criticizing and faultfinding others. What is the cure? What is the prevention? It is right here in our verse. What is it? Sigh and cry.

Do you know what it takes to sigh and cry? It takes the love our brother was talking about. That is the key to this whole matter.

You know, I got to thinking about it friends. I have a dear little wife who loves me, and I am thankful to the Lord for that. She knows about my faults more than anybody else in this world knows them. Even my worst enemies don't know as much about my faults as she does. She could get out a mimeographed sheet that would really be something. Well I didn't mean that in any foolish way friends. I want you to think about it. If she loves me, will she publish to the world all about my faults and mistakes? No.

Now I want to ask you something else. If she loves me, will she pat me on the back when I do wrong? No I don't think so. In fact I know that isn't what God wants you to do.

If she sees me doing something wrong, she won't get out that public sheet that exposes my faults, neither will she compromise and encourage me in sin, and unite with

me in sin. What will she do? She will sigh and cry. Won't she? Yes. Where? In prayer with God. Won't she? Yes. Isn't there many a wife doing that for her husband friends? Yes. Sometimes a sad-hearted husband doing it for his wife.

Oh friends, what a picture. "Husbands, love your wives even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it." I tell you friends, if God can help you and me to love the church the way a good husband loves his wife, even his erring wife, it will settle this whole problem. We will never go with our brothers and sisters in any compromise with the world. Neither will we join the accuser of the brethren in exposing their faults before and accusing world.

There is no other cure. There is no other prevention. Inevitable we will be kicked back and forth across the football field one way or the other friends. We will either be driven into the ranks of the accusers by our antipathy for compromise, or reacting from that criticism we will be led to soft pedal the truth and decide that after all it is best to go along and be loving and kind and keep still about sin and eat and drink with the drunken.

One or the other friends. There is no way to avoid this twin horns unless we come with Jesus into the sanctuary and sorrow with Him over the sins of Israel.

Now, I want to ask you something friends. If you and I are numbered with Israel and we are sorrowing over the sins of Israel, whose sins do you think we will sorrow over the most? Our own. That's right. Any spirit that would separate us from the church as we weep for the church is not from heaven friends. It is not from the sanctuary. It is from another source.

Oh as we weep and pray for Israel, again and again the Spirit of God will strike the arrow of conviction deep into our own hearts and we will say, oh Lord, I see, I see that the neediest one in all my circle of acquaintances is this man right here. And it will be the truth to friends. It will be the truth.

God uses this very reaction against sin in the church as a pry, as a lever to try and get sin out of our own hearts friends. I will tell you, we will either get it out, or we will inevitably join with that which we see around us.

I want to read you something from this little book *The Story of Our Health Message*. It has an appendix with an article by Sister White. On page 430 of the new edition it says this:

"We must wait patiently and not fail or be discouraged for God has His plans all arranged. While we are burdened in distress, but waiting in patient submission, our Invisible Helper will be doing the work we do not see, and will bring to

pass in His providence, events which will either work reformations or separate these half-hearted world-loving members from the believers. If those in Jerusalem who feel deeply the abominations, who earnestly seek the Lord in prayer, not trying to expose the faults of their brethren to a godless world, not uniting with them in sin, but pleading with God weeping between the porch and the altar, God will take a hand friends and He will either convert those who unite with the world or else He will separate them from the believers and leave a pure, clean church" *The Story of our Health Message*, page 430.

God says He will do it. Let's take Him at His word. What do you say, friends?

Is not our duty then plain? What is it that we want to do? Do we want to see Jesus come? First the revival and reformation must come, so the latter rain can come, so the loud cry can come, so the work can be finished.

But ah, when will it come? When those in the church that God can reach do what Ezekiel 9 is talking about. That is the answer. Remember, friends, love will not seek to expose others and place their faults before the attention of the world.

I mentioned about how a husband and a wife are safe in the knowledge that the other partner loves them. I want to call your attention to a very interesting article in the Review and Herald of November 30, 1897. I am not going to read this whole article. I am going to read you just a very few sentences of it, but all I need to read perhaps is just the name of the article. What do you suppose it is? Exposing of the Brethren's mistakes reproved by Mrs. E.G. White. I will read these few sentences in the middle of the chapter:

"God has inspired no man to reproduce their mistakes and to present their errors to a world that is lying in wickedness, and to a church composed of many who are weak in faith. Speak not of the errors of your brethren who are living, and be silent as to the mistakes of the dead. Let their mistakes and errors remain where God has put them, cast into the depths of the sea. The less that is said by those who profess to believe present truth in regard to the past mistakes and errors of the servants of God, the better it will be for their own souls, and for the souls of those whom Christ has purchased with His blood" *Review and Herald*, November 30, 1897.

Let's do it friends, what do you say? Let's leave the mistakes of our brethren

where God has put them. What do you say?

But do you know all we need to do that? Peter tells us. It is the same thing that my wife needs to live with me.

“And above all things have fervent charity [love] among yourselves: for charity [love] shall cover the multitude of sins” 1 Peter 4:8.

Love will do what? Cover the multitude of sins.

I am glad God loves me that much. He loves me more than anybody. That is why it is safe for Him to know so much about me. If some of you knew as much about me as I know about myself, you wouldn't love me at all. But God doesn't let you find all that out, and I am glad.

But I don't know all that He knows friends. He is letting me know more and more as I am able to bear it oh how weak and unworthy and faulty I am. But oh I thank the Lord for His covering righteousness, for the precious blood that cleanses. There is a beautiful garment over my poor, weak, faulty life. He tells me as He puts that garment on me, He wants me to use that same love to cover my brothers and sisters. And I am just as sure as anything friends, if I have enough love, it will do it.

But did you ever get something and then it shrunk. I wonder if our love has shrunken for the church, for our brethren. If it has friends, let's ask God to give us a brand new cover. What do you say? Plenty big enough. Remember, that doesn't mean compromise. That doesn't mean white-washing. Read the chapter in Volume five, it is clear friends. Those who in this time of apostasy are heart to heart with God will not be going around backslapping and encouraging world-loving compromise. Nothing of the kind.

They will be crying to God in secret, and then doing all they can to help those who are going the wrong way. Praise God friends, we don't have to take either tea or coffee. We don't have to choose either horn of the dilemma that Satan offers. We don't unite with worldliness in the church, neither do we have to react in criticism and fault-finding and exposure of our brethren.

We can go to the secret place of prayer. There heart-burdened cry and sigh with Jesus over this, and as we do we will get a view of our own weakness and deformity that will drive us to Him as our only answer. When enough of God's people do this and really enter into it, the revival will come, the reformation will come, the latter rain will come, the loud cry will come, and the saints will soon be gathered.

Now just in a little closing work friends, I want to give you something that through

a providence fell into my hands. This is a copy of a little printed tract called *Special Testimony* that was printed in 1882 and was addressed to the Battle Creek church. James White had died in August of 1881, and in the fall and winter of 1881 over into 1882, the Battle Creek college and the Battle Creek church went through a great crisis. You can read it in the first hundred pages of volume five.

At this time Sister White was in the west, and she wrote this special testimony to the Battle Creek church. And from it I wish to read just a few sentences, for oh friends I long that God shall help us not to make the mistakes that others have made before us. I want you to see what killed James White:

“My husband was hunted to death. His mind was kept stirred up by reporters, tattlers, mischief makers and false reporters. And those who have acted their part faithfully for Satan saw him in his coffin removed from the strife of tongues” *Special Testimony*, 1882.

The whole world was shocked by the assassin of a week ago. But here were a horde of assassins, church members in good and regular standing that killed a man who was the apostle of this movement. They killed him with what? Their tongues.

I read on:

“He died of a broken heart. And the Lord let him rest. I hold no grudge against anyone. I felt to the very depths of my soul over the treatment my husband received, and I have forgiven those who have done this work. I pray the Lord to forgive them. I warn you not to do to another as you have done to him. And when you begin your attacks upon one, and then another that do not agree with your ways and please your fancies, I am determined to resist your influence and stand up for the oppressed. Will you send others to their deaths by your persecuting tongues, your suspicions, your envies, your jealousies? Is the element that you love, and will you choose this atmosphere which is the poison of hell?” *Ibid*.

Ah dear ones, I pray that if there is a single fault-finding tongue here tonight, we will pray the Lord for some surgery. Do not think that it is your province, or your privilege to use that tongue telling this one and that one what you think about this one and that one. Don't think that is your business. God hasn't made you a church tinkerer, or an institutional tinkerer. No.

If you see weakness, if you see faults go where? Oh go to the closet of Ezekiel 9 and there on your knees cry to God. Sigh and cry. And then if there in the closet God

lays on your heart a burden to do something further, go to the man that you were tempted to speak against, and open up your heart to him in a humble earnest way, and see how God sends His melting love to accomplish the work that needs to be done.

Brethren let's get ready for Heaven what do you say?

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