

What Brings You to Tears?

As I approach 50, I must confess I have never lost anyone to death with whom I've been extremely close. My parents and siblings are still alive, and I became distant to my grandparents before their passing.

It's difficult for me to relate to the tears of anyone whose friends or relatives have passed away. But that doesn't mean I do not cry and cannot relate to emotional pain, similar to that of the prophet Jeremiah.

His grief ran deep, as we discover in Lamentations. He wasn't called the "weeping prophet" for nothing as he bore the burdens of his country, Israel. His tears flowed from a broken heart for he knew what lay ahead for Judah—that God's judgment would fall and destruction would come for its disobedience.

Jeremiah's tears were not self-centered; he did not mourn over personal suffering or loss. He wept because the people had rejected their God and because that would bring much future suffering. His heart was broken with those things that break God's heart.

I would like to believe I cry for similar reasons. I cry because my shortcomings sometimes allow me to alienate my wife—the beautiful and precious gift God gave me. I cry because I sometimes fail in the stewardship of two more wonderful gifts He has given me—my daughter, Rachel, and my son, Joshua. I cry because of the senseless murdering of Jews in Israel and Christians around the world on a daily basis, and for the hatred that is behind it.

I cry because I break my own heart with my disobedience to God and that I sometimes see myself as inadequate as His messenger. The last one is a lie from the enemy, and I have to rebuke those thoughts because I know that "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the

righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21, MEV).

Like Jeremiah, I also weep for our nation and its shortcomings, as well as the shortcomings of the church. The church has let America down, and it is because of the church's neglect that our country has deteriorated to its current state of degradation. I know America's current state brings God to tears. Does it for you?

So I ask you: what causes your tears? Are they self-centered, or do you lament over the things that also break God's heart? Do you cry because many in this world will go hungry today? Do you weep because you have lost something that gives you pleasure, or because people all around you will suffer for their sinfulness?

Our world is filled with injustice, poverty, war and rebellion against God. All of these things should move us, His church, to action. Read or re-read the book of Lamentations and learn what it means to grieve with God.

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Start the new year off by praying with tears—tears of sympathy and empathy for the lost and broken. Pray that all of us as Christ followers will do the same, and that indeed it will be a happier New Year in 2016.

And as I always like to say, "there is that." {eoa}