



[Ezekiel 9:4](#)

(4) And the LORD said to him, "Go through in the midst of the city, in the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark on the foreheads of the men who are groaning and are mourning because of all the abominations that are done in her midst."

A Faithful Version

To [sigh and cry](#) effectively over the sins of Israel, *we must know what those sins are*. In this particular context, this means that we need to be watching and listening attentively, just as Peter says that Lot was tormented by what he saw and heard going on around him ([II Peter 2:6-8](#)). Lot had to spend at least some of his time listening to SNN, the Sodom News Network!

We cannot sigh and cry if we are like ostriches and bury our heads in the sand. This is a type of denial. We need to be awake and aware, not slumbering and not sleeping ([I Thessalonians 5:6](#)). We need to ensure that we interpret the events that we see and hear in the news in terms of [God's law](#), for that holy law is the standard, the benchmark, the touchstone, by which we must measure the deeds of our leadership, of our fellow citizens, and of ourselves.

Of course, awareness of [sin](#) does not imply participation in it. In one sense, we need to be like the man in the Bee Gees song, "I Started a Joke," which contains a line: "I started to cry which started the whole world laughing." The song is about an individual out of step with [the world](#) around him. He was alienated from it. We, too, are fish out of water—oddmens out, as it were—and we cannot sigh and cry over the nation's sins if we are singing from the world's song sheet. To change the metaphor, we cannot march in step with this world and simultaneously sigh and cry at its sins. That simply will not work.

So, while we are *in* the world, we are not *of* it. We are spectators and not participants. Though we are watching from the sidelines, we dare not even for a moment cheer the ways of a world that is oblivious to God's law—a world that almost ubiquitously considers

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the law to be both odious and onerous. It is a world that is eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage ([Matthew 24:38](#)), laughing and living it up while we are crying all the time. We cannot successfully sigh and cry before [God](#) if we are of this world, part and parcel of its sins. We must remain outside.

Have we ever considered where our commitment to God's law puts us? Liberals in the world [see God](#) as having no influence at all on their actions. They think God has gone away—they even say He is dead—so they believe that obedience to God is not important. In Ezekiel 8, that is exactly what God says is wrong with the leadership of ancient Judah! They, too, thought that God had left the scene.

But what about the conservatives? These people give lip service to the [Ten Commandments](#). They even become exercised when the liberals remove them from courthouses. Yet, consider that, for the most part, they refuse to keep those same commandments themselves! At best, their argument with liberals over this particular issue is logically inconsistent and morally hypocritical because they do not practice what they preach. Their refusal to keep the [Sabbath](#) is a prime example. Further, some of the business practices of professing conservatives are appalling, breaking God's injunctions against lying and stealing! Not recognizing the need to keep God's law, most conservatives attend churches that preach heavy doses of [salvation](#) by [grace](#) through [faith alone](#), saying that is all we need.

This puts true Christians right in the middle—caught between "right" and "left" on every side—trapped in a world of lawlessness on every side. There is no light in this world whatsoever. Though Paul speaks in [Romans 2:14](#) of people "who . . . by nature do the things in the law," he does not say that they *obey* the law but merely practice things contained in it. We, however, are the only people who, by covenant, have committed ourselves to obey God's law. We are indeed odd men out who sigh and cry while the world laughs. And all that time, God remembers His covenant and acknowledges His people.

— Charles Whitaker

To learn more, see:
[The Torment of the Godly \(Part Two\)](#)

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