

Lament for New Orleans

Adapted from Jeremiah's "*Lamentation over Jerusalem*" (NIV)
See suggestions at the end for praying this lament today.

- How deserted lies the city, once so full of people!
How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations!
- 2 Bitterly she weeps at night, tears are upon her cheeks.
The roads to New Orleans mourn, for no one comes to her appointed feasts.
All her gateways are desolate, her priests groan,
her maidens grieve, and she is in bitter anguish.
- 4 The French Quarter mourns, for no one comes to her appointed feasts.
All her gateways are desolate,
All the splendor has departed from the Daughter of Louisiana.
Her princes are like deer that find no pasture;
in weakness they have fled before the pursuer.
- 7 In the days of her affliction and wandering
She remembers all the treasures that were hers in days of old.
When her people fell into the hands of her enemy the sea, there was no one to help her.
Her enemy looked at her and laughed at her destruction.
- 12 "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look around and see.
Is any suffering like my suffering that was inflicted on me,
that the LORD brought on me in the day of his fierce anger?
- Listen, all you peoples; look upon my suffering.
My young men and maidens have gone into exile.
- 19 "I called to my allies – my protectors - but they betrayed me.
My priests and my elders perished in the city
while they searched for food to keep themselves alive.
- 20 "See, O LORD, how distressed I am!
- 2:1 How the Lord has covered the city with the cloud of his anger !
He has hurled down her splendor from heaven to earth;
- 5 The Lord is like an enemy; he has swallowed New Orleans up.
He has swallowed up all her palaces and destroyed her strongholds.
He has multiplied mourning and lamentation for the Daughter of Louisiana.
- 7 The Lord has rejected his saints and abandoned his sanctuary.
He has handed over to the waters the walls of her palaces;
they have raised a shout in the house of the LORD
as on the day of an appointed feast.
- 8 The LORD determined to tear down the wall around the Daughter of Zion.
He ... did not withhold his hand from destroying.
He made ramparts and walls lament; together they wasted away.

9 Her gates have sunk into the ground;
their bars he has broken and destroyed.
Her king and her princes are exiled among the nations,
the law is no more, and her prophets no longer find visions from the LORD.

11 My eyes fail from weeping, I am in torment within,
my heart is poured out on the ground because my people are destroyed,
because children and infants faint in the streets of the city.

12 They say to their mothers, "Where is bread and wine?"
as they faint like wounded men in the streets of the city,
as their lives ebb away in their mothers' arms.

13 What can I say for you? With what can I compare you, O City of Music?
To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, New Orleans?
Your wound is as deep as the sea. Who can heal you?

18 The hearts of the people cry out to the Lord.
O walled city, let your tears flow like a river day and night;
give yourself no relief, your eyes no rest.

19 Arise, cry out in the night, as the watches of the night begin;
pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord.
Lift up your hands to him for the lives of your children,
who faint from hunger at the head of every street.

20 "Look, O LORD, and consider: Whom have you ever treated like this?"

3:17 I have been deprived of peace; I have forgotten what prosperity is.

21 Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:

22 Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.

23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

24 I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him."

25 The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him;

26 it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

-- there may yet be hope.

40 Let us examine our ways and test them,
and let us return to the LORD.

54 The waters closed over my head, and I thought I was about to be cut off.

55 I called on your name, O LORD, from the depths of the pit.

56 You heard my plea: "Do not close your ears to my cry for relief."

57 You came near when I called you, and you said, "Do not fear."

4:4 Because of thirst the infant's tongue sticks to the roof of its mouth;
the children beg for bread, but no one gives it to them.

6 The punishment of my people is greater than that of Sodom,
which was overthrown in a moment without a hand turned to help her.

5:1 Remember, O LORD, what has happened to us;
look, and see our disgrace.

14 The elders are gone from the city gate;
the young men have stopped their music.

15 Joy is gone from our hearts;
our dancing has turned to mourning.

16 The crown has fallen from our head.
Woe to us, for we have sinned!

18 for New Orleans lies desolate,
with jackals prowling over it.

19 You, O LORD, reign forever;
your throne endures from generation to generation.

21 Restore us to yourself, O LORD,
that we may return; renew our days as of old

Suggestions for prayerful lament:

Scriptures of Lament are helpful to teach us sympathy, humility
and repentance, to give us perspective ... and ultimately hope.

1. Pray this prayer in solidarity with the people of New Orleans
Weep with those who weep. This is intercession.
2. Pray for the cities of the world that are wracked by poverty, crime and suffering;
for refugees whose homes and villages have been wiped out
3. Pray this prayer for our city - and our physical and moral vulnerability.
Jesus said, "*Do you think they were more guilty than others?*
I tell you, no!
But unless you repent, you too will all perish." *Luke 13:4-5*
4. Pray this prayer for the church, the city of God
and consider how swamped and paralyzed we are by affluence and self-interest
how no one comes to our appointed feasts
how secularism has engulfed us.

David Knight, September 6, 2005