

# *The Language of Tears*

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*All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Recently, I was thinking about a precious man of God, Bill Bright, who founded one of the great ministries of our day—Campus Crusade for Christ. This man's body is failing, but he still faithfully preaches from a wheelchair. Just considering his life brought tears to my eyes.

Maybe that sounds unusual to you, a grown man crying over another grown man. Those tears were not the kind meant to stir up an emotional response from an audience. They were tears moved by God as I considered the life of one of His dearest servants. Mr. Bright is suffering in the midst a great angelic conflict, and God moved upon my heart as I identified with a man whose ministry has gone places no other ministry could go.

Not enough genuine tears are shed in our pulpits today. The language of tears is a language many no longer speak, because the Word and Spirit of God are not allowed to move upon

humble hearts.

This booklet will show that tears are precious to God. Behind each tear that falls because of a heart of love is a story to be told in eternity. They are so valuable to Him that He carefully bottles each one.

*Chapter One*  
**STRONG CRYING**

“Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?

“When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me” (Psalm 56:8-9).

In the Word of God, many kinds of tears are mentioned. Hebrews 12:16-17 refers to the tears of Esau. His tears were shed out of selfishness and regret for having missed a blessing, but those tears did not lead him to a place of repentance. Many of the children of Israel covered their altars with that kind of tears, according to Malachi 2:13. God rejected their offerings because they had rejected God’s way.

The tears that God cherishes are genuine tears, shed by individuals who reckon on God’s grace and mercy for every breath. Those tears are the kind that He bottles and saves in eternity.

David declared in the Psalms that those tears

are kept in God's bottle. The Lord knows those tears as intimately as He knows all of our members—our eyes, hands, feet, ears—every part of us (Psalm 139:16).

"Only God knows what I have done," David said. "I committed adultery with Bathsheba. I plotted to kill her husband, Uriah. I was the cause of hundreds of deaths at Nob (1 Samuel 21, 22). I wouldn't let my son Absalom see me for two full years because of what he did to his stepbrother. In the end, he turned against me, and his rebellion resulted in his death. I caused these things. I know You are for me, Lord God, but I am devastated."

God did not leave him comfortless. "Yet, You bottle my tears. I have shed a bucket of them over my many failures."

The tears David shed were tears of sorrow, tears of regret, and tears of repentance. These are tears that God remembers.

Jeremiah was called the weeping prophet. He wept before God because he was so broken over the sinfulness of his people and the impending judgment of God. So many tears poured out of Jeremiah that his eyes failed him, according to Lamentations 2:11. In the same verse, he spoke of being greatly troubled. In Je-

remiah 14:17, Jeremiah's eyes ran down with tears night and day, and it seemed that they would not cease. Surely, God bottled those tears.

### *Agonizing for a Lost World*

"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Hebrews 5:7-8)

In the days that Jesus walked on earth in the flesh, He shed many tears as He offered prayers and supplication (John 11:33, 38). Often He was moved to "strong crying."

"Strong crying" indicates Jesus' physical response as He prayed with all His might. He was about to endure the most intense suffering known to anyone in the flesh, and He groaned under the weight of the pain He would soon experience. Picture the Son of God suffering on the Cross, crying to the Father who could not hear Him because the sins of the world were upon Him (Psalm 22:2). Imagine the indescribable sighs and groans that He uttered.

"LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why

hidest thou thy face from me?

“I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.

“Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off” (Psalm 88:14-16)

The Lord knew from His youth that He was going to die for the sins of the world. He was distraught by the separation He would have to go through. He knew the punishment for our sins that He would have to experience in His humanity. But there was nothing in Jesus’ experience that could prepare Him for the anguish He would suffer as He who knew no sin *became* sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). With every step that He took, He was occupied with His purpose for living, which was to die on the Cross for our sins (Luke 9:51; Hebrews 12:2).

It was difficult for the Son to think of a time when He would be separated from the Father. It would be the first and only time that this would ever happen. This is what He was talking about in Matthew 26:38 when He said His soul was “sorrowful even unto death.” In His humanity, Jesus feared being separated from the Father. The sins of the world would be upon Him, and He knew that His Father could not even look

upon Him in that state.

### *Groaning as the Sin-bearer*

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus knew that death was imminent. As the time drew near, He said, “My face is set stedfastly toward the Cross. I can’t think of anything else. What is this going to be like? Here I am—God and Man at the same time—yet in My humanity I cannot comprehend what it will be like when the Father turns His back on Me, when the sins of the world are upon Me.”

For this reason, Jesus shed many tears with strong crying. It speaks of physically shaking in agony. The Son of God shook and groaned and cried out because He was becoming the Sin-bearer. He was to be numbered with the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12), therefore the separation He was facing was real. But there was something else beyond that trial that made those tears precious, and it was the joy of an eternal reunion set before Him.

*Chapter Two*

## THE STORIES OF TEARS AND SCARS

“Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.

“Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one” (2 Corinthians 11:23-24).

“Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews” (Acts 20:19).

“Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31).

The apostle Paul was a man always broken and in tears. Night and day, he wept because of intense compassion for those he was serving. Tears came to his eyes because of an intense desire to preach and to teach the glorious Gospel.

Tears came because of wanting to help others. Tears came because of the sorrow he carried for what people were going through. He shed tears because he experienced the pain people were enduring physically and spiritually.

“For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you” (2 Corinthians 2:4).

Much affliction and anguish accompanied Paul, and it was evident in everything that he wrote. He wrote of his tears, not to grieve his readers but to express his abundant love, which came from God.

“Greatly desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy” (2 Timothy 1:4). Timothy, Paul’s disciple, was also a broken servant of God who wept for Paul and for others.

The apostle Paul understood why Timothy would weep, longing to see Paul. Paul knew firsthand the agony and scars that sometimes come with the ministry. But these scars, these marks, were the marks of Jesus Christ.

## *Suffering for His Name*

“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

“For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake” (Acts 9:15-16).

Every scar tells a story. I once read of an American slave who was beaten again and again during the course of the Civil War. He could relate the situation and tell the story behind every scar upon His body. The apostle Paul bore scars that were the result of his suffering for the Gentiles. His stories have given hope and understanding to everyone who has ever encountered sorrow for the cause of Christ.

In heaven, we will all be perfect. There will be nothing to remind us of any physical pain or emotional trauma we went through on earth. Yet, the Lord Jesus—the Savior, the Son of God, the Lamb of God—will have fresh wounds in His hands and His feet throughout eternity (Revelation 5:6). Those wounds will be the only reminder of the price that was paid for our salvation and the great grace we have received.

Think of the whipping He endured with the

cat-o'-nine tails, with the bits of stone and metal designed to tear flesh. Consider the crown of thorns jammed down upon his head, the sword that pierced His side after He died. The suffering in His humanity left its marks on Jesus.

In His humanity, Jesus sweat great drops of blood while praying in Gethsemane because of the terrible pressure He was experiencing from the demonic atmosphere. His scars and tears were combined in His love for lost souls that were going to hell. This is what made Him the Savior.

Many people carry tremendous mental scars in their souls, and we have asked God to deliver them again and again (Psalm 116:4). As real as those scars are, as intense and undeserved as the suffering is, we have a Savior who has already been touched with the infirmity caused by those scars. Hebrews 2:18 says that He was tempted in all things so that He could ultimately identify with us.

God understands the tears we shed because of godly sorrow, supplication, and intercession. Every tear, when it belongs to the Lord, tells a story. And because God bottles them all, we will see those stories completed, each with a Finished-Work ending, all to the glory of God.

### *Chapter Three*

## TEARS AND THE SAVIOR

“And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

“And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment” (Luke 7:37-38)

Think of the prostitute at Simon the Pharisee’s house and the tears that fell upon Jesus’ feet as she wept. Her tears streaked down across His dusty, dirty feet. Then she wiped His feet with her hair and anointed Him with oil. She shed her tears because Jesus had forgiven her and she was saved. These were now tears of thanksgiving, for she had been forgiven much. Her tears fell on the feet of the Master, and throughout eternity those tears will tell a won-

derful story.

God wants every person who hears His voice to understand the value of tears. A tear can reveal love and compassion beyond explanation. Instead of sentimental tears or tears of anger, those tears express God's heart.

God gives to many believers a special capacity, a tender heart that cries because of love. We cry for the lost. We cry for our children and for our marriage. We cry because we care so deeply. Tears such as these have something special that binds people in unity to God.

### *The Time of Visitation*

"Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

"When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

"And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

"Jesus wept.

"Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!

"And some of them said, Could not this

man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?

"Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it" (John 11:32-38).

*"Jesus wept."* Some know these words only as the shortest verse in the Bible. But it reveals so much more about our Savior. He was moved by the sorrow of Mary and Martha over the death of their brother Lazarus. He groaned and wept because of the great unbelief of his friends. He had done so much among these people, yet still they had trouble grasping the truth that He was indeed the resurrection and the life.

Finally, according to a very accurate translation of the original text, He shouted "Out, now!" and Lazarus came forth alive from the grave.

### *Weeping for the World*

"And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

"Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

"For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and

compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

“And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation” (Luke 19: 41-44)

Seeing Jerusalem made Jesus weep. He knew what would become of this city. He knew that in A.D. 70, Titus of Rome would lay siege to Jerusalem and force many of the Jews to die. There would come indescribable pain and suffering. Jesus longed to see God’s people return to Him. In His humanity He revealed the Father’s heart of love, through tears.

Oh, how precious our tears are. Tears because we love God. Tears because of what He has done for us. Tears of joy, tears of thanksgiving, tears over answered prayers. Tears that come because someone makes an uncompromising stand for God. Tears from God also come with a great promise of reward:

“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:5-6).

## CONCLUSION

There are so many languages. In the spiritual realm, we are learning to communicate with the language of love, the language of grace, the language of mercy. These are languages we must learn as believers. But let us not neglect the precious language of tears.

In our church, you will see a weeping preacher. My tears come from a heart broken before God and warmed by His Holy Spirit. The people who come to my church faithfully have seen a lot of tears from the pulpit over the years. Some may call it emotionalism. I call it a deep-rooted concern and compassion for my people, my community, and my world. I call my tears the result of a tremendous love for the good old-fashioned Book, the Bible.

Do not be ashamed when God speaks through you in the language of tears. Yes, sorrow is part of the human condition, and every one who loves God will also share in His suffer-

ing. But after all the tears have been shed, there is coming a day when darkness and sin and death will be no more. In heaven, God will wipe away all our tears (Revelation 7:17; 21:4), and there will be no more sorrow or pain.