

Tears

Ecclesiastes 3: 4; Luke 19: 41.

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I refer to the thought of tears with the desire that the Lord may bring our affections into alignment with divine compassions. It is clear from the 3rd chapter of Ecclesiastes that in the calendar of God room is made for weeping. It is said, "There is . . . a time to weep," but one would desire that our weeping might be intelligent. There are tears in Scripture which are unavailing; we have in relation to Esau, a profane person, the matter of tears which were altogether unavailing. We read in Malachi of the people of God flooding the altar with tears which God refused to regard. We need to be preserved from tears which are not in accord with the feelings and movements of divine Persons, but we need to be encouraged to weep according to God.

It may seem a strange subject to introduce, when in our readings we are engaged with an epistle which abounds with rejoicing. But I would remind you that the one who wrote that epistle was found, when at Philippi, in conditions which are calculated to draw out the sympathetic feelings of the saints. And if Paul rejoiced, if he abounded, it was because he knew how to be abased. The first recorded movement of divine Persons in relation to the creation would be in line with this subject, when in relation to that scene of chaos the Holy Spirit of God hovered; the word suggests divine feelings. And that is what is in mind, that we might be brought, under the influence of God's word, into sympathetic accord with the movements of divine Persons.

One of the greatest men in the Old Testament, Moses the man of God, is introduced to us as weeping. The only person in the New Testament who is called by the Spirit a man of God, Timothy, was a man of tears. The blessed Lord Himself wept, and the word used in John's gospel for Jesus weeping, so far as I can trace, is never found elsewhere in Scripture. There were other occasions upon which He wept; but the occasion at Bethany is unique. Beloved brethren, there is no sympathy like the sympathy of Jesus, hence the uniqueness of the weeping of Christ, those precious holy tears which He shed in the power of His love for His own. It is one's exercise that we should be brought into alignment with the feelings of His own blessed heart.

There are many tears mentioned in Scripture. I would like to call your attention to some of them.

There are *recorded* tears. Depend upon it that if there is produced in your affections and in mine, feelings which are in accord with the feelings of divine Persons in regard to the testimony, as seen with Paul in Philippians 3, such tears are recorded. "Put Thou my tears into Thy bottle," says the Psalmist, "Are they not in Thy book?" The service of God is not confined to the platform, or to those who speak; power in testimony lies in the deep affections of the saints who are seeking to move under the power of the Spirit in relation to divine sympathies. Movements resulting from such feelings are recorded by God Himself.

There are *productive* tears, tears that bring a harvest; tears that bring forth fruit for the heart of God; tears that bring rejoicing; sowing in tears and reaping in joy, and the more we know of this sowing in tears, the more will be manifest the reaping in joy. Precious tears which have in mind not sentimentality, but a harvest for God from His heritage. Tears which will pour themselves out before God in private, in order that there might be brought amongst the saints of God those elements of joy in unity of which we have been speaking in our readings together. The brother, the sister who is

competent to help the saints of God, is the brother or sister who has carried the exercises of the saints in private, in sorrow, in tears before God. Of that we may be assure.

There are *repentant* tears, precious tears, of which Jesus Himself spoke, "Her tears." That woman was experiencing in her sinful condition the immensity of the frank forgiving of God. Beloved brethren, *we* are here because God is sovereign, *we* are here because God in the infinitude of His mercy has put His hand upon us, and we have been brought repentantly to the feet of Jesus. Her tears must have been profuse; feet could not be washed with a few scalding tears; she had not ceased to wash His feet with her tears. Profusely those tears of repentance flowed out upon the feet of Christ; those beautiful feet, those precious feet, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace," (Isa. 52: 7). We should have known nothing of the rejoicing that exists in the realm of Christianity if those precious feet had not moved here in grace. She wept at His feet. Of course we sing:

"It is not my tears of repentance, nor prayers,
But the blood that atones for the soul."

I am sure that is true; but there was in those tears that which refreshed the heart of Christ. And, beloved brethren, as having been brought to Jesus in the sovereign mercy of God, how blessed to pour out in the reciprocity of love that which would refresh His blessed heart.

There are *sympathetic* tears. Paul in writing to his son Timothy took account of them, spoke of them, aligned himself alongside them, knowing that those tears expressed the genuine feeling in the heart of Timothy as to how the saints would get on. Precious tears! Tears which have in mind that the brethren should be helped to move forward with one objective, the glory of Christ. Tears that would agonize before God, in order that everything that held the saints back from pressing forward might be removed. This is a service open to every one of us. We must take account of difficulties; we see failures amongst the brethren, and oft times we talk about them; far better to weep about them. It is recorded of Hannah the mother of Samuel that in a crisis her mouth moved but her voice was not heard. It would be a good thing, perhaps, if in crises our feelings were more active than our voices. Associating ourselves feelingly with the difficulties that come in, weeping over the dishonour brought to the name of Christ, and seeking that there might be maintained in the affections of the saints a right of way for the interests of Christ.

There are tears of *affection* too; Paul for three years, night and day, wept over the saints. The great apostle, as having the day before him, watered his ministry with tears; and ministry would not be so dry if we watered it with our tears; ministry would go right home and be productive in fruitbearing for God, if it were well watered with the tears of deep affection.

As Paul writes his second letter to the Corinthians he says, speaking of his first letter, "out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears." Tears of *distress* because their general condition was such that they could go on with what dishonoured Christ without discerning it, and without being concerned about it. It was said in our readings most pointedly, that the saints were being stumbled because of features which are contrary to divine love. At Corinth there were matters which were contrary to all that had been revealed in the power of the Spirit through the apostle, and they were not concerned about it at all; they shed no tears about it; rather were they "puffed up." When *they* did not weep, Paul wept for them; and beloved, if we see others unmoved, let us be moved; if we see others unconcerned, let us seek grace to be concerned ourselves; if others seem to be casual in relation to the things of God, let us get before God as to the conditions of weakness amongst us; let us be before Him in humiliation, and, if needs be, in tears, and God will answer, for "Weeping may endure

for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." And in his second letter to them we see that Paul had joy in the Corinthians, but it was joy that followed the night of weeping.

Jesus wept; "strong crying and tears." Think of the sorrows that brought forth those tears. He was about to cry in the anguish of His soul, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?." "With strong tears He sought deliverance."

In the heading to Psalm 22 we read, "To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar," — the hind of the morning. The night of tears must be endured before that morning of light and glory could be brought into evidence, but the joy of it was in the heart of Christ before He went into the abandonment of Calvary. "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame," (Heb. 12: 2). Through infinite mercy we form part of that joy, and as such would we not seek grace to be more appreciative of the tears of the One who secured us for Himself. Tears that we cannot fully enter into, but they were shed by the One who died that we might live in the embrace of the eternal love of God.

In Luke 19: 41, we see the Lord weeping over an unresponsive nation, in the midst of which He had manifested the compassions of God. Let *us* not be unresponsive to these holy movements of divine love.

There is a moment coming when tears will *all be gone*. Three times in Scripture are we told that God will wipe away all tears; Isaiah 25: 8; Revelation 7: 17; Revelation 21: 4. Two references would have been adequate testimony to the fact; but we have the Holy Spirit's complete testimony to the fact that the day is coming when God Himself will remove all tears, and the *cause* of those tears will be gone for ever, "He shall wipe away *every* tear," (New Trans.). *Every* true tear recorded; *every* true tear valued by God; but *every* tear wiped away. Beloved, let us value the opportunities of the night of weeping; it is on the divine calendar, "There is . . . a time to weep." We see the breakdown around us and we have to take account of it in our own histories, too. Peter was brought to the realization of the fact that he had grieved the heart of Christ, and "he went out, and wept bitterly." If we were more sensitive in regard of all that which is contrary to the holy love of Christ, and sorrowed in a godly way over it, there would be compensating occasions of joy, for He delights to "give . . . beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." (Isa. 61: 3).