

# TEARS IN A BOTTLE



“You have collected all  
my tears in your bottle.  
You have recorded  
each one in your book.”  
Psalms 56:8 NLT

## **God's Book of Tears**

Our TEARS are important to God. What's important to God is worth our attention. We need to look at several things... First of all, Who's Crying? Why are they weeping? And how did this get God's attention?

The Lord is intimately involved with our sensitivities specifically our TEARS. The psalmist makes a reference here to tears collected in a bottle and that God keeps an account of all our tears in his book (Psalm 56:8)

Before we investigate some specific places in Scripture, let's do some background study on tears.

## **What Are Tears?**

According to the American Medical Association, a deficiency in tear production causes keratoconjunctivitis sicca (dry-eye syndrome). Excessive tear production may cause watering eye. Tears help wash the eye of potentially harmful germs. Worth noticing the spiritual parallel here:

**NUGGET:** Tears, in our crying out to God, can wash our spiritual eyes of any evil that has taken root. Just as the physical tears wash the dangerous germs, so our spiritual tears serve as cleansing, falling to the ground and taking the harmful germs with them.

## **Is There Such a Thing As Artificial Tears?**

Yes. Artificial tears are preparations used to supplement inadequate production of tears in keratoconjunctivitis sicca and other conditions causing dryness of the eyes. Artificial tears may also be used to relieve discomfort caused by irritants, such as smoke or dust, but they provide only temporary relief.

## Anawim

*The Anawim of the Old Testament were the poor of every sort: the vulnerable, the marginalised, and socio-economically oppressed, those of lowly status without earthly power. In fact, they depended totally on God for whatever they owned. The Hebrew word Anawim (inwetan) means those who are bowed down.*



### What Occurs When We Cry?

When we experience intense emotions, such as grief or anger, our brain sends a signal to our lacrimal glands. This flow, medically known as lacrimation, serves to keep the eye clean and germ-free and to lubricate the movement of the eyelid over the eyeball. But when we laugh or cry, or if the eye is irritated by a foreign body such as dust or grit, lacrimation increases and there is an overflow of tears.

### Is there more than one kind of tear?

Yes, there are two kinds of tears. Every time we blink, a film bathes the surface of the eye with a bacteria-fighting fluid. Anyone who has chopped onions is familiar with irritant tears, which dilute and flush away the strong onion vapors. When a foreign object such as a loose eyelash or grain of sand gets in our eyes, these tears help to wash away the irritating invaders. This is called neurogenic lacrimation. The second type of tear is uniquely human. These are emotional tears. Although weeping is usually associated with sorrow, human tears appear in response to many types of emotional stress. From tears of grief when a loved one dies, to extreme joy from winning a game, tears play an important part in human emotions. Or when we experience tears of consolation during prayer.

### Tears in A Bottle

Now before the psalmist mentions the recording in heaven of our weepings, he says something about our tears being put into a bottle. The idea of collecting tears as a memorial has been going on for centuries. In fact, some civilizations have actually carried out what we have done mentally, collecting tears in little bottles as memorials to those who have died. These little bottles, called lachrymatories, are still found in great numbers in ancient tombs. The custom was to collect the tears of the mourners and preserve them in bottles. These bottles were made of thin glass (or, more generally, of simple pottery, often not even baked or glazed) with a slender body, a broad bottom and a funnel-shaped top. Friends of the deceased were expected to contribute their share of tears for these bottles. Collecting tears not only was common among the Romans, but was in practice at an earlier period among the Eastern nations. In some of the mournful Persian assemblies, a priest would go to each person at the height of his grief with a piece of cotton in his hand, with which he carefully collected the falling tears. He then squeezed the tears into a bottle, preserving them with the greatest caution. In her book, *The Fountain and the Furnace*, Maggie Ross writes, "It is possible that the woman who bathed Jesus' feet with her tears (Luke 7:38), was pouring out her bottle of tears.

The Greek verb could be translated in this way. Having found her Lord, she no longer needed to hold to herself all her joys and sorrows, but could pour them out and be free. Her tears flow with the waters of life into the river of life.”

There was another similar practice during the times of the psalmist. When a person was ill or in great distress, his friends went to see him, taking along a tear bottle. As the tears rolled down the sufferer's cheeks, they were caught in these bottles, sealed up, and preserved as a memorial to the event.

**NUGGET:** Now in order for those tears to be collected there has to be a visitation. This lets us know that when we weep, God is right there where we are. Seeing every pint catching every drop.



### **Revelation 21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes**

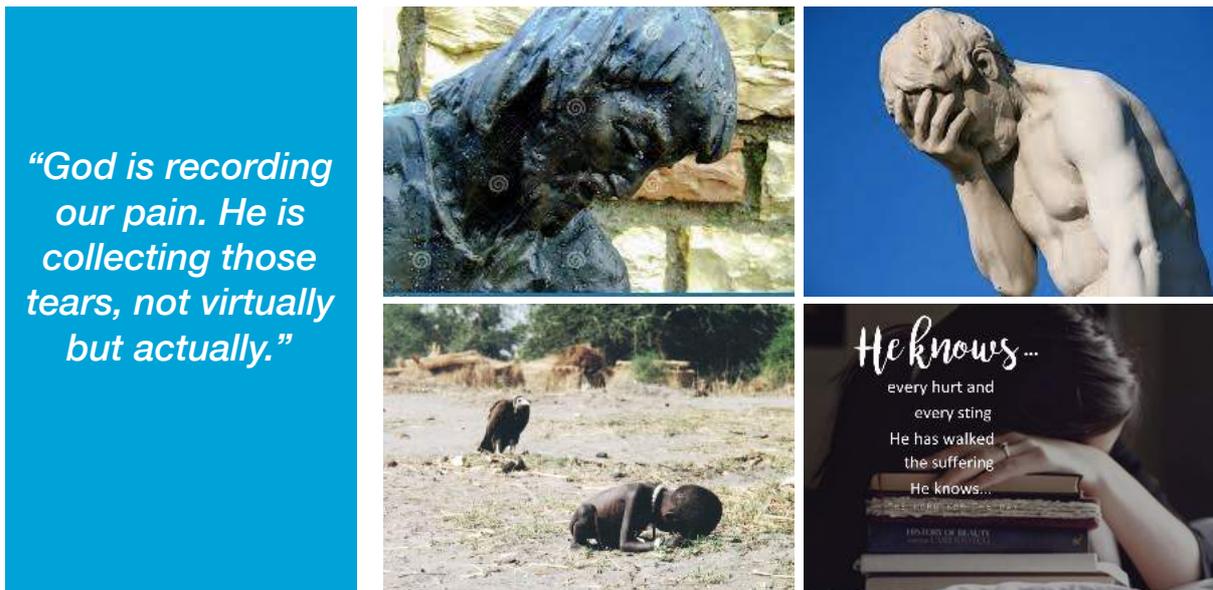
We can rejoice for there is a time that God shall wipe our tears away! We are not talking of senseless whining, our selfish sorrow that life isn't going our way, our blatant church ministry bickering over the choice of songs or the volume of the sound system. Neither are we talking of the tears of the sulking saints. No, the tears spoken of here are legitimate Godly tears, that comes from deep within a heart filled with intense pain.

Are we passing through a personal Gethsemane? Are we feeling alone? Jesus has been there. God is holding a bottle, catching every teardrop. Are we teary-eyed from running the race? We have all experienced tears welling up as we went running against the wind. Its brisk force, cutting across our eyes, dried out the moisture. Our body reacts by crying, soothing the dryness. Are the winds of adversity blowing across as we run this race? Jesus has been there. God is holding the bottle, catching every teardrop. Are we tired of our wanderings? Do we feel like a hunted fugitive, like David, with the pressure clamping down on all sides? Do we find ourself going from one dark cave to another or from wilderness to wilderness? Do we have no place to lay our head? Jesus has been there. God is holding the bottle, catching every teardrop.

Is the world crashing down all around us? Are we standing on a hill, beholding the agony of this life, as Jesus beheld the city of Jerusalem? Are we seeing what could have been a perfect situation, but sin has separated us from God? Are we feeling the effects of rebellion? Do we feel the darkness of destruction? Jesus has been there. God is holding the bottle, catching every teardrop.

### **God is recording our pain. He is collecting those tears (not virtually, but actually).**

The scripture is filled with lovely examples of the tender compassion that God extends to the people of Israel and to those who are part of the Body of Christ.



But He also displays His gentleness and sensitivity towards insignificant individuals as well – people like Hannah and the widow of Nain; people like Jairus, the leader of the synagogue; the apostle Peter who denied His Lord three times and Mary of Bethany who was wrongly accused of gross extravagance by the disciples – people like you and me.

**The Anawim of God.** The *anawim* of the Old Testament were the poor of every sort: the vulnerable, the marginalized, and socio-economically oppressed, those of lowly status without earthly power. In fact, they depended totally on God for whatever they owned. The Hebrew word *anawim* (*inwetan*) means those who are bowed down. God's gracious mercies towards us can be seen in the intimacy of the lovely Psalm 56:8. For we read that the Lord takes account of all our sadness and all our pain – all our weariness and all our wanderings – all the salty teardrops that flow from our eyes and all the silent groans that rend the inner parts of our secret being.

Indeed, we read in this precious verse that He has collected every single salty teardrop that has wet our lashes and recorded every single silent groan of our hurting heart - and He has placed each single tear in His bottle of remembrance and recorded each hurt in His book, because of His great love for each of us.

Remember God has scheduled every day of our lives and knows the tears that will result from the afflictions of His people. Our times are in His hands and we have a God Who knows and loves and cares for everything that causes His children pain - but like our Saviour, we gain a closer intimacy with our Father through the things that we suffer in obedience to His will.

And the wonderful thing is that through it, we will gain a closeness to His heart of love, and a depth of understanding of our God that we never imagined possible - (as did Job), for God has promised that the day is coming when **sorrow will be turned into joy and tears will be turned into laughter** – a day when He Himself will wipe away every wet tear from our eye.

Eye drops from the pharmacy has due date, expiry date and need to be discarded. Our pain, sorrow and tears also have an expiry date but these are not discarded. They are collected as gems in God's bottle and in His record book

Fr Andrew Wong, Spiritual Director & Veronica Nathan, Programme Manager/Counsellor