

God's Lachrymatory

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Put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in your book? Psalm 56:8

Sometimes there is no ready reason for suffering, no obvious, happy ending. The Christian knows that "all things work together for good," but the world does not know this because it is not to be observed in nature. We wait for the just resolution of life in eternity, and in the meantime, we mourn.

What is to be done with all those tears? Some are crocodile tears, to be sure, and will dry in the wind as though they had never fallen; all precious things in this life have their fraudulent counterparts. But those tears which spring from the compassionate and suffering hearts of God's people have eternal value. What is to be done with them? David asks God to put them in His bottle, to preserve the value of those emotions even as the story which provoked them is written in God's book. Our God knows the heart as well as He knows history. Neither is lost. Both are recorded for that last day when all is made right and tears do, finally, cease. But in the in-between, God saves them in His bottle.

Ancient tear bottles, or lachrymatories, have been excavated from Middle Eastern and Roman tombs. It is believed that they were filled with the tears of the mourners and placed into the grave as a gift and a token of the value of the life of the deceased. Tears are the currency of the heart, precious in God's economy. Some scholars believe that when the sinful woman washed Christ's feet with her tears she poured them from her own lachrymatory, representing all the sorrows of her painful life. Those tears were an act of adoration. Those sorrows, poured out for Christ, became beautiful and valuable instruments of worship. Did she understand the ways in which they were all a part of God's good sovereignty? Almost certainly not. Did she regret that her bottle was so full in that instant? Almost certainly not. Her tears were a worthy baptism for those feet on their way to the cross.

We will always have heartache and tragedy in this world. Our compassion, our loss, and our sorrow are fitting memorials to a fallen world, to the heart-breaking fact that this is not the way it's supposed to be. On the day when all tears end, we will have an appropriate offering for the Man of Sorrows. Will you wish that your bottle was not so

full? That would be to wish God's work undone at the very moment His glory is finally revealed. Allow yourself tears, in emulation of a weeping Savior, precious droplets for His sacred bottle.

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