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TEARS

By Quinton J. Everest

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1
TEARS OF CONCERN

"Oh that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Jeremiah 9:1.

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matthew 23:37.

A man by the name of Colonel Clark, a Christian business man of Chicago, was an unusual soul winner. He would work at his business six days every week in order that he might keep his mission open seven nights. Every night in the week, the year 'round, five or six hundred men would gather together in his mission hall. It was a motley crowd: drunkards, thieves, pickpockets, gamblers, and everything that was hopeless.

It is said that Clark was naturally a dull speaker. He would ramble along and yet these five or six hundred men would lean over and listen spellbound, while he talked in his peculiar way. Some of the greatest preachers in Chicago went down to help him, but the men would not listen to them as they did to Clark. While he was speaking, they would lean over and listen, and finally would be converted by the score. It was hard to understand. There were those who studied and wondered at the secret of Mr. Clark's success. Why did these men listen with such interest, and why were they so greatly moved by such a man? But there was a secret! It was because they knew Clark loved them, and nothing conquers like love. The tears were very near the surface with Clark. Once in the early days of his mission ministry when he had been weeping a great deal over these men, he became ashamed of his tears. He steeled his heart and tried to stop his crying; he succeeded, but he lost his power. He saw that his power was gone; his altars were barren; lives were not being changed. He went to God and prayed, "Oh, God, give me back my tears." And God gave him back his tears and wonderful power, and marvelous results continued to be evident in the lives of the men with whom he was dealing.

The church of today has become too dry-eyed. We lack concern, passion, Spirit-imparted enthusiasm; our prayers are powerless and ineffective; religious performance has become nauseatingly routine and formal. Many are left under the impression that they can be educated, legislated, or indoctrinated into the kingdom of heaven. This can never be done. Men can only enter the kingdom of God by being born of the Spirit of God, and men are not going to be born by the Spirit of God until there are tears of concern on the part of those who profess to know Christ.

CONDITIONS

There are few people today who have sufficient concern over the souls of men to weep because they are lost, For them, hell seems to have lost its fire, heaven its glory, and sin its terribleness. The authors of our texts -- Jeremiah and Jesus -- were really moved by the condition of their day. Israel had forsaken God and was serving strange gods. Of Judah the prophet said,

"Destruction upon destruction is cried: the whole land is spoiled: my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good, they have no knowledge." Jeremiah 4:20, 22.

Again, God says to Judah,

"Thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: When I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses, They were as fed horses in the morning: everyone neighed after his neighbor's wife. As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen

rich. They are waxen fat, they shine; yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper: and the right of the needy do they not judge." Jeremiah 5:7, 27, 28.

Then, finally, in the closing of the fifth chapter of Jeremiah, the prophet says,

"A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?" Jeremiah 5:30, 31.

In the third verse of the same chapter, the prophet speaks of how God tried to help these people. He says,

"O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return."

In reading the book of Jeremiah, we find that it is filled with the sins, the idolatry, and the rebellious attitude of Judah. It isn't any wonder that this prophet cried out,

"Oh that my head were waters and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

Jeremiah lived close to God; he had a heart that was spiritually sensitive; he had a compassion and a love for the people. He knew that judgment was inevitable if they continued in their present condition of ignoring and rejecting God and indulging in their sins.

Surely the tragedies of present-day sin with its power, penalties, distress, desolation, degradation and destruction should be a strong incentive for us to pray for the souls of men to be delivered. No individual who is genuinely saved and who lives close to Christ can stand unmoved in the presence of sin, with all of its devastating results. There is absolutely nothing sacred about it. It is debauching our youth, demoralizing the old. It has destroyed politics, disgraced economics, and debased society. It robs men of virtue, decency, purity, morality. It takes the things which we consider the sweetest, dearest, and noblest, and defiles them with the seal of satan. Sin is breaking up homes, violating marriage vows, disrupting filial affection. To fall within its power means to be helplessly enmeshed and ensnared by it. Without the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ applied to the heart, men will perish beneath its power and penalties. The terribleness of sin, and the tragedy that comes into the lives of sinners should call out the yearning concern of the heart of every true believer in Christ.

We are living in a day when tears are being shed -- rivers of them -- tears of bereavement, regret, and remorse, but there are very few people who are shedding tears of concern over a world which is lost and over souls that are bound for hell. We work hard to make money and to enjoy a comfortable life in the realm of the physical, but where is our concern for our own souls and the souls of our fellowmen? Some of you parents are slaving hard to give your children an education. You are doing everything within your power to give them a good start, physically, socially, and

financially; but how about the soul of that son, that daughter? Do you realize that they are going to live eternally? Going to live on forever throughout the ceaseless ages and cycles of eternity? How much praying have you been doing for their salvation? What kind of teaching have you been giving them? What kind of life do you live before your sons and daughters? You farmers couldn't sleep if your pigs had broken out of their pen into the field of spring corn; you'd work all night to get them out of that field of tender corn; and yet, some of you have sons and daughters who are outside of Jesus Christ. The devil is ruining their lives, damning their souls, and you can go to bed and sleep without any concern whatever for their eternal welfare.

Many claim to be Christians; yet they know absolutely nothing about winning a soul for Christ. They have never carried a burden for souls in a revival meeting; intercessory prayer is absolutely foreign to them. Religious conditions and attitudes in America today are very similar to those which existed in Judah as depicted by Jeremiah. Unless we have a return to God, to the Bible, and to the standards of true righteousness and holiness, destruction is inevitable. We are rearing a crop of children and young people, many of whom have never experienced salvation; yea, many have never had a chance to be saved. There are thirty-three million children in America who have never heard the Gospel. When we consider that 90% of all those who are saved are won to Christ by the time they are twenty-one years of age, surely we have cause to weep.

In the past four years, we have had a 20% attendance slump in Sunday School. Judges testify that of the youth convicted of crime, 97% have had no religious training, and only 3% ever go to Sunday School. This means that giving a child the Gospel is 97% effective in saving that life from sin and the soul from hell. What better investment can we make than this? Surely, we need to have tears of concern, for not only the children, but the parents of our nation, for if we get the parents to turn to God, the children will naturally follow. The people of Jesus' day not only rejected His message, but they rejected Him. He healed; He prayed; He preached; He did everything that was possible, and yet men cold-heartedly, stubbornly, turned away from Him, and in our text, we hear Him cry,

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matthew 23:37.

The true minister, the true Christian parent, the devout and genuine follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, feels something of this same passion for the salvation of the souls of men.

CALL

I am persuaded that the weak place in Christianity today, as in all days, is this lack of concern for humanity, which makes it possible for us to have revivals and see men brought to Jesus Christ. This lack is a loud call for everyone who knows Jesus Christ to pray earnestly and fervently that God will stir the hearts and the cities of America once again.

I heard of a man who struggled in vain to start his automobile. Finally, he lifted the hood, and discovered that someone had stolen the motor. You know a great many things can stop a car from running, but no car can run without a motor, When a motor is gone, it must stand still forever

so far as its own power is concerned. This is exactly the difficulty with many people who are nominally Christian. This is the trouble with many fruitless churches that go on for months and years without conversions. Worldliness and indifference have stolen their motor. They have lost the great Christian passion—the great concern which makes possible divine, Christ-like compassion, saves men from their sins, and turns them to righteousness.

The fact that sin and hell are some of the most terrible and alarming facts in the universe should stir every Christian's heart. We should be alarmed and anxious. Our entreaties should be earnest, our prayers fervent, and our efforts tireless. If, because of sin, men are going to a burning, fiery, eternal, devil's hell, surely, there should be no limit to our prayers and efforts. I fear that modern Christians have gotten away from the burden and passion for the salvation of sinners because they have forgotten the Bible teaching on hell. Many have tried to explain away the torments of the damned. Jesus was very clear and positive in His teaching concerning hell. In this, we have a compelling motive for prayer, preaching, and soulwinning, when we learn that every responsible human being who leaves this world without a definite change of heart and life, immediately lifts his eyes in hell, tormented in eternal flames. This thought greatly moved the Apostle Paul. He was troubled because his kinsmen, the Jews, were in danger of hell. With a heart full of compassion, he said,

"I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." -- Romans 9:1-3.

Paul realized the doom of a soul; it never left him. Day after day he toiled, working far into the night, to teach people to repent, all the while the tears rolling down his face. He didn't have any different Gospel from that we have. He had the same Christ and the same Holy Spirit, but he had a deeper concern for the salvation of sinners. With him, it was a holy passion. It was practically the only concern in his life, May God help us to make this our chief concern and burden of life -- to save sinners from hell.

The Bible and history are full of illustrations of compassion. Abraham is an example. Who can read the eighteenth chapter of Genesis and hear the intercessory cries of that burning-hearted man without realizing the depth of his concern for the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah?

Moses was another intercessor who saved Israel from the fiery wrath of an almighty God. As we have already noted, Jesus Himself gave proof of His compassion when He wept over the city of Jerusalem. When He hung on the cross, He cried, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Nothing but a passionate broken-heartedness can move men to Christ today. John Knox, in the agony of soul, cried, "Lord, give me Scotland, or I die." George Whitefield, out of his great God-given compassion, cried, "Lord give me souls, or take my soul."

The unforgettable story of John and Mary Welch has many times moved and stirred my own heart. John was a sickly, anemic, consumptive, non-conformist preacher in the time of James of Scotland. John had been in prison for preaching the Gospel. The filth, darkness, and dampness, of his underground cell, robbed him of what little health he had, so that he almost died. Time and again, Mary appealed to the king for his release, only to be refused.

One day, in her desperation, she threw herself on her knees in front of the king, as he was riding through the palace park. The king reigned in his horses, and asked her what she wanted. Once more, she told him the pathetic plight of her husband, and begged for his discharge from the prison.

After studying a moment, the king made her an offer. "Woman," he said, "if you will promise that your husband will never preach again, I will open the doors of his cell at once."

Mary arose to her feet; lifting her apron, she threw back her head, looked fully and fearlessly into James' face. "Your majesty," she cried, "I would rather have the head of my husband in this apron than to make any such promise." Moved by the intensity of the woman, the king released John into her custody. She took him back to their home in the Scottish highlands, and gently, lovingly, carefully nursed him back to health. He began to preach once more, keeping one jump ahead of the police and the dragoons.

One night the two found themselves hidden in a small highland cottage. It was a freezingly cold night. They had gone to bed early. In the middle of the night, Mary awoke to find her husband's side of the bed empty and cold. She heard a motion on the floor and looked down. There was John, stretched out on that frozen earth floor, wrapped in a spread, weeping and groaning in prayer. She urged him to return to bed, for fear of catching a bad cold. He said something to her which she took as a sign of assent and fell asleep once more. The morning sun woke her up. John was still on the floor, deep in agonizing prayer. She bent down, touched his shoulder, urging him to get under the covers to warm up. He lifted his twisted, tear-stained face to her and said, "O woman, let me alone. I have three thousand souls on my heart this night, and I know not how it is with many of them."

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications of strong crying and tears, and if we are going to see the things accomplished for God that we desire to see, it will mean that many of us will have to shed tears of concern. Do you want to see your sons and daughters, your husband, your wife, your neighbors and friends saved? If so, may ' God help you to be faithful in your life.

* * * * *

2

TEARS OF CONFESSION

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Proverbs 28:13.

"Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death." II Corinthians 7:10.

The tendency of this day is to say a great deal about faith and not very much about confession and repentance. You do not get salvation by confession and repentance; neither can you get salvation without repentance. Jesus said,

"Except ye repent, ye shall perish," Luke 13:3,

and John said,

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 1:9.

God will never save a man until he is willing to acknowledge his past sin and confess it. There is no use preaching to a man, "faith, faith," unless you preach along with that, that it is necessary to break off sinning and get rid of iniquity.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord." Isaiah 55:7.

So the first thing to do is to forsake your wicked way and unrighteous thoughts, and then you have a foundation on which you can come to God and accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, It is absolutely contradictory to scripture that God should save a man while that man continues to hold onto his sin. Therefore, unless you have real sorrow because of your sin and have really, genuinely, scripturally repented, which is a turning away from sin with a resolute purpose as a man would turn from a serpent, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Remember, also as I have said, you do not get salvation for your repentance.

"Could your seal no respite know,
Could your tears forever flow,
These for sin could not atone,
Thou must save, and Thou alone."

Not your penitence, but Christ's death, is the ground of your salvation; yet, real godly sorrow and repentance for sin is an indispensable condition of salvation.

My subject is "tears of confession." Too many people have the idea that all they need to do is to believe on Christ and they will be saved. They have never had any real godly sorrow for their sin. As a pastor and evangelist, I have seen hundreds and thousands of souls come to Christ and receive His forgiveness. They became recipients of the great salvation which God provided through Christ on the cross of Calvary, and almost without exception, when these people came to accept the Lord Jesus Christ, there was real heart sorrow because of their sins and transgressions.

Many times people are sorry for their conduct without thinking of it as a sin against God. A man may be lying in the hospital a wreck, the sins of youth gnawing the flesh off his bones. He may be sorrowing only over the fact that he failed to live soberly, chastely, and temperately in his past days. The man who has gone into fraudulent bankruptcy, has lost his reputation, and can get no one to lend him enough money to start into business again, slouching in his rags, may be sorry enough

that he didn't keep the straight road, and do business in an "up-and-up" manner, but this type of sorrow may be only the sorrow of the world, as the Apostle has stated. He may have absolutely no thought about God. The consequences of sin bring sorrow and regret in many a man's heart who does not feel any compunction whatever for the wrong that he did. He doesn't seem to realize that he has transgressed against God as well as his fellowmen.

Crime means the transgression of man's law; wrong means a transgression of the law of conscience; and sin is a transgression of God's law. Some have committed crimes; most people are ready to acknowledge that they have done wrong many times, but there are too few who are ready to take the other step and say, "I have sinned." The prodigal said,

"I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." Luke 15:18. He had caused his father much grief and concern, and yet he said of his father, "I have sinned before thee," but he said, "I have sinned against heaven."

His transgression against the God of heaven incurred greater guilt than against his father. This brings me to say that if there is no God, there is no sin. There may be faults, failures, transgressions, breaches of the law, things done inconsistently with man's nature and constitution, and soon, but if there be a God, then we have personal relations to that Person and to His law, and when we break His law, it is more than crime; it is more than a fault, more than a transgression or a wrong; it is sin.

When you then let the light of God rush in upon your heart and conscience, when you look away to Calvary and see the great price God paid to redeem you from sin, you will have the wholesome sorrow that worketh confession, repentance, salvation, and light. Any man who is not moved to sorrow and even to tears when he sees his sins in the light of God's majesty and holiness and in the light of Calvary, surely has a heart that is adamant.

I am not preaching uniformity of experience, but I do say that unless a man has learned to see his sin in the light of God and weep over it, he has yet to know the straight gate that leads unto life. The curse of abounding superficiality and "easy-goingness" which we witness in much of our religion today comes from the fact that many who call themselves Christians have never really gotten a glimpse of themselves as they actually are.

CONFESSION

In Psalms 32:5, the Psalmist says, "I will confess my transgressions." The Psalmist didn't always feel like that. He had sinned and had obtained forgiveness by the way of confession, but for a long time, he had tried another way, rather than the road of confession. Even though oppressed by a guilty conscience, he said, "I kept silence." Verse 3. He had attempted to ignore his sin. Going on, he gives quite a description of the distress he experienced as a result of unconfessed sin. Said he,

"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old, through my roaring all the day long." Verse 3. In attempting to ignore his sin, it struck deep, even to his bones. This may have been only a figure of speech, but I am inclined to think that the Psalmist's covering his sins, also affected him

physically. Many have found that the oppression of an unrelieved conscience has been the root of many physical ills.

I am persuaded that there are multitudes of people who crowd waiting rooms of our physicians who more sorely need the touch of the divine hand upon the soul than they do the touch of the physician upon the body. Back yonder, some sin has been committed; confession has never been made. There is a continual roaring within, which seems to disturb day and night. My friend, I have good news for you! If you will honestly confess your sins to Christ, He will forgive.

The Psalmist doesn't try to conceal the distress which unforgiven sin brought upon him. When he kept silence, he experienced an indescribable heaviness of spirit. He says, "Thy hand was heavy upon me." Verse 4. Secret sins, gnawing at the vitals of men, are the cause of many difficulties. Many have tried to revive their spirits by a change in scenery and climate, but what they really need is a change of heart. Buoyancy, expectation, sweetness of temper have been lost. There is no joy and gladness in the fellowship of God.

The Psalmist also states that the sense of guilt, which he felt, turned his moisture into the drought of summer. The joy and blessing of the Lord had leaked out of his soul. His hopes had wilted; faith languished and dried up like parched fields in the summer drought; the blight of unconfessed sin drives men from the very presence of God until the soil of the heart that should be bright with every Christian grace and bringing forth fruit in abundance, becomes parched and dead. Finally the Psalmist said, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine Iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Verse 5.

His sin had become the cause of soul putrefaction. The soul poison had to be given an outlet, or it would finally have banished him eternally from the presence of God. Confession is the knife which lances the sore of the soul. Real godly sorrow and heart confession are those which drain the soul of moral poison.

Primarily we must confess our sins to God; as I have already said, it is against Him that we have sinned. If we bring our sins into the light of God and really confess them with a broken and contrite heart, we can be assured of forgiveness. The Psalmist said in Psalms 34:18, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." And again in Psalms 51:17, "A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Any man with a sincere, humble, contrite spirit, confessing his sins to God will find forgiveness. With the poet, he will be able to say,

"Plenteous grace with thee is found,
Grace to cover all my sin.
Let the healing streams abound;
Make and keep me pure within."

It must also be remembered that if we have wronged our fellowmen, we must confess our sins to the person who has been injured. The face of the injured will haunt us and we will find no

peace in silence. Jesus who was Master of the inner life, was emphatic at this point. He said, "Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Matthew 5:23.

Many times the person committing an injury is more deeply wounded than the person upon whom it is inflicted. In any event, we are not to go on with our worship and a pretentious piety, while we know there is sin in our hearts and lives. Many people are going to church, going through the forms of worship, holding offices in the church, making loud religious professions, who know well enough in their hearts that they have sins that have never been confessed. The prophet Malachi speaks of the terrible sins of Israel, and then on top of all this, Israel was covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping and with crying out, but God refused to regard or receive their offerings. Existing church factions, jealousy, envy, hatred, and many such things are keeping the blessings of God out of many a life, With these things in the heart, worship is absolutely not acceptable to God.

FORSAKETH

Our text in Proverbs says, "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy."

It is one thing to confess our sins to God, but it is another thing to forsake them. I am sure that Holy Ghost conviction for sin, real heart confession, and regeneration will cause men to turn from sin. There are some, however, who seem to have the idea that it is perfectly alright to go back to drink out of the same bottle, chew off the same plug, and gamble at the same table, and in general, live as before. You remember that the Pharisees and Sadducees came to John the Baptist to be baptized, but he said to them, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." Matthew 3:7b, 8. In other words, he said, "Your lives must give evidence of an amendment of life before I baptize you." Take baptism, and a few shallow forms and rituals out of many people's lives, and they wouldn't have a spark of religion left. John said, "You are a generation of vipers -- a serpentine brood from a serpentine stock." My! My! the people today who have been duped and deceived by the false teaching and statement that all they need is baptism, church affiliation, and catchecism. What is needed is a genuine confession and forsaking of sin until we come out from the world and live a separate life.

John says, "Love not the world; neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world,, the love of the father is not in him." I John 2:15. Thank God for a Christ who can take all the worldly desires and practices out of our hearts and lives.

FORGIVENESS

Finally, we note that the writer states, "He that confesseth and forsaketh shall have mercy."

God will extend forgiveness to such an individual. Recently a man wrote to a certain individual, telling the story of moral collapse, and asking in desperation, what remedy could be found. The reply was, "There is no remedy; you have made your own bed; now you must lie in it.

Your past is beyond repair." That is the answer of one who is ignorant of the Christ whom I serve and preach. It is the counsel of despair. If there is no way of relief, then every sinner must carry his guilty past as the poor convict carries his ball and chain.

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." Acts 13:38. No person needs to live under the blight of past sins. We're not hopelessly damned by our yesterdays. There is One who can break sin's curse and power and set the prisoner free. We are serving a God who is full of compassion, gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy.

Forgiveness does not restore lost innocence. It does not assure us that we will suffer none of the consequences of our sins. It does not restore savings that have been squandered. It does not call back lost opportunities, or releases from the regrets for all the wrong we have done. But thank God it removes the dark veil between God and ourselves. We are no longer alienated; we are no longer rebels; we are no longer transgressors; broken fellowship has been restored. The veil is removed; the estrangement is forgotten. Thank the Lord for the great plan of salvation which restores friendship with God. My friends, I want to encourage you to confess your sins and accept God's forgiveness while mercy's door is ajar.

In closing, let me give you a word of warning and exhortation in the words of the Hebrew writer concerning Esau, "For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears." Hebrews 12:17.

A minister friend of mine tells of a business man of his acquaintance who took great delight in making sport of Christian people. He laughed and joked about those things which were spiritual and holy. He lied about the pastor, told corrupt stories about the members, and enjoyed entertaining backsliders and sinners with his tirades on a certain spiritual church. God put up with this for a time, and finally the church was having a revival. This man intensified his efforts to try to defeat the revival and the cause of Christ. He was suddenly taken ill; the doctor was called and after a careful examination, diagnosed the case and pronounced him a very sick man. The doctor said, "If you have any business to straighten up, you'd better do it right away, for you only have a couple days to live."

Immediately this man sent for the preacher of the church whom he had ridiculed. He didn't send for some backslidden preacher and for some worldly church members. The pastor came to pray for him about four o'clock in the afternoon. He prayed and read the Word until six o'clock; at seven o'clock he was still praying and exhorting this man. The revival service started at seven-thirty; the pastor stayed with this man, and the evangelist carried on the revival service. The pastor was there until ten o'clock.

Finally the evangelist came in to pray with him also. They were on their knees until one o'clock in the morning; there was no voice from God. At two o'clock, it seemed the darkness of hell was settling down; there was no light. At three o'clock, they were still praying and holding on; at four o'clock, the doomed man who had been praying with the pastor and evangelist, trying to get

through to God, rose up on one elbow, looked those two godly preachers in the face, and said, "Brethren, there is no use. I have prayed clear up to the door, and the door is shut."

He lived two or three days and died without God and went to hell. My friend, I warn you not to put off your salvation and to neglect your soul. Confess your sins, come in penitence with godly sorrow, and I can assure you that God will be gracious in granting forgiveness.

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3

TEARS OF SORROW

"My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" Psalm 42:3.

"Mine eye is also dimmed by reason of sorrow, and all my members are as a shadow." Job 17:7.

This forty-second Psalm, from which our first text is taken, is chiefly an outpouring of sorrow. It is the expression and feeling of David's heart when he was driven from Jerusalem at the revolt of Absalom. His forced exodus caused him to feel keenly the separation from the tabernacle and its services. He was accustomed to approach God through the services of the sanctuary, but now this was no longer his privilege. Day and night, tears of sorrow had become his meat. David's grief of being shut out from God's presence was then intensified by the reproaches of his enemies who said, "Where is thy God?"

In his soliloquy he says, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?" Psalm 42:5a. And then he answers his own question by saying, "Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." Psalm 42:5b.

The second text is wrung from the heart of Job, the world's example of suffering. His sorrow had become so great and his weeping so prolonged that his eyes were dimmed with tears, and his members, or rather, as the margin says, "his thoughts," were as a shadow. The deep, indescribable, inexpressible sorrow was so intense that it affected him physically and mentally. Surely, there has never been a day when tears of sorrow have been shed so freely and generally as at present. Many can truly say, "My tears have been my meat day and night."

Sooner or later, sorrow enters every home and every life, If it has never entered your heart or your home, it will very soon. The question is, what are you going to do, and in whom are you going to trust when it comes?

Not so long ago, in my travels, I was waiting in a depot of one of our large cities. The depot was crowded with people, and over to one side, I heard someone speaking to a great company of boys who were on their way to camp. I listened to the speech and observed the crowd. After given final instructions, the boys left. Many people were weeping, but there was one old gentleman who sat on the bench near where I was standing, his whole being shaking with grief, his

face in his hands, and weeping aloud. Something seemed to 'say to me that it was sorrow, void of hope. My own heart was moved with pity and compassion for this dear old man.

As long as I live, I do not believe I shall ever be able to get that scene out of my mind. Repeatedly, I have seen crowds of our boys leave for the service of their country, and I cannot remember any occasion when there was not weeping on the part of many who were saying, "Good-bye." One cannot be a minister for seventeen years without being deeply moved by the sorrows and heartaches of this old world, but how glad I am that I have been able to point men to the One who can bind up the brokenhearted and give comfort to all who mourn. Sorrows, like mighty sea billows, may be threatening your bark on the sea of life, but let me say with the song writer:

"God understands your sorrow,
He sees the falling tear,
And whispers 'I am with thee,'
Then falter not, nor fear.

"He understands your longing,
Your deepest grief He shares;
Then let Him bear your burden,
He understands and cares.

"God understands your heartaches,
He knows the bitter pain;
O, trust Him in the darkness,
You cannot trust in vain.

"God understands your weakness,
He knows the tempter's power;
And He will walk beside you,
However dark the hour."

CAUSE

Many of you have had to say, "Good-bye," to your sons, your husbands, or your sweethearts. Some of you mothers have had to lay away a precious bundle; others of you have had to part with a companion, with a father, or mother; as a result, tears of sorrow have dimmed your eyes. They have become your "meat" day and night, but remember, as the boys sang a few minutes ago:

"Jesus whispers, 'I am with you,
In the sunshine or the cloud,
When the spirit is exalted,
When the stricken heart is bow'd.

"I am with you, I am with you,

Jesus whispers sweet and low,
'In the sunlight, in the shadow,
I am with you where you go.

As to the disciples, so He says to you and me, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." John 14:1. Thank God, He is coming back again one of these days to receive us to Himself. Poverty, financial reverses, or material losses may have caused you tears of sorrow, but, my friend, do not permit these things to destroy your faith in Christ. Let them be stepping-stones for a closer walk with Him. After all, the time is coming when we will have to leave everything we have gained in the realm of the material and the financial, but if we have laid up for ourselves treasures in heaven, there will be no losses or regrets. The most tragic poverty is that which is spiritual.

A certain traveler, in making a journey, made ample provision for the first part, but failed to make preparation for the parts of the journey where the road went through brambles and thorns. He dressed himself in light clothes, took a slender cane in his hand, and nimbly proceeded on his way along the beaten path across the green meadows. The sun shined in the skies, and on went the traveler -- comfortably, pleasantly, and delightfully.

After a while, the road became rugged; by the time night drew on, the traveler was in a pitiful plight. His provisions were exhausted, his clothes wet through, and partly torn from his back by the briars. The flowers were faded, and weary as he was, his slender cane could not bear his weight.

A stream of water was before him and darkness was around him. "Alas," said he, smiting his breast, "I am hungry and have no food, wet to the skin and have no dry clothes, weary and have no staff on which to rest; I have a stream to cross, and there is no boat. I am bewildered and have no guide; it is dark, and I have no lantern. Fool that I am! Why did I not provide for the end of my journey as well as the beginning?"

I wonder how many of you have failed to make adequate provision for life's journey to eternity? You are destitute of God's forgiveness, His regenerating power, and His grace. You are going on in life, spiritually poor, separated from God and goodness, and facing a dark, hopeless eternity where there is "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." My friend, let me encourage you today to come and partake of the riches of God's love through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Perhaps bereavement has caused your cheeks to be furrowed with tears of sorrow. Even Jesus was moved at the havoc sin had wrought as He stood by the grave of Lazarus and wept. God blessed a devout home with a beautiful little girl. When she was about six years of age, her mother took sick and died. The father and husband was brokenhearted. After the service at the cemetery, a friend asked him to go to his home, rather than back to that home which was void of a companion and mother.

Said he, "I must go right back to my home and fight this battle through for myself." He and his little daughter returned to their home. His heart was very heavy; the shades of evening gathered,

and it came time to retire. He put his little daughter to bed and tucked the covers about her as lovingly as possible. He turned out the light and went to bed -- but he couldn't sleep.

In the darkness, the little girl called to her daddy, who said, "What is it, sweetheart?"

She said, "Daddy, it is so dark; I just wanted to know if you were there."

He said, "Yes, daughter I am here." He said in his awful heaviness of bereavement, and with the pressure of recent events and losses, everything seemed so dark, but he cried to God, saying, "O, God, it seems so dark," but the answer came back; "Son, I am still here." He said God gave him courage; he was comforted, went to sleep, and found that God's grace was sufficient to bear him up even in such a sore trial as that. My friend, I am glad to tell you today that God's grace will prove to be more than sufficient for you.

Regrets have also caused tears of sorrow to flow. Regrets because of wrong decisions early in life. God was not considered; His advice was not solicited; associations and companionship were not according to God's will; life's occupation was not selected under the direction of the Holy Spirit. The home foundation was selfishness, rather than God and His Word. The whole course of life domestically, socially, physically, materially, financially, and religiously, was not built on God's eternal truth and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, As a result, the years wear on with tears and regret.

One evening a fine Christian father returned home to find one of his two sons seriously ill. Upon entering the home, his wife was weeping and said, "Our boy is dying. I wish you would go in quickly to see him." The father went in the room and placed his hand upon the head of his dying boy and could feel that cold, damp sweat which was already gathering there. He knew that the cold, icy hand of death was gripping the life-cords of his boy.

He said, "Son, do you know that you are dying?"

"Am I father? Is this death? Do you really think I am dying?"

"Yes, my son, the end is near."

"And will I be near Jesus tonight, father?"

"Yes, you will be with the Savior."

"Father, don't weep, for when I see Jesus, I will tell him that you led me to Him."

The father said those words meant everything to him. He was glad that his son could carry such a message to Jesus, for he had faithfully prayed for his sons, taught them God's Word, and led them to Christ.

Said he, "I would rather lead them to Jesus than to give them the wealth of the world." Even when tears of sorrow were being shed, that father had no regrets. I wonder how many of you

can say that? Multitudes of sons and daughters are being neglected spiritually today. They do not have a Christian home. Many of them are half damned before they are ever born into this world. They never hear God's name from the lips of their father and mother except when taken in vain. The Bible is never read, God's house is regularly neglected. This message may not mean much to some of you; perhaps your neglect has not yet turned into regret, but my friend, if you continue to neglect, the day is coming when you will have some very serious regrets.

CONSEQUENCES

Sorrow will do one of two things for us: either draw us closer to God, or drive us farther away. To know Christ does not even mean that we are going to be free from suffering, but it does mean that we will have strength and grace to bear all the experiences that are common to man, and be more than conquerors over every trial and test of life. Suffering is the common lot of all men, and God has not promised to free us from it. To be frank with you, I am glad that He hasn't. It would not be good for us if He did.

Some of the greatest saints who ever graced this earth were those who passed through great tribulation. Most of the Psalms were born in a wilderness; most of the epistles were written in a prison; the greatest thoughts of the greatest thinkers have all passed through fire. The greatest poets have learned through suffering what they taught in song. In bonds, Bunyan lived the allegory that he afterwards indited, and we can thank the Bedford jail for "Pilgrim's Progress."

When God is about to make pre-eminent use of a man, He puts him in the fire. I am personally acquainted with a father, who after losing a son, gave his heart to Christ and today is a noble Christian. I am personally acquainted with another father, who after losing a child, became bitter, critical, and very unkind in his attitude toward God. Today he is without Christ, going on in spiritual darkness and void of the heavenly hope.

The floods washed away all that a certain poor man had, but after the water had subsided, he saw something shining in the bank which the waters had laid there. It was gold. The flood had beggared him and made him rich. My friend, if you will look to God in the time when floods of sorrow overwhelm your soul, they will make you rich in eternal values.

A man, in talking to John Wesley said he didn't know what to do with his perplexities. The two were passing a meadow, bounded by a stone fence, over which a cow was looking. "Do you know," asked Mr. Wesley, "why that cow looks over that wall?"

"No," replied the man.

"I'll tell you -- it's because she can't look through it. That's what you must do with your troubles. Look over and above them." Thank God, through Christ, this is possible.

Many times it is the refining fire of suffering and sorrow that brings men to Christ and reveals His beauty in the lives of those who already know Him. It takes the darkness of the night to bring out the beauty of the stars; it takes the clouds and the storms to bring out the glory of the rainbow, and the same is true of suffering and trials. So often we do not know just how much

Christ can mean to us until some dark trial comes into our lives; then when no one else can meet our needs, He has the chance that He has coveted for so long.

Heartaches and tears came to Mary and Martha because of the death of Lazarus, but think of what it was worth, not only to them, but also to their friends, and perhaps to all the people of the countryside! Think also of the glory Jesus got out of it. David said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." Psalm 119:71.

May God help us to be willing to endure anything which will draw us closer to Christ. The song writer says:

"When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;
For I will be with thee, thy trials to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace, all-sufficient, shall be thy supply.
The flames shall not hurt thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine."

Sorrow and suffering many times enables us to be greater blessings. Jesus suffered in order that He might comfort those who have suffered. He was made a perfect Captain of our salvation through suffering, He was not made morally perfect, for He was already that, but He entered into all the experiences that are common to man in order that He might be our leader and captain. He can sympathize with us, because He knows just what we are going through, and we need just the same thing in our lives so we may be able to help sympathize with others.

Some of you have been wondering why you have been having so many troubles. Perhaps you have been complaining a bit. If you are not a child of God, permit these troubles to draw you to Christ; and if you are His, you know that "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning," Psalm 30:5b, and that "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Thank God, it won't stay dark, but there comes a sweet, fair morning, tinted with all the favor of God, and we can go our way, knowing that finally all will be well. In the meantime, let us remember that God has provided a sufficiency of grace for each individual, and all things will work together for our good.

"We are often tossed and driven
On the restless sea of time,
Somber skies and howling tempests
Oft succeed a bright sunshine.

"In the land of perfect day
When the mists have rolled away

We will understand it better by and by.

"By and by, when the morning comes,
When the saints of God are gathered home,
We'll tell the story how we've overcome,
And we'll understand it better by and by."

* * * * *

4

TEARS OF JOY

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." Nehemiah 8:10.

Many have thought that the Jewish religion was a gloomy, harsh observance, It is true that their rituals and ceremonies were very detailed -- perhaps in some respects, burdensome, but they had much that was joyous. Their feast days were characterized with music, shouting, and tears of joy. The Sabbath was a day of joy. They had some fast days, but generally speaking, their religion was characterized by joy.

Our text refers to the feast of trumpets as observed by the Jews after their re-settlement in Palestine. When on this occasion, God's law was read, the people mourned because of their past sins, but Nehemiah tells them not to mourn, but to rejoice, and adds that the joy of the Lord would be a stronghold to them. The joy of the Lord, which is a holy joy, is always a source of strength. It is a defense against evil; it is a stronghold against discouragement, despondency, and trying times. When sin abounds on every hand, the joy of the Lord makes God's service a delight; it dulls the attractions of sinful pleasure. It is a bulwark against infidelity, for it gives an experimental truth of the reality and worth of salvation which no mere argument can shake, and so the text is true, not only in the lives of individuals, but with families, churches, and nations that the joy of the Lord is strength.

Gloomy religion is weakness and sinful joy is even greater weakness. I do not know what your theories or doctrine may be, but the question is, do they lead to joy? Is there a glorious, victorious life within your heart in spite of the conditions that are round about? When you have the salvation which Christ bestows, you will have joy. It is the oil of His presence that makes life worthwhile. It isn't the ability or disposition to laugh at a joke, or to feel and act as a man who is under the influence of liquor, but it is the ability to laugh at calamity, to rejoice and to experience joy in the heart, even at the time of death -- to rejoice not at the victories of satan and sin, but in spite of, and in the presence of, these victories.

CONDITIONS OF THE DAY

I know we are living in a day when the forces of evil are abounding. Sin, like a boundless, trackless river is spreading over the land. The devil is rallying all his forces to make one last stand against the powers of righteousness, but even these present, perilous, times cannot be given as an excuse for joyless religion and a lack of God's blessing. Many times the joy of religion is not

experienced until the sword of adversity does its work. The early church was persecuted, beaten, imprisoned, and martyred, but they continued right on preaching the Gospel wherever they went. The joy of the Lord was filling their souls; adversity didn't silence Peter and John. It didn't smother Philip's joy, and even Stephen, in his dying hour, being stoned to death, had the joy of seeing Jesus standing at the right-hand of the Father, awaiting his arrival in the courts of glory.

Many of our church fathers were burned at the stake, tarred and feathered, and tortured, but they were able to cross the line of worlds with the shout of victory on their lips. In spite of the fact that Fanny Crosby was blind, she could write the beautiful hymn, "I Shall See Him Face to Face" The loss of physical vision helped her to gain remarkable spiritual discernment. We are living in testing, trying days, but if we will just nestle a little closer to the Lord during these times, we will find that the joy and love of God in our hearts will prove to be our strength; our lives will be a greater blessing; more souls will find Christ; and when we look upon His face, our rewards will be greater.

CAUSES OF THIS JOY

Of course, there must be a cause for such joy as this. Looking into the ministry of Jesus and that of the early church, we find that the cause of joy was the preaching of God's Word. The Gospel is good news; other things may be enlightening and interesting, but the Gospel is more than that -- "It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." Romans 1:16b. It changes the life and warms the heart; it gives a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.

Whenever and wherever men take heed to the preaching of God's Word and accept the Lord Jesus Christ, they experience inexpressible joy. In many instances, it is a joy that bubbles over with emotion. I've heard some people shout, others laugh, and still others that were so full of joy they could do nothing but shed tears. The heart was so full of joy that it caused a 'so-called spasm of the eyes. With sins under the blood, the burden of guilt gone, and a realization that one has become the son of God, he is moved to overflowing delight. I am glad that the days of miracles and the days of joy are not past. Christ could perform miracles while on earth: He touched a man's eyes and the man saw men as trees walking; He touched them again and he saw clearly. Jesus met a funeral procession coming down the road; He touched the dead body and gave the son back to his mother. He met a man with a withered hand and said, "Put your hand out," and his hand was whole. One night the sea was raging, and those on the ship went down to tell the Savior; He came up on deck and said, "Peace, be still." Mark 4:39. The disciples were made to say, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" Mark 4:31.

This same Christ is the one who performed the miracle in my life, forgiving me of my sins, making me a new creature in Christ; old things passed away, and behold all things became new. As a result, the joy of the Lord is flooding my soul. I shall never forget the time as a boy nine years of age when I confessed my sins and asked Jesus to come into my life. On one side of me was my father; back of me was my grandfather, both there praying for me that as a boy I might give my heart to Jesus, and oh, the moment when Christ came in! Tears of joy streamed down over my cheeks, and other hearts felt the thrill of God's salvation as He met the need of my soul.

I feel somewhat like the little boy who slipped off from home and went to the river, swimming. He was going down, but he had his little hand up saying, "Help! Help!" The crowd threw ropes, but he missed them all. He was going down and all they could see were the tips of his fingers.

He came up again and said, "Help!"

A man threw a board, and when it went past him, he took hold of it. The man drew the little boy to shore and said, "Sonny, let's go home."

The boy picked up the board and said, "I'll never let it go! I'll never let it go!"

The man said, "Sonny, you are all right now."

"When I was sinking and going down the last time, the board reached me and was my savior. I'll never let it go!" repeated the little boy.

When I was sinking, when I was lost and bound for hell, the Man of Galilee came to my rescue, and I am here before this microphone today, preaching this message of salvation to you as a result of God's saving power and the joy of the Lord that floods my soul. When I was sinking, He became my Savior, and thank God! He can save you and keep you if you will open your heart and let Him come in.

There are many kinds of joy and pleasure, but there is nothing in the world that will measure up to the joy of the Lord. Instead of being under the devil's power, we suddenly see that we are above the devil in Christ Jesus. Instead of being under sin, we see that we are above sin by His death on the cross. Instead of being held by the iron ties and habits that bind men -- glory to God, we are free! "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:36. It is the work that Jesus did on Calvary that emancipates us, sets us free, and gives us this joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. The song writer says:

"When a sinner comes, as a sinner may,
There is joy, there is joy,
When he turns to God in the gospel way,
There is joy, there is joy.

"There is joy among the angels,
And their harps with music ring,
When a sinner comes repenting,
Bending low before the King."

The apostle very definitely condemns sensuous exhilaration, but he enjoins spiritual exhilaration. There is something in man which tires of monotony and desires a change. Many are resorting to liquor in order to satisfy this craving for variety. Many times we hear it said that it "drove him to drink." This same God who has woven this desire for variety in our human nature

has provided for its satisfaction on the very highest and most helpful plane. He says, "Be filled with the Spirit."

In no place does God's Word sanction a dignified dullness which many people mistake for reverence. To be sure, the Holy Spirit leads us into soul burdens and sacrifice, hard toil, and tears of intercession. He works in the true child of God a tender compassion for the Christless which often makes the heart ache with keenest pain; yet He is the Spirit of joy, and when we know the joy of being utterly His and filled with His presence, this joy is unspeakable and full of glory. It is right here that the church has made a great blunder, which makes her responsible for much of the backsliding among young converts. In reading the Acts of the Apostles, it is clearly seen that the apostles were not content until they led the newly converted into the fullness of the Spirit. When they were filled with the Holy Ghost, they were filled with a gladness that was all-satisfying.

What a sad thing that the fullness of the Spirit is an almost forgotten doctrine. I fear that there are many Christian workers who know nothing of this experience, and as a result, they are unable to lead young converts into it. The result is that in the lives of these new converts, there comes a time when they feel they have a still further and definite need. Instead of being led into Canaan, they are left in the wilderness, longing for the flesh-pots of Egypt, and too many times, return to the bondage of the past. If these same individuals would be led on to the fullness of the Spirit, the seducing calls of worldly pleasure would have far less power over them.

Christians who have the music of the Spirit in His fullness have deaf ears to the siren songs of worldly pleasure and sinful amusements. You don't hear such individuals asking the poor, low, miserable question whether or not there is any harm in dancing, theater-going, card-playing, drinking, and so on. They have no need to drink at the fountain of worldly pleasure to satisfy the longing of the soul. They have an ever-springing fountain of joy within. They carry about with them the springs of joy and can drink whenever they like.

O! that Christians and the church today could be brought into the experience of the Spirit-filled life. The problems of worldliness, questionable amusements, immodest dress, lukewarmness, apostasy, modernism, and atheism would soon be solved. In the comforts of the Holy Spirit, the deep heart needs of people would be grandly met. In the pleasure of worship and communion and the gladness of toil, they would find true joy. With great joy they would draw water from God's wells of salvation; they would never think of seeking satisfaction from the wells of the world and from the wells of their own making. Many people today who have once known God are just as guilty as the people of Jeremiah's day when God said to them: "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Jeremiah 2:13.

My friend's, as long as you seek for joy outside of Jesus, no matter where you seek it, or from what you may desire to receive it, you will be disappointed. I urge you today to forsake your broken cisterns and come to Jesus Christ, who is the source and fountain of all true joy and satisfaction.

CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH JOY

As our text states, the result of this joy will be strength. What health is to the body, joy is to the soul. It will be strength when faced with duties, during revival seasons, and at other times. It will be a pleasure to pray, intercede, and help men to Christ. It will be a joy to do the will of the Lord. You will find His yoke to be easy and His burden light. Some folks look as if they were going to a funeral every day, but once you have the joy of the Lord in your heart, it is going to manifest itself on your countenance. It will be strength in time of difficulties, mountains will be removed, enemies overcome, and the devil defeated. The devil will have absolutely nothing to offer a joyful Christian.

Your joy will also sustain you in time of suffering. The Psalmist said, "I had fainted,, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord." Psalm 27:13. The outward man may perish, but with the joy of the Lord, the inward man is renewed day by day.

This joy also continues to overflow at the thought of Christ's second coming. There are great magnets which are used to locate and pick up steel. They have such tremendous power that even though steel has been buried quite deeply for some months, it will come out of the ground and lead to the magnet.

My friends, one of these days the sky is going to burst asunder, the trumpet is going to sound, and Jesus is going to appear, but if, as Paul says in Romans 8:11: "The Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Praise God, with the joy of the Lord in our hearts, we will be in the first resurrection -- the resurrection of the just. Those who are in the graves will come forth, and we that remain on the earth will be changed and carried away before you can wink your eye. My friend, do you know that your sins are forgiven, and that the Holy Spirit abides? Do you experience the joy of the Lord in your heart? Are you ready for the coming of Christ? "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." Revelation 20:6.

The question is, do you have a holy heart? The main question is not whether you are a Methodist, Baptist, or Presbyterian, or affiliated with some organization. That is all right in its place, but ask yourself the questions -- are my sins forgiven? is my heart cleansed? am I a possessor of the joy of the Lord?

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THE END