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GRACE & PEACE

An E-periodical for spiritual enlightenment, edification and encouragement

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"Are You Jesus?"



EDITORIAL

The Dismissed Soldier: A Challenge

The recent judgment of a high court in India upholding the dismissal of a Christian soldier from service for refusing idol worship presents the true state of the followers of Christ in the world today.

Lieutenant Samuel Kamalesan joined the army in 2017 and was removed from service in 2021 without any pension rights or service benefits for refusing to participate in the Hindu rituals such as puja and aarti against his faith.

He used to participate in parades and religious festivals but sought exemption from direct participation by entering into the most sacred part of the temple, citing his Christian conviction against idol worship. However, the court upheld the dismissal, saying that in military, obedience to orders takes precedence over personal religious choices.

The Believer and the World

Even after two millennia, the words of our Lord stand true regarding a believer's condition in this world. The world does not recognise God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Hence, the world system does not understand us either. They cannot comprehend our convictions and way of life. For the same reason, they will oppose and even persecute us just as they did with our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:25; 15:18; 14:17; 1 John 3:1)

Today, when so many believers forsake their distinct Christian identity and lifestyle for the approval of this world, believers like Mr. Kamalesan are an example. Faithfully following the truth of God's Word is costly for a true Christian, but that's what our Lord exhorts us as disciples of Christ (Matt 10:37; Luke 14:26, 27).

In **'Believers' Separation'**, we are considering the importance of living a holy and separated life for Christ. Bro. Enoch Reuben Muniah continues his reflections on the **'Creation and Creator'**, highlighting how science confirms the biblical account of creation.

In our study on **'Victorious Christian Life'**, we are looking at the difference between God's work in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament. The article, **'The Bottle of Tears — God's Comfort and His Promises'** is taken from the book **'Tears in the Bottle'** written by Bro. Tom Johns. He discusses in detail how God graciously looks at the pain and prayers of God's people.

Thank you for your encouraging response and prayers. It's our prayer that, as always, these writings will enlighten and encourage many from around the world, thus bringing glory to the name of our blessed Lord.

Sincerely,

NTK

Believers' Separation

In Kerala, south India, certain evangelical Christians are called 'verpettavar', which can be translated as 'separated ones'. More than a century ago, when their forefathers experienced personal salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, they left the traditional ecclesiastical system to follow the New Testament pattern of worship and church life. Their transformation was not just internal but also very much visible externally. They adopted a distinct lifestyle in every aspect. Simplicity was their hallmark; they avoided all kinds of extravaganza, even forsook ornaments, especially gold, which many in this region passionately hold.

In their zeal to be faithful to the word of God, believing farmers even stopped cultivating betel leaves and areca plants. Their argument was simple: 'since we don't use it, we should not grow it to help others not follow the bad habit of 'pan' (betel-leaf) chewing.'

They were willing to forsake the economic benefit of cultivating something that was widely used, yet detrimental to public health. Those Christians were zealous in practising the truth of separation in their personal life and business. Seeing such a detached lifestyle, the common people called them 'verpettavar' or 'separated ones'!

A Confused Generation

But today, many of the present generation of these godly Christians are not bothered about such a separated lifestyle any more. Many do not even know the rationale behind this tag. They are not aware of why they are what they are or why they do what they do! Many just flow with the trend for some time and later become confused, not knowing the meaning of separation or its biblical basis. Finally, they are compromised, conformed and corrupted, resulting in too many 'nominal believers' in the local churches! They have a form of godliness without any substance. Without any hesitation, some take back what their forefathers forsook.

The Importance

In today's liberal and tolerant culture, the separated life of believers is not very popular. Being influenced by the inclusive mind-set of the post-modern society, many prefer to avoid such topics. But a careful study of the scripture reveals a number of reasons why the followers of Christ must maintain separation as they sojourn in this world. Let us consider a few:

1) The nature of God, Lev. 18: 2, 3

"Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I am the LORD your God. After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances."

Notice the instruction to Israelites, 'not to do like the doings of Egyptians or Canaanites' because the LORD is their God. The LORD repeatedly reminds them He is a holy God, and His people also should be holy and separated as He is. Apostle Peter also exhorts quoting from the same book, "as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY", (1Peter 1:14–16). Our lifestyle and behaviour should reflect who our God is and what His nature is.

2) The work of God, Lev. 20: 26

"And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine".

In His repeated instructions to Israel to be holy and separated, the Lord refers to His works for them. He has separated them from the people to be His own. Thus, they are obligated to abstain from walking in the ways of Gentiles. Cf. Exo. 6:6, 7; Deut. 7:6; 14:2, etc. Similarly, in the New Testament, separation is an integral part of the work of salvation. For example:



a. Redemption, Eph. 1:7

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." cf. 1Peter 1:18

'Redemption' is an important aspect of the work of salvation that God has accomplished through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. The meaning of redemption is to purchase a slave from the slave market, bring him out and set him free so that he should never be a slave again. Not only He has bought us, He brought us out and set us free. Don't we see separation very clearly underlined in this aspect of salvation? God wants us never to go back to the old slavery of sin and Satan, but to stay separated from the past associations and way of life. Failure in separation is a shame and a contradiction. cf. 2 Peter 2:20–22.

b. Sanctification, Hebrews 10:10

"By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" cf. v. 14

Not only He has redeemed us, He has

sanctified us too. He has ‘set us apart’ — separated for God’s purposes. The purpose of saving us out of darkness is that we may be ‘His own special people’, (Cf. 1 Peter 2:9. Hebrews 10:10; Galatians 1:4). It has a practical aspect too, which is an on-going process (1 Thess. 5:23; John 17:17; Eph. 5:26).

So, God’s work in and through us today involves separation. That’s why the first Christian converts left their past associations and joined the apostles (Acts 2:40, 41).

Never forget, it is God who separates us; from darkness to light, death to life, falsehood to truth, ignorance to understanding, etc. (Psa. 4:3; Col 1:12, 13; 1Pet 2:9). We are only maintaining that separated position in doctrine and practice.



3) The commandment of God Genesis 12:1, 2 – Revelation 18:4

Throughout the Bible, we see the divine call to ‘come out’. God called Abraham and commanded, “Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show

you.” Gen. 12:1. Later, we see the Lord, time and again, reminds the people of Israel to maintain separation (Exo. 23:31-33; Numb. 16:21; Duet. 7:1-7; Isa. 52:11; 2Cor 6:14-17; Eph. 5:11, etc.). God commands His people to be away from the evil practices and lifestyle of the people around them.



4) Example of the godly

Take the story of any godly believer—Biblical or of church history. All of them valued separation and even sacrificed many things to stay true to God’s Word. When everyone in his generation lived in wickedness, Enoch walked with God, pleased God, and even preached (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5; Jude v. 14). What a challenge it had been for Noah to go against the popular perception and preach about the coming flood (Gen. 6:5, 8, 9 cf. 2:5)! Abraham’s faith life began with separation; he went out not knowing where he was going (Gen. 12:1; Heb. 11:8). Moses by faith forsook the position, possessions, and pleasures of Egypt (Heb. 11:24-26). Such scores of examples from the scripture as well as history attest the importance of believers’ separation.

5) The blessings of separation

2 Cor. 6: 17b, 18

Separated life is costly, at the same time it's a blessed one. We will have to sacrifice many things. Many may even misinterpret our stand and brand us as 'fundamentalists' or even 'extremists'! Knowing this, soon after the call to come out, God gives the promise, "I will receive you, I will be a FATHER to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters" (2Cor. 6:17b, 18).

It does not mean we become the children of God as a result of separation. He is calling upon His own people. When we maintain separation, we will enjoy the love and affection of our heavenly Father in a very special way. He will be happy to own us as we take a stand for Him and His word. Leaving something for the sake of divine fellowship will be rewarded in due time.

Interesting to notice, soon after Abraham separated from Lot, the LORD made a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 13:14). Later, when Abraham rejected the reward from the King of Sodom, the LORD came close to him and reinforced His care and affection for Abraham (Gen. 14:23; 15:1).

People may call us 'fools' or 'narrow-minded' for our commitment to the Word of God, but God will honour us. Even He will begin to use us for His purposes in a very special way (2 Tim. 2:21).

Balaam's observation in Numbers 23 about Israel is noteworthy in this context. He found the separated life of Israel was

the reason for his inability to curse them as directed by Balak, the Moabite King. They were blessed, strong, numerous, and victorious (Num. 23:8, 9, 21, 22).



6. Consequences of Compromise, Num. 25:1–3, 9

In spite of the recurring warnings, Israel failed miserably at the tactics of the enemy. Balaam could not curse them but gave Balak a secret to trap them (Num. 23:9; 31:16). Consequently, the Moabite women seduced the young Israeli men and thus destroyed their spiritual separation and holiness (Num. 25:1–9).

The wrath of the Lord kindled against Israel, and twenty-four thousand perished (Num. 24:24). We see such punishments falling upon Israel often, due to their failure in the area of separation.

Samson is the best example of the blessings of separation as well as of compromise. As long as he maintained separation, he was strong and mighty, but the moment he compromised, he lost his strength and the rest we know well (Judg. 16:17ff).

Today, in various ways, the enemy is trying to destroy the separation of God's people. Many have already fallen. Compromise is

taking place in various areas. Satan's agents are infiltrated among the saints. The number of unconverted, professing Christians is growing.

The line of separation is assaulted from many fronts. Spiritual services became entertaining programs. Social functions like funerals and weddings are controlled by event managers and photographers. Consequently, the strength and the fruitfulness of God's people are affected.

The Pattern

Our Lord is the best example of spiritual separation. He loved sinners and ate with them, to the extent that Pharisees accused him of being a friend of sinners (Luke 7:36; Mark 6:31; Matt. 11:16-19). Yet the writer of Hebrews says, He is 'holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners' (Heb. 7:26).

That is the kind of separation we have to maintain. Living among unbelievers as 'salt' and 'light', influencing them with taste, protection and light yet not contaminated by the evil around (Matt 5: 13–16).

In His intercessory prayer, Christ prayed for believers' separated life in this world. He says, "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:14c). There is nothing wrong with enjoying the God-given facilities of this world for His glory and our enjoyment (1 Timothy. 6:17). Yet there are limits; certain balance needs to be kept. We must know where to draw the line. We cannot go beyond that limit. If the line of separation is compromised, we fail from God's purposes and reap the consequences.

Pharisaism

Remember the reasons why Christ rebuked Pharisees who, by their name and lifestyle, proved to be the separated people of the first century. They thought they were godly and obedient people who lived by the law. Yet the Lord Jesus pronounced 'woes' against them (Matt. 23:13-16). Their kind of separation was not acceptable to God. They majored in minor matters but neglected major spiritual truths. Pharisaism was characterised by formalism, traditionalism, legalism, exclusivism, antagonism, etc.

If not careful, even today we may fall into this trap in the name of the truth of separation. That's why we ought to consider this truth seriously, searching scriptures without going to the left or right extremes.

Conclusion:

A holy and separated life is an essential characteristic of a true Christian life. When there is widespread compromise among the so-called saints today, let us stay faithful to the truth of God's Word. His nature and instructions demand it. Above all, His wonderful work of salvation makes it possible. The world will never recognise us, for it does not know the triune God either. During this short pilgrim journey, let us keep a safe distance from all that is unscriptural and rejoice to be different, for we are not of this world. Costly it is, but definitely God will honour, bless and use us for His glory.

G&P

OUTLINE- 1

SEPARATION



- i. From the world, John 15:19; Galatians 6:14
- ii. From darkness, 1Peter 2:9; 2Corinthians 6:14; Ephesians 5:8
- iii. From false profession, 2Timothy 3:1—5; 2Cor 6:17
- iv. From teachers of error, 1Timothy 1:4; 4:7; 6:5
- v. From Unbelievers & evil thing, 2 Corinthians.6:17
- vi. From Wicked brother, 1Corinthians.5:11
- vii. From Disorderly brother, 2Thessalonians. 3:6
- viii. From Life style of the gentiles, Ephesians.4:17f

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OUTLINE- 2

SEPARATION: Positives and Negatives

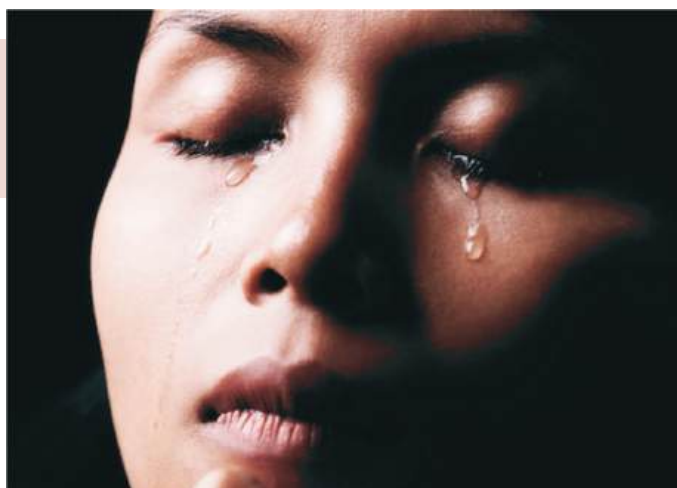
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|--------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Be ye clean, | - Isa 52:11 | a. Be not, | - Rom 12:2 |
| 2. Be ye holy, | - 1Peter 1:15 | b. Love not, | - 1John 2:15 |
| 3. Be ye separate, | - 2Cor 6:17 | c. Touch not, | - 2Cor 6:17 |

WTR

OUTLINE- 3

TEARS

- ▶ Tears of Faith. Mark. 9:24
- ▶ Tears of Devotion. Luke. 7:38
- ▶ Tears of Service. Acts. 20:19
- ▶ Tears of Sympathy. 2Timothy. 1:4
- ▶ Tears of Warning. Acts.20:31



Source: Unknown

CREATION AND MAKING

(Part 3)

Science & Design

We know scientifically and factually that the universe is actually, a continuum of space-matter-time. Albert Einstein's famous equation, ($E=mc^2$), the theory of special relativity, scientifically confirms and reinforces what the Bible says and not the other way round. Einstein commented that there had to be a supreme intelligence behind its creation, God.

Atheists and agnostics alike know that but will not admit it. The earth is the only planet that God made conducive for the habitation of mankind. There were two very important elements necessary for man to live on the earth; the oxygen atmosphere (O) and the hydrosphere of liquid water (H₂O). In other words, air and water was vital for man's existence.

Scientists now know that our planet is precisely the right distance from the sun to benefit from its heat. A little closer and all the water will evaporate as on Venus and we would all probably fry. Only a bit farther and everything will freeze like it does on Mars.

Planet Earth is also just the right size to generate the right amount of gravity. Any less, would make everything weightlessly sterile like the moon, while more gravity would trap poisonous gases that suffocate life as on Jupiter.

The intricate physical, chemical and biological interactions that comprise our world bear the imprint of a sophisticated Designer. To do that, God, created a firmament, which separated the greater mass of water on the earth from the lesser mass of water, which evaporated to form a vast blanket of vapor, a canopy, if you will, in the troposphere.



There were certain gaseous components in the atmosphere which held the waters above the firmament as a canopy until the deluge in the days of Noah. The effect of

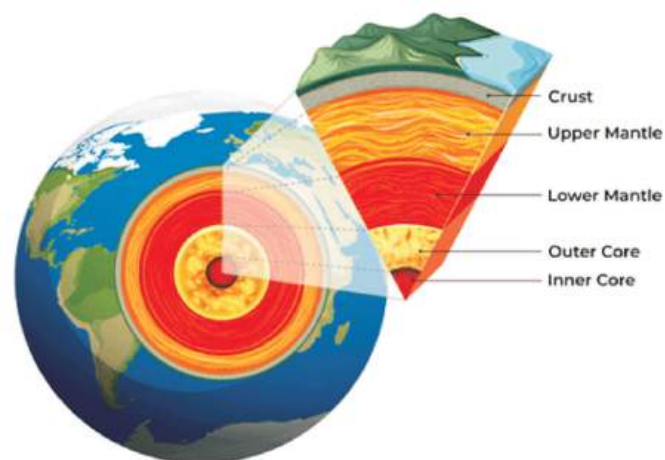
this canopy was to distribute the sun's warmth in a uniform fashion throughout the earth and to prevent the formation of cold fronts and wind storms.

Before the flood, Genesis 2.6 says, "There went out a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground".

After the ‘fall’, at the onset of the flood in Noah’s days, the fountains of the deep, (springs) were broken up and the windows of heaven were opened. The canopy of vapor above the firmament was precipitated on the earth in the form of torrential rains (Gen. 7:11). It was then, that Noah saw a rainbow for the first time (Gen. 9:13).

Since then, we have a cyclical movement of water, as the greater mass of water is evaporated, then driven by the wind in an atmospheric circulation. Condensation and precipitation in the form of clouds occur and we receive it as rain, hail or snow. These elements find their way back into the oceans via rivers and the process comes full circle. With the warmth of the sun, the water evaporates and condenses into droplets of water and again, we receive it as rain. I found it quite interesting, that the canopy of vapor was highly effective in filtering out or absorbing ultraviolet radiations, cosmic rays, other destructive energies and harmful elements from outer space.

The greater masses of water below the firmament were a shoreless ocean until God divided the waters to form dry land. God called the dry land Earth and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas (Gen. 1:10). In verse 9 of chapter 1, God said, “Let the dry land appear and it was so”. That meant a precipitation of complex and cataclysmic movements on the earth combined with chemical elements resulting in rock formations and layers of sediments, thus making up the solid earth with the crust, its mantle and its core.



Through the passage of time great earth movements such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, has changed the landscape of the earth with an intricate network of channels, canyons, gorges, reservoirs and even plateaus. The topographical, geographical and to some extent, geological features of the earth were remarkably altered as the crust of the earth reformed and deformed causing splits in the earth’s crust which resulted in the rise and fall of continents and the waters divided into several seas.

Read the whole of Psalm 104 about the creator, God. In verse 3 of chapter 1 God said ‘Let there be light’. According to verse 14 of Genesis chapter 1, there were two lights. The sun was the greater light to rule by day and the moon, the lesser light to rule by night. Someone commented that darkness really isn’t darkness; it is the absence of light- and cold isn’t cold; it is the absence of heat. The sun is able to give us both light and heat. The moon controls the tides and seasons.

G&P

(To be continued...)

VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE

A Study: Part 3 (Based on Joshua 1–8)

Review:

We have seen the meaning and importance of victorious Christian living in its various aspects. It is to enjoy all that God has planned for us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Israel's exodus and subsequent entrance into Canaan give us many valuable lessons on a Victorious spiritual life. The purpose of their deliverance from Egypt was not just a walk through the wilderness but to enter into Canaan, which flows with milk and honey. Similarly, we have been saved not just to experience a new life but live an abundant and fruitful life. Our Lord's desire for us is to progress in our Christian walk and live on a higher level of spiritual life.

God's work in the OT vs. the NT

Victory for Israel in the OT and victory for us today in the NT times are two distinct things. God's work for Israel in the past and the Church in the present dispensation are not alike.

For example, Israel had to defeat the enemy and capture the land. But we do not need to defeat the enemy, actually speaking, because Christ has already won the war. Every child of God already stands in the victory that Christ has accomplished for us on the cross (Col 2: 13 - 15).



Christ has defeated the enemy on the cross. The devil wanted to stop God from redeeming mankind. By Christ's atoning death and resurrection, He defeated the design of the Devil, erased the writings against us, forgave all our sins and disarmed the enemy. Further, we have been justified and declared righteous.

Victory in Christ

Remember, the cross deals with our sins in the past, present and even future. Nothing can cancel this work of God, even our actions! Notice what Paul writes,

Rom 8:33: "Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies."

Rom 8:34: "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us."

Rom 8:37:- “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”

This victory on the cross is the basis for our victory despite all kinds of hardships. It has to be our true state in Christ because of what our Lord has accomplished on the cross.



Paul further writes, “Thanks be to God who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place”, (1Cori 15: 57; 2Cori 2:14). Paul celebrates the victory we have in Christ, remembering the way Roman soldiers celebrate their victory.

All the above-referred verses present victory for a Christian as something he already experiences. Because victorious Christian life is something that we ought to experience as children of God, through what Christ has done for us. If we continue to lead a failed life, there is a question mark on the very work of Christ in our lives. “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our

faith” (1Jn 5: 4). Everyone with faith does experience victory, which is demonstrable and continuing. That’s why Paul declares, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”, (Phil 4:13).

God’s Promises to Joshua, Jos 1: 3 – 6

Not only had He promised victory in advance for Israel, but God also gave Joshua enough promises to encourage Israel to go forward and experience it. God’s promises are His enablement and resources. Notice the promises:-

- a. Every land, V.3, 4 “I have given”
 - Already given freely. Cf. Gen.15.19
- b. Unfailing Presence V.5.
 - No one can stand against them. God will not leave work unfinished.
- c. Prosperity V.7
 - Growth.
- d. Success V. 8
 - Their efforts will bear fruit in victory.

God’s Provision in the NT

Now think of the divine provision in the New Testament. These are not just promises, but resources that can help us to enjoy victorious Christian life.

- i. **The new nature—divine.** 2Peter 1:4
 - John 1:12, 13 – result of regeneration.
 - John 1:12, 13 – result of regeneration.
 - 1 John 3: 9 - “God’s seed abides in him’
- ii. **The Indwelling Spirit.** 1Jn 4:4
 - To strengthen, equip, guide, etc.
- iii. **The abiding presence of the Lord,** Col 1: 27
 - ‘Christ within us’, cf. Matt 18: 20 - ‘among us’; Matt 28:20 – ‘with us’

iv. **The word of God in our hand / heart.** 1Jn 2:14

- Young men are strong, word of God abides, they are victors too.

v. **The intercessory prayers of Christ,** Luke 22:31

- Praying for Peter's victory over the evil one when he will be attacked by Satan, (1Jn 2:2)

vi. **The angels to protect,** Heb 1: 14

- To serve us – invisible yet true – myriads of angels.

vii. **The whole armour of God,** Eph 6: 13 – 18.

- To stand against the attack of Satan and his forces.

viii. **All other needy resources,** 2 Pet 1:3, 4

That includes our safety and encouragement we receive through the fellowship of God's people (1Cori 5:5; 1Tim 1:20). Often, we do not value the protection we have among the saints. To correct an erring brother, Paul says to put him out of the fellowship so that he will see the difference, repent and return.

When God has done so much and provided such valuable resources, if we still say it's impossible, hard or not easy, we are only neglecting God's resources and failing to believe His promises.



Conclusion:

- Where are you today?
 - o Wilderness or Canaan; low level or higher? - go to a higher level.
- Do you lead a victorious Christian life?
- Are you aware of what Christ has done for you on the cross?
 - o Let us praise God for the victory in Christ and claim it.

(To be continued...)

“Some sincerely zealous Christians have turned separation into isolation, until their fellowship has become so narrow that they cannot even get along with themselves.”

Warren W. Wiersbe



The Bottle of Tears

God's Comfort and His Promises

"You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle Are they not in Your book?", Psalm 56:8

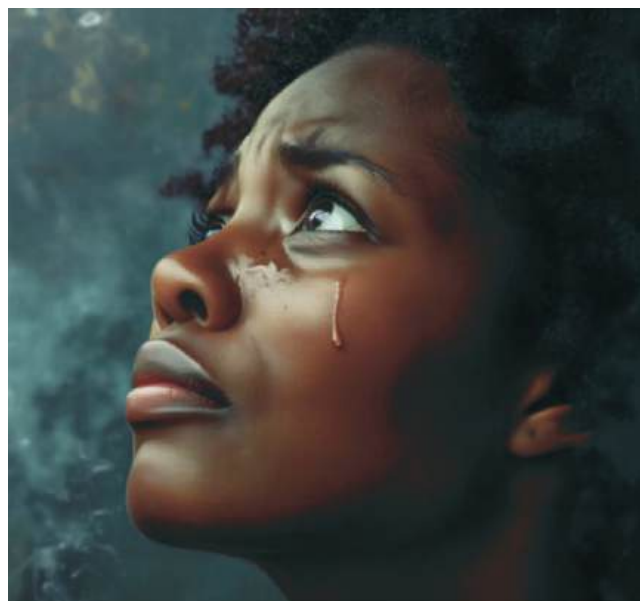
The psalmist David, harassed by enemies, expresses deep trust that none of his sorrows or prayers escape God's notice. In ancient times, mourners sometimes collected tears in small vessels (lachrymatories) as memorials of grief.

Whether or not David had such a custom in mind, the metaphor is clear: God remembers every tear shed by His people. It assures us that "God will never forget nor ever be indifferent to the cares of any one of his much-beloved people"

Our laments are not lost in the void; they are lovingly stored in God's bottle and recorded in His book, meaning He keeps an account of our wanderings and our weeping knowing that God treasures our tears as precious.



Prayer is often the channel through which those tears flow. In seasons of adversity, God's people have always turned to earnest prayer, trusting that the Lord sees, remembers, and responds. The following sections explore five



biblical examples of prayer in hardship, examining how each exemplifies the truth of Psalm 56:8. In each case—whether it's Elijah persevering in prayer, Hannah pouring out her soul in anguish, King Jehoshaphat entreating God in crisis, Jesus Himself agonizing in Gethsemane, or the Apostle Paul teaching on divine comfort—we see that God indeed "keeps our tears" and answers in His perfect timing.

Each story will be considered with scriptural quotations, historical and cultural context, and insights from the inspired word of God. Finally, we will reflect on pastoral applications, encouraging us that our own tears and prayers in adversity are noticed by our Heavenly Father and never shed in vain.



Elijah's Persistent Prayer for Rain (1 Kings 18:41–46)

The Prophet Elijah's context was a literal drought of adversity. For three and a half years, no rain had fallen in Israel as judgment on rampant Baal worship (cf. 1 Kings 17:1). After Elijah's dramatic victory over the false prophets on Mount Carmel, it was time for God to lift the drought. Yet, significantly, the rain did not come until Elijah prayed persistently for it. Although God had promised to send rain (1 Kings 18:1), Elijah "himself retired to pray (for though God had promised rain, he must ask it)"

This aligns with the scriptural understanding that divine promises invite human prayer, not render it unnecessary. Trusting God's word, Elijah went to the mountaintop to intercede.

"And Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel. And he bowed himself down on the earth and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, 'Go up now, look toward the sea.'... And he said, 'Go again,' seven times. And at the seventh time he said, 'Behold, a little cloud like a man's hand is rising from the sea.'" (1 Kings 18:42–44, ESV)

Elijah's posture—bowed to the ground with face between his knees—was one of profound humility and earnestness. He sent his servant repeatedly to look for any sign of

rain, refusing to give up. Scripture notes that Elijah prayed seven times until a tiny cloud finally appeared. The narrative emphasizes his perseverance.

The old Puritan commentator Matthew Henry admires how Elijah "continued praying, will not be diverted...while he keeps his mind close and intent in prayer, and abides by it, as one that has taken up his father Jacob's resolution, 'I will not let thee go except thou bless me'"

Six times the report was "there is nothing," yet Elijah did not lose heart.

This illustrates the kind of faith-fueled importunity Jesus later commended about the widow who was persistent in her plea to the Judge (Luke 18:1–7). Henry draws a general lesson: "Though the answer of our fervent and believing supplications may not come quickly, yet we must continue instant [devoted] in prayer, and not faint nor desist; for at the end, it shall speak and not lie." [it will happen.]

Historically and culturally, this event stood in stark contrast to the impotent prayers of Baal's prophets earlier that day. Baal was supposedly a storm god, yet he had brought no rain. Elijah's persistent prayer to Israel's God, on the other hand, unleashed the rains of blessing.

Indeed, "God opened the bottles of heaven, and poured out blessings" that day vindicating His sovereignty over the land's fertility. We might recall that in Hebrew thought, the heavens were

like waterskins or bottles (cf. Job 38:37). Fittingly, once Israel's repentance began, "God...opened the bottles of heaven" with rain. It's a lovely providence that the God who figuratively keeps our tears in a bottle also literally controls the "bottles" of the sky.

From a theological standpoint, Elijah's prayer exemplifies the relationship between divine promise and human petition. God had declared He would send rain, yet Elijah "must ask it" in prayer showing that God ordains prayer as a means of fulfilling His word. Elijah's fervency also reflects the truth later expressed in James 5:16–18, that "the prayer of a righteous person has great power." James specifically cites Elijah's earnest prayer for rain as an example of effective prayer, stressing that Elijah was a man "with a nature like ours" who simply prayed in faith.



In terms of Psalm 56:8, while the text does not explicitly mention Elijah weeping, we can imagine the emotional toll of those drought years on God's prophet. Elijah had suffered exile and hardship during the drought (hiding by the brook and then in a widow's home). Certainly, he had shed tears over Israel's apostasy and the peoples' misery. Now on Carmel, every fervent plea he offered was as if depositing those tears into God's bottle. And

God did respond at Mount Carmel, and each supplication was noted by God until, in the seventh instance, a cloud the size of a man's hand appeared and then the sky "grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain" (1 Kings 18:45). Elijah's tossed and turning (to borrow the Psalmist's term "tossings") through a long trial were not forgotten by the Lord. In response to persistent prayer, God turned those stored-up tears into "showers of blessing" at the proper time.

G&P

*(Taken from "Tears in the Bottle"
book written by the author.*

*Copies available at <https://a.co/d/ir48RsE>
Kindle and Audio editions also available)*



**"Our tears are not lost;
God catches them in His bottle,
marking every sorrow.
No trial is overlooked by
His loving heart."**

Charles Spurgeon

Rowing a tied-up boat



One evening, two farmers in a village boat with their produce set out for the market the next morning. On the way stopped for dinner. After tying up at the shore and they had dinner and drinks. Then they began to row the boat again with all their zeal and strength. In the morning, to their surprise, they found that they were in the same place where they had dinner! Drunken farmers forgot to untie the boat.

Without true separation, there will be no going forward. In spite of all our efforts, growth and progress will be limited because something pulls us back.

“Are You Jesus?”



A cripple on crutches was walking with a few packages under his arm. It was with great difficulty that he painstakingly made his way to the railway station. All the people around him were rushing up to the station and one of them knocked down the crippled boy. His packages were scattered onto the road. The man who knocked him down was angry with the boy for walking clumsily.

Another gentleman who had been walking behind him picked up the boy and the packages, put his crutches in place and even slipped a little money into his hand. With a kind smile, he went on his way. The crippled boy who had not known such kindness, called out to the gentleman inquiring, “Mister, please sir, are you Jesus?”

“No,” replied the Good Samaritan, “but I am one of His followers.”

- Source Unknown

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For further details contact:- gracepeaceu@gmail.com / Whatsapp: **+91 9869638285**

Prepared, and posted by **Nelson Thomas Kumaramparampil (NTK)** for the Glory of God & the Joy of the saints.

Editorial assistance: **Tom Jacob**

Design & Layout: **Jiju Mathew, Dhanya Mohandas**

Technical Support: **Robin Johnson (RJDeals)**

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