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PRESENTS

Frankly Speaking Notes . . .

Published as time and opportunity permit, usually a few times a week.

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Ed Smithson, Editor

TEARS IN A BOTTLE

Psalm 56:8 “Thou numberest my wanderings: Put thou my tears into thy bottle; Are they not in thy book?”

It is said that the custom in old times was, when a person was ill or in great distress, for his friends to go to see him, and take with them a tear bottle. Then, as the tears rolled down the cheeks of the sufferer, they were caught in these bottles, sealed up, and preserved as a memorial of the event. “Thou tellest my wanderings; O visit me, and behold my anguish; put my tears into thy bottle,” for “they have been my meat day and night.” Psalm 42:3. “Keep them before thee, by way of remembrance, and when thou seest the bottle, O think of him whose tears it contains. Are they not in thy book?”

As we read the Bible we find that the people on its pages are not unfamiliar with tears. One of the classic examples of grief and the shedding of tears is the story of David and his son Absalom. Absalom had tried to steal the kingdom from his father and in time things developed into a war between the two. When David’s servant Joab goes to the fight David told him to spare Absalom. When news was brought that Absalom had been killed, David wept bitterly. “And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2 Samuel 18:33) “And the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son!” (2 Samuel 19:4)

Tears! We do not talk about tears the way we do not talk about death. It isn’t that we don’t cry or don’t see people cry. Today you can see people crying on almost every television newscast. It isn’t that we dread crying the way we dread death, but we still don’t talk about it.

Sometimes tears come at the least provocation, especially with children. A fall, a scrape, a disappointment, they will cry and seek the comfort of an

adult, usually one of their parents.

The loss of loved ones almost always bring tears. When Jesus appeared at the grave of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha the sisters thought if he had been there Lazarus would not have died. In fact, Mary approached him that way, “Mary therefore, when she came where Jesus was, and saw him, fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” (John 11:32) The record continues, “When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping who came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, and said, Where have ye laid him? They say unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.” (John 11:33-35)

There are all kinds of tears. Tears of joy, tears of sorrow, tears of disappointment, and these tears can cover many different kinds of situations. Happiness of seeing someone after a long absence; happiness at someone getting married: joy of a child making his first step. There are also tears because of the loss of another in death; tears of lost love; tears of lost success.

Perhaps the greatest tears are those shed over the loss of a child. Like David’s sorrow over Absalom. It did not matter to him, to his heart, that Absalom had deceived him and tried to take away his kingdom, he was still David’s son and the loss was felt greatly. In fact David’s grief was so great that Joab went to him and told him it was time for him to return to his duties.

Everyone has tears from time to time. Sometimes we have people close to us, like family and close friends, that will hold our hands, hold us in embrace and empathize with us in our time of calamity or whatever.

Regardless of what friends and family do, or if we have no friends or family to comfort us, we know from scripture that God will be there to “put our tears in a bottle,” and remember those times. He cares and will help, if only we will turn to Him and rely on Him. If we are happy he cares; if we are sad or sorrowful, he cares; if we are at our wits end, he cares. One scripture on which I have relied most of my life is, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you.” (1 Peter 5:6–7)

There are two things to notice about this passage. We are to “humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God,” for without our submission to Him and His authority, we have no promise. Then, when we “cast all our anxieties on Him,” He cares for us and will as David asked, “put our tears in

His bottle.” I don’t know about you but I had rather have my tears in God’s bottle and any tear bottle I know of.

So the next time you are in the throes of despair, or downhearted or downtrodden; the next time your heart is breaking so badly that you think you can’t stand it, remember, if you will “cast your anxieties” and heartbreak or whatever, on Him, and ask, He will put your tears in his bottle.

TEARS IN A BOTTLE

When unexpected tears roll down our cheeks,
And without control we begin to weep,
We’re not alone in all our hurt,
God puts out tears in His bottle.

When it comes our time to suffer pain,
And at times it seems there is no gain,
We have someone we go to for our complaint,
God puts our tears in His bottle.

When sorrow brings us down to the depths,
And it seems there is no one that is left,
To give us comfort in our time of despair,
God puts our tears in His bottle.

When the ravages of life bring us down low,
And we think there is just no place to go,
Remember God reigns in heaven and earth, so,
God puts our tears in His bottle.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Smithson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

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February 23, 2011