

A Bottle of Your Tears
by Shiela Walsh [submitted by Major Deborah Coles]

When I opened the gift from my friend, I wasn't quite sure what it was. The small glass bottle was a beautiful cobalt blue, about two inches tall, covered in silver filigree.

I thought it might be a perfume bottle, albeit a very small one, but her note explained that it was actually a tear bottle she'd found in an antique store in Israel. I did a little research and discovered that tear bottles were common in Rome and Egypt around the time of Christ. Mourners would collect their tears as they walked toward the graveyard to bury their loved one, a tangible indication of how much that person was loved. Sometimes women were even paid to follow the mourners and cry into such a vessel.

Apparently, the more anguish and tears produced, the more important and valued the deceased person was perceived to be. But legend has it those mourners-for-hire who cried the loudest and produced the most tears received the greatest compensation.

I treasure this little blue bottle because it reminds me of a profound spiritual truth David wrote about in Psalm 56, when he was at one of the lowest points of his life. David had been captured by his enemies in Gath (he had actually feigned insanity to survive), but he found comfort in the fact that God saw everything he was going through and caught every single tear he shed. I love David's confidence in the mercy and faithfulness of God even when he himself had not been faithful to the Holy One.

David knew without a doubt that Almighty God never misses a moment, a tear, or a sigh from any of His children. Do you rest in that truth, or do you question that God loves you that much?

Do you ever feel alone? Have you ever thought, "No one on this earth understands the depth of my suffering"?

If you've taken a wrong turn in the road, are you expecting God to hold back His mercy until you get back on the straight and narrow?

That's not the God David knew; that's not the God of the Bible.

We have a Father who keeps track of all our wanderings and catches every single tear we cry. When we begin to grasp the depth of that truth, we can say with confidence just as David did,

This I know: God is on my side! — Psalm 56:9

Five Minutes in the Word

You have kept count of my tossing's; put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in Your book? — Psalm 56:8

The Lord hears His people when they call to Him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the broken-hearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed. — Psalm 34:17-18

He heals the broken-hearted and bandages their wounds. — Psalm 147:3

Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! — Psalm 126:5

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. — Matthew 5:4

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Your Turn

One of the most insidious lies of the enemy is that we are completely alone in our sufferings. That God's not paying attention, doesn't care, and won't intervene even if He noticed what is going on in our lives. No one understands. Rest today in the truths of Scripture that God cares intimately about you, sees what you are struggling under, and is *with* you and *for* you.