

*Weeping alone releases the tension ;
weeping together brings healing.*

AFTER A SESSION

Daring to tell God your pain

*“A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...” (Isaiah 53:3)
“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?”*

Psalm 13:1

There is a moment, in grief, when we no longer dare to pray. It is not a lack of faith, it is a kind of modesty. We would like to come before God composed and presentable, and we wait until we feel better before returning to him. The Bible teaches the opposite. Nearly a third of the Psalms are laments, and God kept them in his Book to teach us to pray precisely when we have nothing left but tears.

Look at what a complaint becomes when it is addressed to God. It stops being a cry thrown into the void. We only demand an account from someone we still expect something of ; we only quarrel with a person we believe is there. Job did it, harshly, for whole chapters, and in the end it is him God approves, not his friends with their tidy answers. Lament is not the opposite of faith. It is faith's barest form, the one that keeps nothing back for appearance's sake.

We must go to the end of this freedom, for it is more radical than we usually admit. Not all the laments of the Psalms end well. Psalm 88 closes in the dark, with no light in its final verse, on loneliness and shadow ; no one there comforts the one who prays. Yet God left that prayer in his Bible, just as it is, without sewing on a happy ending. So your pain does not need to resolve to have its place before him. You may come with no conclusion, no lesson to draw, not the slightest brightening.

Often, somewhere in the lament, something does turn, gently, toward trust : “But I have trusted in your loving kindness” (Ps 13:5). Not because the pain is gone, but because it has at last been placed into hands. You do not have to manufacture that turn. If it comes, let it come ; if it delays, your complaint is already a whole prayer.

On the evening of the cross, the Son himself made this language his own. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” are the first words of Psalm 22. In crying out his abandonment, he was not leaving prayer : he was carrying it to its summit. Your bitterest complaint has already been prayed by him, before you and for you.

The word. The Hebrew *yadúa'* (יָדָעַ, Isaiah 53:3) comes from the verb *yada'*, “to know.” It is not the knowledge of one who has read about pain, but of one who has lived it in his own flesh. The same verb elsewhere names the most intimate knowledge between two persons. God does not know your pain from afar ; he knows it from within.

This week. Once a day, say to God, out loud, the truest sentence of your day, even if it is a sentence of anger or emptiness. Do not correct it. Let it be your prayer.



“Lord, I do not understand, and I am not pretending. Receive my complaint as a prayer, and hold me as I go through it. Amen.”

The God who entered the night

“Jesus wept.” (John 11:35)

“My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death...”

Matthew 26:38 · Luke 22:44 · Luke 24:15 · Hebrews 4:15

“Jesus wept.” It is the shortest verse in the Bible and one of the most fathomless. Before the tomb of his friend, God made man stops and weeps, even though he knows he is about to raise him in a moment. His faith in the resurrection did not dry up his grief. Neither must yours. To believe that death will not have the last word does not oblige you to act as if it did not hurt.

And he went far beyond compassion. In Gethsemane his soul was sorrowful to death, and his sweat fell like drops of blood. He knew the anguish that crushes, the kind where one begs for the cup to pass and heaven seems mute. Then he entered death itself.

There is a day we rarely speak of : the Saturday. Between the cross and Easter morning, a whole day when God was in the tomb, when the promise was not yet kept, when those who loved him knew nothing of what was coming. That is often where your grief stands : in the in-between, after the loss and before the comfort, when you know the theory of hope but do not yet feel it. That Saturday is part of God's own story. You are not alone there ; he dwelt in it before you.

And he does not merely go down : he walks the road back up with you. On the road to Emmaus, two shattered disciples were walking, sure that everything was over. The risen Jesus fell in beside them without their recognizing him, and he first let them speak their grief, at length, before he opened the Scriptures. Often he is present like this : not in a flash that dispels everything, but in a quiet presence that walks at your pace and listens to the end. Perhaps he is already walking near you, without your having recognized him yet.

“We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses” (Hebrews 4:15). He does not sympathize from afar, as a spectator. He sympathizes from within, as one who has lived there. Where you go down, he has already gone down. Where you walk, he walks.

The word. The Greek **edákrusen** (ἐδάκρυσεν, John 11:35), from the verb **dakrúō**, does not name the loud cry of mourning : that cry (*klaiō*) is used for the crowd in the previous verse. It names tears that well up in silence. God's tears are not a spectacle. They rise, restrained and true, like yours.

This week. When the night grows thick, do not first look for an answer. Simply say, “Jesus, you are here,” and stay a moment in silence with him, adding nothing.



“Jesus, you who wept, who went down into death and who still walk beside the afflicted, be with me. I do not need to understand everything. I need you to be here. Amen.”

A hope that holds when the tears go on

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4)

“... the God of all comfort.”

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 · Psalm 56:8 · Romans 8:22 · Revelation 21:4

“They shall be comforted.” Notice the tense. It is not an order to feel better at once, it is a promise turned toward a fulfillment. And Christian hope is not optimism. Optimism bets that things will work out and hopes it guessed right. Hope does not bet : it rests on a fact that has already happened. The tomb is empty. Because Christ is risen, death now has an end date, and that certainty does not depend on your mood of the day.

This is why this hope can hold even while the tears do not yet stop. The two coexist. The Bible never asks you to pretend : “the whole creation groans” (Romans 8:22), and we groan with it as we wait. The groaning is not the failure of the road, it is part of it. You can hope and weep in the same hour, without being divided.

And God wastes nothing of what you go through. He comforts you, says Paul, so that you may one day comfort others in their affliction with the very comfort you have received. Your wound of today could become the exact place from which you raise someone tomorrow. Not in spite of it, but through it. What pain hollows out in you, it also hollows into a capacity to receive another's sorrow.

And before he even dries your tears, he gathers them. “You put my tears into your bottle” (Psalm 56:8). The image is striking : God keeps your tears like something precious, he counts them, he sets them safely aside. Nothing you shed is lost or forgotten. Then will come the day when “he will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 21:4). Notice it does not say he will explain the tears. He will wipe them, one by one, with his own hand. Keep that image for the long nights.

The word. The Greek **paráklēsis** (παράκλησις), from **pará** (beside) and **kaléō** (to call), means “to call to one's side,” to come and stand next to the one who suffers. It is the name given to the Spirit, the *Paraclete*, and it is also what you do for one another. To weep together is already to comfort.

This week. Each evening, entrust to God one tear of your day, and remember that he keeps it. Then ask him to show you, this week, someone to comfort.



“God of all comfort, I do not ask to understand, but to hold on. Anchor my hope in the empty tomb, and make my pain, one day, a spring for someone else. Amen.”

Original meditations, in the spirit of R. Kelleman, Grief: Walking with Jesus. Scripture: public domain (KJV/WEB). Hebrew/Greek word meanings: standard biblical lexicons.