

A Valley of Tears

*"Jesus wept."
John 11:35*

When I was growing up it was not respectable for a man to weep in public or private. Somehow it was thought to be a sure sign of weakness emotionally if a grown man shed tears. As a child I even heard adults around me who sought to stop my crying with words like, "Only babies cry." Or "Don't be a baby," Somehow I was to have the stiff upper lip of the legendary British men.

I only recall two times in my life when I witnessed my father crying. Once was when I was very sick with whooping cough. I was about four years old at the time and he held me in his arms as I sought to rest between bouts of being ill. I can remember tears running down his cheeks at my misery.

Then a few weeks prior to his death, when the cancer was widespread in his tired old body, I saw tears for the second time. For some unknown reason he was not taking anything stronger for the pain than aspirin. The pain forced tears from his eyes. So on the occasion of

my pain and misery and – in his own final time of suffering – my father wept.

I have long ago learned that it is all right for men to cry when the occasion is right. Following the example of our Lord, we understand that various situations should bring on tears and, if we do not weep, then we simply do not understand what is happening in front of our tearless eyes.

Why did Jesus weep here in the context of our verse? He was at the grave of His beloved friend Lazarus and saw the weeping of the loving sisters who also had a large place in His heart. Possibly He wept at the thought of soon making Lazarus return from the glories of heaven to this weary old world only to die once more. So for His own grief at death, and seeing loved ones so broken hearted, Jesus wept. The word here suggests He "burst into tears". It was not a loud form of weeping but rather a gentle sobbing.

The only other occasion when it is recorded that

Jesus wept is in Luke 19:41. Then Jesus was approaching the city of Jerusalem and seeing it "wailed" over it. This is the great lament of our Lord for an impenitent people that occurred during the triumphal entry of Jesus to Jerusalem. It happened a week prior to His crucifixion.

When you lose a loved one it is proper to weep. Such a loss needs to be mourned with tears. Also, when we have loved ones who refuse to seek the Lord, then tears are also appropriate. For someone to be blind to the grace of God in Jesus is disaster for them. They need to be wept over if we truly love them.

Never stifle tears. They are God's gift to us to allow the grief to surface and be dealt with in an appropriate manner. Then, for another devotional we will look at the ministry of tears when we "weep with those who weep". That is a whole subject of its own.

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