

The Prayer of Tears

“Tears are like blood in the wounds of the soul.” - Gregory of Nyssa

Penthos is the Greek word for it. There simply is no good English equivalent. It is a frequent experience for those who walked across the pages of the Bible, and a recurring theme in the works of the great devotional writers. *Penthos* means a broken and contrite heart. *Penthos* means inward godly sorrow. *Penthos* means blessed, holy mourning. *Penthos* means deep, heartfelt compunction. Above all, *Penthos* means the Prayer of Tears.

What is it, this Prayer of Tears? It is being “cut to the heart” over our distance and offense to the goodness of God (Acts 2:37). It is weeping over our sins and the sins of the world. It is entering into the liberating shocks of repentance. It is the intimate and ultimate awareness that sin cuts us off from the fullness of God’s presence.

Tears are God’s way of helping us descend with the mind into the heart and there bow in perpetual adoration and worship.

The most rock-bottom reality for the Prayer of Tears is that we are sinners. I do not mean that we commit sins – though I am quite sure that is true, too. We are not sinners because we commit sinful acts; rather we commit sinful acts because we are sinners.

A few of us cannot weep. If this is the case, do not be discouraged. I have been where you are. Be both firm and friendly with yourself. Do not let yourself get away with the “I’m just not the emotional type” excuse. Also remember that you did not take on the modern macho “I am a rock, I am an island” attitude overnight and it will take more than a day to change such ingrained habits.

Immerse yourself in the Gospels. Jesus knew the Prayer of Tears and he will show you how to follow in his steps. When you cannot weep outwardly, shed tears before God in your intentions. Have a weeping heart. Keep your soul in tears. Even if the eyes are dry, the mind and the spirit can be broken before God.

Gracious Jesus, it is easier for me to approach you with my mind than with my tears. I do not know how to pray from the emotive center of my life or even how to get in touch with that part of me. Still, I come to you just as I am.

I am sorry for my many rejections of your overtures of love. Please forgive all my offenses against your law. I repent of my callous and insensitive ways. Break my stony heart with the things that break your heart.

Jesus, you went through your greatest trial in unashamed agony and wept tears of deep, deep sorrow. In remembrance of your sorrow help me to weep over my sin ... and my sins.

For your sake and in your name, I pray. Amen!!