

POUR OUT YOUR HEART LIKE WATER



**“Arise, cry out in the night,
as the watches of the night
begin;
pour out your heart like water
in the presence of the Lord.”**

Lamentations 2:19

One night, I had a beautiful dream.

In my dream, I walked through a house, my heart heavy with sadness. As my restless feet wandered in and out of rooms, a companion drew near and began to walk with me. Wherever I went, he went too. My companion remained unseen, but I knew he was there. I also knew that he was ancient, strong and wise. How safe I felt in his presence!

I began to pour out my troubles to him, the words tumbling out one after another. As we walked together, my unseen companion listened with an attentive ear. He heard every word and understood the pain that brimmed beneath each one. Not once did he ever leave my side.

When I awoke, I realised with awe that even in my dreams, I had been walking and talking with the Ancient of Days.

What I experienced in my slumber that night reflects what I have been learning in my waking hours: God is a good, kind and loving Father who cares about every aspect of our lives. The Lord walks with his children, and there is nothing too small or too big that cannot be shared with him. Whatever our burdens, whatever our needs, we can pour out our hearts like water in the presence of the Lord.

I remember a day as a seven-year-old girl when I took one of my favourite toys to school. It was a small, pink plastic cat. To adult eyes, it wouldn't have seemed like much, but it meant a lot to me. At some point throughout the day, I lost that pink cat. Emotions swirled inside my chest: panic, anxiety, sadness and even anger (somebody must've stolen it!). But I managed to suppress my feelings and did not let them out. I trudged through the rest of the day and sighed with relief when the bell finally rang, marking the end of school. I climbed into the back seat of the family car, and only when I was safely shut inside did the tears begin to fall.

'What's the matter?' asked my mother.

'I lost my pink cat!' Tears continued to flow down my cheeks as I poured out my childish woes.

My mother suggested we pray. So, we did. It was a simple prayer asking Father God to help me find my toy.

The next day, I saw another child holding my cat. She had found it on the classroom floor and was more than glad to pass it back to me. I learnt that day that even a plastic toy isn't too small for God to care about. It mattered to me, and because he loved me, it also mattered to him.

A child's toy is one thing, but bigger concerns can also be brought to the Lord. We can talk to him about our relationship difficulties, the complexities we face at school or work, and the disappointments we encounter in life. Even the matters of what we eat daily and what we wear are important to God because he knows how much we require them.

The Bible is filled with accounts of people pouring their troubles out to God. Hannah is one example. She was in deep anguish because she had no children and could not fall pregnant. In those days, barrenness was a burdensome stigma. Year after year, Hannah longed for her heart's desire to be granted, but God never seemed to hear or answer her prayers. Such was Hannah's grief that she was often reduced to tears and unable to even eat. One day, she went to the temple and cried bitterly as she prayed to the Lord. She poured out her heart to him: all her disappointment and sorrow. Hannah held none of it back. Not long afterwards, God fulfilled her desire and gave her a child. However, this didn't mean the Lord only heard her prayers on that one particular occasion. The answer this time was 'yes', but her countless prayers were equally worthwhile throughout the years. God heard each one. Scripture tells us that the Lord keeps track of all our sorrows. He collects every tear in his bottle and records each one in his book (Psalm 56:8 NLT). Every single prayer uttered by Hannah and every tear she ever shed were precious in the Lord's sight.

I remember another occasion when I stood on a rock before a waterfall and watched as it thundered down. Though I stood at a distance, the pummelling water sprayed through the air, and I soon became drenched. Sometimes our emotions seem as powerful as a waterfall, and we feel sure they will overcome and destroy us. Life can be brutal. Devastating events happen that shatter our souls and leave us gasping with ragged breaths. There are those amongst us who have experienced the unspeakable.

But nothing is too big for the Lord. Nothing is so shocking or shameful that we can't bring it to him.

When the prophet Jeremiah penned the words, 'Pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord,' he was lamenting the afflictions of his people. They had fallen into tremendous sin, and judgement had come. Jerusalem was ravaged and destroyed, and most inhabitants were carried away as slaves to a distant land. Those left behind were plunged into famine and vast suffering. Jeremiah was heartbroken as he wept for his people. His sorrows poured out like a gushing waterfall.

When our emotions are as strong as Jeremiah's, we can pour them out in the Lord's presence just as he did. Scripture also expresses it another way: we are told to cast our burdens upon God, for he cares deeply for us (1 Peter 5:7). To cast means to throw with force. God is telling us to hurl those overwhelming feelings onto him, for he is strong enough to carry them. King David knew this. His prayers in the Psalms are punctuated with drenching tears, cries of anguish, pleas for forgiveness, and accompanied by much sobbing, groaning, weeping and sighing. David never stopped calling out to the Lord.

God looks deep within the heart and mind. He knows what is already in there, and there is no point in keeping any of it hidden from him. When I was a little girl, I was able to climb into the car, close the door and cry out my sorrows to my mother, who cared about my lost toy. How much more does our God in Heaven care? He is a Father, full of compassion for all who belong to him, and we can talk to him about anything and everything. He simply asks that we come to him like children.

This truth sets the one true Living God apart from all the other so-called 'gods' of the world's religions. The gods of this world are not all one and the same, despite what many might teach these days. Those who teach such things are in error because they do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. They might speak as if they know God, but do they really?

In the name of religion, people do all sorts of things to try and have their prayers heard. Some say repetitive prayers as they count beads. Some deprive themselves of sensual pleasures. Some empty themselves to become a blank vacuum inside. Some burn incense and chant. Some whisper to 'saintly' humans who are dead and cannot hear them. Some people perform the same rituals over and over and over again. Others babble on believing their prayers will be answered by their many words.

So much effort! And all of it is without any assurance that those prayers will ever be heard or answered. It does not need to be this way.

Jesus tells us not to be like the pagans who strive so hard to have their prayers heard. We don't have to strive if we know Jesus and belong to the Father. We are simply told to go someplace quiet, close the door and talk to our Father, who is unseen. This is the highest form of prayer because it is a conversation between a Father and child who love each other. God isn't interested in our pious attitudes and religious practices. He desires for us to know him personally.

Christian prayer is unique, and it is unique not only because of God's fatherhood but also because of the person of Jesus Christ. He connects us to the Sovereign Father in Heaven so we can know and talk to him. And it is through Jesus that the Father sends the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to come and dwell with us. This means that although we may sometimes pray in solitary places, we are never alone because each member of the Godhead is always present. As children of God, we pray to the Father through his Son Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

When God became man and walked on this earth for thirty-three years, he was despised and rejected — a man of sorrows, acquainted with the deepest grief (Is 53:3). Jesus was mocked, betrayed and abandoned by friends. His body was whipped and scourged and pierced. On the cross, he carried the sin of the whole world — the sins of every person who has ever lived or ever will live. Because he experienced this world's evils firsthand, Jesus can empathise with all our weaknesses. He was tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin (Heb 4:15). And because Jesus defeated death and is alive forevermore, he can forgive our sins and help us overcome any struggle we might face.

No other god can make this claim. No other god has ever demonstrated such love.

The true gospel is mighty enough to break through into the gritty and crushing aspects of our lives. Our emotions can be messy. It's not often wise to let them spill over onto other people. Most won't understand our situations, and even the rare person who does will never be able to meet the innermost needs of our souls. The best place to take our emotions is the Lord's presence.

As children of God, we can enter boldly into his throne room whenever we need to. We might be inside a house, car, school, office,



hospital or church. Or we might be outside in a garden, park, field, beach or walking along a city street. Wherever we might be, we can enter in and let our hearts spill out like water before him. Throughout the centuries, believers have found themselves in the bleakest of situations. But even in prison cells, concentration camps or arenas filled with hungry lions, people have been able to enter into God's presence and talk to him.

The Lord knows how difficult this life can be and how weak we often feel. When this is the case, the Holy Spirit will help us in our weakness to pray, even with sighs and groans too deep for words.

Sometimes we might have to endure for a long time, but we won't be alone if we do. The Lord walks with us and will never leave our side. His power can deliver us from any trouble, and even if he doesn't in this lifetime, he is strong enough to sustain us until we reach eternity.

As you walk with the Lord, bring every concern to him each day. It may be as small as a lost pink cat. It may be as vital as food, clothes and money. It may be that you have fallen into sin and need to repent. It may even be as devastating as broken relationships, illness, trauma or grief. Your emotions might feel as thunderous as a waterfall. Whatever your concerns, God cares about you and wants to hear all about it.

Amid great turmoil, Jeremiah was able to say, 'Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness (Lam 3:22-23).' If you are facing hard circumstances right now, know that God loves you and has compassion for you. He is faithful. Enter into his presence through Jesus and pour out your heart like water before him.

Afterword...

If you do not yet know God and are seeking to know if he is real, go somewhere quiet, shut the door, and talk to Jesus Christ. Be honest with him. Tell him all about your concerns, doubts, hurts or wrongdoings. He is alive and can reveal himself to you. Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved. This means that Jesus will forgive all your sins, enabling you to stand in God's holy presence. Jesus will introduce you to the Father so you may receive the right to become one of his children.

Dear Heavenly Father,

Thank you that I can come to you with all my troubles and concerns. I bring them to you now and ask that you help me.

Thank you that you walk beside me and will never leave me.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.