

A walk with Mr O (50)

A time to weep

Mr O, do you ever cry?

That's not the sort of question I am normally asked, but I'm happy to answer it. And the answer is both 'no' and 'yes'.

'No' and 'yes'? Is that one of your provocative answers?

Not this time! I have a medical condition which means that I can't shed any tears. All the tears I have are in a tube in my pocket and I squirt them in every few hours. That said, I cry quite often, I frequently weep like a child, but without physical tears.

Yet you're not an emotional person, are you?

Perhaps not visibly. But all humans cry. We all experience pain, heartbreak, and countless sorrows. Christians, however, cry much more than other people; and among Christians it is pastors who cry most of all.

Why do, Christians cry more than other people? Aren't we supposed to be the happiest people on the planet?

It's possible to have two opposing emotions at the same time. We are 'sorrowful, yet always rejoicing' (2 Corinthians 6;10). The day of our conversion is a day we repent and believe for the first time. We continue to repent and believe every day after that. The day of our conversion is not a unique day. It is the first of all the similar days that will follow it throughout our earthly life.

Isn't it possible to repent without crying?

Repentance is being heartbroken for our sins. It is weeping in the depth of our soul. We are immeasurably sorry for the way that we have grieved the Heavenly Father who loves us, the Saviour who bled for us, and the Holy Spirit who indwells us. Having sinned against him we flee to the Lord for forgiveness and trust that by his grace he will forgive and receive us.

There is no such thing as a Christian who doesn't weep. But remember, we shed two sorts of tears at the same time: tears of sorrow for our sins and tears of relief and delight for the way that the Lord welcomes us and saves us.

If such daily weeping is the experience of every Christian, how is it that pastors cry even more?

Pastors are shepherds. We have been appointed by the Chief Shepherd to feed his lambs and to tend and feed his sheep. We feel very tender towards every one of the Lord's people and are conscious of our personal responsibility to live and die for their welfare. So, of course we weep more than other believers do.

What sort of things do you weep about?

We inevitably weep over our own failures, especially as those failures are certain to have damaged the flock. When we see a lamb we have failed to nourish, a sheep with wounds we have failed to tend, or those of the flock we have failed to protect from wolves, our tears flow. But often we see people refusing spiritual food, ignoring loving warnings, and wandering off to feed in places that will ruin them. It is then that our flow of tears becomes a flood.

In your loving pastoral experience, what has caused you personally to weep the most?

It is the fact that vast numbers of evangelicals are clearly lost, and that they resent it when it is pointed out to them.

Surely they should be grateful. Why do they resent it?

Instead of evaluating their profession of faith biblically and in the light of eternity, they accept what their evangelical friends and churches say about them.

Mr O, I'm not quite sure what you're saying. Could you explain things a bit more fully?

Their faith is not in the Lord Jesus Christ, but in their profession of faith, Jesus is not real to them. He just isn't. And their friends and churches do not care.

As long as they can say, 'I believe that Jesus died for me' they are considered to be true Christians, even if they are not having daily, personal dealings with the resurrected Saviour.

True Christians call Jesus 'Lord' live under his lordship, and weep at his feet over every continuing disobedience, however small it may be. Where there is no weeping there is no Christianity.