

Son of Tears  
By Bob Vincent

**Bible Text:** 1 Samuel 1:1-20; Luke 18:1-7  
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There was once a very brilliant young man. He was among the most brilliant people in the entire world. And he had a mother. Her name was Monica, and her son's name was Augustine. Augustine, great intellect, was pursuing his intellect, studying all over the world, here and there and everywhere, and he lived a profligate life as well, indulging everything that he wanted to indulge as he bloated his very arrogant mind with knowledge, more and more and more knowledge. One day this man went into a garden, and he was pondering things, and he heard children singing over the wall, "*Tolle lege, tolle lege, tolle lege,*" in Latin, which is, "Take up and read." And it happened in that garden, there was a book, and the book was open to the last part of a chapter in Romans which says, "Take no provision for the flesh but put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:13-14).

Then and there, Augustine became a believer. Isn't it amazing? Were those really children singing on the other side of the wall? Or were those angels making those noises? What was it? How could a singsong going over and over again, "Take up and read, take up and read"—and this amazing providence that the book is open right there to say—"but put on the Lord Jesus Christ." That's what it really is to be a Christian, isn't it?

To put on the Lord Jesus Christ. It's to wear him. It's like I wear this coat, I put it on. And when a person comes in repentance and faith to Christ, he puts on Christ. He's clothed with Christ. Christ's righteousness is his own righteousness. His sinfulness is covered under Christ and his sacrifice, and now it's no longer he who lives, but Christ who lives in him, the hope of glory (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:27).

Now, what makes this such a story for Mother's Day is this: Monica was a woman who knew what was going on in her boy's life and wherever Augustine went, she kept up with him by way of letters and other things,

worrying constantly. But what did she do? She did the one thing that a mother can always do. She prayed for her boy, and she wouldn't quit. She wouldn't take no for an answer.

Turn with me, if you will, in your Bibles to the gospel of Luke 18. Luke 18 and verse 1. Luke 18:1. Monica never gave up. That's why Augustine is sometimes called the "Son of Tears." The son of tears. Luke 18 and verse 1, page 1,628, and as you're turning there, I think of my own mother.

I was raised in a Christian home, and like Augustine, I rebelled against it, and I fled from it, and without my parents knowing, I got drunk roughly once a week all through high school and lived a life of profligacy. At times I would say when people asked me, "Do you believe in God?" I would say, "I'm not sure. I think I'm an atheist." That's who I was.

And then I will remember that I had gotten drunk. It was the junior-senior prom, and I was a junior in high school, and I had gotten incredibly drunk the next day and had gone out with some of my friends with a rifle to the city dump to shoot rats. No kidding. Anyhow, I drank more and more of that Wild Turkey straight, ended up being at a house party where I was thoroughly obnoxious, and so people decided to put me in the back of a car and someone said, "We ought to call his doctor."

And someone knew my doctor's name, Dr. William Ragsdale, who also had taught me Sunday school. So, I end up with Dr. Ragsdale at the hospital who puts me in his car and drives around, and I guess he's thinking, "What do I do with this boy? I know his mother; I know his father." And he decided to take me home. Oh boy! That was the first time that my parents knew that I ever took a drink of alcohol.

My father had been a drunk, but he gave it up after my mother had prayed because he was a man who drinking bootleg whiskey, would become quite violent, and she would get down on her knees and say, "Lord, change him or kill him." And God changed my daddy.

So here I come home drunk, very belligerently, humiliatedly drunk, and I remember part of it very vividly. Dr. Ragsdale grabbed me by the hair and slammed my head against the wall, and I went to sleep having torn a feather pillow by ripping it apart with my teeth and my hands.

In the night, I woke up, and I went to the bathroom, and when I looked in the mirror, I had blood that had dried out of my right ear. And there were my mother and father, and I remember daddy's words, "We ain't gonna fuss at you. Just promise me you'll never drink again."

Oh yeah, of course, I swear. And of course, I did drink again. But that led to something, and what it led to is that my mother had a wake-up call.

As a parent, have you ever had a wake-up call when you realized, "Uh-oh, there's something going on here. I don't know what to do with it."

And do you know what would happen, because I've always had to get up at least once in the night as long as I can remember. Whenever I'd get up in the night, I'd look down the hall, and I could see into my mother's bedroom, and my mother was on her knees—on her knees—weeping and crying out to God for me, over and over and over again. And finally, that same year, on September 4<sup>th</sup>, my mother's prayers—as in the case of Augustine—my mother's prayers were answered—A son of tears like Augustine.

Luke 18, page 1,628.

"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men.'"

Now, I want you to think about that for a moment. That is a picture of many people who have power. If you get power in this world, you get there generally by means of things like hardening your heart and you begin to see things about people that disturb you greatly.

I remember when I was being trained as a police chaplain in Wichita, Kansas, back in 1973, they told me this, "You know, preachers believe everything about people, but policemen don't believe anything about people." In other words, policemen are cynical, and preachers tend to be naive, and I guess because I was both a policeman and a chaplain and a preacher, I'm kind of like those people where they halted between two opinions (1 Kings 18:21). And so anyhow, you discover something about human nature, and this judge—Jesus understood people—this judge neither feared God nor cared about people. Literally in Greek, he had no fear of God, meaning there was no external restraint on his behavior, and he held

people in contempt. He didn't respect people. He had seen too many people, and he just didn't have respect for them.

Now notice what happens here. He says there in verse 3, "And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him" —notice that tense there, this is repetitive action. She kept "coming to him with a plea." And what is she pleading? "Grant me justice against my adversary."

We don't know who her adversary was. Maybe somebody was trying to take her home. Maybe somebody was trying to steal other things from her. Maybe somebody had done her great harm. And she was defenseless.

Remember that the role of women in the ancient world was one of being extremely vulnerable and precarious, and if a woman were a widow and had no child, or her child were in jail, she is utterly defenseless in the ancient world. There was no welfare system, and this is before the church and people did not rush to take care of others. So, here's this woman and she has an adversary. Do you know you have an adversary? Your adversary is the devil (1 Peter 5:8). He wants to steal everything you've got. And so anyhow, Jesus has this woman saying to him over and over again, "Grant me justice against my adversary."

Now look at verse 4, "For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself" —notice this judge was self-aware. Not all politicians are self-aware, but many are, and this man was aware of himself, and he said, "Even though I don't fear God or care about people" —even though I don't fear God or care about people, he says— "Yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!" Wow!

So, you can just imagine him every time, just imagine that historic building that is situated in two states, the federal courthouse in Texarkana, imagine that and every time that judge is going to go into that building, here's this woman, "Your Honor, your Honor, please, please grant me help against my adversary!"

"Leave me alone."

He goes in and when he comes out of there, there she is again, dogging him, "Please, please help me, I need help!"

And she's wearing him out. He's sick and tired of it. Every time he goes in, every time he goes out, and probably finding out where he lived, she would sometimes go to his house and knock on the door and say, "Help me, help, I need help! Give me relief! Your Honor, please help me!"

And so even though this man had no fear of God—he had no external thing motivating him to do what was right—and he held people in contempt—he was a cynic—he responds, and he gives her what she asked for. Wow!

Now, we've got to get the point of the parable. The point of the parable is this is how we've got to approach God and the question immediately arises, why do we have to approach God as if he's an unjust judge? Is God an unjust judge? No. But the laws of the universe work a certain way, and we need never forget this: Though God loves us, and though God wants to hear and answer our prayers, and give us the things we're asking for, there are things that God cannot do.

You say, "I thought that God is omnipotent, he can do anything?" No, he can't do every single thing. What are things God cannot do?

God cannot lie. The Bible makes it absolutely plain, God never tells a lie, has never told a lie, will never tell a lie, because a lie is contrary to his nature.

("God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?" (Numbers 23:19)

("And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or have regret, for he is not a man, that he should have regret." (1 Samuel 15:29)

("In hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began." (Titus 1:2))

God cannot commit murder. Now, God kills people every day. He might kill somebody this very afternoon. If I've got to go, I'd like to go with Sandy together without suffering, but I don't want to die this afternoon. But God kills people every day, but God has never committed murder.

What is murder? Murder is the unlawful taking of a human life. God takes people's lives every day, but never unlawfully.

God never steals. What's in your pocketbook? God's money. What's in your body? Your health, God's health. Where are you going home this evening to take a nap? Your house, your bed. But don't you understand that God owns all of that. So, God—not only does God not steal—he cannot steal. He cannot lie.

There are many things that God cannot do because this is it: Why is something right and something wrong? Because it's based on God's own character. God's law is like a prism refracting light. It refracts God's own character. The reason that murder is wrong is because it's contrary to the character of God. The reason that adultery is wrong is it's contrary to the character of God. The reason that stealing is wrong is because it's contrary to the character of God. And so, God will never violate his own character. There are things he cannot do.

And so, what we see here is this: There are principles that make it impossible for God to hear and answer our prayers. What's the very first principle?

If you don't pray. If you don't pray, why do you expect God to hear your prayers? Maybe one time you were slamming on your brakes in order not to be rear-ending a vehicle and said, "Oh God, help me!" And that was the last time you prayed. It was about four years ago.

So, God can't answer the prayers you don't pray, and the other thing is you have to pray with faith. You've got to believe that somebody's there. When you dial up the phone, you've got to believe that somebody's going to answer and hear you. And you've got to believe that he wants to hear and answer your prayers ("And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that **he rewards those who earnestly seek him.**" (Hebrews 11:6)). You have to have faith. You have to have faith. If you don't have faith, you're not going to have your prayers answered.

And you've got to deal with sin in your life. "If I regard iniquity in my life, the Lord will not hear me," But God does hear (Psalm 66:18-19). And so the point is, what if you're sitting here this morning and you think about, "Oh, oh wow, I remember what I did just three days ago. O Lord." What do you do with that?

You can do one of two things. You can say, “Ah, forget about it. People have done worse than that.” Or you can say, “Lord, you’re right. I was wrong.” And you know the moment that you say, “Lord, you’re right. I was wrong,” God forgives you. So, it’s easy at that point.

So again, there are things that block and hinder prayer. So, what is Jesus telling us? Jesus is telling us that the way the world works because you have an adversary. Remember the widow had an adversary. Because you have an adversary who will always throw these things up to God (Zechariah 3:1), God requires us to pray earnestly and regularly and never give up and that’s the thing that we see here.

We remember Monica, Saint Monica, who pleaded with God with tears over and over and over again, “Save my brilliant boy! Lord, he’s so smart, he’s just too smart for his own good. Please save my boy!” And so, Monica’s prayers are answered by children singing on the other side of a wall, “*Tolle lege,*” as a book just happens to be open to the practical part of the book of Romans, “Make no provision for the lust of the flesh to obey it but put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 13:13-14) At that very moment, children are singing, and there’s the book open. Augustine sees it, and at that moment, the Spirit of the living God quickens those words into Augustine’s heart.

And here again is this picture of this widow crying out to God with tears, pleading with God. There’s something about weeping. The title of this sermon is “Weeping Mothers.” (I changed it to “Son of Tears.”) Weeping mothers, just like Monica wept and persisted with God. She didn’t give up. Over and over again, years passed, decades passed, but she never gives up. And I think of my mother on her knees, praying for my daddy. (I didn’t know about that because that’s before I was born.) But praying for me, pleading with God, “Lord, help me! Lord, help my boy! Lord, change him! Lord, make him into a Christian! Turn his heart!”

You know, nobody can be converted apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, but as mothers pray, as they weep before God, as they pour out their hearts, what happens is the Spirit of God moves, and it takes the Spirit of God to change a heart. Jesus said in John 6:44, “No man can come to me except my Father draw him.” God draws people to the Father through the Holy Spirit.

And so, we pray. We persist. The mothers pray. And then I'm struck with something else. You know because this is true for fathers as well. I remember David's words in his agony. You remember when his son Absalom had rebelled against him and was going to kill his own father, and you remember when David got word that Absalom had been killed? Those words in 2 Samuel 18:33, "Then the king trembled and went up to the chamber over the gate and wept. Thus he said as he walked, 'O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you. O Absalom, my son, my son!'"

And now I'd like you to turn with me to the book of Hebrews 5. Hebrews 5, and I just think again of tears and prayers—earnest prayers for something you have a great burden about often will produce tears. Hebrews 5 and we're looking at verse 7. Hebrews 5 and verse 7 and page 1,867. Hebrews 5 and verse 7. This is about the Lord Jesus Christ. So mothers, pray. Mothers, weep. Stain your bedspread with tears. Stain your Bible with tears. God's going to hear and answer those prayers. And look, here's the greatest encouragement of all, Hebrews 5:7. This is about the Lord Jesus. Look what we are told here.

"During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission."

That's quite a thought, isn't it? Jesus had to pray. Jesus, of course, was perfect. Jesus knew the love of the Father. There never was a time that Jesus did not know the love of the Father because from the very beginning of time, before time began, we have the one true and living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in blessed, united communion one with the other. He had always known the Father's love, yet coming to earth, he's coming into a realm that is estranged from God because God created the world, but the Bible tells us the world God created is not the world we live in. The world we live in is a world that was subjected to a curse and a judgment (Genesis 3:14-20; Romans 8:18-23; 1 Corinthians 15:21-26).

That's why there's death. That's why there's pain. That's why there's disease. And so, Jesus entering into our world takes on himself a true human nature. Jesus, who is truly God, in every sense whatsoever, one with the Father, one with the Holy Spirit, in becoming a human being there as a single-cell human being, where the Holy Spirit took a single egg from the virgin Mary and caused the Lord Jesus to be formed of that single egg. From



that moment on, Jesus took on human nature. He had a human body (John 1:14). He had a human soul (Mark 14:34). He had a human spirit (John 11:33). He had a human mind (Mark 13:32). He was tempted in all the ways you and I are tempted, but he never sinned (Hebrews 4:15).

But notice how he's heard, as he is in this world, a world of suffering, pain, separation, sickness, listen to what it says there. Again, going back. "In the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death." (Hebrews 5:7)

Do you think of Jesus weeping? Can you think of him weeping with a loud cry? Jesus is not that picture of Aryan beauty that you often see with blonde hair and nicely coiffed blonde hair. Jesus was a Middle Eastern person of somewhat swarthy olive skin. And Jesus was not like the British. You know the British, the ladies all wore hats to anything formal in church, and the men wore hats outside of church, like going to the horse races. They wore those top hats, very formal. What do they say about the British? Stiff upper lip.

Don't show emotions. And I know I'm probably over a third English and almost a third Scottish and another third French, so I don't know how that mixes together, because the French are a little more vocal. But the British, very reserved.

But what is the picture you have of Jesus? He cries out to God with a loud voice, weeping and wailing before God and petitioning, "Lord, help me! Lord, help me! Lord, deliver me!" And then we're told that he was heard because of his reverent submission (Hebrews 5:7).

Look at the next verse. It's a strange verse, isn't it? It says, "Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek." (Hebrews 5:8)

What does it mean that once he became perfect? Here's what it means: He was morally perfect. He had no sin, but he had to experience development. He had to experience growth. He learned about life as he observed life. He learned about people as he observed people. But the greatest teacher in

Jesus' life, the thing that matured him, again, not in a moral sense, but matured him as a human being, was what? Suffering.

Are you suffering today? Are you in agony today over something? Is something just eating your lunch? Is something really bothering you? Are you haunted about something?

“O God, what’s going to happen? What’s going to happen? What’s going to happen?” The Lord Jesus has done all of those things for you. He’s gone through it for you. He learned in his own suffering the things that taught him how to be the man he needed to be, and he was that man for you and me, and then he laid down his life for you and me on the cross and therefore he’s the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, that is, respond to the gospel (Hebrews 5:8).

And now I have a word for those who may be watching, maybe in Africa or Russia or even Saudi Arabia, where some people sometimes see these things, or China.

If you’re here today and you’re a mother, and you have a burden on your heart that just will not go away, it’s there, and day in and day out, it seems to get heavier, you see no matter what you’re saying, no matter how you try to plead with a child or a grandchild or a great-grandchild, the situation just seems to get worse and worse and worse.

I have a word for you, and that is, take heart. God heard the tears of Hannah (1 Samuel 1:10-18). God heard the tears of Saint Monica regarding her son, Saint Augustine. God heard my mother’s tears and cries on my behalf. And we have these promises throughout Scripture (Genesis 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:6; Acts 2:38-39; 16:31; 2 Timothy 1:3-5), and Jesus himself is the great example. Take heart.

The Lord Jesus Christ loves you. The Lord Jesus Christ wants to lift that burden off your shoulders. The Lord Jesus Christ is going to hear your prayers. Don’t give up. Don’t quit in discouragement. Keep on praying. Keep on weeping. Keep on wailing before God and crying out, “Lord, you know the need. You know the need of my child. Please, Lord, please, please, please send deliverance!”

And so, I say to all of us, I thank God for a praying, weeping mother who not only gave birth to me, but who gave spiritual birth to me through her prayers and tears, bringing me by the power of the Holy Spirit to come to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know him?

May we pray.

*Lord, we pray you'll take this message and use it to advance your kingdom in the hearts of people. We pray you would speak a word of encouragement to every mother who hears it. And, Lord, for those who have never experienced motherhood, we pray that they would take it to heart that they can have a part in spiritually birthing someone into the kingdom of God if they will not yield to bitterness, as Hannah was eaten up and devoured by bitterness, Lord, if they will not yield to bitterness, but keep petitioning you, you will give them a hundredfold in this life, children, houses, and lands. Lord, have mercy and hear our prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen.*