What is a Tear Bottle?

In Psalm 56:8 David prays, "You have taken account of my wanderings—put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in Your book?" David is referring to the custom of collecting tears in a tear bottle. These vessels were used to catch and preserve the owner's tears during times of grief and sorrow. When ancient tombs have been opened, tear bottles have been found in large numbers. Each member of the family owned a tear bottle, which was considered one of the most cherished possessions because it represented all the heartaches and sorrows of the individual. When a person died his tear bottle was buried with him.

On one occasion, Jesus was in the home of Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-40). A woman came into the house and washed His feet with her tears. It's unlikely she would have been able to cry enough tears to wash His feet, so it's very possible that she took her tear bottle with her and poured her tears on His dusty feet. Those tears could not be replaced, so she might have been buried without a bottle of tears next to her in the tomb.

David's prayer reminds us that God also has a "tear bottle" where He counts each pain and suffering, and remembers every tear that His children shed. Although you might be going through a difficult time right now and crying tears of pain and sorrow, God promises a better tomorrow to His children who trust in Him:

- "Weeping may endure for a night (now), but joy comes in the morning (future)." (Psalm 30:5).
- "Those who sow in tears (now) shall reap with joyful shouting (future)." (Psalm 126:5)
- "For I will turn their mourning (now) into joy (future) and will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow." (Jeremiah 31:13)
- "Blessed are those who mourn (now), for they shall be comforted (future)." (Matthew 5:4)
- "He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes…there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain (future)." (Revelation 21:4)

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