

The Day the Milk Spilled

The Day the Milk Spilled

... And 30 Other Bible-Based Meditations

Series # 5

Roger Ellsworth

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Purpose

My Coffee Cup Meditations are short, easy-to-read, engagingly presented devotions based on the Bible, the Word of God. Each reading takes a single idea or theme and develops it in a thought-provoking way so that you are inspired to consider the greatness of God, the relevance of the good news of the life, death, resurrection, and coming-again of Jesus, and are better equipped for life in this world and well prepared for the world to come.

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Dedication

Dedicated to my friend from youth,
Sandy Mullen

About This Book

This book is the result of the labors Roger Ellsworth and the thought he has given to various passages of Scripture over the years. You may read more about Roger on page 141.

We hope you will enjoy these Bible-based meditations. We would love to hear from you, so please send us a note to tell us what you think—which ones you liked most, and how they made a difference in your life or in the life of a family member, friend, or work associate. To reach us online, go to www.mycoffeecupmeditations.com/contact

MY COFFEE-CUP

MEDITATIONS

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From God's Word, the Bible...

*Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls —
Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

Habakkuk 3:17-18



The Day the Milk Spilled

“Don’t cry over spilled milk.” How many times have we heard that one? It’s a good saying. It means there’s no point in fretting and stewing over things that can’t be changed.

I can’t tell you how this saying came about. I wouldn’t be surprised if the first person to say it was a mother whose child spilled his milk and burst into tears. But that’s just a guess.

I do recall a day when I saw someone crying over spilled milk. The someone wasn’t a child. It was my dad. And the milk wasn’t the small amount in a glass. It was a lot of milk.

For years my parents tried to scratch a living out of a hardscrabble little farm near Mulberry Grove, Illinois. There wasn’t much money to be made from farming in those days, at least not from farming on our scale.

My parents would make some money when the crops were harvested, but that was annual income. As far as the

vital weekly income was concerned, they had to depend on their hens and their cows for what they called the “egg money” and the “milk money.”

They received the “egg money” when they sold their graded and boxed eggs to a merchant in Mulberry. And they received their “milk money” when a check arrived in the mail for the milk that was transported by truck from our little farm to town.

Our farm was isolated. It was a couple of miles from what my parents called the hard road. So there was a dirt road that extended from the hard road to our house and barn. The dirt road became a mud road when there was a lot of rain. When the road turned to mud, it was impossible for the milk truck to pick up our milk. On such days it was necessary for us to take the ten-gallon milk cans by tractor and trailer to the truck at the end of the hard road.

We were in this process one rainy day when disaster struck. The trailer hitch suddenly came loose and the trailer “tongue” flew up, sending the milk cans crashing into the mud. It was a strange sight, seeing that white milk cascading over the brown mud.

My dad wasn’t a crier. As far as I can remember, I saw him cry on only one occasion—the day the milk spilled.

There was nothing to do except re hitch the trailer, pick up the empty milk cans, turn the tractor around, and make our way back down the muddy road, wondering all the way how we would make it without “the milk money.”

Tears still well up when I think about it.

The milk in the mud left an unforgettable image in my mind, but it wasn’t the only thing. When it was time for our next meal, we all bowed our heads as my father gave thanks for our food. And the next Sunday we were all in our usual places at church. The giving of thanks before eating and the going to church also etched indelible images in my mind.

Through their praying and churchgoing, my parents taught me that we don't trust and serve God because we think in doing so we will purchase for ourselves a trouble-free life. We trust and serve God because He is God. We don't trust Him to do what we want done, but rather to do as He has promised to do. And He has never promised to keep the milk out of the mud.

The prophet Habakkuk could imagine a time when the fig tree would not blossom, the vines and olive trees would not produce, the fields would be barren, and there would be no livestock. In other words, he could imagine a time when the milk would be in the mud. So what does he say about such a time? Does he say that will be the time to stop loving and trusting God? Not at all! He rather says:

*Yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

If we want to rejoice, we must not look to the milk in the mud but rather to the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. There He purchased salvation for sinners so they can join Him in heaven where there will be no more milk in the mud and no more tears (Rev. 21:4).

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From God's Word, the Bible...

*He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does
not believe the Son shall not see life,
but the wrath of God abides on him.*

John 3:36



What about Jacob Eames?

They became very close friends when they were students at Providence College (later to be named Brown University)—Adoniram Judson and Jacob Eames.

Judson was brought up by godly parents. His father, after whom he was named, was a pastor. But when he went to college—as so often seems to be the case—the young Judson turned against the faith of his parents. One of the main reasons was his friend Jacob Eames. Jacob rejected the Bible and the God of the Bible. He was so intelligent and witty! And Adoniram was mesmerized—so much so that he joined Jacob in repudiating the Christian faith.

Knowing his new views would devastate his parents, Adoniram kept them to himself for a while. When he told his parents he had decided to travel, they tried to dissuade him. In the heat of disagreeing, Adoniram told his father that he no longer believed the Bible was the Word of God or Jesus was the Son of God.

Adoniram made his way to New York City with the hope of finding a career in the theater. It was not to be. Disappointed and dejected, he left the city. He stopped to spend the night in a village inn. It wasn't a restful night. A man in the next room was critically ill. As he heard the sick man groaning through the night, Adoniram was torn. On one hand, he wondered if this man was ready to die, and if he, Adoniram, was ready. On the other hand, he could imagine what his friend Jacob Eames would say to him if he were there with him: "Are you, the valedictorian of Brown University, going to allow yourself to be carried away by religious superstition?"

The next morning Adoniram asked the innkeeper about the man in the adjoining room. "He is dead," answered the innkeeper.

"Do you know who he was?" asked Adoniram.

The response was stunning: "Oh yes, a young man from the college in Providence. Eames, Jacob Eames."

That news caused Adoniram's mind to whirl. He couldn't get the word "Lost" out of his head.

Lost. In death, Jacob Eames was lost—utterly, irrevocably lost. Lost to his friends, to the world, to the future. Lost as a puff of smoke is lost in the infinity of air. If Eames' own views were true, neither his life nor his death had any meaning. . . . But suppose Eames had been mistaken? Suppose the Scriptures were literally true and a personal God real? Then Jacob Eames was already lost in a most desperate sense. For already, this moment, Eames knew his error—too late for repentance. . . any chance of remedy, of going back, of correcting, lost, eternally lost.¹

¹ (Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson*).

Realizing that his friend's haughty skepticism was no defense in the face of death, Adoniram turned to the gospel of Christ that he had so confidently repudiated. Eames' death caused Adoniram to see this: proud intellectualism can be a very delectable morsel, but it loses its appeal when served on the plate of death.

Adoniram Judson would go on to a life of serving that gospel as a missionary in Burma and to a life of incredible suffering for that gospel. Unlike his friend Jacob Eames, Adoniram would die believing that gospel and drawing comfort from it.

The gospel of Jesus Christ served as a dividing line for Adoniram Judson and Jacob Eames. Adoniram was on one side of it, and Eames on the other. It is still dividing. Each and every one of us is either on the Jacob Eames side of the gospel or on the Adoniram side. The former is the side of haughty, disdainful rejection; the latter the side of humble acceptance. The Eames side is that of dying without hope; the Adoniram side makes dying nothing more than falling asleep in the arms of the Lord.

On which side are you? If you are on the Eames side, you don't have to remain there. You can be on the Adoniram side by repenting of your sins and trusting in the Lord Jesus.

Many maintain that they are on neither side. They insist that they are neutral. But Jesus said: "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad" (Matt. 12:30). Are you with Him or against Him?

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From God's Word, the Bible...

For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus' sake.

2 Corinthians 4:5



The Greater Story

April of 1846 found Adoniram Judson, missionary to Burma, back in America for the first time since his departure in 1812. One of those April days found him in Hamilton, New York, where he addressed a congregation of eager hearers. The building was packed. Due to an ongoing problem with his throat, Adoniram spoke for only fifteen minutes about the Lord Jesus Christ. His fiancée, Emily Chubbock, said the message was about what Christ “has done for us, and what we owe to him.” Emily characterized the message as one of “singular simplicity” and “touching pathos.”

But there was a problem. Both Adoniram and Emily sensed that his words had not been well received. Emily noted: “... it was evident, even to the most unobservant eye, that most of the listeners were disappointed.”

After the service, she learned the reason. The people had come expecting Judson to tell the exciting story of his time in Burma. When Emily related this to Adoniram, he responded that there is nothing better to tell than “the wondrous story of Jesus’ dying love.”

Adoniram Judson certainly had many interesting stories to tell about his missionary service in Burma. He could have talked about frightening voyages, frustrating delays, life-threatening diseases, heart-wrenching imprisonment, and death. Yes, he knew all about death, having lost two wives and six children in the first thirty-three years of his time in Burma.

But to him the story of his service in Burma could not begin to compare with the story of Jesus.

There are things to learn from Adoniram's experience in Hamilton, New York. One thing is that it is possible to keep the wonder of salvation, no matter how long we have been saved and no matter how many difficulties we have encountered. Adoniram had kept it, and so should we. But the flip-side is true also. It's possible to lose the wonder of salvation. I'm not talking about losing salvation itself, but rather losing the sense of amazement over it. Many people in Adoniram's congregation, if not most, had apparently lost that sense of amazement.

The author of Hebrews bemoaned the fact that he had so much of a wondrous nature to share with his readers, but they had become "dull of hearing" (Heb. 5:11).

How do we "stack up" in the wonderment business? Are we in Adoniram's stack or that of his hearers?

Doesn't the current tendency of pastors and churches to embrace an entertainment mentality tell us that the saving work of Jesus doesn't thrill us? Doesn't the tendency of preachers to pitch their preaching toward coping with the challenges of life tell us that they're not as thrilled about the Lord Jesus as they should be? If we are going to preach the Bible, we must preach the Lord Jesus because He is the subject of the Bible.

Adoniram and Emily were married on June 2, 1846. On July 11, they set sail for Burma, arriving there in late No-

vember. But their time there would be brief. Adoniram became so gravely ill that it was decided that he must leave. He died on board the *Aristide Marie* that was carrying him away on April 12, 1850. A coffin was constructed for him, and in the darkness of the night, it was released into the darkness of the ocean to await the day that the sea will give up the dead who are in it (Rev. 20:13).

How are we to explain Adoniram Judson? How are we to explain his remarkable accomplishments and his ability to absorb suffering? We could say that by nature he possessed unusual strength of character, and we would be correct. But I think if Adoniram were asked to explain himself, he might very well do so in terms of the message he preached in Hamilton, New York—the message of what Christ has done for His people and what they owe Him. Adoniram would, I think, tell his story in terms of the far greater story, the story of Jesus. He loved that story, and he would urge us to love it as well.

*Tell me the story of Jesus,
Write on my heart every word.
Tell me the story most precious,
Sweetest that ever was heard.*
(Fanny J. Crosby)

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From God's Word, the Bible...

Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying: "I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the LORD your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn . . ."

1 Kings 2:1-3