

THE PSALMS IN HUMAN LIFE

PART 7

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PSALM 126

1 *When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed.*

2 *Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."*

3 *The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.*

4 *Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like streams in the Negev.*

5 *Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.*

6 *He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.*

Its Title. *A Song of Ascents, Degrees, or Going up.*

Its Topic. *An Expression of Gratitude.*

Its Truth. *A Fulfilment of Prophecy.*

It can be said that this *Psalm* was written to commemorate the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon. To fully understand the truth about what is contained in this *Psalm*, it will help us if we look into the Captivity of the Jews.

In the Book of the prophet **Jeremiah** it is recorded in **chapter 25**, the prophecy given by him concerning the captivity of the Jews. Let's read from **verse 11 to 13**.

11 *And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.*

12 *And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the*

Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.

13 *And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.*

Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem, and took its inhabitants captive. Among those who were transported to Babylon, were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These were there during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, and would not bow down to the golden image that the king had said all were to bow the knee to. Following the fall of the Babylonian Empire, the Jews came under the rule of the Medo Persian Empire.

It was during this time that some of the captives were allowed to return to Jerusalem. We read in **Ezra chapter 2 vs 1 & 2. and 5 v 1**, that during the reign of Cyrus, Zerrubable led a party back from captivity. With Zerrubable on this occasion were Haggai and Zechariah, the prophets of the Lord. Zerrubable is a type of Christ who also led captivity captive (**Eph. 4**).

During the times of hardship these prophets encouraged the people. Particularly at the time when there was opposition to the rebuilding of the Temple, these servants of the Lord were a great help to the people, bringing to them a word from the Lord.

Following this there was another party of captives who were set free by Artaxerxes, who was then the king. This party was led by Ezra the Priest.

It was whilst Artaxerxes was king, that Nehemiah enquired as to the well being of Jerusalem, which resulted in him being allowed to return, and then build the walls of the City. This was completed in seven weeks.

It could have been one of the people in one of these two parties that, having been set free from their captivity, wrote this particular *Psalm*.

This *Psalm* therefore, is an expression of what was experienced by the captive on being set free.

We will now look at the *Psalm*, and analyse it to glean what we can from it, because I feel it has relevance to how we felt when the Lord Jesus set us free from the bondages imposed upon us by the devil.

1. WHAT THE FREED CAPTIVE EXPERIENCED. Verses 1 & 2

These verses show us the **joy** of their deliverance. The realm they were now in seemed to be unreal, and yet it was very real. Have you ever had the experience where you have had to pinch yourself to see if you were dreaming or not? This was the feeling these freed captives experienced.

It is the feeling of astonishment, the great realisation dawning upon you that God has actually turned around a situation. I think these verses show us the absolute greatness of the ability of God, and His power to turn a situation right around. What happened to the Jews was, in their terms, seemingly so unreal that they thought they were dreaming.

Spurgeon in '**Psalms of David**' wrote:

“Is this a dream? O if it be a dream,
Let me sleep on, and do not wake me yet.”

As the fact of their freedom dawned upon them, they said “*Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy*”. There was an appreciation shown to the Lord, and it was expressed in two ways. There was a **manifestation of laughter**, and an **expression of singing**.

Laughter and singing are an expression of **joy** which is felt in the heart. I don't think there is enough laughter or singing which spring from a feeling of **joy** in the heart. The world needs a comedian to make them laugh; they need the pop singer or crooner to make them happy. As the Lord's people we can be open to the Holy Spirit who can fill us with **joy**, which then make us laugh and sing.

We have the **joy** of the Lord in our hearts, and it is this that gives us the desire to do these things.

Some question whether it is dignified to laugh in the company of God's people, or even in a church service.

The following are two verses that refer to **laughter**.

Genesis 21 v 6 *Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me".*

Ecclesiastes 3 v 4 *"A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance".*

The following two verses refer to **joy**.

Isaiah 12 v 3 *"With **joy** you will draw water from the wells of salvation".*

Isaiah 55 v 12 *"You will go out in **joy** and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands".*

2. WHAT THE ENEMY SAID. verse 2.

Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."

The enemy can only stand and be astonished at the greatness of that ability in God, to turn a situation around. I can imagine the enemy saying, whenever he sees a soul respond to the Lord Jesus Christ, *"the Lord has done great things for them"*.

The turn around of the situation for the people, being held captive in Babylon, is quite amazing. No conqueror wants to release the people over whom he has become the champion. No ruling king wants to see the release of those he has in captivity. However, on this occasion God worked a miracle. He softened the heart of those in authority and made them tender towards those in captivity, which resulted in their release. Look now at.

3. HOW THE FREED RESPONDED. verse 3

The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy. (NIV)

The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. (KJ)

There was an outburst and an acclamation of how great the Lord is, which came from the mouths of those freed. They knew it was only the Lord who could possibly have done what had been accomplished. The king, who had been holding them captive, had no authority over the Lord, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Notice here in this verse, the words: “*Whereof we are glad*”. They were glad the Lord had done great things for them. Their lot now was a happy one; they had nothing to be unhappy about.

They were not like the children of Israel when travelling in the Sinai wilderness who were full of moans and groans because everything in the garden at that time was not rosy. These people saw that what had happened to them was something great. It was the beginning of even greater things.

4. WHAT THE FREED REQUESTED. verse 4

Restore our fortunes O LORD, like streams in the Negev. (NIV)

Turn again our captivity O LORD, as the streams in the south. (KJ)

Here was an appeal for further help. If God could restore them to their own land, then He could do anything and there was nothing beyond His ability.

The people had been restored **to the land**, now they were asking for the restoration **of the land**.

5. WHAT THE FREED CAPTIVE BELIEVED. verses 5 & 6.

Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.

He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him

In **verse 5** it seems almost as if the writer goes into some prophetic realm, because **verses 5 & 6** are statements of promise. These verses show what will happen when certain things are done.

This is what they believed. Sow the seed on well watered ground and it will produce a good harvest. Quite a picture is revealed to us when we read these verses. You can almost see the people walking over the land, the very land which had been spoiled by the enemy. It bore not fruit, it produced nothing only weeds. We now see a people who realise the true value of the land. That by cultivation and fertilisation and having the right mixture, the end result would be, that they will come rejoicing bringing their harvest with them. It is no wonder they thought they were dreaming - God had restored them to their land. Under the various men He had restored the walls of the city; the Temple was rebuilt; exiles were coming back to where they belonged, and now all they wanted was the restoration of the land so that it produced what it had for them in the past - a land flowing with milk and honey. By them doing their part and God doing His, the work would be complete.