

# Psalms of Ascent

## Message 5

### II. Those Who Sow in Tears Shall Reap with Shouts of Joy —Shall Enjoy the Fruitful Life

**Psalm 126:** <sup>1</sup> When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream. <sup>2</sup> Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them.” <sup>3</sup> The Lord has done great things for us, And we are glad. <sup>4</sup> Bring back our captivity, O Lord, As the streams in the South. <sup>5</sup> Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy. <sup>6</sup> He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves with him.

#### Monday

*I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members (Rom. 7:21-23).*

*You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4).*

*When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream (Psa. 126:1).*

#### A. The experience of being brought back from captivity

This psalm tells us that the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion. In our spiritual life, we will often have the experience of being brought back from captivity. Many times we are captured, yet many times, the Lord brings us back to where we belong and lets us enjoy the freedom of the sons of God. Therefore, in spiritual experience, being captured and being brought back is a common experience for

Christians, for those who are pursuing the Lord.

Psalm 126 mentions both the return from captivity and the sowing while weeping. What do they mean? The Israelites had been captured to the Gentile land of Babylon. What does that have to do with sowing while weeping? What does being captured mean in our New Testament experience? In Romans 7 Paul tells us that he was captured by the law of sin in the members of his body. Therefore, the members of his body obeyed the law of sin. We also are being captured by the law of sin. This is something that we often experience. We get captured but in spirit we return. We often get captured and then brought back. The law of sin captures us and causes us to sin; however, the law of the Spirit of life releases us from captivity to save us. It brings us back to the enjoyment of Christ. When the Israelites failed and left the promised land, their greatest loss was the loss of the blessing of the promised land. Our greatest loss is to lose the enjoyment of Christ. So Paul said that if we try to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law, we fall from grace; this is to be captured away from the enjoyment of Christ. In our experience, we are thus separated from Christ, fallen from grace. This is a great loss. If we Christians like this with a separation between us and Christ, we can no longer enjoy the grace of God. This is a great loss. So we need to be released from captivity, from the bondage of the flesh.

## **Tuesday**

*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain (John 12:24).*

### **B. Reaping of the richness of life by sowing ourselves, dying, and resurrecting with the lord**

This chapter, on one hand, talks about being captured and brought back, and on the other hand, it talks about sowing and reaping. Being captured causes anguish, while being brought back is joyful; sowing

is with tears, while reaping is with shouts of joy. Therefore, these two metaphors indicate the same experience.

1. Sowing—going through the process of death and resurrection, and releasing life
  - a. The Lord Jesus is the first grain of wheat; we who believe in him are also grains of wheat. We have the life of wheat inside of us. If we want one grain of wheat to become many, or if we want life to be released, we need to sow this one grain into the earth. Through death, this life inside the wheat grain can be released. When this life is released, it will grow and produce more grains as our Lord Jesus Christ said, “some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold.”

Within a seed is life. The Lord said that He was a grain of wheat that would fall into the ground and die (John 12:24). In death the shell of the grain was broken and the divine life was released. To sow is to release the divine life from the out shell. The result of the release of life can be thirty-fold, sixty-fold or even a hundred-fold. To return from captivity is related to the matter of sowing and reaping; it is another aspect of the same thing. We need to be released from the bondage of the flesh, then we can enjoy God’s riches through the Spirit of life and the divine life within us will not be bound. When we fall in the flesh we lose our enjoyment; the divine life within us is restricted. The seed needs to fall to the ground and die for the divine life to be released in resurrection. In the Lord’s crucifixion His divine life was released. In resurrection He produced many grains.

The last thing that the Lord Jesus said on the cross was, “It is finished” meaning that salvation was completed, redemption paid for the debt of sin, and the old man was crucified. John also recorded that He gave up His spirit. The soldiers broke the legs of the criminals were crucified with the Lord; but when they came to Jesus, He was dead already so they did not break His bones. Then one of the soldiers thrust his spear into the Lord’s side. Blood and water flowed out from Him. Redemption was done but blood and water still flowed out

meaning that this is not for redemption but for the dispensing of life. His outward flesh was being broken for blood and water to flow out, for the divine life to be released. The blood was mixed with water; the release of the divine life was based on redemption. Many grains were produced by the death of one grain.

To sow is to put yourself into the ground, into death so that the outward shell can be broken and God's divine life can be released. Psalm 126 is not speaking of the Lord Jesus sowing Himself into the ground but that we have to sow ourselves into the ground. We are the seed. To sow into the ground is to put ourselves to death so that our outward flesh can be broken and God's divine life can be released. God's divine life is within us; all of who have been redeemed have God's life. This life needs to reproduce; the seed needs to grow and bear fruit.

Here it says that those who sow and reap will reap with joy. This shows the contrast; when they are brought back from captivity they are laughing with joy. They wept while sowing but then reaped with joy. To return from captivity, to be released from our flesh, to sow, is the release of the divine life that was bound by the flesh. Such a short psalm speaks of such a marvellous reality.

## **Wednesday**

*But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!* (Luke 12:50).

*However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth* (John 16:13).

- b. When a farmer sows during a famine, he must experience deep internal anguish or pain. The food that is sowed into the earth is spoiled and it must seem to be a waste and a big loss.
- c. Therefore, the Bible tells us that when people sow, they sow in tears and pain. However, they still need to sow. It may seem to be a sacrifice and a loss, but they and their families will have plenty of food when the harvest comes.

This is the story of sowing.

- d. At the end of Jesus' ministry on the earth, He said, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). He had God's life and a human body; the human body limited the release of the life inside of Him. The Lord was willing for his body to be broken on the cross, in order for the life inside of Him to have the opportunity to be released and for many to gain God's life.
- e. This is the meaning of sowing: our outer man should be broken so that our inner man can be strengthened. Paul said, "Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). This is the metaphor of sowing and reaping.

When we read the Old Testament we must have revelation to apply it to the New Testament. We need to understand the Old Testament according to the revelation of the the New Testament. Paul knew the Old Testament; after he was saved he received the revelation of Christ that the Spirit showed him. The Lord said, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). All the Old Testament becomes open to us. When Paul was writing the New Testament epistles, he used the revelation of the Old Testament as the background; the Old Testament was not just words to him.

We want to be released so we are willing to sow ourselves into death. Our flesh will be broken. When we are captured in the flesh we experience darkness, weakness, death and pain. When you are released from the flesh you have life, light, strength, satisfaction, joy and peace. When we are brought back from captivity we are filled with laughter and singing.

The Psalms of Ascent bring us higher and higher. The first experience is to be saved from the world. Then we need to be released from our flesh, to be saved from the bondage of the flesh. Then we need to deny ourselves and put ourselves away. We need to take up our cross and follow the Lord. If this word becomes a reality in us,

then the church here will be filled with light. This portion is about being released from the flesh and being renewed. Once we are released we can enter into the Spirit of life and enjoy all His riches. We want to sow ourselves but sowing is with weeping because none of us likes to be put to death.

## Thursday

*Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16).*

*Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves with him (Psa. 126:5-6).*

### 2. Restoration and freedom

- a. God's people have been captured to Babylon, which indicates that even though we have God's life, our flesh is in captivity and in prison. This is like what Paul said: "For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:19-24).
- b. Many of God's children are in the same situation in these days. Their flesh is captured and God's life inside of them is in captivity. Praise and thanks be to God, for those who are captured will be restored! Bring back the captivity of Zion! Our Lord is performing a releasing work within us, bringing us back into Christ Jesus and the enjoyment of the freedom of God.

- c. Therefore, what has been mentioned in this chapter, whether it is sowing or reaping, is talking about the same thing on the spiritual side. This is how God's people are set free and how God's people enjoy the freedom of being God's children.

In a time of famine it is painful to sow the seed because once you sow them they are gone. But praise the Lord, even though you are weeping while you are sowing, but when harvest comes you will be joyful and can supply the whole family. You need to give up something but when harvest comes you will reap a lot more. You will have much more riches of life. The sowing is with weeping but the harvest is full of joy. These two things go together in our spiritual experience.

We all need to experience the Lord's death so that His divine life can be released. Our shell needs to be broken so that we can dwell in Christ and enjoy His riches, that His divine life can expand. When the seed is sown the life is released. One seed does not produce just one more seed. Perhaps you only have handfuls to sow but when you reap there may be many bundles. This is the reproduction of life. If we are willing to put ourselves to death so that our flesh can be broken then life will be released and reproduce. To sow is to go through death and resurrection for life to be released. This is a very important experience after we are saved that we must have in the church life. Our outer man must be broken so that our inner man may be strengthened and renewed day by day.

## **Friday**

*For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you (2 Cor. 4:11-12).*

*Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin (Rom. 6:6).*

3. Accepting the death of the cross
  - a. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He not only bore our sins, He also bore us. He died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3); He also died for us (Rom. 5:8).
  - b. Rom. 6:6: “Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.” Jesus Christ has died for us on the cross, so we also died in Him. This is what God has accomplished in Christ. Paul said, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” We need to believe and accept such a truth.
  - c. The difficulties in these days are that when things happen, we tend to face them ourselves. In this way, the life of Christ inside of us is bound by our flesh, and we fall and fail. We are brought into death; there is no peace, joy, or life.
  - d. If we see this reality before the Lord: “I belong to the Lord. I give myself to the Lord. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. I am dead already! O Lord! You have already put my old man to death, and now I can simply live for You.” This is the time that you need to experience this grain falling into the earth and dying. Your outer man, both your flesh and everything natural, is dead. The life of God is released inside of you. Not only is it released, it also increases. It increases a hundredfold.
  - e. This is God’s salvation. He wants us to be released from our outer man, so that our inner man can be renewed day by day. This is the message from this chapter, which has the two aspects of the cross: termination and germination. There cannot be germination if there is no termination. If we want to be Christians who are alive, we need to pass through termination. Our outer man should die and our inner man should be alive. Only when we live by our inner man alone, can we say that we are truly God’s people.

To return is to be released from the flesh to enjoy the freedom in Christ. We need both experiences—to put ourselves to death so that life can be released and be expressed through us. In 2 Corinthians 4 Paul said that the death of Christ operated in him so that the life of Christ could be expressed through him. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians while he was in Macedonia on his third journey; his life was already very mature. His experience with the Lord was already very high. But he still was always bearing about in his body the death of the Lord Jesus that that life of Jesus would be manifested in his body. We who are alive are always being delivered unto death for Jesus sake that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. This is even higher than putting our flesh to death; it is to allow the death of Christ to work in us. We are willing to experience being put to death because what the Lord has already accomplished on us. When the Lord died on the cross He died for our sins and we also died with Him. Now we need to apply the death of Christ to ourselves. The death of Christ is applied to us so that the life of Jesus can be manifested in our bodies. This is a very important revelation in the New Testament and a very important experience in our Christian life. We need to continually experience that we are crucified with Christ. It is no longer us who live but Christ lives within us. We must say to the Lord, “I don’t want remain in my flesh, to live by my flesh, to try to please You by myself” so that the Lord can release us.

## **Saturday**

*When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing (Psa. 126:1-2a).*

*But the father said to his servants, “Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” And they began to be merry (Luke 15:22-24).*

### **C. Returning and dreaming**

1. “When Jehovah brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream.” This indicates that when God turns to us as we turn to Him (turning or returning), we think we are dreaming. When we turn to God, He also turns to us.
2. This is like the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15; there are two turnings in this chapter. One is the prodigal son who returns from far away; however, when he returned, his father also turned to him. They met each other on the way.
3. At that time, the prodigal son was like those who dream. He just wanted to come back and be one of the hired servants. His father told his servant to bring quickly the best robe and put it on his son, he put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And asked to bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let everyone eat and celebrate. When the son sat at the feast, he was like those who dream. When the prodigal son returned home, it felt like a dream.
4. On one hand, we need to be active before God. We need to be willing to tell the Lord: “Lord, I want to turn to You. I don’t want to live in the flesh.” On the other hand, when we turn to God, God will turn to us. The Bible says, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8). The Lord also says, “He who abides in Me, and I in him” (John 15:5).
5. Christians need to be those who dream. We need to dream and hope to attain the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13), to enjoy the freedom of being God’s children. We hope that Christ can be released inside of us, can be formed and constituted within us, and can be manifested in us. This is our dream.
6. Our dream needs to become true step by step. Every day that we put to death the deeds of the body by the spirit, Christ will be formed and increase in us. We are like those who dream, and all our dreams become true. The author of this psalm had been through this experience. He said, “Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing.”

Psalm 126 speaks of those who were brought back from captivity, who returned to God. When we turn to God, God will turn to us. When the Israelites returned from captivity God raised up the prophet Zachariah to speak to them. Chapter 1, verse 3 says, “‘Return to Me,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘and I will return to you,’ says the Lord of hosts.” God is calling us to turn to Him so that He would return to us. Who has the first move? We do! If you don’t turn to Him, He will not turn to you. We must take the initiative in many spiritual experiences to turn to Him. This is the same in principle as when the Lord said that if we abide in Him He will abide in us. We must take the first step to abide in Him. The result is that He abides in us. James 4:8 says, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” The Bible is filled with examples of this. God called to the Israelites to return to Him. Turning to Him is the secret of being blessed. We experience the return from captivity when we turn to God so that He can draw near to us.

I used to be troubled when I read the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. The prodigal son left. Why didn’t the father go and find him if he loved him so much? Why didn’t he send a servant to go look for him? God doesn’t do that because He is waiting for the prodigal son to return; then He will draw near to him. This is an important spiritual principle. The prodigal son must first return before God will turn to him. Once the son said, “My father’s house is so rich; why must I die of hunger? I must return to my father. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Please let me be one of your servants.” He thought he could only be a servant; he didn’t realize that the father would turn to him when he returned. While he was still far away the father ran to him and kissed him. When he turned back to the father, the father turned to him. This shows the heart of our Father. The son thought that he was no longer worthy because he had offended his father but his father did not let him say what he wanted to say. All God’s riches will be given to us when we return. The best robe, shoes, and a ring was put on him and the fatted calf was slaughtered for a feast at his return. Like the psalmist, the prodigal son must have thought that this was like a dream. He was clothed and feasting and everyone was rejoicing. This is the experience of being released. The father said

that it was as if his son had returned from the dead, his lost son was found. We must touch the heart of our father. Yes, we will fail, but as long as we return God will turn to us. The faster we turn, the better. don't wait until you are half dead. As soon as you realize that you are away from the Father, turn back.

## **Sunday**

*Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us, And we are glad (Psa. 126:2b-3).*

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now (Rom. 8:18-22).*

### **D. God has done great things**

1. Although God's creation of the earth is a great thing, it cannot compare to how God is changing us, dishonourable people, to attain to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The work of the new covenant is the greatest work. Today, all things are waiting to see this great thing. All we need to do is believe in Him, obey Him, accept Him, and cooperate with Him, in order for God to do this work among us. When the Gentiles see this, they cannot but say, "The Lord has done great things for them."
2. We also need to rise up and testify, "Jehovah has done great things for us." This testimony is very powerful. Today, when people look at us, may they see not us but Christ, just as Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ!" How glorious! May God

have mercy on us. Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy!

God always loves us; He is always willing to give us grace so we should have this kind of experience many times. “God, I don’t want to live in my flesh. I come back to You.” Then we will be released from our flesh, experience the freedom of the Spirit, and enjoy the riches of life. Others will say, “The Lord has done great things for you.” It is a great thing to be released from our flesh to enjoy freedom with God’s people in the church life. No miracle is as great as this. When we have this testimony, we all will say that the Lord has done great things for us. We will rejoice. This joy is a corporate joy. Don’t be like the elder son who worked every day but was not happy when his brother came back. He said, “I worked so hard every day. You didn’t slaughter a fatted calf for me.” We need to rejoice together.

The real great thing is the change in life, the release from the flesh. Nothing else is as great as this. When God created the universe God only spoke and it came into being. So many scientists have been studying the universe for generations but to God it was very simple; He only spoke and it came into being. But for God to come into us and transform us so that we all can become the new creation is very great. One day we will be manifested causing all the other creatures to praise God. This is a great thing. We must learn to appreciate God’s work in His new creation. When you see a brother or sister being saved, someone is being released from their flesh, someone is being transformed, someone is willing to be sown into death to produce many grains, then we need to rejoice together. Hallelujah! This is the church life. This is what God treasures. We also must treasure these experiences. We must subjectively experience such a salvation so that God’s life can work in us and produce such a wonderful result. What is the old creation? Anything that does not have God’s life is the old creation. When God’s life enters into us we become a new creation. This is what God is doing today and wants to gain. God wants all His redeemed people to become a new creation to be manifested in the universe. Romans 8 tells us that all creation is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God so that it also may

enjoy the freedom of the sons of God. Creation is waiting for us. Creation is groaning while waiting for us to hurry up and be transformed. We must reach the end of the New Testament so that even our body can enter into glory. Tell the trees and animals that you are growing so that the glory of the Lord will come.