

## ***Today's faithfulness for tomorrow's harvest*** (Psalm 126)

What is helpful for you today, to make it through this new year and end well? The Jews who journeyed to Jerusalem for their yearly festivals, reminded themselves with Psalm 126 what helped them. They looked back with joy on what God had done, they prayed, and they set about to do what they needed to do in anticipation of God doing further great things. You can do the same.

### **I. *Ponder joyfully God's redemption***

1. *Jewish pilgrims recalled the miraculous work of God in restoring them to Jerusalem.* God's miraculous intervention on behalf of Israel could be seen especially in their restoration to the Land of Israel after seventy years in exile. The Babylonian empire was unexpectedly overthrown and the new Medo-Persian ruler, Cyrus, not only allowed their return, he encouraged the rebuilding of the Temple and returned the Temple articles which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away. It was so fantastic, it seemed unreal, like a dream.
2. *Jewish pilgrims recalled their joy at what God had done.* Especially when the foundation of the Temple was laid, their shouts of joy were so great that the sound was heard from far away.
3. *Jewish pilgrims recalled the testimony of the nations.* Even their pagan neighbors gifted them with silver, gold, and other goods when they left to return to the land (Ezra 1:6). Their neighbors recognized that the God of the Jews, Jehovah, was doing great things for them.
4. *Jewish pilgrims affirmed God's work and rejoiced.* God's work in the past was a reason for joy both in the past and in the present.

Ponder God's great salvation in Jesus Christ and rejoice. Rejoice always (1 Thessalonians 5:16; Philippians 4:4). Remember that the believer has every spiritual blessing in Jesus Christ.

### **II. *Pray expectantly for God's intervention***

1. *Prayer acknowledges our need.* God has helped, but more was needed. Only a remnant was in the land and they frequently reverted to former sinful ways. Peace and righteousness were not yet in the land. So they prayed.
2. *Prayer turns to the Lord, the only one who can meet that need.*
3. *Prayer expects further great things from God.* They hoped for an answer like "streams in the Negev" — that dry, desert-like southern region of Israel. The start of the rainy season brought rushing torrents of water down through the wadis quickly turning that arid land into a garden of green grass and colorful flowers. Prayer expects blessings beyond what we can ask or think (cf. Ephesians 3:20). Though following Christ can mean suffering and persecution, there are great spiritual blessings and a glorious eternity with Christ.

### **III. *Persevere purposefully in God's program***

1. *Sowing and reaping:* One principle in the figure of sowing and reaping is the truth that you reap what you sow. Hosea warned the Jews of this decades earlier (Hosea 10:12–13) and the apostle Paul repeats the warning (Galatians 6:7–8). The returned Jewish remnant experienced this when they neglected the house of God to panel their own houses. By limiting their harvest, God taught them a spiritual lesson. Focus on what God wants and there will be a joyful harvest.
2. *Weeping and joy:* Their weeping could have had a physical cause and a spiritual cause. Physically there is hardship in sowing, particularly after the exile. Spiritually, both the exile and discipline after the return revealed their sinfulness and the need for repentance. Repent and a restored relationship to God will bring joy. Persevere in the hard work of God's business, because there is joy ahead, just as Jesus did (Hebrews 12:2–3; cf Galatians 6:9). One day tears will be wiped away (Revelation 21:4).
3. *Seed and sheaves:* a few seeds can produce a great crop. God rewards greatly faithfulness in a little (cf. Matthew 25:14–30).

You reap what you sow, so sow rightly and persevere.

The principles of this psalm reappear in Romans 12:12. "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." The believer looks forward joyfully to what God will do because of what He had done, endures tribulation as he or she follows Christ, and persists in prayer. This is your task today to end well.

*For further thought and discussion:*

- What convinces you that God loves you? Does that bring you joy? When does it help to reflect on this?
- Are you satisfied with your prayer life? Why/why not? In light of the psalm what might help improve how and how often you pray?
- What challenges in your life especially require perseverance? Are you anticipating a joyful harvest?
- What are the "little things" to sow in your life?