

SOWING AND REAPING
Psalm 126:5, 6

Intro: One of the Psalms of the Ascents.

— Obviously written after some great deliverance--probably the return from Babylon in Ezra's day.

The picture is of some who realize that the Lord has done great things for them, and they are glad.

But they realize that others who have come with them have not really experienced a change of heart, and it grieves them. Perhaps there is the thought, too, that those who stayed in the land are actually far from the Lord. Remember that people were not saved in that day just because they were Jews, but it was necessary to believe then as it is now.

So we have the picture of a sower, a figure that the Lord Jesus used in His parables--the sower going forth weeping, sowing the seed of the Word (Matt. 13:19), with the promise that there will be a harvest, and that the sower will come back with rejoicing!

Obviously these two verses have some very important lessons for us as witnesses today, and in the evangelization of the world.

— Let us notice what those lessons are.

The first thing to note is that we have in these two verses,

I. A PARALLELISM (Psa. 126:5, as compared with verse 6).

This was common in Hebrew poetry.

The repetition shows both the certainty and the immediacy of the promise. See what Joseph said to Pharaoh in Gen. 41:32.

It is also to clarify the meaning by bringing out in one statement things that are not mentioned in the other. The repetition of any part is for emphasis.

II. THE PARTICULARS.

These are followed by THE PROMISE, but we need to note the particulars first.

— There are three of them.

A. The sower went forth.

This suggests two things: (1) He went from someone;

(2) He went to others.

The question is: Whose idea was this sowing? And the answer has to be, that it was the Lord's. Therefore, the sower comes forth from the Lord. What a wealth of meaning there is in that statement!

Long ago I noticed that statement in Mark's account of the sending forth of the twelve that he prefaced it all with this word:

And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach (Mark 3:14).

This speaks of our fellowship with the Lord, of the time that we spend with Him. Many of those who profess to be the Lord's people may discount this, but the emphasis is there, nevertheless. We will never be burdened as we should unless we know the intimacy of communion with the Lord.

But where were they to go?

These Israelites were to go among the people of their own nation. We are to go to those in the world around us. It may be that we need to go to some who profess to be of the Lord's people, but whose lives deny it. We go because the Lord told us to go, and we go because they will not come!

How important it is for us to understand this! Cf. Acts 1:8.

But notice the second point:

B. He was to go forth weeping. Both verses say this.

Some people can fake their tears. The Lord was certainly not encouraging anything like that. These were genuine tears, tears like our Lord shed, tears that are poured out before the Lord, and tears that may even be seen by the people to whom we go.

Why would we cry?

1. We cry because we want to see people saved, but they are not, or will not, listen to us.
2. We cry because we are so helpless.
3. We often cry because some appear to have come to the Lord, and then we realize that they have not.

4. We cry because of the destiny of those who are without Christ.
5. Sometimes we cry for joy when people do turn to the Lord, but the preceding points seem more in line with what the Psalmist was saying here.

If you have not cried over the lost, and do not now cry, let me encourage you to spend time with the Lord, over His Word, and you will soon see the difference in your own life.

The third thing is this:

C. Bearing precious seed.

The Hebrew here could perhaps be better translated, scattering the seed.

Never expect to see the blessing of God upon your testimony if you are not giving out the Word of God. And remember Isa. 55:10, 11.

See also Ecc. 11:1-5.

People are born again by the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23). Our confidence is not to be in our methods. Our confidence is to be in the Lord and in the way in which He, not we, will use that Word.

All of these are essential characteristics of a fruitful witness. We come forth from the Lord, having learned from Him, and having been empowered by Him, with a burden to give the Word to people who do not know Him. There is no other way. What we say in each case may be different, but the essential necessities are the same always!

III. THE PROMISE.

The Lord promised fruit--and this is repeated to show the certainty of blessing.

When we do the Lord's work in the Lord's way we will see the Lord's blessing!

Concl: But let me close by pointing out two things which I trust will be encouraging to you.

The first is that those who have been genuinely concerned have always been in a minority. It was true in Israel; it is true in the church today.

The second is this: Note the difference between the subject of v. 5 as compared with the subject of v. 6: "They" and "we."
(OVER)

The Lord does not wait for multitudes to be moved with a burden for the ministry of the Word. He may touch the heart of one person and so accomplish more than multitudes are presently doing with all of their methods and programs and carefully planned strategy.

May the Lord touch our hearts, as small in number as we are, and let us go forth from Him, carrying and scattering His Word, with tears, trusting the Lord to give us His promised increase.