

## PSALM CXXVI.

TITLE.—A Song of Degrees. *This is the seventh step, and we may therefore expect to meet with some special perfection of joy in it; nor shall we look in vain. We see here not only that Zion abides, but that her joy returns after sorrow. Abiding is not enough, fruitfulness is added. The pilgrims went from blessing to blessing in their Psalmody as they proceeded on their holy way. Happy people to whom every ascent was a song, every halt a hymn. Here the trustor becomes a sower: faith works by love, obtains a present bliss, and secures a harvest of delight.*

*There is nothing in this Psalm by which we can decide its date, further than this,—that it is a song after a great deliverance from oppression. "Turning captivity" by no means requires an actual removal into banishment to fill out the idea; rescue from any dire affliction or crushing tyranny would be fitly described as "captivity turned." Indeed, the passage is not applicable to captives in Babylon, for it is Zion itself which is in captivity, and not a part of her citizens: the holy city was in sorrow and distress; though it could not be removed, the prosperity could be diminished. Some dark cloud lowered over the beloved capital, and its citizens prayed "Turn again our captivity, O Lord."*

*This Psalm is in its right place and most fittingly follows its predecessor, for as in Psalm cxxv. we read that the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, we here see it removed from them to their great joy. The word "turn" would seem to be the key-note of the song; it is a Psalm of conversion—conversion from captivity; and it may well be used to set forth the rapture of a pardoned soul when the anger of the Lord is turned away from it. We will call it, "Leading captivity captive."*

*The Psalm divides itself into a narrative (1, 2), a song (3), a prayer (4), and a promise (5 and 6).*

### EXPOSITION.

**W**HEN the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.

3 The LORD hath done great things for us; *whereof* we are glad.

4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*.

1. "*When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.*" Being in trouble, the gracious pilgrims remember for their comfort times of national woe which were succeeded by remarkable deliverances. Then sorrow was gone like a dream, and the joy which followed was so great that it seemed too good to be true, and they feared that it must be the vision of an idle brain. So sudden and so overwhelming was their joy that they felt like men out of themselves, ecstatic, or in a trance. The captivity had been great, and great was the deliverance; for the great God himself had wrought it: it seemed too good to be actually true: each man said to himself,—

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

It was not the freedom of an individual which the Lord in mercy had wrought, but of all Zion, of the whole nation; and this was reason enough for overflowing gladness. We need not instance the histories which illustrate this verse in connection with literal Israel; but it is well to remember how often it has been true to ourselves. Let us look to the prison-houses from which we have been set free. Ah, me, what captives we have been! At our first conversion what a turning again of

captivity we experienced. Never shall that hour be forgotten. Joy! Joy! Joy! Since then, from multiplied troubles, from depression of spirit, from miserable backsliding, from grievous doubt, we have been emancipated, and we are not able to describe the bliss which followed each emancipation.

“When God reveal’d his gracious name  
And changed our mournful state,  
Our rapture seem’d a pleasing dream,  
The grace appeared so great.”

This verse will have a higher fulfilment in the day of the final overthrow of the powers of darkness when the Lord shall come forth for the salvation and glorification of his redeemed. Then in a fuller sense than even at Pentecost our old men shall see visions, and our young men shall dream dreams: yea, all things shall be so wonderful, so far beyond all expectation, that those who behold them shall ask themselves whether it be not all a dream. The past is ever a sure prognostic of the future; the thing which has been is the thing that shall be: we shall again and again find ourselves amazed at the wonderful goodness of the Lord. Let our hearts gratefully remember the former lovingkindnesses of the Lord: we were sadly low, sorely distressed, and completely past hope, but when Jehovah appeared he did not merely lift us out of despondency, he raised us into wondering happiness. The Lord who alone turns our captivity does nothing by halves: those whom he saves from hell he brings to heaven. He turns exile into ecstasy, and banishment into bliss.

2. *“Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.”* So full were they of joy that they could not contain themselves. They must express their joy and yet they could not find expression for it. Irrepressible mirth could do no other than laugh, for speech was far too dull a thing for it. The mercy was so unexpected, so amazing, so singular that they could not do less than laugh; and they laughed much, so that their mouths were full of it, and that because their hearts were full too. When at last the tongue could move articulately, it could not be content simply to talk, but it must needs sing; and sing heartily too, for it was full of singing. Doubtless the former pain added to the zest of the pleasure: the captivity threw a brighter colour into the emancipation. The people remembered this joy-flood for years after, and here is the record of it turned into a song. Note the *when* and the *then*. God’s *when* is our *then*. At the moment when he turns our captivity, the heart turns from its sorrow; when he fills us with grace we are filled with gratitude. We were made to be as them that dream, but we both laughed and sang in our sleep. We are wide awake now, and though we can scarcely realize the blessing, yet we rejoice in it exceedingly.

*“Then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.”* The heathen heard the songs of Israel, and the better sort among them soon guessed the cause of their joy. Jehovah was known to be their God, and to him the other nations ascribed the emancipation of his people, reckoning it to be no small thing which the Lord had thus done; for those who carried away the nations had never in any other instance restored a people to their ancient dwelling-place. These foreigners were no dreamers; though they were only lookers-on, and not partakers in the surprising mercy, they plainly saw what had been done, and rightly ascribed it to the great Giver of all good. It is a blessed thing when saints set sinners talking about the lovingkindness of the Lord: and it is equally blessed when the saints who are hidden away in the world hear of what the Lord has done for his church, and themselves resolve to come out from their captivity and unite with the Lord’s people. Ah, dear reader, Jehovah has indeed done marvellous things for his chosen, and these “great things” shall be themes for eternal praise among all intelligent creatures.

3. *“The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.”* They did not deny the statement which reflected so much glory upon Jehovah: with exultation they admitted and repeated the statement of Jehovah’s notable dealings with them. To themselves they appropriated the joyful assertion; they said “The Lord hath done great things for us,” and they declared their gladness at the fact. It is a poor modesty which is ashamed to own its joy in the Lord. Call it rather a robbery of God. There is so little of happiness abroad that if we possess a full share of it we ought not to hide our light under a bushel, but let it shine on all that are in the house. Let us avow our joy, and the reason of it, stating the “whereof” as

well as the fact. None are so happy as those who are newly turned and returned from captivity; none can more promptly and satisfactorily give a reason for the gladness that is in them. The Lord himself has blessed us, blessed us greatly, blessed us individually, blessed us assuredly; and because of this we sing unto his name. I heard one say the other day in prayer "whereof we desire to be glad." Strange dilution and defilement of Scriptural language! Surely if God has done great things for us we are glad, and cannot be otherwise. No doubt such language is meant to be lowly, but in truth it is loathsome.

4. "*Turn again our captivity, O Lord.*" Remembering the former joy of a past rescue they cry to Jehovah for a repetition of it. When we pray for the turning of our captivity, it is wise to recall former instances thereof: nothing strengthens faith more effectually than the memory of a previous experience. "The Lord hath done" harmonizes well with the prayer, "Turn again." The text shows us how wise it is to resort anew to the Lord who in former times has been so good to us. Where else should we go but to him who has done such great things for us? Who can turn again our captivity but he who turned it before?

"*As the streams in the south.*" Even as the Lord sends floods adown the dry beds of southern torrents after long droughts, so can he fill our wasted and wearied spirits with floods of holy delight. This the Lord can do for any of us, and he can do it at once, for nothing is too hard for the Lord. It is well for us thus to pray, and to bring our suit before him who is able to bless us exceeding abundantly. Do not let us forget the past, but in the presence of our present difficulty let us resort unto the Lord, and beseech him to do that for us which we cannot possibly do for ourselves,—that which no other power can perform on our behalf. Israel did return from the captivity in Babylon, and it was even as though a flood of people hastened to Zion. Suddenly and plenteously the people filled again the temple courts. In streams they shall also in the latter days return to their own land, and replenish it yet again. Like mighty torrents shall the nations flow unto the Lord in the day of his grace. May the Lord hasten it in his own time.

5. "*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.*" Hence, present distress must not be viewed as if it would last for ever: it is not the end, by any means, but only a means to the end. Sorrow is our sowing, rejoicing shall be our reaping. If there were no sowing in tears there would be no reaping in joy. If we were never captives we could never lead our captivity captive. Our mouth had never been filled with holy laughter if it had not been first filled with the bitterness of grief. We must sow: we may have to sow in the wet weather of sorrow; but we shall reap, and reap in the bright summer season of joy. Let us keep to the work of this present sowing time, and find strength in the promise which is here so positively given us. Here is one of the Lord's shalls and wills; it is freely given both to workers, waiters, and weepers, and they may rest assured that it will not fail: "in due season they shall reap."

This sentence may well pass current in the church as an inspired proverb. It is not every sowing which is thus insured against all danger, and guaranteed a harvest; but the promise specially belongs to sowing *in tears*. When a man's heart is so stirred that he weeps over the sins of others, he is elect to usefulness. Winners of souls are first weepers for souls. As there is no birth without travail, so is there no spiritual harvest without painful tillage. When our own hearts are broken with grief at man's transgression we shall break other men's hearts: tears of earnestness beget tears of repentance: "deep calleth unto deep."

6. "*He.*" The general assurance is applied to each one in particular. That which is spoken in the previous verse in the plural—"they," is here repeated in the singular—"he." "*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*" He leaves his couch to go forth into the frosty air and tread the heavy soil; and as he goes he weeps because of past failures, or because the ground is so sterile, or the weather so unseasonable, or his corn so scarce, and his enemies so plentiful and so eager to rob him of his reward. He drops a seed and a tear, a seed and a tear, and so goes on his way. In his basket he has seed which is precious to him, for he has little of it, and it is his hope for the next year. Each grain leaves his hand with anxious prayer that it may not be lost: he thinks little of himself, but much of his seed, and he eagerly asks, "Will it prosper? shall I receive a reward for my labour?" Yes, good husbandman, *doubtless* you will gather sheaves from your sowing. Because the Lord has written *doubtless*, take heed that you do not doubt. No

reason for doubt can remain after the Lord has spoken. You will return to this field—not to sow, but to reap; not to weep, but to rejoice; and after awhile you will go home again with nimbler step than to-day, though with a heavier load, for you shall have sheaves to bear with you. Your handful shall be so greatly multiplied that many sheaves shall spring from it; and you shall have the pleasure of reaping them and bringing them home to the place from which you went out weeping.

This is a figurative description of that which was literally described in the first three verses. It is the turning of the worker's captivity, when, instead of seed buried beneath black earth, he sees the waving crops inviting him to a golden harvest.

It is somewhat singular to find this promise of fruitfulness in close contact with return from captivity; and yet it is so in our own experience, for when our own soul is revived the souls of others are blessed by our labours. If any of us, having been once lonesome and lingering captives, have now returned home, and have become longing and labouring sowers, may the Lord, who has already delivered us, soon transform us into glad-hearted reapers, and to him shall be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

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#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS.

*Title.*—Augustine interprets the title, "A Song of Degrees, i.e. a Song of drawing upwards," as the drawing (going) up to the heavenly Jerusalem. This is right, inasmuch as the deliverance from the captivity of sin and death should in an increased measure excite those feelings of gratitude which Israel must have felt on being delivered from their corporeal captivity; in this respect again is the history of the outward theocracy a type of the history of the church.—*Augustus F. Tholuck*, 1856.

*Whole Psalm.*—In its Christian aspect the Psalm represents the seventh of the "degrees" in our ascent to the Jerusalem that is above. The Christian's exultation at his deliverance from the spiritual captivity of sin.—*H. T. Armfield*.

*Whole Psalm.*—In mine opinion they go near to the sense and true meaning of the Psalm who do refer it to that great and general captivity of mankind under sin, death and the devil, and to the redemption purchased by the death and bloodshedding of Christ, and published in the Gospel. For this kind of speech which the Prophet useth here is of greater importance than that it may be applied only to Jewish particular captivities. For what great matter was it for these people of the Jews, being, as it were, a little handful, to be delivered out of temporal captivity, in comparison of the exceeding and incomparable deliverance whereby mankind was set at liberty from the power of their enemies, not temporal but eternal, even from death, Satan and hell itself? Wherefore we take this Psalm to be a prophecy of the redemption that should come by Jesus Christ, and the publishing of the gospel, whereby the kingdom of Christ is advanced, and death and the devil with all the powers of darkness are vanquished.—*Thomas Stint*, in *An Exposition on Psalms cxxiv—cxxvi*, 1621.

*Whole Psalm.*—I believe this Psalm is yet once more to be sung in still more joyous strain; once more will the glad tidings of Israel's restoration break upon her scattered tribes, like the unreal shadow of a dream; once more will the inhabitants of the various lands from among whom they come forth exclaim in adoring wonder, "The Lord hath done great things for them," when they see Israelite after Israelite and Jew after Jew, as on that wondrous night of Egypt, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, hastening to obey the summons that recalls them to their own loved land!—*Barton Bouchier* (1794—1865), in "*Manna in the Heart*."

*Whole Psalm.*—

When, her sons from bonds redeeming,  
 God to Zion led the way,  
 We were like to people dreaming  
 Thoughts of bliss too bright to stay.

Fill'd with laughter, stood we gazing,  
Loud our tongues in rapture sang ;  
Quickly with the news amazing  
All the startled nations rang.

" See Jehovah's works of glory !  
Mark what love for them he had ! "  
" Yes, FOR US ! Go tell the story.  
This was done, and we are glad."

Lord ! thy work of grace completing  
All our exiled hosts restore,  
As in thirsty channels meeting  
Southern streams refreshing pour.

They that now in sorrow weeping  
Tears and seed commingled sow,  
Soon, the fruitful harvest reaping,  
Shall with joyful bosoms glow.

Tho' the sower's heart is breaking,  
Bearing forth the seed to shed,  
He shall come, the echoes waking,  
Laden with his sheaves instead.

William Digby, in "The Hebrew Psalter. A New Metrical Translation," 1882.

*Verse 1.*—"When the Lord turned again the captivity." As by the Lord's permission they were led into captivity, so only by his power they were set at liberty. When the Israelites had served in a strange land four hundred years, it was not Moses, but Jehovah, that brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. In like manner it was he and not Deborah that freed them from Jabin after they had been vexed twenty years under the Canaanites. It was he and not Gideon that brought them out of the hands of the Midianites, after seven years' servitude. It was he and not Jephthah that delivered them from the Philistines and Amorites after eighteen years' oppression. Although in all these he did employ Moses and Deborah, Gideon and Jephthah, as instruments for their deliverance ; and so it was not Cyrus's valour, but the Lord's power ; not his policy, but God's wisdom, that, overthrowing the enemies, gave to Cyrus the victory, and put it into his heart to set his people at liberty ; for he upheld his hands to subdue nations. He did weaken the loins of kings, and did open the doors before him, he did go before him and made the crooked places straight ; and he did break the brazen doors, and burst the iron bars. Isaiah xlv. 1, 2.—John Hume, in "The Jewes Deliverance," 1628.

*Verse 1.*—"In Jehovah's turning (to) the turning of Zion." Meaning to return to the return, or meet those returning, as it were, half way. The Hebrew noun denotes *conversion*, in its spiritual sense, and the verb God's gracious condescension in accepting or responding to it.—Joseph Addison Alexander.

*Verse 1.*—"The captivity of Zion." I ask, first, Why of Zion? why not the captivity of Jerusalem, Judah, Israel? Jerusalem, Judah, Israel, were led away captives, no less than Zion. They, the greater and more general ; why not the captivity of them, but of Zion? It should seem there is more in Zion's captivity than in the rest, that choice is made of it before the rest. Why? what was Zion? We know it was but a hill in Jerusalem, on the north side. Why is that hill so honoured? No reason in the world but this,—that upon it the Temple was built ; and so, that Zion is much spoken of, and much made of, it is only for the Temple's sake. For whose sake it is (even for his church), that "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Ps. lxxxvii. 2) ; loveth her more, and so her captivity goeth nearer him, and her deliverance better pleaseth him, than all Jacob besides. This maketh *Zion's captivity* to be mentioned chiefly, as chiefly regarded by God, and to be regarded by his people. As we see it was : when they sat by the waters of Babylon, that which made them weep was, "When we remembered thee, O Zion" ; that was their greatest grief. That their greatest grief, and this their greatest joy ; *Lætati sumus*, when news came (not, saith the Psalm, *in domos nostras*, We shall go everyone to his own house, but) in *domum Domini ibimus*, "We shall go to the house of the Lord, we shall appear before the God of gods in Zion."—Lancelot Andrewes, 1555—1626.

*Verse 1.*—"We were like them that dream." That is, they thought it was but mere fantasy and imagination.—*Sydrach Simpson*, 1658.

*Verse 1.*—"We were like them that dream." Here you may observe that God doth often send succour and deliverance to the godly in the time of their affliction, distress, and adversity; that many times they themselves do doubt of the truth thereof, and think that in very deed they are not delivered, but rather that they have dreamed. Peter, being imprisoned by Herod, when he was delivered by an angel, for all the light that did shine in the prison; though the angel did smite him on the side and raised him up; though he caused the chains to fall off his hands; though he spake to him three several times, *Surge, cinge, circunda*; "Arise quickly, gird thyself, and cast thy garment about thee"; though he conducted him safely by the watches; and though he caused the iron gates to open willingly; yet for all this he was like unto them that dream. "For he wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision": Acts xii. 9. When old Jacob was told by his sons that his son Joseph was alive, his heart failed, and he believed them not; but when he had heard all that Joseph had said, and when he saw the chariots that Joseph had sent, then, as it were, raised from a sleep, and awakened from a dream, his spirit revived, and, rejoicing, he cried out, "I have enough; Joseph my son is yet alive."

Lorinus seems to excuse this their distrust, because they were so over-ravished with joy, that they misdoubted the true cause of their joy: like the Apostles, who having Christ after his resurrection standing before them, they were so exceedingly joyed, that rejoicing they wondered and doubted; and like the two Marys, when the angel told them of our Saviour Christ's resurrection, they returned from the sepulchre rejoicing, and yet withal fearing. It may be they feared the truth of so glad news, and doubted lest they were deceived by some apparition.—*John Hume*.

*Verse 1.*—"We were like them that dream." We thought that we were dreaming; we could hardly believe our eyes, when at the command of Cyrus, king of the Persians, we had returned to our own land. The same thing happened to the Greeks, when they heard that their country, being conquered by the Romans, had been made free by the Roman consul, P. Quinctius Flaminius. Livy says that when the herald had finished there was more good news than the people could receive all at once. They could scarcely believe that they had heard aright. They were looking on each other wonderingly, like sleepers on an empty dream.—*John Le Clerc* [*Clericus*], 1657—1736.

*Verse 1.*—"We were like them that dream," etc. In the lapse of seventy years the hope of restoration to their land, so long deferred, had mostly gone out in despair, save as it rested (in some minds) on their faith in God's promise. The policy of those great powers in the East had long been settled, viz., to break up the old tribes and kingdoms of Western Asia; take the people into far eastern countries, and never let them return. No nation known to history, except the Jews, ever did return to rebuild their ancient cities and homes. Hence this joyous surprise.—*Henry Cowles*, in "*The Psalms; with Notes*," 1872.

*Verse 1.*—"Like them that dream." It was no dream; it was Jacob's dream become a reality. It was the promise, "I will bring thee back into this land" (Gen. xxviii. 15), fulfilled beyond all their hope.—*William Kay*, in "*The Psalms, with Notes, chiefly exegetical*," 1871.

*Verse 1.*—"We were like them that dream." The words should rather be translated, "We are like unto those that are restored to health." The Hebrew word signifies to recover, or, to be restored to health. And so the same word is translated in Isa. xxxviii., when Hezekiah recovered, he made a Psalm of praise, and said, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live." It is the same word that is used here. Thus Cajetan, Shindler, and others would have it translated here; and it suits best with the following words, "Then were our mouths filled with laughter, and our tongues with praise." When a man is in a good dream, his mouth is not filled with laughter, nor his tongue with praise: if a man be in a bad dream, his mouth is not filled with laughter, nor his tongue with praise; but when a man is restored to health after a great sickness, it is so.—*William Bridge*, 1600—1670.

*Verse 2.*—"Then was our mouth filled with laughter," etc. We must earnestly endeavour to learn this practice, or at least to attain to some knowledge thereof; and we must raise up ourselves with this consideration—that the gospel is nothing

else but laughter and joy. This joy properly pertaineth to captives, that is, to those that feel the captivity of sin and death; to the fleshy and tender hearts, terrified with the feeling of the wrath and judgment of God. These are the disciples in whose hearts should be planted laughter and joy, and that by the authority of the Holy Ghost, which this verse setteth forth. This people was in Zion, and, after the outward show of the kingdom and priesthood, did mightily flourish; but if a man consider them according to the spirit, he shall see them to be in miserable captivity, and that their tongue is full of heaviness and mourning, because their heart is terrified with the sense of sin and death. This is Moses' tongue or Moses' mouth, full of wormwood and of bitterness of death; wherewith he designs to kill none but those which are too lively and full of security. But they who feel their captivity shall have their mouths filled with laughter and joy: that is, redemption and deliverance from sin and death shall be preached unto them. This is the sense and meaning of the Holy Ghost, that the mouth of such shall be filled with laughter, that is, their mouth shall show forth nothing else but great gladness through the inestimable consolations of the gospel, with voices of triumph and victory by Christ, overcoming Satan, destroying death, and taking away sins. This was first spoken unto the Jews; for this laughter was first offered to that people, then having the promises. Now he turneth to the Gentiles, whom he calleth to the partaking of this laughter.—*Martin Luther.*

*Verse 2.*—“*Then was our mouth filled with laughter,*” etc. It was thus in the valley of Elah, where Goliath fell, and Philistia fled. It was thus at Baal-Perazim. It was thus when one morning, after many nights of gloom, Jerusalem arose at dawn of day, and found Sennacherib's thousands a camp of the dead. And it has all along been the manner of our God.

“The Lord has wrought mightily  
In what he has done for us;  
And we have been made glad.”

Ever do this till conflict is over! Just as thou dost with the streams of the south, year by year, so do with us—with all, with each. And we are confident thou wilt; we are sure that we make no vain boast when we sing this Psalm as descriptive of the experience of all thy pilgrims and worshippers.—*Andrew A. Bonar, in “Christ and his Church in the Book of Psalms,” 1859.*

*Verse 2.*—“*Then was our mouth filled with laughter.*”—They that were laughed at, now laugh, and a new song is put into their mouths. It was a laughter of joy in God, not scorn of their enemies.—*Matthew Henry.*

*Verse 2.*—“*Mouth*”; “*tongue.*” *Lorinus*, the Jesuit, hath observed that the Psalmist nominates the *mouth* and *tongue* in the singular, not *mouths* and *tongues* in the plural; because all the faithful and the whole congregation of the Jews *univocè*, with one voice, with one consent, and, as it were, with one mouth, did praise and glorify the Lord.—*John Hume.*

*Verse 2.*—“*And our tongue with singing.*” Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; and if the heart be glad the tongue is glib. Joy cannot be suppressed in the heart, but it must be expressed with the tongue.—*John Hume.*

*Verse 2.*—“*Then said they among the heathen.*” And what is it they said? It is to the purpose. In this (as in many others) the heathens' saying cannot be mended. This they say: 1. That they were no quotidian, or common things; but “*great.*” 2. Then, these great things they ascribe not to *chance*; that they *happened* not, but were “*done.*” 3. Then, “*done*” by *God himself*: they see God in them. 4. Then, not done by God at random, without any particular aim; but *purposely* done for them. 5. And yet, there is more in *magnificavit facere* (if we look well). For, *magna fecit* would have served all this; but in saying *magnificavit facere*, they say *magnificavit illos, ut magna faceret pro illis*. He magnified them, or set greatly by them, for whom he would bring to pass so great a work. This said they among the “*heathen.*”

And it is a pity the “*heathen*” said it, and that the Jews themselves spake not these words first. But now, finding the “*heathen*” so saying; and finding it was all true that they said, they must needs find themselves bound to say at least as much; and more they could not say; for more cannot be said. So much then, and no less than they. And this addeth a degree to the *dicebant*,—that the sound of it was so great among the *heathen* that it made an *echo* even in Jewry itself.—*Lancelot Andrewes.*

*Verse 2.*—“*The Lord hath done great things.*” *He multiplied to do great things*;

so the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic versions render it; and the history of this deliverance makes it good.—*Thomas Hodges, in a Sermon entitled "Sion's Hallelujah,"* 1660.

Verses 2, 3.—There is this great difference between the praise which the heathen are forced to give to God, and that which the Lord's people heartily offer unto him: the one doth speak as having no interest nor share in the mercy; the other do speak as they to whom the mercy is intended, and wherein they have their portion with others: "*He hath done great things for them,*" say the heathen: but, "*he hath done great things for us,*" say the Lord's people.—*David Dickson, 1583—1662.*

Verse 3.—"*The LORD hath done great things for us,*" etc. This verse is the marrow of the whole Psalm, occasioned by the return of God's people out of Babel's captivity into their own country. Their deliverance was so great and incredible that when God brought it to pass they were *as men in a dream*, thinking it rather a dream, and a vain imagination, than a real truth. 1. Because it was so great a deliverance from so great and lasting a bondage, it seemed too good to be true. 2. It was sudden and unexpected, when they little thought or hoped for it. . . . 3. All things seemed desperate, nothing more unlikely, or impossible rather. 4. The manner was so admirable (without the counsel, help, or strength of man: nay, it was beyond and against all human means); that they doubt whether these things be not the dreams of men that are awake.—*Thomas Taylor (1576—1632) in "A Mappe of Rome."*

Verse 3.—"*For us.*" What were we, might Sion say (who were glad to lick the dust of the feet of our enemies), that the Lord of heaven and earth should look so graciously upon us? The meanness of the receiver argueth the magnificence of the giver. "Who am I, that the mother of my Lord should visit me?" this was a true and religious compliment of devout Elizabeth. The best of men are but the children of dust, and grand-children of nothing. And yet for the Lord to do "*great things*" for us! this yet *greatens* those "*great things.*" Was it because *we were his church*? It was his superabounding grace to select us out of others, as it was our greater gracelessness, above all others, so to provoke him, as to force him to throw us into captivity. Or was it because *our humiliation*, in that disconsolate condition, did move him to so great compassion? Alas! there was a choice of nations whom he might have taken in our room, that might have proved far more faithful than we have been for the one half of those favours we have enjoyed.

Or was it for *his covenant's sake* with our forefathers? Alas! we had forfeited that long since, again and again, we know not how often. Wherefore, when we remember ourselves, we cannot but make this an aggravation of God's "*great things,*" that he should do them for us, FOR US, so very, very unworthy.—*Malachiah [or Matthew] Harris, in a Sermon entitled "Brittaines Hallelujah,"* 1639.

Verse 4.—"*Turn again our captivity, O LORD.*" A prayer for the perfecting of their deliverance. Let those that are returned to their own land be eased of their burdens which they are yet groaning under. Let those that remain in Babylon have their hearts stirred up, as ours were, to take the benefit of the liberty granted. The beginnings of mercy are encouragements to us to pray for the completing of it. While we are here in this world, there will still be matter for prayer, even when we are most furnished with matter for praise. When we are free, and in prosperity ourselves, we must not be unmindful of our brethren that are in trouble and under restraint.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4.—"*Turn again our captivity.*" As Israel of old prayed that he would bring all their brethren scattered abroad in captivity back to their own land in one full stream, multitudinous, joyous, mighty, like the waters of Nile or Euphrates pouring over the parching fields of the south in the hot, dry summer-tide; so now should the members of Christ's church ever pray "that all that profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life."—*J. W. Burgon, in "A Plain Commentary,"* 1859.

Verse 4.—The Psalmist cries—

"Turn our captivity, O Jehovah,  
As aqueducts in the Negeb."

This Negeb, or South Country, the region stretching below Hebron, being comparatively dry and waterless, was doubtless irrigated by a system of small



artificial channels. The words of the Psalmist imply that it is as easy for God to turn Israel back from Babylonian bondage to their own land, as for the horticulturist to direct the waters of the spring to any part of the land he chooses along the channels of the aqueducts.—*James Neil.*

*Verse 4.*—"As the streams in the south." Then shall our captivity be perfectly changed even as the rivers or waters in the south, which by the mighty work of God were dried up and utterly consumed. Whether ye understand here the Red Sea, or else the river of Jordan, it mattereth little. The similitude is this: Like as by thy mighty hand thou broughtest to pass miraculously that the waters were dried up and consumed, so dry up, O Lord, and bring to nothing all our captivity. Some do interpret this verse otherwise; that is, Turn our captivity, O Lord, as the rivers in the south, which in the summer are dried up in the desert places by the heat of the sun, but in the winter are filled up again with plenty of water.—*Martin Luther.*

*Verse 4.*—"Streams." The Hebrew word for "streams" means strictly a river's bed, the channel which holds water when water is there, but is often dry. Naturally there is joy for the husbandmen when those valley-beds are filled again with flowing waters. So, the prayer is, let thy people return joyfully to their father-land.—*Henry Cowles.*

*Verse 4.*—"As the streams in the south." Some render it, *As the mighty waters in the south.* Why would they have their captivity turned like those mighty floods in the south? The reason is this, because the south is a dry country, where there are few springs, scarce a fountain to be found in a whole desert. What, then, are the waters they have in the south, in those parched countries? They are these mighty strong torrents, which are caused by the showers of heaven: so the meaning of that prayer in the Psalm is, that God would suddenly turn their captivity. Rivers come suddenly in the south: where no spring appears, nor any sign of a river, yet in an hour the water is up and the streams overflow. As when Elijah sent his servant toward the sea, in the time of Ahab, he went and looked, and said, "there is nothing"; that is, no show of rain, not the least cloud to be seen; yet presently the heavens grew black, and there was a great rain: 1 Kings xviii. 44. Thus let our captivity be turned thus speedily and suddenly, though there be no appearance of salvation, no more than there is of a fountain in the sandy desert, or of rain in the clearest of heavens, yet bring salvation for us. We used to say of things beyond our supply, Have we a spring of them? or can we fetch them out of the clouds? So though no ground appears whence such rivers should flow, yet let our salvation be as rivers in the south, as rivers fetched out of the clouds, and dropped in an instant immediately from the heavens.—*Joseph Caryl, 1602—1673.*

*Verses 4, 5, 6.*—The saints are oft feeding their hopes on the carcasses of their slain fears. The time which God chose and the instrument he used to give the captive Jews their gaol delivery and liberty to return home were so incredible to them when it came to pass (like Peter whom the angel had carried out of prison, Acts xii.), it was some time before they could come to themselves and resolve whether it was real truth, or but a pleasing dream. Now see, what effect this strange disappointment of their fears had upon their hope for afterward. It sends them to the throne of grace for the accomplishment of what was so marvellously begun. "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O Lord": verses 3, 4. They have got a hand-hold by this experiment of his power and mercy, and they will not now let him go till they have more; yea, their hope is raised to such a pitch of confidence, that they draw a general conclusion from this particular experience for the comfort of themselves or others in any future distress: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," etc., verses 5, 6.—*William Gurnall, 1617—1679.*

*Verse 5.*—"They that sow in tears." I never saw people sowing in tears exactly, but have often known them to do it in fear and distress sufficient to draw them from any eye. In seasons of great scarcity, the poor peasants part in sorrow with every measure of precious seed cast into the ground. It is like taking bread out of the mouths of their children; and in such times many bitter tears are actually shed over it. The distress is frequently so great that government is obliged to furnish seed, or none would be sown. Ibrahim Pasha did this more than once within my remembrance, copying the example, perhaps, of his great predecessor in Egypt when the seven years' famine was ended.

The thoughts of this Psalm may likewise have been suggested by the extreme danger which frequently attends the farmer in his ploughing and sowing. The calamity which fell upon the husbandmen of Job when the oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away, and slew the servants with the edge of the sword (Job i. 14, 15), is often repeated in our day. To understand this you must remember what I have just told you about the situation of the arable lands in the open country; and here again we meet that verbal accuracy: the sower "*goes forth*"—that is, from the village. The people of Ibel and Khiem, in Merj' Aiyûn, for example, have their best grain-growing fields down in the 'Ard Hûleh, six or eight miles from their homes, and just that much nearer the lawless border of the desert. When the country is disturbed, or the government weak, they cannot sow these lands except at the risk of their lives. Indeed, they always *go forth* in large companies, and completely armed, ready to drop the plough and seize the musket at a moment's warning; and yet, with all this care, many sad and fatal calamities overtake the men who must thus sow in tears. And still another origin may be found for the thoughts of the Psalm in the extreme difficulty of the work itself in many places. The soil is rocky, impracticable, overgrown with sharp thorns; and it costs much painful toil to break up and gather out the rock, cut and burn the briars, and to subdue the stubborn soil, especially with their feeble oxen and insignificant ploughs. Join all these together, and the sentiment is very forcibly brought out, that he who labours hard, in cold and rain, in fear and danger, in poverty and in want, casting his precious seed into the ground, will surely come again, at harvest-time, with rejoicing, and bearing his sheaves with him.—*W. M. Thomson.*

*Verse 5.*—"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy," etc. This promise is conveyed under images borrowed from the instructive scenes of agriculture. In the sweat of his brow the husbandman tills his land, and casts the seed into the ground, where for a time it lies dead and buried. A dark and dreary winter succeeds, and all seems to be lost; but at the return of spring universal nature revives, and the once desolate fields are covered with corn which, when matured by the sun's heat, the cheerful reapers cut down, and it is brought home with triumphant shouts of joy. Here, O disciple of Jesus, behold an emblem of thy present labour and thy future reward! Thou "sowest," perhaps, in "tears"; thou doest thy duty amidst persecution, and affliction, sickness, pain, and sorrow; thou labourest in the Church, and no account is made of thy labours, no profit seems likely to arise from them. Nay, thou must thyself drop into the dust of death, and all the storms of that winter must pass over thee, until thy form shall be perished, and thou shalt see corruption. Yet the day is coming when thou shalt "reap in joy," and plentiful shall be thy harvest. For thus thy blessed Master "went forth weeping," a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, "bearing precious seed" and sowing it around him, till at length his own body was buried, like a grain of wheat, in the furrow of the grave. But he arose, and is now in heaven, from whence he shall "doubtless come again with rejoicing," with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, "bringing his sheaves with him." Then shall every man receive the fruit of his works, and have praise of God.—*George Horne (1730—1792), in "A Commentary on the Psalms."*

*Verse 5.*—"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." They sow in faith; and God will bless that seed: it shall grow up to heaven, for it is sown in the side of Jesus Christ who is in heaven. "He that believeth on God," this is the seed; "shall have everlasting life" (John v. 24); this is the harvest. *Qui credit quod non videt, videbit quod credit*,—he that believes what he doth not see; this is the seed: shall one day see what he hath believed; this is the harvest.

They sow in obedience: this is also a blessed seed, that will not fail to prosper wheresoever it is cast. "If ye keep my commandments"; this is the seed: "ye shall abide in my love" (John xv. 10); this is the harvest. (Rom. vi. 22), "Ye are become servants to God, and have your fruit unto holiness"; this is the sowing: "and the end everlasting life"; this is the reaping. *Obedientia in terris, regnabit in cælis*,—he that serves God on earth, and sows the seed of obedience, shall in heaven reap the harvest of a kingdom.

They sow in repentance; and this seed must needs grow up to blessedness. . . . Many saints have now reaped their crop in heaven, that sowed their seed in tears. David, Mary Magdalene, Peter; as if they had made good the proverb, "No coming to heaven with dry eyes." Thus nature and God differ in their proceedings. To have a good crop on earth, we desire a fair seedtime; but here a wet time of sowing

shall bring the best harvest in the barn of heaven. "Blessed are they that mourn"; this is the seeding: "for they shall be comforted" (Matt. v. 4); this is the harvest.

They sow in *renouncing the world*, and adherence to Christ; and they reap a great harvest. "Behold," saith Peter to Christ, "we have forsaken all, and followed thee" (Matt. xix. 27); this is the seeding. "What shall we have therefore?" What? "You shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (verses 28, 29); all that you have lost shall be centupled to you: "and you shall inherit everlasting life"; this is the harvest. "Sow to yourselves in righteousness and reap in mercy": Hos. x. 12.

They sow in *charity*. He that sows this seed shall be sure of a plentiful crop. "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only"—a little refreshing—"in the name of a disciple; verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward:" Matt. x. 42. But if he that giveth a little shall be thus recompensed, then "he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully": 2 Cor. ix. 6. Therefore spare abroad with a full hand, like a seedsmen in a broad field, without fear. Doth any think he shall lose by his charity? No worldling, when he sows his seed, thinks he shall lose his seed; he hopes for increase at harvest. Darest thou trust the ground and not God? Sure God is a better paymaster than the earth: grace doth give a larger recompense than nature. Below thou mayest receive forty grains for one; but in heaven, (by the promise of Christ,) a hundred-fold: a "measure heaped, and shaken, and thrust together, and yet running over." "Blessed is he that considereth the poor"; this is the seeding: "the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble" (Ps. xli. 1); this is the harvest.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 5.—"*They that sow in tears,*" etc. Observe two things here. I. That the afflictions of God's people are as sowing in tears. 1. In sowing ye know there is great pains. The land must be first tilled and dressed; and there is pains in casting the seed into it; and then it takes a great dressing all the year, before it be set in the barn-yard. 2. It requires great charges, too, and therefore it is called "precious seed." For ye know that seed corn is aye dearest. 3. There is also great hazard; for corn, after it is sown, is subject to many dangers. And so it is with the children of God in a good cause. II. Then after the seed-time follows the harvest, and that comes with joy. There be three degrees of the happiness of God's children, in reaping of fruits. 1. In the first-fruits. Even when they are enduring anything for the Gospel of Christ, it carries contentment and fruit with it. 2. After the first-fruits, then come sheaves to refresh the husbandman, and to assure him that the full harvest is coming. The Lord now and then gives testimony of a full deliverance to his own people, especially of the deliverance of Sion, and lets them taste of the sheaves which they have reaped. 3. And lastly, they get the full harvest; and that is gotten at the great and last day. Then we get peace without trouble, joy without grief, profit without loss, pleasure without pain; and then we have a full sight of the face of God.—*Alexander Henderson.*

Verse 5.—"*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.*" Gospel tears are not lost; they are seeds of comfort: while the penitent doth pour out tears, God pours in joy. If thou wouldst be cheerful, saith Chrysostom, be sad. It was the end of Christ's anointing and coming into the world, that he might comfort them that mourn: Isaiah lxi. 3. Christ had the oil of gladness poured on him, as Chrysostom saith, that he might pour it on the mourner; well then might the apostle call it "a repentance not to be repented of": 2 Cor. vii. 10. . . . Here is sweet fruit from a bitter stock: Christ caused the earthen vessels to be filled with water, and then turned the water into wine: John ii. 9. So when the eye, that earthen vessel, hath been filled with water brim full, then Christ will turn the water of tears into the wine of joy. Holy mourning, saith St. Basil, is the seed out of which the flower of eternal joy doth grow.—*Thomas Watson* (—1690?), in "*The Beatitudes.*"

Verse 5.—"*They that sow in tears shall reap.*" We must take notice of the reapers: "*They shall reap.*" Which *they*? They that did sow; they shall, and none but they shall. They shall; and good reason they should, because it was they that did sow. And though some that have sown in tears do complain of the lateness or thinness of the harvest, that they have not reaped in joy, as is here promised; know that some grounds are later than others, and in some years the harvest falleth later than in others, and that God, who is the Lord of the harvest, in his good time will ripen thy joy, and thou shalt reap it: and in the meantime, if we try it narrowly, we shall find the cause in ourselves, both of the lateness of our joy, because we were too late in sowing our tears; and of the thinness of our joy, because we did

sow our tears too thin. And if after our sowing of tears we find no harvest of joy at all, we may be well assured that either our seed was not good, or else some of the mischances are come upon them, which came upon the seed that came to no good in the thirteenth of Matthew.—*Walter Balcanqual*, in “*a Sermon preached at St. Maries Spittle*,” 1623.

Verse 5.—“*They that sow in tears*,” etc. I saw in seedtime a husbandman at plough in a very rainy day. Asking him the reason why he would not rather leave off than labour in such foul weather, his answer was returned me in their country rhyme :—

“ Sow beans in the mud,  
And they’ll come up like a wood.”

This could not but remind me of David’s expression, “*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy*,” etc.—*Thomas Fuller* (1608—1661), in “*Good Thoughts in Worse Times*.”

Verse 5.—“*Sow in tears*.” There are tears which are themselves the seed that we must sow ; tears of sorrow for sin, our own and others’ ; tears of sympathy with the afflicted church ; and tears of tenderness in prayer and under the word.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 5.—“*Shall reap in joy*.” This spiritual harvest comes not alike soon to all, no more than the other which is outward doth. But here’s the comfort, whoever hath a seed-time of grace pass over his soul shall have his harvest-time also of joy : this law God hath bound himself to as strongly as to the other, which “ is not to cease while the earth remaineth ” (Gen. viii. 22) ; yea, more strongly ; for that was to the world in general, not to every country, town, or field in particular, for some of these may want a harvest, and yet God may keep his word : but God cannot perform his promise if any one particular saint should everlastingly go without his reaping time. And therefore you who think so basely of the gospel and the professors of it, because at present their peace and comfort are not come, should know that it is on the way to them, and comes to stay everlastingly with them ; whereas your peace is going from you every moment, and is sure to leave you without any hope of returning to you again. Look not how the Christian begins, but ends. The Spirit of God by his convictions comes into the soul with some terrors, but it closeth with peace and joy. As we say of the month of March, it enters like a lion, but goes out like a lamb. “ Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright : for the end of that man is peace ” : Psalm xxxvii. 37.—*William Gurnall*.

Verses 5, 6.—In my little reading and small experience, I have found that corn sown in dear years and times of scarcity hath yielded much more increase than at other times ; so that presently after much want, there hath followed great plenty of grain, even beyond expectation.—*Humphrey Hardwick*, in a Sermon entitled “*The Difficulty of Zion’s Deliverance and Reformation*,” 1644.

Verses 5, 6.—Mind we the undoubted certainty of our harvest verified by divers absolute positive asseverations in the text : “ *he shall reap* ” ; “ *he shall come again* ” ; “ *he shall bring his sheaves with him*.” Here’s no item of contingency or possibility, but all absolute affirmations ; and you know heaven and earth shall pass away, but a jot of God’s word shall not fail. Nothing shall prevent the harvest of a labourer in Zion’s vineyard.—*Humphrey Hardwick*.

Verses 5, 6.—In a fuller, deeper sense, the sower in tears is the Man of sorrows himself. Believers know him thus. He has accomplished, in the sore travail of his soul, the seed time of affliction which is to bear its satisfying harvest when he shall again appear as the reaper of his own reward. He will fill his bosom with sheaves in that day of joy. The garner of his gladness will be filled to overflowing. By how much his affliction surpassed the natural measure of human grief, when he underwent for our sakes the dread realities of death and judgment ; by so much shall the fulness of his pure delight as the eternal blesser of his people excel their joy (yet what a measure, too, is there !) whose sum of blessedness is to be for ever with the Lord.—*Arthur Pridham*, in “*Notes and Reflections on the Psalms*,” 1869.

Verse 6.—“*He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed*,” etc. This is very expressive of a gospel minister’s life ; he goeth forth with the everlasting gospel which he preaches ; he sows it as precious seed in the church of God ; he waters it with tears and prayers ; the Lord’s blessing accompanies it ; the Lord crowns his labours with success ; he has seals to his ministry ; and at the last day he shall doubtless come again with joy from the grave of death “*bringing his sheaves with*

him"; and will, in the new Jerusalem state, be addressed by his Lord with, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—*Samuel Eyles Pierce* (1746—1829 ?), in "*The Book of Psalms, an Epitome of the Old Testament Scripture.*"

Verse 6.—"He may go forth, he may go forth, and weep, bearing (his) load of seed. He shall come, he shall come with singing, bearing sheaves." The emphatic combination of the finite tense with the infinitive is altogether foreign from our idiom, and very imperfectly represented, in the ancient and some modern versions, by the active participle (*venientes venient*, coming they shall come), which conveys neither the peculiar form nor the precise sense of the Hebrew phrase. The best approximation to the force of the original is Luther's repetition of the finite tense, *he shall come, he shall come*, because in all such cases the infinitive is really defined or determined by the term which follows, and in sense, though not in form, assimilated to it.—*Joseph Addison Alexander*.

Verse 6.—

"Though he go, though he go, and be weeping,  
While bearing some handfuls of seed;  
He shall come, he shall come with bright singing,  
While bearing his plentiful sheaves."

*Ben-Tehillim*, in "*The Book of Psalms, in English Blank Verse*," 1883.

Verse 6.—"Goeth forth." The church must not only keep this seed in the storehouse, for such as come to enquire for it; but must send her sowers forth to cast it among those who are ignorant of its value, or too indifferent to ask it at her hands. She must not sit weeping because men will not apply to her, but must go forth and bear the precious seed to the unwilling, the careless, the prejudiced, and the profligate.—*Edwin Sidney*, in "*The Pulpit*," 1840.

Verse 6.—Weeping must not hinder sowing: when we suffer ill we must be doing well.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 6.—"Precious seed." Seed-corn is always dearest; and when other corn is dear, then it is very dear; yet though never so dear, the husbandman resolves that he must have it; and he will deprive his own belly, and his wife and children of it, and will sow it, going out "weeping" with it. There is also great hazard; for corn, after it is sown, is subject to many dangers. And so is it, indeed, with the children of God in a good cause. Ye must resolve to undergo hazards also, in life, lands, moveables, or whatsoever else ye have in this world: rather hazard all these before either religion be in hazard, or your own souls.—*Alexander Henderson*.

Verse 6.—"Precious seed." Aben Ezra, by the words rendered *precious seed*, or, as they may be, *a draught of seed*, understands the vessel in which the sower carries his seed, the seed basket, from whence he draws and takes out the seed, and scatters it; see Amos ix. 13: so the Targum, "bearing a tray of sowing corn."—*John Gill*.

Verse 6.—"Precious seed." Faith is called "*precious seed*": *quod rarum est charum est*. Seed was accounted precious when all countries came unto Egypt to buy corn of Joseph, and truly faith must needs be precious, seeing that when Christ comes he shall hardly "find faith upon the earth": Luke xviii. 8. The necessity of faith is such, that therefore it must need be precious; for as the material seed is the only instrumental means to preserve the life of man; for all the spices, honey, myrrh, nuts, and almonds, gold and silver, that were in Canaan, were not sufficient for Jacob and his children's sustenance; but they were forced to repair unto Egypt for corn, that they might live and not die; even so, without faith the soul is starved; it is the food of it; for, "the just man liveth by his faith": Gal. iii. 11.—*John Hume*.

Verse 6.—"Sheaves." The Psalm which begins with "dream" and ends with "sheaves" invites us to think of Joseph; Joseph, "in whom," according to S. Ambrose's beautiful application, "there was revealed the future resurrection of the Lord Jesus, to whom both his eleven disciples did obeisance when they saw him gone into Galilee, and to whom all the saints shall on their resurrection do obeisance, bringing forth the fruit of good works, as it is written, 'He shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.'"—*H. T. Armfield*.

## HINTS TO PREACHERS.

*Verse 1.*—I. Sunny memories of what the Lord did, "he turned again the captivity," etc. II. Singular impressions,—we could not believe it to be true. III. Special discoveries—it was true, abiding, etc.

*Verse 1.*—A comparison and a contrast. I. The saved like them that dream. 1. In the strangeness of their experience. 2. In the ecstasy of their joy. II. The saved unlike them that dream. 1. In the reality of their experience. Dreams are unsubstantial things, but "the Lord turned"—an actual fact. 2. In their freedom from disappointment. No awakening to find it "but a dream": see Isaiah xxix. 8. 3. In the endurance of their joy. The joy of dreams is soon forgotten, but this is "everlasting joy."—*W. H. J. P.*

*Verse 2.*—Saintly laughter. What creates it, and how it is justified.

*Verse 2.*—*Recipe for holy laughter.*—1. Lie in prison a few weeks. 2. Hear the Lord turning the key. 3. Follow him into the high-road. 4. Your sky will burst with sunshine, and your heart with song and laughter. 5. If this recipe is thought too expensive, try *keeping in the high-road.*—*W. B. H.*

*Verses 2, 3.*—I. Reports of God's doings. II. Experience of God's doings.

*Verses 2, 3.*—I. The Lord does great things for his people. II. These great things command the attention of the world. III. They inspire the joyful devotion of the saints.—*W. H. J. P.*

*Verse 3.*—"The Lord hath done great things for us." In this acknowledgment and confession there are three noteworthy points of thankfulness. I. That they were "great things" which were done. II. Who it was who did them: "the Lord." III. That they are done, not *against* us, but "for us."—*Alexander Henderson, 1583—1646.*

*Verse 4.*—Believers, rejoicing in their own deliverance, solicitous for a flood of prosperity to overflow the church. See the connection, verses 1—3. Remark, I. The doubting and despondent are too concerned about themselves, and too busy seeking comfort, to have either solicitude or energy to spare for the church's welfare; but the joyful heart is free to be earnest for the church's good. II. Joyful believers, other things being equal, know more of the constraining power of Christ's love, which makes them anxious for his glory and the success of his cause. III. The joyful can appreciate more fully the contrast of their condition to that of the undelivered, and for their sake cannot fail to be anxious for the church through whose ministry their deliverance comes. IV. The joyful are, in general, the most believing and the most hopeful; their expectation of success leads them to prayer, and impels them to effort.—*J. F.*

*Verse 4.*—I. The dried-up Christian. II. His unhappy condition. III. His one hope. IV. Result when realized.

*Verse 5.*—*The Christian Husbandman.* I. Illustrate the metaphor. The husbandman has a great variety of work before him; every season and every day brings its proper business. So the Christian has duties in the closet, in the family, in the church, in the world, etc., etc. II. Whence it is that many Christians sow in tears. 1. It may be owing to the badness of the soil. 2. The inclemency of the season. 3. The malice and opposition of enemies. 4. Past disappointments. III. What connection there is between sowing in tears and reaping in joy. 1. A joyful harvest, by God's blessing, is the natural consequence of a dripping seed-time. 2. God, who cannot lie, hath promised it. IV. When this joyful harvest may be expected. It must not be expected in our wintry world, for there is not sun enough to ripen it. Heaven is the Christian's summer. When you come to reap the fruits of your present trials, you will bless God who made you sow in tears. *Improvement.* 1. How greatly are they to blame who in this busy time stand all the day idle! 2. How greatly have Christians the advantage of the rest of the world! 3. Let the hope and prospect of this joyful harvest support us under all the glooms and distresses of this vale of tears.—*Outline of a Sermon by Samuel Lavington, 1726—1807.*

*Verse 5.*—Two pictures. The connecting "shall."

*Verse 5.*—I. There must be sowing before reaping. II. What men sow they will reap. If they sow precious seed, they will reap precious seed. III. In proportion as they sow they will reap. "He that soweth sparingly," etc. IV. The sowing may be with sorrow, but the reaping will be with joy. V. In proportion to the sorrow of sowing will be the joy of reaping.—*G. R.*

*Verse 6.*—In the two parts of this verse we may behold a threefold antithesis or opposition; in the *progress*, 1. A sojourning: “He that now goeth on his way.” 2. A sorrowing: “weeping.” 3. A sowing: “and beareth forth good seed.” In the *regress* there are three opposites unto these. 1. Returning: “He shall doubtless come again.” 2. A Rejoicing: “with joy.” 3. A Reaping: “and bring his sheaves with him.”—*John Hume.*

*Verse 6.*—“*Doubtless.*” Or the reasons why our labour cannot be in vain in the Lord.

*Verse 6.*—“*Bringing his sheaves with him.*” The faithful sower’s return to his Lord. Successful, knowing it, personally honoured, abundantly recompensed.

*Verse 6.*—See “Spurgeon’s Sermon,” No. 867: “Tearful Sowing and Joyful Reaping.”

*Verse 6.*—I. The sorrowful sower. 1. His activity—“he goeth forth.” 2. His humility—“and weepeth.” 3. His fidelity—“bearing precious seed.” II. The joyful reaper. 1. His certain harvest-time—“shall doubtless come again.” 2. His abundant joy—“with rejoicing.” 3. His rich rewards—“bringing his sheaves with him.”—*W. H. J. P.*

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