

# FULLY RESTORED

PSALM 126 AUGUST 18 & 20, 2017

If you have a Bible, find your way over to Psalm 126.

I came across an article some time ago from [AutoWeek.com](http://autoweek.com) titled: Four Reasons NOT To Restore A Vintage Car.<sup>1</sup> Hopefully I don't hit any nerves that are too raw. Here are the 4 reasons the writer gave:

- #1 - You Will Not Make Money
- #2 - You'll Spend More Than Planned
- #3 - You Probably Won't Finish
- #4 - Protecting An Heirloom Isn't Worth The Aggravation

Auto Week interviewed a fellow who has at least 17 restorations under his belt. He calculated that the average job takes about 2,000 hours, with a return payoff equal to about \$3 per hour. The author's conclusion? *"You might be better off buying a car someone else has suffered through."*

Psalm 126 is one of the Songs of Ascents. These were songs that were sung each year by Jewish pilgrims who were traveling to Jerusalem for the annual feasts. They are *great* songs. There are 15 of them, starting at Psalm 120. And it's appropriate for us to make them our own because, we also are pilgrims on our way up, but to the *New Jerusalem*. So, I commend these Psalms to you. Here, number 126 shows us a magnificent, ongoing restoration project. Not of hot rods, but of human beings - of you and me. And, as the singers point out in their first verse, it is the *Lord's* work. He began the work and will be faithful to complete it.

But this song also gives us the perspective of the person being restored. Using our real-world example, what would the *car* say as it's being turned from rust bucket into prized possession? I suppose the car might do a bit of complaining about how long it's taking or "why are you always leaving tools and paint on my hood?" But our song here is not like that. It's rich and full and encouraging. We'll take 3 main headings today: The singers' **hindsight**, their call for **help**, and their wonderful **hope** for what is still to come.

## Psalm 126

### *A Song Of Ascents*

- 1 **When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion,  
We were like those who dream.**
- 2 **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."**
- 3 **The Lord has done great things for us,  
And we are glad.**
- 4 **Bring back our captivity, O Lord,  
As the streams in the South.**

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<sup>1</sup> <http://autoweek.com/article/car-news/four-reasons-not-restore-vintage-car-you-might-be-better-buying-car-someone-else>

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

In verses 1 through 3 the singers share a little *hindsight*. I say “singers” because we don’t know who specifically wrote this Psalm and throughout we see that it is a corporate song. We, our, us.

The first Jews to sing this song, we believe, were those who had been released from the Babylonian captivity. And now they were free to go and live as God’s people once again, taking the trip to Jerusalem to worship the Lord and be in His presence.

Their hindsight had 3 characteristics. First, in verse 1, we see they were **confounded!**

**Psalm 126:1 - <sup>1</sup>When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream.**

It was unreal to them! It was like a dream!

In the late 70’s, a Russian Jew named Natan Sharansky was arrested and imprisoned in the Soviet Union, simply because he believed Jews should be allowed to return to Israel! He wrote a book about his 9 years in the KGB prisons and the labor camps. He remembers incredible details and specific conversations that he had. And then, one day, because of outside events he didn’t know about and the activism of his wife and others, the guards came, got him dressed, put him on a plane and sent him home. In his book he says he can’t really remember what happened those first few days that he was free and restored to his family. It was so unreal. Like a dream!

But what a great descriptor of the work of God. He does what we could *never* do on our own. He makes us into a new creation. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in us. He fills us with everlasting life and a promise for an everlasting future! Not to mention that He breaks the chains of sin and death and guilt and wipes them away from our lives. It’s almost unbelievable! But it’s true.

In verse 2, we see their hindsight was not only confounded, it made them **celebrate:**

**Psalm 126:2a - <sup>2</sup>Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing.**

When God is working in our lives, the mark is *joy*. That doesn’t mean things will always be *pleasant*, but we can always rejoice in the work of God. And we’re commanded to. Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say: Rejoice! Not only is it *commanded*, it’s *exampled* for us. What were Paul and Silas doing that night in the Philippian dungeon? They were singing and praying. The apostles were called before the Sanhedrin and were brutally beaten and then they went out rejoicing.

This kind of celebration is possible when we realize that God has not only given us *freedom*, but a *future*. When a person has this understanding in their minds, then the result, according to the Bible, is great amounts of joyful praise. You squeeze them and worship comes out. They are people of cheer and melody. They *celebrate* their Christianity and are not burdened with it.

And then we see a third characteristic of this hindsight. They were confounded, they were celebrating and then they confirmed what God was doing through their lives. Look at the rest of verse 2:

**Psalm 126b-3 - 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.**

The nations here are Gentiles, meaning people who did not belong to God. And yet, they invoke the name of Yahweh. As the pilgrims were rejoicing, the world was watching. And the only conclusion they could come to was, “Look what the God of the Bible has done for these people.”

God never plans to go unnoticed. His desire is to reveal Himself *to* us and *through* us. He wants to build testimonies in our lives of who He is and what He has done. And He hasn't just done a thing or two that one time way back when. He has done *GREAT* things for His people.

And here, the pilgrims take the opportunity to confirm that work and turn back to those nations and say, “You're right. The Lord *HAS* done great things for us, not just in this circumstance, but here's what He's done for our hearts and for our souls.” They could testify that God was doing a *full* restoration in their lives.

Now, here's something important: the ‘them’ and the ‘us’. We know they're pilgrim Jews who had been released from captivity in Babylon. But we know *more* than that. In Ezra chapter 1 we can read the proclamation of King Cyrus of Persia who allowed them to go free, and here's what he said:

**Ezra 1:3 - <sup>3</sup>Any of you who are his people may go to Jerusalem in Judah to rebuild this Temple of the Lord, the God of Israel**

It was whosoever of the Jews in Babylon. Who wants to go? Go! The same invitation is given when it comes to salvation, to discipleship, to being used by God, to being full of the Holy Spirit. *Any* may. And, along the way, we're given opportunities to confirm what God has done and proclaim Him to the nations.

Now, in verse 4, we see our second major heading. They shared their **hindsight**, and now the singers call for **help**.

**Psalm 126:4 - <sup>4</sup>Bring back our captivity, O Lord, As the streams in the South.**

Praise turns to prayer here and they petition the Lord for His help. F.B. Meyer wrote: “*When God has done much for us, we may venture to ask more.*”

But, wait - hadn't the Lord already brought back their captivity? Why are they praying for the same thing again? They had been set free, yes, but here the singers ask the Lord to bring them back in full measure and great strength. And, remember, they were pilgrims on their way to a temporary stay in Jerusalem. But they had a heart like David's. They wanted to abide in the City of God. They wanted to *stay* in His presence and be settled there. They wanted His work to flow fuller and fuller like a torrent of water hitting the Negev desert.

We can jump easily to our own lives. What did Jesus say He wants for us? That out of our hearts would come streams of His living water. A stream or a torrent, by definition, is something that *moves*. It progresses and does not stand still.

God's intention for us is that rivers of life would be flowing out of us. That we not become like ponds or bogs of standing water. Or, using our classic car restoration analogy, the prayer for help here is like this: "Lord, don't just make me pretty to look at, I want to be fully restored, put out on the show-room floor and race ready at top speed!"

This prayer for help in verse 4 shows these pilgrims had a drive to receive more and more spiritual torrents from the Lord, bringing new life to the dry and barren world around them.

Finally, in verses 5 and six, we have our third heading. We've seen the hindsight and the prayer for help, and now the singers proclaim their **hope** for what is still to come.

**Psalm 126:5 - <sup>5</sup>Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy.**

They knew that the Lord was *far* from done with them. And as they looked down the road on their way to Jerusalem, they looked down into the future, knowing that there was a greater day coming when they'd have even *more* joy. They prayed for help in verse 4 and they *knew* they would receive it from the Lord. And they understood the principle of heaven that God works all things together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purposes. That, despite circumstances or sufferings, God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work.<sup>2</sup> Our God brings beauty from ashes, joy from mourning. Victory from persecution. And He will put a harvest in the hands of those who are willing to go out and sow. The singers of Psalm 126 had this hope, and we see that it was a **settled** hope, because they repeat again in verse 6:

**Psalm 126:6 - <sup>6</sup>He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves *with him*.**

We, like all the pilgrims of the Lord, may have times of great trial or difficulty. Certainly the original singers had their share of hurt and heartache. But the very act of sowing shows that a person has a future hope. They live their lives *believing* that a harvest is coming. And it shows that a person trust in what they know to be true and then orients their behavior toward a goal, rather than toward their circumstances. I know the sun will rise tomorrow. I know Christmas comes on December 25th. And we know that the Lord brings a harvest to the work we do and His reward with it. He's said so and He's *proven* it for thousands of years through millions of lives. He's the God who can bring harvest from the crushing of seed. Streams to a dry desert. Freedom to captives. He takes the rusted, ruined, defective human life and restores it to not only be beautiful, but *functional*. And then He asks if we will move with Him through life and ultimately to final glory in heaven.

When a classic car is restored, it's a pretty thing. Even if you're not into cars. But more than just something to *look* at, that car stands as a testament to incredible amounts of work and expense and craftsmanship that someone went through to go from junk to jewel. And if that car can actually hit the streets and take you from place to place, we've got a pretty remarkable product!

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<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:8

If we could somehow magnify that sort of project to the eternal degree, we start to catch a glimpse of the great things that God does with human beings that He restores. Saving them not just from the junkyard, but from utter and everlasting destruction. Not just slapping on a coat of paint, but rebuilding *every* piece. Not just for us to be ornaments, though we are, and not even just as instruments of His work, though we're that too, but also *associates* in His project. Sent into communities around the world to be a testimony and to go find *other* captives and let the rivers of Christ flow through us to them.

This short song gives a huge scope of the work of God. It speaks to prodigals. It speaks to pilgrims. It gives us hope any any age and any stage. It has tidings for each and every one of us today. And, as we close, take note of this truth from Psalm 126: We belong to a God who does *great* things for His people. Of all the things a limitless God could do, He has decided to pour out His love on us, to set us free from our captivity and then make a promise and plan for our future. His promise and His plan is to *bring us back*. Verse 1. Verse 4. Verse 6. What does that mean? In the Old Testament it's a term reminding us of God's covenants with His people. And it's a term that means to be brought, to be gathered in, to bring to pass, to arrive, to be included and to receive a harvest.

We *will* be brought to heaven. We *will* be gathered into His presence. God *will* bring to pass His purposes for our lives. We *will* arrive in glory, forever free from death and sin. We *will be* included in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and in His inheritance and we *will* receive harvests along the way the Lord bears fruit in us and through us. These are the settled hopes of our faith.

So what do we do? Very simple. It's *God's* work. He brought them. He did the great things. He accomplishes these purposes. Our part is to be His pilgrims. Our part is to *walk* with God and abide in Jesus Christ. What were the original singers doing as they sang this song? They were going to be in the presence of the Lord. Very simple. Don't return to captivity, but surrender to God and allow Him to continue the work of fully restoring your life until we awake in glory, face to face, finally, fully in His likeness. Made perfect by our matchless King, our hope, our help, the author of our salvation.