

Thought for Today: October 3, 2008

Psalm 126

**When the Lord brought back the captive ones of Zion,
We were like those who dream.**

**Then our mouth was filled with laughter
And our tongue with joyful shouting;
Then they said among the nations,
"The Lord has done great things for them."**

**The Lord has done great things for us;
We are glad.**

**Restore our [fortunes]*, O Lord,
As the streams in the South.**

**Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting.
He who goes to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed,
Shall indeed come again with a shout of joy, bringing his sheaves with him.**

**The translation of this word is debated. It is sometimes translated "captivity."*

I've been told that every cloud has a silver lining, but that's not always true. There are days of judgment which offer neither reversal nor reprieve. There are terrifying things that happen that we cannot undue or overcome. That's a stark reality of life in a world of sin and injustice.

When the citizens of Jerusalem and the Southern Kingdom of Judah lost their homes, their territory, and their Temple to the Babylonians, I'm sure they experienced the feeling of total defeat. They may have felt it was a great injustice that they suffered. If so, they were wrong. Their sin brought about the greatest horror that can befall anyone; God came against them in battle. The "Day of the Lord" had come, and God brought judgment rather than mercy. No terror so darkens our prospects of hope as the realization that God may stand against us.

But God is not unforgiving. God's judgment is not without mercy. Rather, the Lord does great things for those who are faithful. Because He is faithful to His covenants, God kept a remnant and prepared those people to return home. This psalm speaks of the joy of those who returned to a place that for decades was forbidden to them. It shouts of the greatness of God and His ability not just to line the clouds with silver but to drive the clouds away altogether. That's not empty rhetoric; that's true!

This psalm affirms that we may be completely lacking, but God gives us more than we can ever gain on our own. He fills to overflowing all that we may lack. He turns our tears and feeble plantings into shouts of joy and bountiful harvests. There is no God like our God! May the whole world come to know the Lord of the harvest.

In gladness,
Patrick Barber