

# Revive us Again!

**Text:** Psalm 126:1-6

## Introduction:

1. The *title* of the Psalm – “A Song of Degrees”. The word ‘degrees’ means ‘ascents’. These are the “Psalms of Ascension” and were sung by pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem for the feasts. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> of 15 “songs of degrees” (Psalm 120-134).
2. The *timing* of the Psalm – was likely written around the time of Israel’s deliverance from Babylon (e.g. by someone like Ezra). Note the word ‘captivity’.
3. The *truth* in the Psalm – the Psalm contains a review of God’s gracious dealings with the nation in the past which then leads to a plea for a further intervention from the hand of God in the spiritual life of the nation. It contains a heart-stirring challenge to us on the theme of spiritual revival.
4. T.W. Davies summarizes the background to the Psalm helpfully, “The Psalm assumes that at some not distant period in the past Jehovah turned the tide of the nation’s affairs, making the people once more happy and prosperous. But there is another change, this time for the worse, and in the present Psalm we seem to have petition and hope that Jehovah may again bless and prosper the nation.”

*In this Psalm we can observe **four truths** concerning revival.*

### I. **The Remembrance of Revival (Vs. 1)**

The Psalmist reminisces concerning God’s reviving work in the past:

#### A. **It was Divine in its Origin (Vs. 1a)**

1. “when the LORD” = revival is first and foremost a work of God. We can pray and prepare but He ALONE can perform.
2. The LORD is the focus of this Psalm and is named in each of the first four verses.

#### B. **It was Delivering in its Operation (Vs. 2b)**

1. “turned...the captivity of Zion” = God had done a liberating work in His people freeing them from the captivity that came as a result of their compromise. The phrase “turned again” signifies a complete return to former, happier, and more prosperous days.” (Flanigan)
2. Challenge: Revival is when God’s people get set free from the entanglements of this life (e.g. worldliness, wrong priorities, carnal living)
3. ‘again’ = key word in relation to revival. This was not the first time God had intervened in mercy in the lives of His people nor would it be the last time they needed such an intervention. Salvation is a onetime experience in our lives but revival needs to be an oft repeated experience.

#### C. **It was Dreamlike on its Occurrence (Vs. 2c)**

1. “like them that dream” = they were like dreamers. “The reality was so good as to be unbelievable.” (Phillips) So amazing and miraculous was the working of God that it seemed too good to be true!
2. Nothing can compare to the gracious workings of God in the lives of His people. And it is no disappointing dream that fills us with temporary hope and then vanishes away. When God works, it is real!

## II. The Results of Revival (Vs. 2-3)

As the Psalmist continues to review the past reviving work of God, he remembers two specific fruits/by-products of the work of God in the hearts and lives of His people. Both are introduced with the word ‘then’.

**THEN there was...**

### A. The Rejoicing of the Saints (Vs. 2a)

1. The source of joy – ‘glad’ (Vs. 3) This joy was produced in them by the working of God on their behalf. They rejoiced in the mighty works of God on their behalf. Joy is a part of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives (Gal. 5:22-23).
2. The sounds of joy – ‘laughter’ Not the superficial, hollow cackle of the heathen which is as “the crackling of thorns under a pot” (Ecc. 7:6) but the laugh of a genuine “merry heart” that “doeth good like a medicine” (Prov. 17:22).
3. The songs of joy – ‘singing’
  - a. “Psalm 137 captures the sadness of the exiles who could not sing the songs of Zion. Psalm 126 captures the joy of the people who returned and were able to celebrate once again.” (Ross)
  - b. Our tongues are like a thermometer that reveals our inner spiritual temperature. According to Ephesians 5:18-20, “singing and making melody” in our hearts is a direct result of allowing the Holy Spirit to fill our inner lives. Many of the great hymns of the faith have been written in times of great spiritual revival (e.g. Charles Wesley and the 18<sup>th</sup> century revival)
  - c. Note: The saturation of the church in worldly worship music is **NOT** a sign of revival in the church but rather a symptom revealing the **NEED** for revival in the church! That’s not revival, that’s regression! Your music reveals much about YOU.
  - d. Review posted on Google Reviews approx. 1 year ago. *“Very welcoming and has a good family vibe. Has different doctrine than I was expecting though. (They said something about people who drink, watch movies and listen to rock. They made it sound like it was bad. I would do all of those things if I liked rock music. Maybe it was a joke??)”*

**THEN there was...**

**B. The Recognition of the Sinners (Vs. 2b-3)**

1. The heathen's acknowledgment of God's working (Vs. 2b)
  - a. Revival is first and foremost a work of God in His people but one of the fruits is the impact of the unsaved. Even where they don't come to faith, they recognize that something supernatural has occurred in the lives of God's people and the Name of God is honoured and magnified.
  - b. There is a connection between our spiritual temperature as a church and our effectiveness in reaching the lost. Andrew Murray wisely observed, "**Great advances in missions are always connected with a deep revival of spiritual life and a higher devotion to the Lord Jesus.**"
  - c. Ezekiel 36:23 *"And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; **and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord GOD, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.**"*
2. The believers' affirmation of God's working (Vs. 3)

**III. The Request for Revival (Vs. 4)**

The Psalmists heart is stirred up by the remembrance of God's workings in the past to plead for fresh workings of God in the present. C.H. Spurgeon said, "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." Look at...

**A. The Focus of the Prayer (Vs. 4a)**

1. For a repeated work – 'again'. The plea is on the basis of past victory. **O God, work again!**
  - a. Psalm 85 is structured in a similar way. After reviewing the faithfulness of God in the first section of the Psalm, the Psalm turns into a plea, "**Turn us, O God of our salvation...Wilt thou not revive us *again*: that thy people may rejoice in thee?**" (Vs. 4 & 6)
  - b. Illustration: Old man visits Methodist church in Nottingham England and looking at plaque on the wall prays, "Oh God, do it again! Do it again!"
2. For a restoring work – "our captivity"
  - a. There was an individual need – the Psalmist recognizes his need of personal revival and includes himself in the prayer.
  - b. There was a corporate need – the Psalmist recognizes the need for national revival. This prayer is significant when considering

the background of the Babylonian captivity. When Israel was given her freedom to leave Babylon and return to the land and rebuild, only a small remnant of some 42,360 people returned. The majority were comfortable in captivity and stayed in Babylon. The prayer would then be that God would do a work in their hearts to liberate them from the grip of the world to a life of faith, obedience and service for the Lord in the promised land.

#### **B. The Fervency of the Prayer (Vs. 4b)**

1. "O LORD" = the Psalmists use of the expression 'O' before the name of the LORD adds earnestness to the appeal. "It ('O') is often used as an exclamation, expressing a wish." (Webster)
2. We have lost the 'O' out of our praying today. But it is the fervent prayer God blesses (James 5:16).
3. Illustration: Daniel says "O Lord" and "O my God" at least 11 times in his great prayer of confession in Daniel chapter 9 (Vs. 4, 7, 8, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19). This is praying from the heart!

#### **C. The Figure of the Prayer (Vs. 4c)**

1. "the south" = Hebrew word is NEGEB or NEGEV. "The Negev is that dry, arid region which lies south of Judah." (Phillips)
2. "the streams" = refers to the dry river beds in the wilderness (Ross).
3. Flanigan: "The streams which irrigate the Negev dry up in summer, and then, after many months of drought, the parched wadis, the dried river beds, are flooded with sparkling, rushing torrents of water. In but a few days, these can turn the parched barrenness of that land into a green fruitful plain. This is the prayer of Zion in distress! Restore us, revive us, renew us, refresh us, just as those watercourses in the Negev transform the desert! Jehovah has restored them on other occasions, as they have remembered. **O that He might do so again!**"
4. Note: Water is a type of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures (John 7:37-39). "The need was for God so to open the floodgates of heaven that torrential revival rains might descend." (Phillips) ***For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.***" (Isaiah 44:3)
5. David's heart cry was, ***As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?***" (Ps. 42:1-2)

### **IV. The Requirements for Revival (Vs. 5-6)**

There is a promise from God to answer the heart cry of Vs. 4 with a requirement attached. For us to see God's work, there must be:

#### **A. Faithfulness – Toil & Tears (Our Part) (Vs. 5a & 6a)**

1. Tears – "sow in tears...goeth forth and weepeth"

- a. Ross: “The idea is drawn from the struggle of the people to get crops to grow in a land that had been largely left uncultivated for many years: the labour was hard and the results meagre at first. The psalmist, therefore, is making a comparison: in the spiritual task of promoting God’s renewed program back in the land, whether by prayer or by direct appeals, the effort will be disappointing and frustrating at times but must be tireless – the “sowing” must continue.”
- b. “There is a price to be paid for revival. It doesn’t just happen. Spiritual laws bring it about...Jesus shed His blood; surely we can shed some tears.” (Phillips) Everyone wants the fruit and blessing of a revival but hardly any one is prepared to pay the price to experience revival. See 2 Chronicles 7:14
- c. We are not talking about some sort of superficial emotionalism but genuine tears that are the fruit of a broken and burdened heart.
- d. Illustration: Robert Murray McCheyne

Years ago, a young minister visited Dundee, Scotland, deeply concerned that his ministry was producing meagre results. He decided to visit the scene where years before the saintly Robert Murray McCheyne had ministered in such evident power of the Spirit of God. McCheyne died at the age of thirty, but not before he had moved Scotland to its depths. The visitor asked the old sexton (care taker) at St. Peter’s if he could tell him the secret of the amazing influence of Robert McCheyne. The old man led the young minister into the vestry. “Sit down there,” he said. “Now put your elbows on the table.” He did so. “Now put your face in your hands,” said the old man. The visitor obeyed. “Now let the tears flow! That was the way McCheyne used to do it!” he said.

- e. Illustration: The tears of Christ
  - i. Christ wept for a man – Lazarus (John 11:35)
  - ii. Christ wept for a nation – Israel (Luke 19:41)
  - iii. Christ wept for the world – Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36; Heb. 5:7)

- 2. Toil – “bearing precious seed”
  - a. Seed – speaks of the Word of God
  - b. Sowing – speaks of our labours

### **B. Faith – Rejoicing & Reaping (God’s Part) (Vs. 5b & 6b)**

- 1. The sureness of the promise – ‘shall’ (5); “shall doubtless” (6)
- 2. The specifics of the promise
  - a. There will be rejoicing – ‘joy’ (5); ‘rejoicing’ (6) Joy is what they had experienced when God had worked before (Vs. 2a)
  - b. There will be reaping – “bringing his sheaves with him” God will bless faithfulness with a harvest of blessing.

**Conclusion:** Are you praying for revival? Will you submit to the conviction of the Holy Spirit in your life and pay the price for revival?