

Composer's Notes -- "Filled with Joy"

The hymn, "Filled with Joy," expresses the joy the captives experienced as they returned from bondage to Zion. Their joy was a witness to their neighbors (refer to Psalm 126:1-2, and verse 1 of the hymn). Remember the joy and dream-like wonder you had when you first came to Jesus Christ, when he freed *you* from bondage? We should have that same joy now, and that joy should be a witness to others.

The first portion of the Refrain, the cornerstone of the hymn, is based on Psalm 126:3, "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy."

The second portion of the Refrain is based on Psalm 126:4. The New International Version translation of Psalm 126:4 is, "Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negev." However, the NIV Study Bible notes state that the words in verse 4, "Restore our fortunes," could also be translated, "Bring back the captives," as in verse 1. I have chosen this latter interpretation. Thus, the scripture and the hymn include a *prayer for those who still are in captivity*.

The words of the hymn's Refrain, "Restore your people, Lord, with streams of living water," have a dual meaning. First, the hymn is a prayer that God will pour out the Holy Spirit to bring non-believers to faith in Christ. Second, the hymn is a prayer that God will renew the church with new outpourings of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of ministry. The results of that outpouring will be two-fold: a harvest of souls, and the enabling of God's workers to reap with songs of hope and joy. The harvest of souls is described in verses 2 and 3 of the hymn. The words, "streams of living water," directly refer to the Holy Spirit as described by Jesus in John 7:37-39.

The first line of verse 2 of the hymn is based on Psalm 126:5-6. The hymn's words, "Those who sow with their tears will reap joy and laughter," are intended to encourage Christian workers. The hymn's words, "Those who go weeping find pardon and release," apply to us as well as to others who find forgiveness in Jesus Christ. God's reward is not only in the hereafter, but also is in the present. The reward of sowing is the *harvest of souls* that God gives in Christ.

Verse 3 of the hymn is a call to commitment. It is not enough to sing of our joy in church. We are to go out into the world *with God* to proclaim God's grace in Christ, feed the hungry, lift the downcast, love others, and live in the way that attracts others to hope in Jesus Christ.

"Filled with Joy" is suitable for worship themes of Stewardship, Thanksgiving, Evangelism, and Commitment.

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