

Psalms 126:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

Analysis

A principle of sowing and reaping is introduced: 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.' This agricultural metaphor connects planting in difficult circumstances with eventual harvest in better times. 'Sowing in tears' captures the experience of faithful labor during suffering - continuing kingdom work despite pain, loss, or opposition. Tears represent sorrow, grief, or hardship accompanying present effort. The promise 'shall reap in joy' guarantees future harvest that corresponds to faithful sowing. Reaping produces joy proportionate to sowing's difficulty. This principle applies to multiple contexts:

1. literal return from exile and rebuilding
2. spiritual labor that seems fruitless
3. suffering that eventually produces character and blessing
4. evangelism and discipleship that bear fruit over time.

The verse encourages perseverance by promising that tearful sowing isn't wasted - joy-filled harvest will come.

Historical Context

Post-exilic returnees literally sowed crops in difficult conditions - land had been desolate 70 years, infrastructure was destroyed, opposition was intense (Nehemiah 4; Haggai 1:6). Planting seemed futile, yet God promised fruitfulness. The metaphor also captures the exile experience itself - suffering seemed permanent, yet restoration came. The principle assured struggling communities that faithfulness during hardship produces future blessing.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to 'sow in tears' - what kind of activities constitute tearful sowing?
2. How does this principle encourage perseverance during seemingly fruitless seasons?
3. What guarantees that tearful sowing will eventually produce joyful reaping?
4. How does this verse apply to evangelism, discipleship, and other ministry that seems unfruitful?
5. In what ways does the time gap between sowing and reaping test and strengthen faith?

Interlinear Text

הַזֹּרְעִים	בְּדִמְעָה	בְּרֵנָה	יִקְצְרוּ:
They that sow	in tears	in joy	shall reap
H2232	H1832	H7440	H7114

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 6:9 (Parallel theme): And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Isaiah 35:10 (Parallel theme): And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Matthew 5:4 (Parallel theme): Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Joel 2:23 (Parallel theme): Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month.

Psalms 137:1 (Parallel theme): By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

Joel 2:17 (Parallel theme): Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

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