

## The Heart-Cry of Tears For Revival By Rev. Al Whittinghill

### Classic Christian Writings:

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"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

"Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psalm 126:1-6).

"When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion...." In Psalm 126:1, we read that the people of God are in captivity. It doesn't say what they are in captivity to, but we know that it is not right for the people of God to be in bondage to anything. Then the psalmist says that when the captivity is turned, the nations noted and they say, "The Lord has done great things for them." The psalmist acknowledges, "The Lord has done great things for us and we are glad. But turn again our captivity, O Lord," like You did then, "as the streams in the south."

The word "streams" here is the word "torrents," and the word "south" refers to the harsh desert just south of Jerusalem, around Masada. Being in Israel, I was standing on the top of Masada, and I asked the guide about this Psalm. He showed me a wadi, an empty riverbed, dry as a bone. He said that is what Psalm 126 is talking about. He had been there when rivers of water flooded that empty riverbed because it had rained in Jerusalem. Suddenly the waters came rushing into the dry bed, torrents of water that could not be contained or explained by anything.

It is like the streams of God's awakening that come when our captivity is turned. As long as we are in captivity there is no water at all. The word "suddenly" is a revival word. You may be in a spiritual wilderness. Your life is dried out. The poor and needy cry out for water and there is no water. Then suddenly, as the showers begin to fall, there comes an overwhelming surge of God's presence that sweeps everything before it. All throughout the Scriptures it refers to the coming of waters of blessing, like the rain and the latter rain, as is pictured here.

Verses five and six of Psalm 126 are the key to having the captivity turned: "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy." The figure that is suggested here to my mind is the people of God in a private place, down before the Lord. They are sowing the word of God before Him in prayer and in tears. As they are there praying, God is breaking their hearts. Then they get up and leave the prayer closet with the precious seed that God has given them. Still weeping, they preach this word and sow this word, and God says that without a doubt they will come back with fruit. It's the heart that makes it fruitful.

### Where Are The Tears?

Have you wondered where the tears are in our gatherings and in the churches? Tears are the pouring out of the soul. You might say tears are liquid prayer. Tears are love without language. No matter what country you go to or what culture you're in or what race you're with, tears say the same thing. They are eloquent. They speak when language cannot, and they show that the heart is involved.

A preacher stands up and has a message that is polished; his gesticulation, homiletics and hermeneutics are perfect, but the preaching is dry as a bone. Then all of a sudden his voice breaks, and he begins to have tears coming down his cheeks. Suddenly the deacon wakes up because he sees the heart is involved. People know that when you see tears coming out of the eyes, you are talking to the real person.

If our eyes are dry, it's because our hearts are parched. It's because our captivity has not been turned. God wants to turn our captivity. I don't believe the Church has a message for the heart of the world until the Lord has the heart of the Church. When the Lord has the heart of the Church, then you will see it authenticated with heartfelt tears coming forth.

Jesus said in John 7:38, "He that believeth on Me, as the Scriptures say, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water." I used to think that was verbal, that it was preaching, and I'm sure that is part of it. But if you trace that term "rivers of water" through the Scriptures, you will find more often than not that it refers to

rivers of water from the eyes. Rivers of water run down my cheeks because, Lord, they keep not your law, says David in Psalm 119:136.

Jeremiah said, "Oh that my head were waters and my eyes were rivers of tears that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people" (9:1). The Book of Lamentations is about tears that people should weep and cry out, for the children and for the captivity of the people that are around.

### Captivity Hinders Tears

The reason you don't see more tears is inherent in verse one of Psalm 126: captivity. Here the people of God are in bondage and without freedom. Something is controlling them that is holding them in check.

In the oldest book of the Bible, Job was a man who was in captivity almost the whole of the book. But in the last part of the book you read, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends" (42:10). God says three times that Job was the best man of the earth. He feared God; he hated evil; but he was captive. To what was he captive?

Job was captive to his own ideas of what it meant to be righteous, what it meant to be holy and what it meant to serve the Lord. He was so occupied with his own growth, and his own deliverance and his own blessing that he didn't have time for others. But when he took his eyes off of himself because he saw God and diminished himself and repented in sackcloth and ashes, then he could understand his friends. He prayed and God turned his captivity. When he was taken to the cross, in his mind, and saw the Lord and saw himself, he was broken and waters flowed, and he wept. We see the end of Job and count him merciful.

### Come to the Cross

I can't weep for others if all I'm thinking about is my own blessing, my own prosperity and my own ministry and how God can bless me. I have to be decentralized. We have to come to the cross and be dethroned and be decentralized. At the cross God gets our mind off our own puny life.

The reason why the prayer of tears is so unattractive to us is because we try to enter the celestial realm of this kind of intercession in the power and strength and the sincerity of the old man. The old man cannot wield as a weapon the kind of prayer we're talking about, which is mighty through God to the tearing down of strongholds. Only God can give us this. The old man can imitate this, but he can never really lay hold of it. He can only pretend and make "tinkling cymbals."

It is as we become in conscious union with the Lord, as we wait before Him and conscious union takes place, that our praying is transformed. As we come to the cross and pass the verdict of the cross on our own thoughts and our own words, we're set free. In captivity our spirit is bound up and we cannot be free to enter into the emotion of prayer, into the heart-cry of prayer for the things that God puts in our hearts for prayer.

The monster of selfishness that was in Job and is in me and in you, must be dealt with and must be expelled. Christ cannot possess us or cause us to have rivers of water coming out of our eyes as He promised, to flow from hearts, until we truly are broken. This brokenness in prayer comes as God turns the captivity of Zion.

### Identified With Christ

We read much about the death and the burial and the resurrection of Christ, and we preach that we are identified with the Lord in that, but we haven't taken it far enough. Death--burial--resurrection--ascension--yes, ascended, seated with Him in the Heavens. But the one we often omit is intercession. We have to identify with Christ in His current intercession. It is just as much a part as being crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, and raised with Christ. Now we are joined with Him in heavenly intercession.

The Holy Ghost is not satisfied with the status quo of the prayers of the Church. He wants to set our hearts free so we're not captive and so we're walking in all He has for us. God responds to prayer when there's a true heart-cry for revival, when our captivity has been turned and the whole being is involved.

This is the burden that Paul had in Romans when he said, "I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not, the Holy Spirit bearing me witness, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ...", sent to hell, if God would save my kinsmen, my countrymen (9:2-3). This is the

kind of burden Moses had when he went before God and said, Lord, if You don't save these people, "blot me, I pray Thee, out of Your book" (Exodus 32:32).

Hot tears don't come from cold hearts. A cold heart is a captive heart, a heart that cannot enter into this realm. When the Lord turns the captivity of Zion, then we can see God opening the heavens, cloudbursts, water fetched from the clouds and dry river gullies that once were full of water, filled again with water.

As soon as Zion travails she brings forth her children. There are labor pains. That is what Paul meant in Galatians when he said, "My little children, of whom I travail in prayer again and again until Christ is formed in you" (4:19). Travailing is entering into a deep agonizing, a groaning which cannot be uttered.

"Pour out your heart before Him" (Psalm 62:8). The early Church had a motto that was repeated often: No coming to heaven without tears. For three centuries the Church used that motto.

### Three Groanings

There are three groanings in Romans, chapter 8. Romans 8:22 says "the whole creation" groans now, waiting for the manifestation of you and me when God gets finished with us. Creation is waiting for the release from the bondage of corruption, the result of the fall.

Then it takes us to a step higher of groaning. It says that we ourselves also groan. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, that we groan within ourselves. We have the first fruits of the Holy Spirit. When we long for revival, when we long for holiness, when we long for diligence that is sometimes out of reach, the Holy Spirit groans for us to be completed and be clothed upon with the finality of all that God has. God wants us groaning and yearning and stretching and pressing toward that completion of what He has.

He goes on to say that not only is creation groaning to be free from the bondage of corruption and the Christian is groaning to be free from the body of carnality, but the Spirit of God, the Comforter within us, is groaning to be free from the binding of captivity. We bind Him up and we limit Him to sterile prayers and prayer lists and things that we've intellectually figured out that the Spirit wants to do and that He needs to do. We've not gone far enough.

Power and tears are eternally wed in Scripture. If you go to Jerusalem you'll see what they call "tear bottles." The rabbis used to catch their tears in bottles to keep them. This goes back to Psalm 56:8: "My tears are in Your bottle; are they not all written in Your book?" In the Book of Revelation, God keeps vials of prayer (Rev. 5:8). Prayer is not measured just by time; it's measured by intensity, when we come to a point of true release.

Who can survey the wondrous Cross deeply without tears? Who can give out the Word of the Cross without tears, if they understand? Who can look at the lost souls and at what is going on today, without tears? Who can know God's heart without tears? The situation as we have it today calls for a contribution of tears.

### God Responds to Tears

Tears make all the difference. This is not hidden in the Scriptures, but we don't see it; we read right over it. It is when the Children of Israel groaned and sighed and cried out that God came and heard. He said, "I have seen the affliction of My people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them" (Acts 7:34).

The word "groaning" there is very significant. That word "groaning" is the same word as when it says, "The Spirit of God helps our infirmities with groanings..."

Note first the word "helps" there. It is used only one other time in the New Testament. It is used when Martha came to Jesus and said, "Master, my sister had left me to serve alone. Bid her that she help me." In other words, bid her that she get involved. It has a sense of when you're carrying something very heavy and you're about to drop it, and I come over and say, "Let me help you before you collapse."

The Spirit of God helps me in my weakness. He comes to aid me with groanings. This word is used only one other time in Scripture--in Stephen's sermon in Acts, chapter 7, when he quotes the groanings of the children of Israel when they are groaning to be freed out of bondage. It is the same groaning as when Hannah wept and God heard her and gave her a prophet for a son (1 Samuel 1:1-20). It is the same as when Isaiah saw Hezekiah

weeping, and God said, "I have seen your tears" and He turned his death into life (2 Kings 20:5). Nehemiah was weeping, and his tears and swollen eyes were noticed by the king. God used his tears to deliver the people of God and to build the wall of Jerusalem. Over and over we read that God will not despise a broken and a contrite heart. "The Lord heard the sound of my weeping" (Psalm 6:8).

### "Sow in Tears"

The Bible says we are to "sow in tears"--sow the Word of God in tears. Remember the Apostle Paul who said, as quoted in Acts chapter 20, I've been with you day and night for three years and I've been preaching to you with tears. In 2 Corinthians 2:4 he says, "I have written to you with many tears." So he spoke the Word of God and wrote the Word of God with tears. And he said to Timothy, I am "mindful of your tears" (2 Tim. 1:4).

If we sow in tears in the prayer closet, then we go out with a broken heart, and we see the fruit of those promises we planted in faith. This is true message preparation--not just laying out an outline, but giving our hearts and minds before God.

### "Serve the Lord with Tears"

Paul not only sowed the Word of God in tears, but he served the Lord with tears. In Acts 20:19 Paul is quoted as saying, "I have been ... serving the Lord...with many tears." What does this mean? I know only in part.

To "serve the Lord with tears," I believe, is to minister to the Lord and to suffer along with Him. If you have something terrible happen to you in your life and someone comes to you and sits down and cries with you, does that minister to you? I believe in the same sense, when we get with the Lord and we wait upon Him and we weep with our Heavenly Father's heart, we come alongside and we enter into His burdens and we share His heart. We co-labor together with Him. It speaks in 1 Corinthians 3:9 of being "laborers together with God."

We want God's power but we don't want His pain. Paul wrote as recorded in Philippians 3:10, of the "fellowship of His sufferings"--plural. He wrote of "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Corinthians 6:10). That is what God has for us. How have we lost this beautiful waiting with the Lord's presence on us, so we can enter into His heart burden and serve the Lord with tears? In our ministry for the Lord we must not neglect our ministry to the Lord, entering into His heart and sharing.

### Supplicate with Tears

"Pour out your soul before Him..." (Psalm 62:8). We who are of the Church must pour our souls out before Him before He will pour out the Spirit upon us. I remember looking in the Scriptures and being shocked by some of the words used there that we have forgotten. There's the *penthos*, which means a broken and a contrite heart in the Greek language, a flowing from the heart and soul, a sympathy with God, cut to the heart, brokenhearted. There are words like "solicitude"--to feel along with the Lord.

Have we done this in prayer? Have we taken time to listen to Him and to say, "Lord, we're available to you"--unable to speak, sometimes only groaning. This is a dimension of prayer--a heart-cry for revival.

I remember when the Lord began to teach me this. I was spending the night with a lovely couple--an elder in the Presbyterian Church and his wife, and I was preaching in their church that night and for the next couple of nights. We met and talked that day. Harold was a dear man, but he was one of those dear men whom, when you meet, you know that something is wrong, something is holding them back on the inside. I began to pray for Harold.

I said, "Lord show me how to pray for Harold. I don't know how to pray for Harold. There is something amiss. I have no clue what it is."

That night we went to the church and had a wonderful meeting. When we returned to their home, before we went to bed, I said, "Why don't we have prayer together?" So Harold and his wife and I sat down in their den and we held hands and were beginning to pray.

I opened my mouth and said, "Lord I want to lift up Harold before You..." and without any emotions, without any feeling of entering into my own human feelings, it was as if sorrow invaded my being. My voice began to break and I thought to myself, "What's happening here?" My voice wavered and my eyes began to water. I wondered what they were going to think about this visiting preacher crying in prayer.

I said, "Lord, what are they going to think?" The Lord didn't care what they would think. I tried to gain composure of myself, but all I could say was just "Harold... Harold..." Water was streaking down my cheeks, dripping off my chin. Humiliated, I couldn't let go with my hands to pull out my handkerchief because they were holding my hands. I was trying to compose myself, but all I could do was sob and say, "Harold... Harold..."

This went on for ten minutes. I was absolutely humbled. Finally all I could do was say, "You'll have to excuse me; I don't know what's happening."

In an instant Harold said, "I know what's happening."

We went to bed. The next morning there was a prayer meeting. Harold stood up in that prayer meeting and said, "I want to thank God for setting me free last night in a prayer meeting --after thirty years of bondage!"

### Groanings Which Cannot Be Uttered

I was in complete awe. I got alone with the Lord. I said, "Lord, what are you trying to teach me? What's going on?"

The Lord said, "You wanted to know how to pray for Harold. But you don't love Harold like I love him. I love him. And you don't know Harold like I know him. How can you pray for Harold? You said you wanted to learn how to pray for Harold. I took you at your word. I borrowed your emotions. I borrowed your heart. I borrowed your words. And I prayed for Harold through you. You entered into a dimension of prayer you know very little about. The Spirit of God made intercession through you with groanings you could never put into human words, too great, too awesome, and you couldn't really do it, and I borrowed your faculties. And by the way, Al, the Father always hears My prayers."

I said, "Lord, is this a possibility for us? Can we move into this?" Then the Lord began to show me like Epaphras in the book of Colossians (4:12): "Always laboring fervently for you in prayer." The word "laboring" is the word "agonizomai" in Greek. It is the same word used for the Lord Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:44). He "being in agonai..." It is the same word used for the Greek Marathon of 26 miles. It is the same word Paul used when he said he wants us to "strive [agonizomai] together with me in your prayers to God for me" (Romans 15:30).

But today where is the agony? God is saying to us to get beyond where we are in prayer, to wait before Him until our hearts break, until we are ushered into a new realm. It will make our prayers cosmic in scope and we'll see something amazing happening.

### God's Gift of Tears

This is a gift from God and it doesn't happen unless we ask. In Galatians 4:6 it says, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." I'd always read that and thought that was just a gentle little, "Abba, Father." But that word "crying [krazein] Abba, Father" is the same word used of the Gadarene demoniac, crying out as he ran (Mark 5:5). What Galatians 4:6 is saying is that when we get before God, the Spirit of the mature Son is sent into our heart and we cry out, "Abba!"--a groaning that cannot be uttered. It is a languishing, a burdening of heart, "No longer I, but Christ" in prayer.

We talk about "No longer I, but Christ" in our daily lives, but when was the last time you thought about, "No longer I, but Christ" in prayer? I don't know this dimension in prayer, but I want to learn this to answer the cry that has been in my heart for years for revival.

Look through history and you will see in the great revival instances that we study, it is when tears and broken-heartedness came to the Church that God rent the heavens. It was when they rent their hearts and wept before Him.

This is beyond crying in repentance or crying before the Lord for joy. This is entering into the fellowship of His sufferings, and communing with the Holy Spirit, praying with the Spirit. It is making myself and my faculties available to the Holy Spirit. I become like a riverbed, a wadi, and God pours out His Spirit and suddenly, through this dried-out person, there comes a torrential flow of His presence. We begin to see with His eyes and feel with His heart and long with His desires and His breath becomes our breath. This is never worked up by man. It is wrought in by God. This is the gift of tears.

### Who Will Ask for the Gift of Tears?

I've seen strong, tough men who would never cry normally, who said, "Lord, I agree with this; I ask for the gift of tears." I remember one such friend, a godly man, but he hadn't been crying in prayer. He said, "Lord, I want the gift of tears."

A week later he was sitting in a nominating committee meeting in his church. He said to me, "All I said was, 'Lord, I'm so burdened for our church,' and I said to the other deacons present, 'I'm so burdened for our church.' All of a sudden it was as if I began to tremble within, and I could no longer stay in my chair. I fell on the floor and I began to weep and cry out with agony for my church. The other deacons looked on, wondering what was going on. But the Holy Spirit grabbed their hearts also and soon all the deacons were down weeping before God for our church."

We must share in the burden of God. We cannot carry His burden if we're concerned only about our burdens. The Holy Spirit takes possession of the heart and mind and it becomes, "no longer I, but Christ" in prayer.

This is very unnatural. This kind of praying can never happen unless our hearts are clean and unless our captivity has been turned. We must come before Him as a living sacrifice, presenting our bodies to Him, available to Him to be as riverbeds for Him to pray through, saying, "Lord, use me to pray through." This kind of prayer will change the world! It is cosmic in scope and awesome in deed. It is Christ in us praying. There is a great mystery and a great majesty to it. What a ministry we have!

### "Seek the Lord with Tears"

The Bible was written in tears, and to tears it will open its very best treasures. "With my whole heart I have sought Thee...O Lord" (Psalm 119:10). If you go outside and look up at the sun and tears don't come to your eyes, you'll go blind. The person who studies the Bible and has everything figured out and attends the best meetings and gets truth that is radiant and bright, without tears, will become a Pharisee. A blinded priesthood didn't even know Jesus when He was in their midst.

There's never been revival until the church was desperate, until there were tears. Are we desperate? Is the Church desperate? Am I desperate?

We sing a wonderful song: "As the deer panteth for the water, so my soul longeth after Thee..." It is lilting and precious and orderly, and I love that song. It comes from Psalm 42: "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..." My soul is like a dry wilderness. I need the water. "When shall I come and appear before God?"

The next verse says, "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" This is not a person sweetly singing. It is a person who can't eat, who can't do anything else day or night. He's before God and he's saying, "God, rend the heavens! Move, O God!" His tears are the only thing he tastes. He's crying out with agony. That is what must happen in our midst and in the Lord's Church before revival will truly come, unless God decides to do it in a new way, which He can decide to do.

I don't see a lot of hope for the Church getting to this point easily. In Joel 2 it speaks of the solemn assembly, and it says, "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep"--it actually says wail, and it is a command, not a suggestion, "continually," "between the porch and the altar"--between the altar of prayer and the porch where the people are, intercede in wailing prayer. That is the burden of the Lord. It was the activity of the Upper Room at Pentecost for ten days, as they were doing what Joel had said, so Peter could stand and say, "This is that which was prophesied by the prophet Joel...." (Acts 2:16-21).

### The True Heart-cry for Revival

Do you want the gift of tears? I believe that if we will ask the Lord for the gift of tears, He will give it to us so we can truly cry a heart-cry for revival. There is no such thing as a heart-cry for revival where there are no tears ultimately.

God says, "Will you let Me give you My heart?"

"But Lord, it is broken!"

"Yes, and so are the hearts of all those who are truly Mine. They have a broken and contrite heart through which I can release My Spirit, the ultimate being in intercession as the person comes before Me in their prayer closet with an open Bible. He takes the promises of God and the Holy Spirit makes intercession according to the will of the Father. It is by the Spirit through the Lord Jesus to the Father." Then God the Father hears, as He heard in Exodus, "I know their groanings; I know their sorrows."

**Lord, Turn Our Captivity!**

We are too stiff and afraid of feeling. Another word for that is captive. We are closed up in self and what others will think of us. It is not because we enjoy tears; nor are we asking the Lord to make us more emotional. Rather it's saying, "Lord, give me the privilege of entering into the very prayers of the Godhead. Let me enter into this dimension of prayer. Turn me, O Lord, and I shall be turned. Turn my captivity!" O that God would pour out His spirit of grace and supplications, as it says in Zechariah 12:10. But then it says, "Then shall they weep and mourn."

Are we willing to go a little further than we've been? Are we willing to fall on our face and really pray? Jesus "went a little further, and fell on His face, and prayed..." (Matthew 26:39). "And being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly..." (Luke 22:44). That's what God wants to teach us. It doesn't matter how much you've learned and know about prayer already. It is what He teaches you now, what He wants us to learn now, in this hour of the Church, in this hour of history.

When we do this, the floods will sweep through our personal life and sweep through our families and clean out things there, sweep through our churches, and sweep through our land. It will be an awesome thing. But it will not be without prayer.

Will you let the Lord break you? He will hear the cry of those who call on Him day and night. "In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul" (Psalm 138:3).