

## **Invested: Missions for Now and Forever**

Psalm 126:1-6

Greg Ng

September 23, 2018

During and since the ten years when I served as a missionary in East Asia, the environment has become increasingly oppressive for Christians. The government imposed forced surveillance of churches, removed crosses, tore some churches down, and deported foreign missionaries. Missionaries are forced to communicate in code to hide the nature of their work from the government. Now more than ever, we need your prayers.

Those who face these trials are fully invested in missions. In order to be invested, we must step out of our comfort zone and accept the costs that come with missions. We need to see these costs as an investment, as giving up something now for something better in the future. We must invest our lives in God's kingdom. To do this, we must be passionate about God's work and overcome any barriers.

In Psalm 126:1-6 we find a potential barrier to missions, which is all the sacrifices that must be made to go on missions. Those who go on missions voluntarily exile themselves from their homelands, leaving behind all they once knew to be God's representatives in a foreign land. Verse 1 speaks of the end of a time when Israel likewise, albeit involuntarily, was in exile in Babylon. In exile, the captives of Israel learned what it meant to be God's people in a land that did not know Him. Verse 4 talks about restoring the fortunes of Israel upon their return to Zion. There is this sense of loss that necessitates restoration. And this loss, which comes from leaving one's home, is one that missionaries must embrace as the cost of following God. This cost includes leaving one's family and friends. It involves putting career on hold and losing potential earnings and potential job prospects. It means losing the quality of life and healthcare we enjoy in America. And in China, it means highly restricted access to social media and the internet. However, if we focus only on the cost, we would never go on missions. We need the proper perspective to see how God can work things out for the best. After the exile, Israel experienced restoration and blessing. If we make the sacrifice to go on missions, we too will experience God's spiritual blessing in our lives. The sacrifice is an investment in God's kingdom, and from this seed He will bring forth a harvest and show us that the sacrifice was not made in vain. And though we give up much of the comfort and security we once had, we need not worry because God still provides for those who seek His kingdom first. My career prospects looked grim

because of the ten years spent outside of the workforce, but God still provided me a job and a home near our current church.

We also see the idea of dreams and sadness in vv. 1, 5-6. For Israel, these were the dreams of restoring the ruined city of Jerusalem. They dreamt of restoration (v. 4). We have many dreams also. We dream of marriage, having children, and being free of debt. If we focus on these dreams, then we may have no desire for missions. However, notice that Israel's dreams were corporate; they were hopes for the prosperity of God's kingdom. If we likewise focus on dreams having to do with God's kingdom, we will find a passion for missions. And these dreams can often be recognized based on what one weeps over. Israel wept over the ruins of Jerusalem (vv. 5-6), and that is where their dreams were directed. What do you weep over? What breaks your heart? These things reveal what you are passionate about, and they act as fuel for your ministry. My wife's heart breaks for orphans, so she ministered to orphans in Mexico and China. At Berkeley, my heart broke for all those lost sheep who didn't know Jesus, and so I became committed to leading people to Christ. Discover what breaks your heart. These things will stay with you your whole life and fuel a passion for God's work.

Finally, in vv. 3, 5-6 we see the blessings of missions. When my time overseas was over, I was sad but at the same time giddy and joyful because I had experienced being in the center of God's will. I found full satisfaction in trusting my life to God and doing my part to advance His kingdom. We see in v. 2 that God's blessing to Israel had the effect of making other nations praise Him. This is the effect of missions, that through the lives, work, and testimony of missionaries the nations will be drawn to Him. Through God we were able to bless couples and parents overseas. Our kids made friends with other team members and even were able to minister to children too. We not only impacted the lives of those we served, but our children gained a heart for missions. God worked through us to bless those around us and to prepare the next generation to do likewise. So although there will be weeping and sacrifice, make the investment and sow the seed, and God will bring forth a harvest for His kingdom. Let us pray that He gives us this heart and passion for missions now and forever.