

**Tuesday, March 28, 2023 • Read Psalm 85**

*Questions from the Scripture text: Into whose hands was this song committed (superscript)? Who wrote it? Whom does v1a address? What was His disposition toward what? What has He done in this favor (v1b)? What does this show that He has done to the people (v2)? In addition to this forgiveness and covering, what has He done (v3)? But what are they praying for Him to do now (v4a)? What are they calling Him? What do they mention three times in v4b, v5a, and v5b? What are they asking for in v6a? What do they want to do with this life (v6b)? What do they want Yahweh to do with His covenant love (v7a)? Whose salvation do they mention in v7b? How many people are talking now in v8a? What will he do now? Who will be speaking instead? What will He speak (v8b)? To whom (v8c)? What mustn't they do (v8d)? What is near to whom (v9a)? Besides the returned people, what will dwell in the land (v9b)? In this glory, what do covenant love and faithfulness do (v10a)? What do righteousness and peace do (v10b)? When the glory dwells in the land, what will spring from earth, and what will look down from heaven (v11)? How does v12 describe this filling of the land with faithfulness and righteousness? Who are back to speaking in v12b? What will go before Him in v13a? And what will these footsteps of His righteousness become (v13b)?*

**What hope may we have, when we are committing sin again, even after the Lord had restored us?** Psalm 85 looks forward to the opening portion of morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these thirteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **when believers backslide, they may look back to the Lord of salvation to glorify His own character in granting them new repentance.**

After acknowledging that the Lord had shown His people mercy by restoring them from the exile (v1-3), the Psalmist acknowledges that the people have ill-repaid God by more sin that has provoked wrath again (v4-7), and then receives from God the message that His own character is still their hope to give them both forgiveness and repentance (v8-13).

Past performance is indicative of future expectation (v1-3). When the Lord brought Israel back from their captivity (v1b), it was entirely because He was gracious (v1a). Apart from the Lord, the only thing that is in His people is iniquity (v2a) and sin (v2b). But it is in God that we find forgiveness (v2a), covering (v2b), and propitiation (the taking away of wrath, v3a; and the turning away of anger, v3b).

This knowledge that restoration from the exile could only have come from something within God now gives the psalmist hope because His people are again in need of salvation (v4-7). Although believers experience the fierce inner battle of Romans 7:15-24, the confidence of Romans 7:25 rests upon this same "Psalm 85 logic" in Romans 5. If my salvation comes not at all from myself but from Him, and He has already begun it (cf. Rom 5:6-8), then surely He will complete it (cf. Rom 5:9-11).

How to pray when you're troubled (v4-7). The people of God are in trouble in this Psalm, but their greatest trouble is spiritual trouble. Often, a believer has peace in the midst of all of life's storms, because he has Christ. And he knows that if he has Christ, then he is safe. The storm is working for his good. The storm is not separating him from the love of God in Christ.

But what about when we aren't just *in trouble* but are *troubled within*? What about when we can see how much we are sinning and we know that the troubles that we have aren't even the tip of the iceberg of what we deserve? What if we can see our unloveliness and our peril? Where can we look for love and salvation?

God Himself. Steadfast/covenanted love (v7a) and salvation (v4a, 7b) are described here as something on the order of personal properties of God. They flow from God's commitment to Himself. And this is the hope for the sinner who has provoked God's holy wrath, because that too flows from God's commitment to Himself.

This is a difficult concept, so let us try. God's holiness, properly speaking, cannot be thought of as fundamentally "separation," like many have noted. Surely, by comparison to the creatures, His holiness does indeed distinguish Him entirely! But if He is holy in Himself from all eternity, then we know that it has something other than separation at its core, for God is not separate from Himself. It is difficult to conceptualize, but we conclude that His holiness is something like the intensity of His being and the intensity of His commitment to Himself. He is completely unlike us, completely "other" from us.

So, when the psalmist notes that God is angry with their sin again (v5a, v5b, v5c), he remembers that for His own sake, God has forgiven and restored them before (v1-3). God would be unholy if He did not hate and punish sin. But God has done something that brings His holiness to bear by saving us from His wrath, rather than destroying us in it. He has taken a people for Himself that can be called "Your people" (v6b). And He redeems them for the purpose of their rejoicing in Him Himself—all His glorious character (v6b).

There's nothing in us to plead. It's all in God. He restores (v4a). He revives (v6a). He shows covenanted love (v7a). He grants salvation (v7b). Yes, we must be penitent and contrite, but apart from His life-giving grace we can't even conjure contrition. And however contrite we are, it's not contrite "enough." We come asking Him to renew right hearts in us; He is the One Who provides what pleases Him (cp. Ps 51:6, 10, 17).

God's answer: peace and repentance in Christ (v8-13). Wisely, the Psalmist turns to Scripture in v8. He turns to what God Himself speaks. After all, if our hope is not in ourselves but in God, then the words that matter most to us are not our own words but God's. When the Psalm turns to the singular in v8, it gives us a window into the Psalmist personally receiving the words of God.

Words that he is confident will be the key to peace (v8b). Why? Because God's words are for *His* people (v8c), *His* saints (v8c). The fact that He is speaking at all is already grace. And He is speaking in that grace, because He has decided to save a people for Himself, to consecrate people unto Himself.

And He will give these people the repentance that they need. Our translation's "but" in v8d takes the conjunction as adversative, implying some sort of quid-pro-quo—as if we receive peace as a reward for obedience. But "and" is almost certainly better than "but" here!

We cannot have peace while we are continuing in foolishness, so the Lord's words are the means by which we are both forgiven and kept from foolishness. v13 verifies this: He forges the way of righteousness for us, and makes a path for us to walk in by His own "feet" as it were.

As for the peace and forgiveness that He speaks, v10 brings us back to what we were thinking about in vv1-3. In His salvation, all of God's attributes hold together to save us. He is faithful to Himself ("truth," v10a), yet keeps covenant love toward us ("Mercy," v10a). He maintains His holy and just righteousness, while giving us peace (v10b). For the people of God in the presence of God, truth (v11a), righteousness (v11b), goodness (v12a), and prosperity (v12b), come from everywhere. For, they come from God Himself.

We now know how. All of the character of God holds together in the salvation of God in Jesus Christ Himself. Particularly at His cross. For there the justice was upheld, the wrath satisfied and turned away, and His love shown. Not only is there no tension between these things, but the cross is simultaneously the greatest display of all of them. The greatest display of wrath. The greatest display of love. The greatest display of mercy. The greatest display of justice. The greatest display of holiness. The greatest display of nearness. The greatest display of God!

Where can a sinner get peace with God and to walk in the pathway of righteousness? Christ and Him crucified! No wonder the apostle was determined to be an expert in nothing else (cf. 1Cor 2:2). May you also be such an "expert" by faith, dear reader.

When have you been in trouble, and when have you been troubled within? What's the difference? Who is the solution? How has He given Himself for you? Through what means does He give Himself to you? What folly is getting in the way of your peace with Him? From where does freedom from it come?

*Sample prayer: Lord, You are gracious to Your people! You have restored us, forgiven us, and hidden our sin from Your sight. You satisfied Your own wrath at the cross, where You made the greatest simultaneous display of Your love, Your truth, Your righteousness, and Your peace. So, revive Your people, we pray, O God. Give life! Give us to rejoice in You! Make Your glory to dwell among us! Help us, by Your Spirit, to walk in the pathway of Your righteousness, we ask through Christ, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP85A "O Lord, Unto Your Land" or TPH85 "You Were Pleased to Show Your Favor"**

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Psalm eighty-five, these are God's words. To the chief musician, a psalm of the sons of korah. Lord, you have been favorable to your land. You have brought back the captivity of jacob. You have forgiven, the iniquity of your people, you have covered all their sin. You have taken away all your wrath.

You have turned from the fierceness of your anger. Restore us. Oh, god of our salvation. And cause your anger toward us to cease. Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations? Will you not revive us again that your people may rejoice in you?

Show us your mercy, yahweh And grant us your salvation. I will hear what god yahweh will speak. For he will speak peace to his people. And to his saints. But let them not turn back to folly. Surely, his salvation is near to those who fear him. That glory may dwell in our land.

Mercy and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed. Truth shall spring out of the earth. And righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yes, yahweh will give. What is good? And our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before him. And shall make his footsteps. Our pathway.

So far, the reading of gods inspired. And an errant worked. In this, psalm, the people of god are trouble are in in trouble. They have fallen back into sin. And the psalmist is leading them. That to sing corporately. To pray together. Restore us. Oh, god of our salvation. Cause your anger toward us to cease.

Revive us again. That we may rejoice in you and that your people may rejoice in you Etc. And so when we are, when we have been sinning, And the lord is disciplining us and we are in trouble. Um, Not just earthly trouble, but especially the spiritual trouble that comes from knowing That we are being disciplined, by god, we have Backslidden and sin and drifted away from him.

What? Should we do? Well, there are two things that he does here. Uh well there are three. The first is the one. We just noticed in verses 4 through 7. That he is calling upon god's name. They did his god, who must revive us again. That it is god who must turn away his wrath from us, that is god who can who alone?

Sorry. That it is god who alone can give us. To rejoice in him. He is the one who can save us. He is as verse 4 called him, the god of our salvation. So the first thing is to pray. But as we pray, we must do so remembering who god is.

As he has shown himself to be in his past actions. So when he's praying, y'all what you have been favorable to your land, you have brought back the captivity of jacob. You forgiven the iniquity of your people. You have covered all their sin. You remembers that god, is a god who has taken for himself a people And because he's taken for himself a people, he has a toned for their sin and he has forgiven them.

And he made a big display that he is like this, that he is a redeeming, god who atons for his people's sin in order to forgive them. He made a big display of that at the return from the exile.

You remember, israel had sent greatly against god for hundreds of years and he had punished them. By carrying them away to other countries and then when he brought them back it showed and reminded of what their sacrifices throughout all of their history had always reminded them and taught them that god is a god who is a toning for sinners so that he can forgive their sin.

And we have something even better than the sacrifices even better than israel returning from exile. Don't we? We have the death and resurrection of our lord, jesus christ that we can say. Lord you have been favorable towards your people. You have forgiven the iniquity of your people, and atone for all our sin, you gave your son who died on the cross.

And who rose again, you have taken away all your wrath. You have turned from the fierceness of your anger. So we learn to look at god saving acts and no from them that he is a saving god. So the first thing or the, the main thing, the center of this psalm is praying for restoration and we take encouragement in our prayer from who God is and we know who God is by what god has done.

So, sophia. When you are in trouble again. And you have sinned, and you're being disciplined. You can say, god, i know you are the god who gave jesus to die for sinners. You are god, who forgives? Restore me, forgive me. But there's one more thing. And that is what we find in verses 8, 30 8 through 13.

So we pray and we remember who he is by his actions while we pray, but we should also. Should we just talk to god? And he listened to us, or should we also? Listen to god. Good afternoon to god. Absolutely. We should also listen to god and what he says to us and that's what he says here.

I will hear what god. Yahweh will speak for, he will speak peace to his people into his saints. You want to know where to find peace and how for things to get better. God. God is the one who tells us? Yes. And so he he is listening but of course, he's also the one through whom god is speaking.

And you notice it changes from the plural the corporate restore us. Well etc. To the i will hear what god yahweh will speak. In verse 8, because the psalmist is actually speaking and writing words from god. And so here is what god speaks. He says. Let the people not turn back to folly.

He says, his salvation is near. To those who fear him. So, if we want to be saved from our trouble, if we want to be saved from the backsliding into sin, the That we have fallen into god is the one who will do that. And then, he tells us.

Uh, this wonderful truth, mercy and truth of met together righteousness. And peace of kissed is talking about how all of the different characteristics of god are complete in him. They're not in competition with one another. It's not like his justice is against his love, but all of who he is, Agrees with with every aspect of who he is agrees, with all the rest, god is.

And this because we use the word simple differently. Don't get me wrong and i say, god is simple. It doesn't mean that tea is easy for us to understand. It means that he is all that he is in every part of who he is. And there's no tension or disagreement in that at all.

And so we look to him to give what is good verse 12 and what is part of that good? That his own righteousness. Becomes our pathway righteousness will go

before him and shall make his footsteps, our pathway. So from god doesn't just come Nearness. And Forgiveness and atonement. Uh, but also repentance He is the one.

From whom we may receive the ability to turn from our sins. Because we have to have both and nobody is forgiven. Who doesn't repent. You're not forgiven full repenting. You're forgiven for jesus. But everyone who is forgiven also repents why. Because repentance also comes. From jesus. And so the psalm 3 teaches us to look to god.

Who has shown in the death and resurrection of christ, just like he had previously shown in the exile. That he is this forgiving god. But to look to him, not only for the forgiveness. But also, for the repentance. To trust in him and listen to what he says. Because the one who has said those things There's the one who gives us.

Forgiveness and life. And repentance. And then, let's pray.

Our father in heaven. We thank you and praise you. For your goodness to us in you There's all of the forgiveness that we need and you as all of our goodness and All of our hope for repentance. Thank you. That we may call upon you in prayer. That you are salvation.

You hear us? Thank you, that you have told us so much about yourself and what you have done. So that we may remember who you are especially as you displayed it, most clearly at the cross. Thank you. That you also have taught us. Not only how to live. But that you are the one who buy your spirit from christ makes us to live that way.

And so, we've entrust ourselves entirely to you, our god. In jesus name. Amen.