

Revive Us Again

A Prayer for Renewing Mercy

Psalm 85

There are times in the life of God's people when we can clearly see that the Lord has worked among us in the past. We can point to seasons of blessings, of closeness, seasons where God's hand was evident.

But there are also times when we recognize that something is not what it should be. The joy is not as full, the sensitivity to the Spirit's voice is not as sharp, and the sense of God's presence is not as strong.

Psalm 85 was written in just such a time.

The psalmist looks back and remembers what God has done — but he looks around and sees the need of the present. And so he cries out: "Revive us again."

This psalm teaches us that when God's people need renewal, the answer is not to look within, but to look to God — remembering His mercy and asking Him to work again.

I. FAVOR REMEMBERED — GOD'S PAST MERCY (VV. 1-3)

Before the psalmist asks God to restore His people again, he remembers how graciously God has dealt with them before.

These verses are dominated by past-tense verbs.

A. The Lord's favor was shown to His land (v. 1)

1. "LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land"

- a) The focus begins with the LORD Himself. The reason the psalmist could recall the restoration that happened was because God acted on behalf

of His people.

- b) "Favourable" (הַצָּרָה) as used here has the idea of God showing pleasure, acceptance, or gracious regard.
- c) "Thy land" (אֶרֶץ) — the land belonged to the Lord before it belonged to the people.

2. "Thou hast brought again the captivity of Jacob"

- a) This phrase appears in contexts where God reverses the condition of His people and brings them out of misery into blessing.
 - (1) It can be speaking of the return from the Babylonian captivity, as many scholars hold.
 - (2) It can be speaking of some earlier deliverance.
 - (3) It may be speaking of a more general restoration from calamity.

➤ The point is: God reversed their condition.

Psalm 126:1

¹ When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

Jeremiah 30:18

¹⁸ Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof.

Deuteronomy 30:3

³ That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations,

| whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.

- b) The psalmist isn't saying, "We survived." He's saying, "God restored."

B. The Lord's forgiveness was shown to His people (v. 2)

1. "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people"

- a) The word "forgiven" (כִּפְּרוּ) has the idea of lifting, bearing away, or carrying off. Their iniquity was removed. The Lord didn't just overlook their guilt; He dealt with it.
- b) "Thy people" — they were sinful people just as we are today as God's children, but they were still His people as we are today.

2. "Thou hast covered all their sin"

- a) This is a synonymous parallel to the first line.
- b) To "cover" (כִּפֶּה) sin in the Old Testament carries sacrificial and atoning principles. Sin is covered because God has dealt with it in a way consistent with His holiness.
- c) "All their sin" — not some; not the smaller offenses; not only the ones they knew about — All their sin.

Psalm 32:1

¹ Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Isaiah 44:22

²² I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

3. "Selah" — stop and reflect on this great truth.
4. In the Old Testament, sin was covered; in the New Testament, we see that Christ is the One by whom sin is finally and fully put away. The mercy praised here finds its fullest explanation at the cross.

C. The Lord's fury was turned from His people (v. 3)

1. "Thou hast taken away all thy wrath"
 - a) "All" — not partially reduces but all was removed.
 - b) Divine wrath is not a figure of speech or merely the natural consequence of sin. It is God's holy opposition to evil.
2. "Thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger"
 - a) This stresses the burning intensity of divine displeasure.
 - b) The psalmist is acknowledging that God's anger was real and justified.
 - c) Christ bore judgment for our sins so that those who trust Him might know the peace with God.

II. FORGIVENESS REQUESTED — PRESENT NEED (VV. 4-7)

The psalmist now that God would turn His people back, remove His anger, and revive them again.

A. Plea for turning (v. 4)

1. "Turn us..." — the psalmist doesn't say, "We will turn ourselves," or even, "Help us turn." This is a recognition that true restoration begins with

God's work in the heart.

2. "O God of our salvation" — this is both a confession (You are our Savior), and an appeal (act according to who You are).
3. "Cause thine anger... to cease" — in verses 1-3 we saw that God had turned away His wrath before and now they ask Him to do it again.
 - Revival happens when God turns His people back to Himself.

B. Protest of lingering anger (v. 5)

1. There is a place for reverent questioning in prayer — not doubting God's goodness, but appealing to it.
2. "For ever... to all generations" (using the synonymous parallels in this verse) — the fear they had was that the discipline they were enduring may become permanent, and the distance from God may become prolonged.
 - They are God's people yet they were experiencing His displeasure. This is still something true today.

C. Petition for revival (v. 6)

1. "Revive us again"
 - a) "Revive" (חַיֵּנוּ) — a verb meaning, in its use here, to make alive, or bring back to life, to restore vitality.
 - b) "Again" — this has happened before.
 - Revival is not something new — it is a return to what once was.

c) "Us... thy people" — revival, in this case, was corporate (a people-wide restoration). The application of this for today is there are times when a whole church needs revival.

2. "That thy people may rejoice in thee"

a) Not that circumstances improve; that problems disappear; that emotions are stirred. Revival is for the purpose that God's people rejoice in Him.

b) That defines true revival: God-centered, joy-producing, spiritually rooted.

Psalm 80:18

¹⁸ So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.

Habakkuk 3:2

² O LORD, I have heard thy speech, *and* was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

Revelation 2:4–5

⁴ Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

D. Prayer for mercy (v. 7)

1. "Shew us thy mercy, O LORD" — this ties back to the first point (mercy remembered). This is essentially: "Do again what You have already shown."

2. "Grant us thy salvation" — this, in the context of

the psalms and national Israel, is speaking of deliverance, restoration, and renewal.

3. The parallelism here is mercy shown and salvation granted. "Act graciously toward us again."
- Revival is ultimately an act of God's mercy, not man's effort.

III. FAITH LISTENING — LISTENING FOR GOD (VV. 8-9)

The psalmist has cried out for revival, and now he takes his stand to hear what God will say.

A. The resolve to hear God (v. 8a)

1. "I will hear" — there must be a willingness to hear from God.
2. "What God the LORD will speak" — he is listening specifically for God's word.
 - a) "God" — the mighty Sovereign
 - b) "The LORD" — the covenant God of His people.

Psalm 62:1

¹ Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him *cometh* my salvation.

Habakkuk 2:1-2

¹ I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. ² And the LORD answered me, and said...

B. The confidence that God will speak peace (v. 8b)

1. "He will speak" — this is language of confidence

and not doubt.

2. "Peace" (דִּילְשׁוּ) — wholeness, well-being, restored order, covenant blessing.
3. "Unto His people, and to His saints" — those who belong to Him.

C. The warning against returning to folly (v. 8c)

The warning is very fitting: If God restores, do not go back again to the sins that made such restoration necessary.

D. The assurance of salvation being "nigh," or near (v. 9)

1. "Surely" — this adds certainty. The psalmist is now affirming that God will answer.
2. "His salvation is nigh them that fear him" — those that humble themselves before God and takes His word seriously.
3. "That glory may dwell in our land" — the end goal of revival is that God's glory would again be seen among His people.

IV. FULNESS REALIZED — FUTURE BLESSING (VV. 10-13)

The psalmist now describes the beauty, harmony, and fruitfulness of a people living under God's restored favor.

A. The harmony of God's blessings (v. 10)

1. "Mercy" (רַחֲמֵי) — speaks of God's steadfast love.
2. "Truth" (אֱמוּנָה) — carries the sense of faithfulness,

reliability, dependability.

God does not show mercy by abandoning truth, nor does he not maintain truth by withholding mercy. With Him, both are perfectly displayed.

3. "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" — God's peace is not achieved by ignoring righteousness, and His righteousness doesn't destroy peace.

The image of "kiss" suggests nearness, agreement, reconciliation, and delight.

- When God revives His people, He brings restoration in which His whole character is beautifully displayed.

B. The union of heaven and earth (v. 11)

1. "Truth shall spring from the earth" — truth sprouting like vegetation from the ground. When God restores His people, truth begins to flourish.
2. "Righteousness shall look down from heaven" — God's favor and approval rests upon His people.

C. The abundance of God's goodness (v. 12)

1. "The LORD shall give that which is good" — whatever "good" that comes is not because of something we've done but because of what the Lord has done. It is His gift to us.
2. "Our land shall yield her increase" — in verse 1, it was "thy land," and now it is "our land." It is His by ownership and ours by gift.
3. God's restored favor produces fruitfulness.

D. The leadership of God's righteousness (v. 13)

The psalm closes by showing that the restored life of God's people is not only blessed, but directed.

1. "Righteousness shall go before him" — righteousness is not just a result of revival; it is the path God Himself walks in and leads His people into.
2. "And shall set us in the way of his steps" — the final end of revival is people walking in the ways of God.

Conclusion:

This psalm reminds us that the God who has restored His people before is the same God who can restore them again.

Our responsibility is to remember His mercy, seek His face, and walk in His ways when He answers.