

Psalms 85:0 ¶ To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

The term “Maschil” indicates an instructive poem. The “sons of Korah” is a reference to the temple singers and musicians.

After reading several commentators, I liked Spurgeon’s remarks: “It is the prayer of a patriot for his afflicted country, in which he pleads the Lord's former mercies, and by faith foresees brighter days....The present psalm has of course been referred to the Captivity, the critics could not resist the temptation to do that, though, for our part we see no need to do so: it is true a captivity is mentioned, but that does not necessitate the nation's having been carried away into exile, since Job's captivity was turned, and yet he had never left his native land: moreover, the text speaks of the captivity of Jacob as brought back, but had it referred to the Babylonian emigration, it would have spoken of Judah; for Jacob or Israel, as such, did not return.”

And from the New Bible Commentary: “Life’s troubles do not always indicate God’s disapproval, but our reaction should always include self-examination lest there is sin to be confessed and wrong to be righted. Such was the occasion of this psalm. God’s favour was only a memory (1-3); the present was full of his anger (4-7)....The psalm is a prophetic meditation on the theme of revival/renewal (6).”

Psalms 85:1 ¶ Lord, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

Psalms 85:2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

The psalmist opens by noting that God had restored His people to the land and shown favor to “His” land in the process. The Hebrew indicates that God’s favor is evidence of His affection. He acknowledges that God has forgiven the people of their sin.

I believe forgiveness and covering of sin in the Old Testament are the same in that they are both predicated on the future sacrifice of Jesus to effectively declare the sinner righteous before God.

Galatians 4:4–5 “But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

1 Timothy 2:5–6 “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

Hebrews 2:9–10 “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

Hebrews 9:23–26 “these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year

with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

1 John 2:1–2 "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

Selah – A pause, an opportunity for meditation.

Psalms 85:3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.

Psalms 85:4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

Psalms 85:5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

The writer knows that God turning His anger away from His people is not the same as no longer being angry. His prayer is for God to stop being angry. He wonders if God is determined to be angry with His people forever.

Note that he addresses God as the "God of our salvation," the source of their liberty, safety and prosperity (from the Hebrew). He knows that it is in response to God's great love and mercy that men are turned from their sin, effectively taking away God's anger..

I liked the way Spurgeon worded it: "It is not that God needs turning from his anger so much as that we need turning from our sin; here is the hinge of the whole matter. Our trials frequently arise out of our sins, they will not go till the sins go. We need to be turned from our sins, but only God can turn us...."

Psalms 85:6 Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

Psalms 85:7 Shew us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.

The psalmist prays for revival, for a time in which His people can once again rejoice in God's favor. He knows they don't deserve His saving provision and makes his request in light of God's mercy. I believe he was cognizant of the truth recorded by Jeremiah.

Lamentations 3:22–23 "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

I liked this application Guzik used from Boice in connection with the church as God's people: "We think of revivals as being a movement of God in the world so that unchurched unbelievers come to Christ. But revivals do not start in the world. They start in the church, since it is the church that needs to live again."

Psalms 85:8 ¶ I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.

I liked the CJB translation for this verse: "I am listening. What will God, ADONAI, say? For he will speak peace to his people, to his holy ones — but only if they don't relapse into folly."

The psalmist is confident of a positive response from God if His people will seek to obey Him. This is a principle that applies to God's people of all times because He never changes.

Malachi 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I change not...."

Psalms 85:9 Surely his salvation *is nigh* them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

The writer is confident that God's salvation is at hand for those that fear Him. If the people as a whole will fear Him and serve Him, His glory will be reflected throughout their land.

Good application from the New Bible Commentary: "Those who desire revival/renewal must wait upon God's word. But this imposes demands: (i) to respond to his love: *saints* (8, 'the objects of his committed love who are committed to love him back'); (ii) to forsake the follies of the past (8). (iii) to live in the fear of God."

Psalms 85:10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*.

Psalms 85:11 Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

Psalms 85:12 Yea, the Lord shall give *that which is* good; and our land shall yield her increase.

Psalms 85:13 Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set *us* in the way of his steps.

The psalmist seems to be saying that mercy/lovingkindness and truth/faithfulness go hand-in-hand, as do righteousness/justice and peace/prosperity.

I think verse 11 is saying that if God's people are faithful, they can count on a just response from heaven. In fact, the LORD will bless them with goodness and the land will be fruitful. His righteousness precedes His provision for those that walk in obedience before Him.