

Psalm 85

- This Psalm is set out sometime after the children of Israel have been released from the Babylonian captivity by king Cyrus, the Medo-Persian king who actually conquered the Babylonians and authorized / ordered the re-building of Jerusalem and the Temple.
- This is all described in much greater detail in Ezra and Nehemiah.

V: 1 The Psalmist acknowledges the kindness of God, and the mercy of God, the favor of God in that He has freed them from their captivity in Babylon.

- When God delivered Israel from their bondage in Egypt, it was with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm - pretty much destroying and plundering the nation of Egypt in the process.
- Here God simply touched the heart of the king who did His bidding.

Proverbs 21:1 “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water He turns it wherever He wishes.”

V: 2 It was pretty obvious why the nation of Israel went into captivity - because of their iniquity and sin. They ignored the various prophets who had not only warned them but tried to turn the nation to repent and walk in righteousness.

- They didn’t repent and ended up in captivity, after much slaughter and destruction.
- Now the acknowledgment that God has forgiven and covered their sins.
- “Covered” (Not “kofar”) but (H-3680) “kasah” meaning to completely cover something, as when the Red Sea covered Pharaoh’s army, it was complete in every sense.
- Here it’s the expression and understanding that they are completely forgiven.
- This is exactly how God forgives:

Psalm 103:12 “As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”

Sticking with the “complete” covering analogy:

Micah 7:18-19 “¹⁸Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. ¹⁹He will again have compassion on us,

and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”

- The nation had been warned of the need to repent, and warned of the consequences of their refusal - and they had also been told that they would be brought back from their captivity.

Joel 3:1 “For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,”

“*Selah*” - think about that, consider that for a moment, or meditate on that:

- As I do consider being forgiven and my sins being completely covered - I can't help but think about Jesus!

Psalm 32:1-2 “¹Blessed (Oh how happy!) is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. ²Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.”

Speaking of Jesus:

Ephesians 1:7 “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”

V: 3 Continuing along the lines of rejoicing in the relief of His forgiveness, their change in circumstances.

- There is the joy of forgiveness, then over the next few verses that cry to God because they still seem to be suffering the consequences of sin.
- When the nation was released from their captivity, the majority of the nation actually stayed in Babylon, they were content to remain in what had become a familiar or comfortable place.
- Those that decided to return to Jerusalem were in for a difficult time, it wasn't easy getting there and it wasn't easy being part of that re-building process.
- Often times we have a romanticized or nostalgic view of things from the past and when we revisit we realize that our childhood home wasn't so grand, or that things weren't as pleasant - we come to face some harsh realities - things weren't quite as we remembered them to be.
- Jerusalem was really a mess, much more than they had expected it to be, especially after 70 years.

V: 4-5 Restore us, “turn us” or “return us” to that good place - “**cause your anger to cease.**”

- “Lord are we going to endure this kind of hardship from now on? The plea for God to turn again to blessing them.
- Sometimes people confuse God’s forgiveness, and His grace, and the natural consequences of our own actions.
- When we sin against God and then repent of that and ask Him for forgiveness - we are forgiven.

1 John 1:9 “**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all un-righteousness.**”

- Being forgiven doesn’t necessarily excuse us from the natural consequences of our sins, even though we’re forgiven.

V: 6 “... **revive us again that we may rejoice in You!**”

- God bring new life. “Revive” brings with is a sense of bringing new life to your people, that’s what “revivals” are all about - bring new life in the Spirit as the Spirit moves in our / their midst.
- I have prayed that prayer for myself - Lord revive me!

Psalm 51:10-12 “¹⁰**Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take You Holy Spirit from me. ¹²Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.**”

V: 7 He is a merciful God who delights to show mercy to His children.

- Have you ever been in that place where on one side you know that your saved, but on the other side you don’t feel that you’re saved?
- Here the Psalmist no sooner thanks God for his salvation, then turns right around and asks God to save him.
- Like the Psalmist we need to take God at His Word, and by faith trust in Him! This is part of our faith walk with Him.
- That new life, that revival, our salvation won’t be by our efforts:

Zechariah 4:6 “**This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord of Hosts.**”

V: 8 There are two ways to take this:

1. I will now pause / stop talking - and wait on the Lord to hear what He has to say - interactive prayer.
2. "I will now do that which I failed to do previously, I will listen to what you're saying and give heed to your word."

- When the Prophet Samuel was a little boy, he was instructed on how to recognize the voice of the Lord, and to listen: we might need the same thing.

1 Samuel 3:1-21

1 Samuel 3:1 "Now the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation."

- Why? (not too much speculation) Because no one was listening, or willing to obey.
- The Lord called Samuel two times, Samuel thought it was Eli calling.

V: 10 "Now the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, Samuel! And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears."

V: 19 "So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground."

V: 21 "Then the Lord appeared again in Shiloh. For the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the Word of the Lord."

V: 8b "... *for He will speak peace to His people and to His saints;*"

- God's Words to us are always words of peace. God wants peace with us and He has provided a way for that through His Son, through the work of Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1 "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

V: 8c "... *but let them not back to folly.*" This is a warning!

- It was their "folly" or "foolishness" that brought them into captivity in the first place; their rebelling against God's Word, not listening, their idolatry and so forth.

- He will speak peace to His people and saints, only let them not return to the sins that led them to destruction.

V: 9 Salvation is nearer to us than we may think.

Isaiah 46:13 “I bring My righteousness near, it shall not be far off...”

- God’s salvation is not far off, distant, or un-attainable.
- Like J. Vernon McGee says “God puts the cookies / the good stuff on the bottom shelf so we can get to them.”

We just studied this on Wednesday night:

- In Romans Ch. 10, Paul describes how salvation is placed very close to us, God wants us to find it:

Romans 10:8-10 “⁸But what does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is the word of faith which we preach): ⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

- That’s how close we are to knowing the power of God and the deliverance of God in our lives, just a breath away. Just the confession, the acknowledgment that we are sinners, and the belief that Jesus died on the cross to take our place, and that He rose again demonstrating His power over sin and death.

V: 10 Mercy and truth have met together in the person of Jesus.

Jesus said:

John 14:6 “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me.”

- Mercy is the forgiveness of wrong doing, not getting what we deserve.
- It isn’t just to simply forgive the guilty, in fact it’s a miscarriage of justice to do so.
- We see it so often today, and bemoan it when our judicial system releases guilty people into our society because of some technicality. They didn’t follow some rule or procedure when the suspect confessed to the crime, so the court releases them back into society.

- We say that's not just or that's not fair, justice demands that a penalty be exacted for the crime.
- Yet God is merciful and He forgives the guilty - but only because He pays the price, He receives the penalty - justice has been served, righteousness has been fulfilled and maintained because the penalty has been paid through Jesus' death on the cross. Peace with God has been obtained through that same sacrifice.
- Mercy and truth have met together in Jesus, righteousness and peace have kissed.

V: 11 *"Truth shall spring out of the earth..."* (For us it already has!)

John 14:6 Jesus is "... the way, the Truth, and the life..."

- And He "sprang" from the earth...

John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Philippians 2:6-7 "⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men."

- Jesus is righteousness and He looks down from Heaven upon the children of God.

Hebrews 7:25 "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

V: 12 The Lord will give that which is good... the very best!

John 3:16 "For God so loved the World, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

- Our land will yield it's increase - there will be revival, renewal, new life!

V: 13 Righteousness will go before Him, and shall make His footsteps our pathway.

- Righteousness - Jesus will go before us, leading the Way, His footsteps will be our path - His ways will be our way, because He is the Way!

Revelation 22:20 "He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"