



BALM PSALMS: PSALM 80

Community Group Study Guide

Week of July 18, 2021

Introduction

- Satan prays on the fact that we don't know God for who he truly is. He tweaks our understanding of God, so that we don't think that we need him when we confront the brokenness within ourselves and within the world. He gets us to believe that satisfaction lies in a life/utopia/paradise apart from God's presence.
- The deceit of Satan leads us to think that they best way to address our brokenness is by tearing everything down in order to build things back in a better way. God is not included in these plans. God, however, doesn't use the term "rebuild" when he speaks of our brokenness, he "restores." Everything that God built was perfect. Christ came in order to bring restoration through reconciliation. It's not until God's rule and reign is over us that God begins to restore us.
- In Psalm 80, the people are crying out at a moment when Israel is being overrun and plundered by enemies. It is in this context that they boldly cry out to God in desperation for restoration of their status as the Lord's favored sons.
- 2 Chronicles 7:12-14 provides four steps, which form the outline of the sermon, from God that a person, church, and state can take in pursuit of restoration before God.

Step #1 to Restoration: Humble Yourself

- This psalm, a psalm of Asaph, was written during a decade when Assyrians were able to raid and plunder the land of Israel at will. God had allowed for his people to be plundered and come under the hand of the enemy. Psalm 79 identifies Israel as suffering sheep. Psalm 80 appeals to God as the Shepherd of Israel (v1).
- Sheep/Shepherd Theme: The title of sheep is not to be viewed as a compliment by God's people. Sheep are dumb, weak, directionless, and defenseless apart from the care of their own shepherd. An example of hundreds of sheep in Turkey walking off a cliff in the absence of their shepherd was provided. When we, like sheep, start thinking that we can find greener pastures without our Shepherd things start going bad. The only voice that we should follow blindly is God's voice.
- Identifying as a sheep should humble us and make us want to follow the Shepherd.
- Vine/Vinedresser Theme (v8-11): God transplants Israel out of Egypt and plants them in the promised land. In the same way, he transplants us out of the world in order to bring us to the promised land. This theme further shows that we are not our own, and should bring us to a position of humility before God, the vinedresser. We should follow his plans and pursue his prosperity instead of our own.

Step #2 to Restoration: Pray Boldly

- V1: Acknowledges that God is Shepherd, but also King of all creation. It is an appeal to who God is and his ability to anything.
- V2: After mentioning Joseph in v1, the psalmist mentions Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's sons, and Benjamin, his brother. These are the most beloved sons of Jacob. The psalmist is calling God to remember that his people are his prized sons. The people want God to love them and prize them like Jacob loved his sons and grandsons, especially Joseph, after thinking that he was dead, before they ask him to do something great for them.
- From a humbled position, one in which the people have nothing more to lose, the psalmist cries out for God to do something great for them. He asks for God to save them, and does so in a way as if they've already received his salvation (see Mark 11:24).
- Can't ask for perfection without repenting of your sin.

Step #3 to Restoration: Turn from Your Wicked Way

DISCUSSION GOALS

Head

To understand the difference between building ourselves up in a new way and seeking restoration before God.

Heart

To trust that forgiveness of our sins is a greater need than relief from our circumstances.

Hands

To humble ourselves, pray boldly, turn from our wicked ways, and seek God's face (in Christ) daily.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Kids' Summer Nights:

Registration is now open for kids ages 4-11 to attend our free, weeklong VBS program this summer! You can register your child(ren) or sign up to volunteer [here](#).

Please **make your plan for CG clear for next week** if Kids Summer Nights will impact the availability of several people in your group.

Wisely, the psalmist doesn't ask for restoration from the Lord without repentance of sin.

- V4-5: The psalmist shows awareness that God is (justly) angry as a result of the sin of the people. It's clear that the people realize that God has abandoned them and not been a loving shepherd because he wanted to teach them a lesson. The people are in the position of Psalm 42:1-3 at this point.
- In his sovereignty, God has allowed for the suffering of his people at the hands of gentile nations (v6) in order that it might produce the fruit that he wanted. Psalm 80 is an expression of that fruit, a humble prayer for restoration after they lost everything in their state of pride. Because of the hardship that they faced, the people of Israel knew that they were not independent owners and rulers of their lives. They know that God is Lord and they are tenants and stewards of the land and grace given to them.
- New Testament believers should see the similar lessons and themes presented in this psalm and the Parable of the Wicked Tenants in Matthew 21:33-46.

Step #4 to Restoration: Seek God's Face

- True repentance, though, doesn't just seek restoration, but it seeks a relationship.
- The progression in the titles given to God in the refrain in verses 3, 7 and 19 reaches its pinnacle in 19 when it appeals to the "LORD God of hosts" to let his face shine on his people. This is an appeal of the psalmist for a healthy, peaceful, loving relationship from the God who loves with steadfast, covenantal love. Israel wants God to look upon them with delight instead of rebuke (v19). As they turn away from their sin and turn back to God, they want him to turn back to them.
- V15-17: The psalmist shows awareness that ultimate restoration to loving relationship with God comes from a restoration that is procured by a son given favor by God.
- v17: This is an appeal by the Israelites for God to give them favor and power over their enemies in the present, but also an appeal for God to give his favor and power to one who would sit at his right hand in the future and grant ultimate restoration to all of God's people and creation. The psalmist is saying that the only way God can restore everything is sending the one who has the power to restore.
- God initiated the restoration process for the relationship between him and mankind by sending Christ. Scripture tells us that after dying on cross, Christ has ascended to the right hand of God, where all authority on heaven and earth has been given to him. Christ is truly Benjamin, the favored "son of the right hand" of God, who will one day come back and bring restoration to all of creation. It is by his suffering as the Ben-oni, that he becomes Benjamin (Gen. 35). All those who repent of their sin and place their faith in him will be saved and live in his glorified presence forever and all those who refused to trust in him for salvation will be condemned.
- The use of "son of man" calls to mind Daniel 7:13-14, which gives a title to the "Son of Man" who will rule a kingdom that will not be destroyed forever.
- The psalmist makes clear that the people of Israel, at this moment, see that salvation from their circumstances isn't what they truly need, but that they need salvation from their sin first and foremost, which only this man of favor at the right hand of God, called the "son of man" can provide.
- It is only by repenting of sin and turning in faith to Christ that God turns his face to us in delight.
- When we come to the point of saving faith we can only produce fruit, as was expected of Israel, as we abide in Christ and follow his will. The Father is still the vinedresser. Christ is the vine. In his Holy Spirit, we seek to bear fruit.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read Psalm 80

1. What points or themes in the psalm or sermon were helpful or convicting to you?
2. What is the difference between seeking to “rebuild” (or start over in life) and seeking “restoration” from God?
3. Have you ever caught yourself trying to build a paradise without God? How did that work out for you?
4. **Read 2 Chronicles 7:14.** The tendency of most people is to want God to relieve them of their present challenges and difficult circumstances instead of seeking restoration before God. How do the instructions in these verses help a person desire the right things from God?
5. Why is it helpful for Christians to think of themselves as sheep?
6. What is significant about the choice of names that the psalmist uses in verses 1 and 2?
7. Why might it be appropriate to describe the tone of this psalm as “bold desperation”?
8. Do you feel inclined to pray differently after hearing this sermon?
9. Pastor Jan said, “True restoration doesn’t just seek repentance, but it seeks a relationship [with God].” What does this mean?
10. How can a holy God make his face shine upon a sinner?