

## Psalms 85

This evening - we're continuing our overview of the Old Testament book titled Psalms.

With this as our focus - let's open our Bibles to Psalms chapter 85 - and as we make our way to the 85th Psalm...

...I should take a moment to point out that - this is the ninth Psalm written by the sons of Korah.

And as I pointed out in our study last week - the sons of Korah - were warrior poets...

...who served as gate-keepers during the days of King David.

And much like King David - the sons of Korah were not only mighty in battle...

...but - they were also prolific Psalmists - who loved to sing the praises of the Lord.

Their love for the Lord can be seen in the 11 psalms that they wrote...

...which includes songs of celebration - and songs of lament.

They wrote songs of wisdom - and songs of thanksgiving.

Here in the 85th Psalm - we find the sons of Korah - proclaimed the praises of the One Who restored the Children of Israel.

And it's here in the lyrics of the Psalm - where they celebrated the righteous God...

...Who graciously saves sinners - according to His mercy and truth.

With this as our focus - let's turn our attention to the lyrics that we find here in the 85th Psalm.

Look with me - beginning there at verse 1 - where we read...

Psa 85:1 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.

Psa 85:2 You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people;

You have covered all their sin. Selah

Here in the beginning of this Psalm - we find the sons of Korah - rejoicing in the LORD - - after they were brought back from captivity.

And while there are many who believe that this Psalm was written after the Babylonian captivity...

...it's also possible that the Psalmist wrote this song - much earlier.

Let's consider how Dr. Thomas Constable explained it in his commentary where we read...

The reference to restoration from captivity suggests that this psalm may date to the return from Babylonian exile. However, the psalmist may have been referring to a more modest captivity, perhaps at the hand of a neighbor nation. In any case, he viewed Israel's former enslavement to be the result of her sin and thanked God for pardoning that.

So - yeah - it's possible that this Psalm was written - after the Babylonian captivity.

And yet - it's also possible that the sons of Korah were singing about an earlier captivity...

...like when the Philistines defeated Israel - and took the Ark of the covenant.

Here's how John Trapp explained it in his commentary of this Psalm - where he declared...

Of old from Egypt, and alate from the Philistines; who, after Saul's death, miserably tyrannized over Israel, till David delivered them. Some hold that this psalm was composed at the end of the Babylonish captivity; others conceive it may be a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles, who are brought in speaking, the whole psalm throughout.

From this - we can see that - there is no consensus among commentators...

...concerning the exact time of this captivity.

And yet - there is a clue as to why this captivity took place.

Look with me again - there at verse 1 - where the sons of Korah declared...

Psa 85:1 LORD, You have been favorable to Your land;  
You have brought back the captivity of Jacob.

Now - that word - favorable - was translated from a Hebrew word - which - in this context...

...was used of those who appease a creditor - by paying off a debt.

And it's here in this verse - where we learn that the Lord was favorable to His land...

...which is to say that - the Lord was satisfying the debt - during the days of Jacob's captivity.

In order to make my case - let's consider how the Lord used the same Hebrew word - which is translated - favorable - here in the 85th Psalm...

...to describe the way that He would satisfy the debt of the Seventh year Sabbath.

Hold your place - here in the 85th Psalm - and let's turn in our Bibles - to Leviticus chapter 26.

As we make our way to the 26th chapter of Leviticus - I should take a moment to remind you that...

...the Lord not only commanded the Israelites to rest on the seventh day of the week...

...but - He also commanded them to observe a Sabbath year - every seventh year.

Not only that - but He also warned them about the consequences that would occur...

...if they failed to observe the seventh year Sabbath.

Let's consider how the Lord explained it - here in Leviticus chapter 26 - look with me - beginning there at verse 31 - where He declared....

Lev 26:31 I will lay your cities waste and bring your sanctuaries to desolation, and I will not smell the fragrance of your sweet aromas.

Lev 26:32 I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it.

Lev 26:33 I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you;

your land shall be desolate and your cities waste.

Lev 26:34 Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies' land;

then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths.

Lev 26:35 As long as it lies desolate it shall rest—

for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths when you dwelt in it.

Now - that word - enjoy - found there in verse 34 - was translated from the same Hebrew word...

...which was rendered - favorable - back in the 85th Psalm.

And I should remind you that - the original Hebrew word was used of those...

...who appease a creditor - by paying off a debt.

What this means is that - the children of Israel were required to let the promised land rest - every seventh year.

And if they failed to obey this observe this sabbatical year...

...then - the Lord would eventually collect on this debt - by sending them into captivity.

And they would remain in captivity - until the debt was satisfied...

...and the people were ready to repent.

Let's consider how the Lord explained it - here in Leviticus 26 - look with me - beginning there at verse 40 - where He declared...

Lev 26:40 'But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me,

Lev 26:41 and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies;

if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt

Lev 26:42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land.

Lev 26:43 The land also shall be left empty by them, and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them;

they will accept their guilt, because they despised My judgments and because their soul abhorred My statutes.

From this - we can see that - the Lord was favorable to His land - according to His covenant with Abraham Isaac and Jacob.

At the same time - He was also ready to show favor to His people...

...by bringing them back from captivity - providing they were ready to accept their guilt...

...and confess their sins - and repent of their iniquities.

Now - with all of this in mind - let's turn back to the 85th Psalm - and let's take another look - beginning there at verse 1 - where we read...

Psa 85:1 LORD, You have been favorable to Your land;  
You have brought back the captivity of Jacob.

Psa 85:2 You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people;  
You have covered all their sin. Selah

Here in these verses - we find the Psalmist celebrating the way in which the Lord satisfied the Sabbatical year debt they they owed.

Not only that - but - he also rejoiced in the way that He brought Israel back from their captivity.

And in so doing - the Psalmist proclaimed the praises of the One Who forgave their iniquities...

...just as the LORD promised - back in Leviticus chapter 26.

That word - forgiven - found there in verse 2 - was translated from a Hebrew word...

...which was used of those who carry - or - bear the guilt of another's iniquity.

And what this means is that - the sins of those who have been forgiven...

...have actually been carried away - according to the favor of the Lord.

And not only have they been carried away - - the sins of the forgiven are also covered.

That word - covered - found there in the middle of verse 2 - was translated from a Hebrew word...

...which in this context - refers to the way that the Lord conceals the sins of the transgressor.

What this means is that - the sins of those who are forgiven...

...have been carried away - - and covered - so that they are forever concealed.

I like the way that the way that King David explained it - in the 103rd Psalm - it's beginning at verse 10 - where he declared...

Psa 103:10        He has not dealt with us according to our sins,  
Nor punished us according to our iniquities.

Psa 103:11        For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him;

Psa 103:12        As far as the east is from the west,  
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

Those who fear the Lord with heartfelt faith - will receive the favor of God...

...by which our sins are carried away - and covered - according to the mercy of our Messiah.

You see - it's our Messiah Jesus - Who was sent to become our substitutionary sacrifice...

...Who bore our sins upon the cross - so that sinners could be forgiven.

I like the way that Spurgeon explained it in his commentary - where he declared...

"Thou hast covered all their sin." All of it, every spot, and wrinkle, the veil of love has covered all. Sin has been divinely put out of sight. Hiding it beneath the propitiatory, covering it with the sea of the atonement, blotting it out, making it to cease to be, the Lord has put it so completely away that even his omniscient eye sees it no more.

What a miracle is this! To cover up the sun would be easy work compared with the covering up of sin. Not without a covering atonement is sin removed, but by means of the great sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, it is most effectually put away by one act, for ever. What a covering does his blood afford!

That's right - the Lord Jesus is the One Who carried away our sins on the cross...

...and then - covered our sins - so that they are forever concealed by the blood that was shed His cross.

And what this means is that - the iniquities of those who are forgiven have been PAID for - and PARDONED...

...according to the promise of the New Covenant.

In this way - the Lord takes away the wrath that He will pour out in the unrepentant.

Let's consider how the Psalmist explained it - here in the 85th Psalm - look with me - beginning there at verse 3 - where he declared...

Psa 85:3      You have taken away all Your wrath;  
You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger.

Psa 85:4      Restore us, O God of our salvation,  
And cause Your anger toward us to cease.

Psa 85:5      Will You be angry with us forever?  
Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?

Psa 85:6      Will You not revive us again,  
That Your people may rejoice in You?

Here in these verses - we find the sons of Korah - crying out for restoration and revival...

...as they rejoiced in the way that Lord had spared them from the fierce anger of His righteous wrath.

And just to be clear - that word - wrath - found there in the middle of verse 3...

...was translated from a Hebrew word - which was used in reference to the overflowing fury of God.

We also find the Psalmist - referring to the fierceness of God's anger...

...which refers to the hot burning breath of the Lord.

We should also consider the request that the Psalmist presented - there in verse 4 - where he declared...

Psa 85:4    Restore us, O God of our salvation,  
And cause Your anger toward us to cease.

That word - anger - was translated from another Hebrew word...

...which can also be rendered - indignation - and vexation.

And so we see that - the Lord was no longer planning to pour out his righteous wrath on Israel...

...and yet - he was still vexed with anger - for the way His people had sinned against Him.

It's for this reason that the Psalmist presented the question that he posed there in verse 5 - where he asked...

Psa 85:5    Will You be angry with us forever?  
Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?

Here in this verse we find the sons of Korah - using the Hebrew word that we found - back in verse 3.

And so - while it's true that the Lord had turned from the fierceness of His anger...

...the Psalmist still wanted to know if the anger of the Lord would impact future generations.

Now - as we consider this concern - it's important for us to realize that - the Lord is always angry with the wicked.

This was precisely the point that King David was making in the 7th Psalm - it's verse 11 - where he declared...

Psa 7:11 God is a just judge,  
And God is angry with the wicked every day.

Let that sink in for a moment - - God is a just judge - and He is angry with the wicked every day.

What this means is that - His righteous indignation burns hot - against those who walk in wickedness.

And seeing how the Lord is a just judge - then - He must perfectly punish every single sin.

Thankfully for us - the Lord made a way for sinners to escape the judicial requirement of His righteous wrath.

And in order to understand this plan - we should consider the way that Paul explained it - in the letter he sent to the church in Rome.

Hold your place - here in the book of Psalms - and let's turn in our Bibles - to Romans chapter 3.

You see - it's here in the third chapter of Romans - where Paul presented God's perfect plan...

...for satisfying His righteous indignation - while simultaneously making a way...

...for sinners to be saved

Let's consider how Paul put it - here in Romans chapter 3 - look with me beginning there at verse 19 - where he declared...

Rom 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Rom 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Rom 3:21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

Rom 3:22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

Rom 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Rom 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Rom 3:25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

Rom 3:26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Here in these verses - we find Paul - helping his audience to understand that...

...the Lord made a way for sinners to be saved - through the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

More simply put - Jesus was sent to satisfy the righteous requirement of God...

...by receiving the wrath that we deserve - so that we might receive the forgiveness we don't deserve.

In this way - God remains judicially just - by punishing every sin.

And at the same time - He becomes the justifier - of those who trust in Jesus.

As a result - those who receive the forgiveness of God - by faith in Jesus Christ...

...have also escaped the wrath of God - which will be poured out on the unrepentant.

I like the way that Paul put it - in 1st Thessalonians chapter 5 - it's beginning at verse 9 - where he declared...

1Th 5:9 ...God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

1Th 5:10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.

1Th 5:11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

Christian - listen - those who have been saved - by faith in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ...

...can also rejoice in knowing that - we are no longer waiting for the wrath of God.

And knowing that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...

...we should comfort one another with this wonderful truth.

With this as our focus - let's turn back to the 85th Psalm - - where the sons of Korah described the way that salvation provides us with peace.

Look with me - beginning there at verse 7 - where the Psalmist declared...

Psa 85:7 Show us Your mercy, LORD,  
And grant us Your salvation.

Psa 85:8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak,  
For He will speak peace

To His people and to His saints;  
But let them not turn back to folly.

Psa 85:9 Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,  
That glory may dwell in our land.

Here in these verses - we find the sons of Korah - connecting the dots between the mercy - salvation - and peace.

Just to be clear - those who receive the mercy of our Messiah - will enter into the salvation of our Savior.

And those who enter into the salvation of our Savior - will rest in the peace of His promises.

At the same time - we must not fail to notice what the Psalmist said - there in verse 9 - where we learn that...

Psa 85:9 His salvation is near to those who fear Him,  
That glory may dwell in our land.

Christian - listen - those who want to rest in the peace that surpasses all understanding...

...must first walk in the fear of the Lord - - and the reason why is because...

...the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom - by which we receive the mercy of our Messiah.

I like the way that King Solomon put it - in Proverbs chapter 9 - it's verse 10 - where he declared...

Pro 9:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,  
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

Now - just to be clear - that word - fear - was translated from a Hebrew word...

...which refers to the respectful reverence that leads us to humble ourselves before the almighty.

And as we humble ourselves before the almighty - the Lord provides us with the wisdom we need...

...to receive the mercy of our Messiah - by which we experience the peace of salvation.

And it's for this reason that I encourage every person to humbly listen to the Lord.

Let's consider the way that Paul put it - in Hebrews chapter 12 - it's beginning at verse 25 - where he declared...

Heb 12:25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven,

Heb 12:26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."

Heb 12:27 Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Heb 12:28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

Heb 12:29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Now - listen - when Paul described our God as a consuming fire - there should be no doubt that...

...those who provoke Him to wrath - will be cast into the lake of fire - forevermore.

It's for this reason that we should help the unrepentant to grasp the importance of reverence and godly fear...

...so that they might humbly hear what the Lord has spoken...

...concerning the salvation that brings peace to those who trust in Him.

With this as our goal - let's consider the way that the imputation of righteousness - brings peace to the repentant.

Look with me again - there at the 85th Psalm - beginning there at verse 10 - where we learn that...

Psa 85:10 Mercy and truth have met together;  
Righteousness and peace have kissed.

Psa 85:11 Truth shall spring out of the earth,  
And righteousness shall look down from heaven.

Psa 85:12 Yes, the LORD will give what is good;  
And our land will yield its increase.

Psa 85:13 Righteousness will go before Him,  
And shall make His footsteps our pathway.

Here in these verses - we learn about the way that Mercy and Truth have met together.

And while the Psalmist failed to explicitly explain how Mercy and truth have met together...

...I can assure you that - the Holy Spirit was pointing to the ministry of our Messiah.

Proof of my point can be found in the fact that - the Mercy of God is made available in our Messiah.

And at the same time - Jesus is the incarnation of Truth.

Therefore - Mercy and Truth have met - in the person of our Savior - Jesus.

The Psalmist also informed us that - Righteousness and peace have kissed.

In other words - the Righteousness of God - which was manifest in the person of our Messiah...

...has created the conditions by which sinners can have peace with God.

And now - those who trust in Jesus - will receive the imputation of Christ's righteousness...

...resulting in relational peace with God.

I like the way that Paul explained it - in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 - it's beginning at verse 18 - where he declared...

2Co 5:18 Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

2Co 5:19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

2Co 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

2Co 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Jesus Christ has created the conditions for our reconciliation with God.

And listen He did this - when He bore our sins upon the tree - - where He received the righteous wrath of God.

And now - those who trust in Him - receive the imputation of His righteousness...

...so that we can make His footsteps our pathway.

I like the way that the sons of Asaph put it - there in the final verse of this chapter - it's verse 13 - where the psalmist declared...

Psa 85:13 Righteousness will go before Him,  
And shall make His footsteps our pathway.

I like the way that Spurgeon weighed in on this verse - here's how he put it...

“Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.” God's march of right will leave a track wherein his people will joyfully follow. He who smote in justice will also bless in justice, and in both will make his righteousness manifest, so as to affect the hearts and lives of all his people. Such are the blessings of our Lord's first advent, and such shall be yet more conspicuously the result of his second coming. Even so, come Lord Jesus. Amen.

Those who trust in the Righteous One - will receive the imputation of His righteousness...

...so that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus.

And with this as our goal - let's follow in the righteous footsteps of Christ Jesus...

...as we become the Ambassadors of our righteous King.

# Communion