

## Our Revival Question

Psalm 85

For the choir director. A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

O LORD, You showed favor to Your land;  
You restored the captivity of Jacob.  
You forgave the iniquity of Your people;  
You covered all their sin. Selah.  
You withdrew all Your fury;  
You turned away from Your burning anger.

Restore us, O God of our salvation,  
And cause Your indignation toward us to cease.  
Will You be angry with us forever?  
Will You prolong Your anger to all generations?  
Will You not Yourself revive us again,  
That Your people may rejoice in You?  
Show us Your lovingkindness, O LORD,  
And grant us Your salvation.

I will hear what God the LORD will say;  
For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones;  
But let them not turn back to folly.

Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,  
That glory may dwell in our land.  
Lovingkindness and truth have met together;  
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.  
Truth springs from the earth,  
And righteousness looks down from heaven.  
Indeed, the LORD will give what is good,  
And our land will yield its produce.  
Righteousness will go before Him  
And will make His footsteps into a way.

Brothers and sisters, let's consider tonight the final question that is asked by the writer of Psalm 85 in verse 6 where he says, "***Will You not Yourself revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You?***" And may the Lord be pleased to help us with our own questions like this one and to show us the answers promised here in this Psalm.

In reading history it has been such encouragement to me to find hope in the evidence we have that it is often true that the darkest times that the Lord's people face are the times when the Holy Spirit of God comes in power and does a great work among them: reviving His people out of cold, dead religion and breathing new life into their prayers, their hunger for the Word, and their zeal to see the salvation

of the lost around them. Is there anything in the Word of God that would lead us to think that past events like the Great Awakening, the international Revivals of 1859, or the stirrings that happened on the Isle of Lewis in the 1950s are something to be expected or even prayed for? Time would fail us tonight to analyze the way the Lord has moved among His people in these past episodes of history but let us take a close look at Psalm 85 so that the Word of God may instruct us how to pray according to His will and not in order to achieve any man-made so-called revival on our own.

Notice that there are three questions in the text leading up to this that he asks the LORD and that each of the questions are all connected. "Will You be angry with us forever? Will you prolong Your anger to all generations? **Will you not Yourself revive us again, that your people may rejoice in You?**" This last question shows us something about ourselves, does it not? He asks, "Will You not Yourself **revive us again?**" From this we can see that even the Lord's people need repeated reviving. We who are in Christ need reviving.

A friend of mine wrote me a message this week just to say simply, "Praise the Lord! I love His word." There is so much for us to love in our portion of God's word here tonight. You see here we have the Word of God showing us **two very important things**: first, here is what we need: **to be revived**, to have and to experience a renewed spiritual life in Christ. And second, here is **the One** who will provide the answer to the question and the answer to our prayer. The humble prayer of verse seven is, "Show us your lovingkindness, O LORD, and grant us Your salvation." This is how we must ask in faith for what we need, here. The writer of the Psalm looks forward by faith to the coming of the Messiah, and now we look to Christ our Savior by faith and need a **renewed** sight of our salvation that is found only in Him.

In the first three verses the Psalm writer rehearses the past goodness of the LORD. He sings of the favor of God, the turning of captivity – physical as well as bondage to sin, he remembers iniquities forgiven, and sins covered. There was a day in his memory when the LORD withdrew all His fury and turned away from His burning anger. But now there is a need to pray, "Restore us, O God of our salvation, and cause Your indignation toward us to cease." It is clear that the nation of Israel had experienced all of the past blessings recorded here and yet, **in the light of God's salvation, they returned to the folly of sin**. Now the Psalm's author knows his own need as well as the need of his brothers and sisters: and it is **newness of life**. **Restoration** of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. **Revival** both personal and national.

What does true spiritual revival look like? How will we ever see revival in ourselves or in the body of Christ? There are many kinds of counterfeits, but we have a more sure word here at hand that will keep us from confusion. Now you don't need to turn to these verses but make a note of it: there are seven instances in Psalm 119 where he prays specifically for revival for himself according to the will of God.

Verse 25: My soul cleaves to the dust;  
**Revive me according to Your word.**  
Verse 37: Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity,  
And **revive me in Your ways.**  
Verse 40: Behold, I long for Your precepts;  
**Revive me through Your righteousness.**  
Verse 88: **Revive me according to Your lovingkindness,**  
So that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.  
Verse 107: I am exceedingly afflicted;  
**Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word.**  
Verse 156: Great are Your mercies, O LORD;  
**Revive me according to Your ordinances.**  
And Verse 159: Consider how I love Your precepts;  
**Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.**

Now this is what revival looks like in the life of one person. It's a quickening, an awakening to the things of God where before there was deadness, coldness, and lethargy toward the things of God. **It is when the Holy Spirit of God so fills a man or a woman that the Word of God, and the Name of God, and the greatness of the glory of God become the chiefest concerns of life.** Do we *all* not need reviving tonight? At least in some measure do not we each need to seek the LORD while He may be found? And call upon Him while He is near? Each of us forsaking the ways of wickedness and the thoughts of unrighteousness? Each of us returning to our God to seek out His mercy because He *will* abundantly pardon?

There is a general trend in our country to read the Bible and think that it is about us as individuals at this moment in time. We may tend to look for some promise or some blessing and we take a verse in isolation to bring ourselves personal comfort in the moment. **We** become the hero of the story when the Bible is about **us**. This kind of thinking tends not to remember the mercies of the Lord shown to our **families**, our **church**, or our **nation** and we then may ignore the passages of Scripture that should provoke us to seek the spiritual well-being of the community we live in, the church we attend, the nation we belong to. It is far too simple to focus on our individual problems and our own personal relationship with the Lord.

Remember all the ways that we share in corporate solidarity as believers in Christ. We who are to Him adopted as sons of a family, are built as a spiritual house, we are joined together as living stones, made a part of His body, the church – we are a vine made up of branches – and we are a true olive tree which has grafted and natural branches which share in the same life giving stream of living water from the fountain which is Christ our Savior. When Saul was supernaturally arrested on the Damascus Road by the risen Lord, Jesus asked him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting **me**?” Jesus so identifies us as being in union with him as the people of God and in His sight we are corporately His very body and He is our representative Head.

Also remember that He is the vinedresser who prunes the branches that bear no fruit. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and so let us hear what the Spirit says to the wavering churches. He will remove their lampstands if they do not repent as congregations and return to their first love. Though He still acknowledges that there are a few **individuals** who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Him in white, for they are worthy. He will not erase their name from the book of life, and will confess their **individual** name before the Father and before His angels. Yet He causes whole churches and even nations to either burn brightly with Gospel light or to be given over to the discipline and chastisement of the darkness of ignorance. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden but the brightness of the evangelical light in our church or in any church is not maintained by arms of flesh. It is a work of the Spirit of the Living God in every way and He will get all the glory for the individual who perseveres as well as the local church that burns with a flame of zeal and love.

Here are a couple of illustrations of the effects of the Holy Spirit sending revival into a community. The story has been told that when William P. Nicholson preached down at the shipyard in Belfast they had to erect a special shed called “the Nicholson shed” to house all of the stolen tools that the newly converted workers were returning as a result of Nicholson’s preaching. Another story I love is that when Martyn Lloyd-Jones came to Sandfields and got rid of the sports clubs and the stage plays at the church and started preaching the Word of God – over 500 people started getting converted. Church committee members were converted. Even his wife Bethan was converted. And the converted started giving him their bottles of liquor after being set free from a life of addiction - so much that he started to have a cupboard full of bottles as a testimony to the changed lives in the community where drunkenness destroyed so many lives. Remember that true revival is a work of the Holy Spirit and it does not happen apart from the faithful proclamation of the Word.

Now looking again to our text: the Psalm writer here prays a question: “Will You not Yourself revive us again that Your people may rejoice in You?” What if we asked this same question of Him? What if we see how this Psalm mirrors our day and should move us to echo the same prayer? The **darkness** of ignorance and superstition have come in like a flood and there is but a **dim** Gospel light in the cities where we live. All around us the situation is **dire** because of the wrath of God abiding on unbelieving souls whose sins have **not** been covered. Their iniquities have **not** been forgiven. The anger of the Lord **will** be fierce and He will **not** relent for a moment in the revealing of His wrath from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. Since there is **no** fear of God among multitudes in this community His salvation **can be said** to be far away. The righteous angels of heaven hide their faces from the sight of the uncleanness and the defilement in our land. Sin has made captives here and there is a covenant with death that forms a wide gate and a broad way that is leading many who we know personally to destruction at the gates of hell.

**But He** is the God of our salvation. Is there not some way that His mercy and His truth could be seen to draw close in union so that His anger might be appeased and His lovingkindness could be declared to us in words of peace? Is there anyone in heaven or on earth who would mediate between us and an offended God who is perfectly just and infinitely holy? Is there any hope that our sins against the light of the knowledge of the gospel would be blotted out and our very souls be revived from spiritual deadness? Is there any power in the universe that is strong enough to take hearts of stone and turn them into hearts of flesh that beat with nothing but love toward God? Is there any hope that truth would spring up at God's command even out of the very stony hearts of the earth and cry out "Hosanna in the Highest, Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord"?

Praise the Lord, the answer is here in this Psalm and so **we** must pray, "Show us your lovingkindness, O LORD, and grant us Your salvation. Turn us O God of our salvation, and we **shall** be turned. Revive Your work in the midst of the years. In wrath remember mercy. And it **will** be revived and mercy **will** be remembered. Cause Your word to go forth and accomplish that for which it was appointed and it **will** bear fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. That Your people may may rejoice in You. That You, O God, would be pleased to see Your Son receive the full reward of His suffering in the redemption and the revival of His elect people. That in the healing of our backsliding He would get all the glory. That we would be clothed in the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness and rejoice in His great salvation. That our greatest delight would be in Him and that You would be pleased to give us the desires of our hearts which should be the revival of the self-secure sleeping neighborhoods we live in where so many do not know their right hand from their left. And unless they repent they will perish." And we pray, "Father, be pleased to grant them repentance that we might rejoice in you."

O that God would awaken us, personally. That He would awaken us more and more as a local church. And stir us up by the Spirit of holiness so much that our friends and co-workers, and neighbors would not let another year pass without being compelled to come to the crossroads of life and consider if they will follow the narrow way that leads to life or be content to stay in the way of death. But that none of them might be able to **claim any ignorance**. That no one in our circle of influence would go another year **unwarned** or **un-prayed-for**. That we would live to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living which is this: that we would see souls whom we love fleeing from the **wrath** that is to come by apprehending the Savior and trusting only in Him for the **world** that is to come. That we might be revived personally and re-consecrate our lives to the service of our Lord and King. That our prayer for the revival of our church and our city and our nation would be a prayer for the knowledge of the Lord – the Gospel of Jesus Christ - to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Again - according to God's will we are taught to pray from Psalm 119:

***Revive me according to Your word.  
Revive me in Your ways.  
Revive me through Your righteousness.  
Revive me according to Your lovingkindness,  
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your word.  
Revive me according to Your ordinances.  
Revive me, O LORD, according to Your lovingkindness.***

What is the LORD's answer? Have you believed His message? ***Has the arm of the LORD been revealed to you?*** God ***will not*** be angry forever with His people. He ***will*** make them to walk in newness of life and they ***will*** rejoice in His salvation with holy fear that they would ever despise His mercy or offend Him by turning back to the folly of sin. God answers this prayer out of the riches of the mercy and grace demonstrated toward us in His Son, Jesus Christ. He who drank the full cup of God's wrath against sin that we deserved to drink. The infinite, burning anger of God toward all generations of His people fell upon Christ instead, in full fury. He became sin who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted as an enemy so that we might hear words of peace and reconciliation, and He was cast out as a rebel that we might be received as sons. And all this was according to His lovingkindness, freely given, without money and without price.

One final word on true revival. Do not think that the Lord will bring revival because we have become so perfect or that we deserve it. Consider the words of a preacher named Silversides who said, "There is only one power in existence greater than the human heart's love of darkness and sin. Only one. And that is the ***grace*** of God in the Holy Spirit changing the human heart, renewing the will, so that a sinner loves the light instead of the darkness." If you are a stranger to the grace of God tonight, call upon Him, for He is near and will abundantly pardon for the sake of His dear Son. If you are in need of His grace for the reviving of your soul, call upon Him, and He will make you to rejoice in Him, again. Amen.