

Righteousness & Peace Kiss

Psalm 85

Halifax: 17 October 2010

Introduction

In our regular Sunday Morning sermon series, we have just completed the portion of the prophecy of Isaiah that runs from chapter 40 to the end of chapter 48.

- In this section, we have seen the Lord's comfort for His people in their distress.
 - The occasion for this distress was God's own anger.
 - For generations, He had graciously preserved the theocracy despite His people's sins.
 - Over and over there had been cycles of sin followed by chastisement leading to repentance.
 - The people would always return to their sinful ways,
 - The LORD would then raise up enemies or send famine to chasten them.
 - The people would cry out to Him for His mercy and He would restore them again.
- But we saw at the end of chapter 39,
 - that the LORD declared to His people, through Isaiah, that the time had come that He would destroy Jerusalem, the temple, and the theocracy!
 - Many of the people were so hardened in their sins that this announcement made little impact on them.
 - But for the godly, it was a time of great distress...
 - Surely God would not forsake His people to whom He had promised the salvation of the whole world!
 - How could this be?
- And we have seen that Isaiah brought forth many words to assure them that though they would be taken into exile, the LORD would not forget His promises.
 - He would restore them.
 - He would raise up the one He calls, "My Righteous Servant" who would come to do His will and bring the salvation that He had promised to Abraham.
 - He would place righteousness in the land and the result of this righteousness would be peace.
 - In these chapters, we have tremendous words of comfort for God's people as they go into exile, assuring the godly that the promise of God still stood.
- While we studied this portion of Isaiah, we sang Psalm 102 as our Psalm of Focus.

- It was very well suited to this section because it tells of how God continues to love His city even when in anger He has reduced it to dust and rubble.
 - It assures His people that even though their city may be brought to ruin, the LORD Himself never changes—
 - and therefore His promises are sure and His righteous kingdom will be established for all His elect people!
 - How encouraging are some of the lines in this Psalm...
 - “You shall arise and mercy yet you unto Zion shall extend. The time has come which you have set, when you will favour to her send. Your saints take pleasure in her stones; her very dust to them is dear. So heathen lands and kingly thrones Jehovah’s glorious name shall fear. The LORD in glory has appeared, has built up Zion strong and fair, and He the destitute has heard, has not despised their humble prayer!”
 - No indeed, even under the worst of God’s chastisements, there is still certain hope for His people that God will restore them!
 - After telling us how the earth will change and pass away, a wonderful contrast is made at the end...
 - “These shall be changed and pass away; but you are ever more the same, because your years will never end. Your servants’ children dwell secure, before you re-established sure!”
 - Despite the exile and all the suffering that went with it,
 - The LORD was as committed as ever to His promise to bring salvation through His people! He was going to re-establish them!
 - That is what we saw in Isaiah 40-48.

And now as we come into chapter 49, we come to a section in which God goes into a full description of that coming mercy.

- He speaks much about His Righteous Servant who brings salvation.
 - He speaks about how the nations will be blessed by this salvation.
 - And He even details for us the suffering of the Servant in the place of all His people.
 - It is a section that is full of Jesus Christ and of the effects of His work!
 - Having assured us that this work is going to be done in 40-48,
 - Isaiah will now focus upon that glorious work in Isaiah 49-57.
 - And I want you to notice something about the way both of these sections in Isaiah ends. They end the same way...
 - Both of them end with the words
 - “There is no peace for the wicked.”
 - That is what it says in Isaiah 48:22
 - And that is what it says again in Isaiah 57:21.

- We must have the Servant come and establish righteousness if we are to have peace—Shalom—the completeness of blessing!
- You can't have Shalom without righteousness—
 - And now Isaiah is going to show us that Jesus Christ is the only source of righteousness for God's sinful people who come from all the nations of the world.

As we move into this wonderful section of Isaiah's prophecy,

- I want to take up a new Psalm of Focus.
 - The one I have chosen for this purpose is Psalm 85.
 - This Psalm teaches us what to do when the church is in decline.
 - when we are being chastened because we have not honoured our Lord.
 - It shows three things.
 - As people who love the Lord, we are to:
 1. Remember God's former mercies
 2. Plead earnestly for restoration
 3. And hope in the sure promise of the gospel.
- The time that this Psalm was written is a matter of great debate.
 - Some have suggested that it was after the exile when the people had been brought back to the land and were still having great troubles.
 - Those who take this view often latch on to the words in verse 1 that say the LORD has "brought back the captivity of Jacob,"
 - But this is by no means conclusive.
 - The word *captivity* is so broad in meaning that it was even used to speak of that which Job was delivered from when his fortunes were restored—
 - When this broader meaning is understood, Israel had *many* captivities that she was delivered from.
 - But I am not concerned to sort out just when it might have been written because we know that it was given by the Holy Spirit for God's people in all ages...
 - It applies to God's people in every period when the church has found herself under God's hand of chastisement for her sins.
 - And the truths that are set out to us here come to fullest expression in Jesus Christ whom Isaiah is going to richly present to us in chapters 49-57.
- My brothers and sisters, this Psalm is very suited to us in our day.
 - The western world has long enjoyed the rich blessing of our gracious Lord, but we have squandered His blessing.

- There is widespread ingratitude and even indifference toward Him and toward the precious gospel in our land.
- Most people in our city did not even bother to come to give thanks to Him today—on the Lord’s Day...
 - and even if they did go to church, many of them went to churches that have so severely compromised the gospel that it is virtually lost!
 - The lampstand of the gospel has largely been taken away!
- But I trust that most of you who are here this morning are what you say you are:
 - True disciples of Jesus Christ who are looking to Him alone for your salvation.
 - And if you are, you are pained to see the church in such decline!
 - Yours is a godly sorrow—a pain that all have known who love the LORD.
 - Even Jesus knew it when He wept over Jerusalem when she had hardened herself against God’s salvation...
 - And this Psalm tells you what to do with that pain!
 - When you see the church fallen into ruins and disgrace.

First of all, when the church is under chastisement, it is for you to

I. Remember God’s former mercies.

- You can see that this is the focus of the first three verses...
- A. First, we are to remember how He keeps His promises to His people.
 - God has promises that are unconditional; promises that are born of free grace.
 - And it is a great help for us to hang on to these promises as a foundation when the tokens of His favour have been withdrawn for a time.
 - 1. For God’s people of old, this unconditional promise is what is behind verse 1...
 - It says:
 - Ps 85:1: LORD, You have been favourable to Your land; You have brought back the captivity of Jacob.
 - This is very interesting language—that He was *favourable to His land*...
 - The LORD had made the unconditional promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that He would bring them to the land of Canaan...
 - And He had made it clear that it was in that land that He would bring forth His salvation in the appointed time—
 - He would bring forth...
 - the seed of Abraham who would bless all the families of the earth...

- the seed of David who would establish a kingdom of righteousness that would encompass all nations and that would endure forever.
 - God was going to do this, and He was going to do it in the land of promise.
- So when Psalm 85 says that in the past, He has been *favourable to the land*,
 - It is not so much that God was concerned about the land as that He had respect to the promise that was tied to the land.
 - Even though Israel was completely removed from the land in the exile, they were restored—
 - It had to be so because God had promised!
 - He could not utterly wipe out the seed of Abraham or the seed of David because His promise could not be broken...
 - Nor could He remove them permanently from the land until the Messiah came to Zion as promised.
- The Lord proved His fidelity to the promise—even to the land—by restoring His people despite the fact that they had provoked Him to wrath.
2. We who live now that Jesus has come need to understand how this applies to us.
- We also have an unconditional promise.
 - Jesus told us that He would build His church and that the gate of Hades would not prevail against it.
 - The Father declared that He will reign until all His enemies are put under His feet.
 - No matter how bad things have gotten in the church, He has always preserved us.
 - God brought the Muslims against His church to chasten us almost a thousand years ago because of the rampant idolatry in the church...
 - But God's promise kept Him from utterly destroying the church.
 - Then there was that period before the reformation when the church was in such darkness that the gospel appeared to be almost completely lost.
 - But it could not be lost—God showed favour to His “land” (so to speak) and restored His light and truth again!
 - He brought back the captivity of Jacob, as it were.
 - And now here we are again in a day of very great confusion...
 - The church in our land is setting aside God's truth in a desperate attempt to please men—

- And the church's ranks are thinning out—churches are closing all across North America!
- But we can be certain that God will not allow His church to perish!
 - He has promised—the gates of Hades will not prevail against it!
 - It is for us to remember His faithfulness in the past when the church has been disobedient in order that we might not despair.
 - That is the first thing we are taught to remember.

B. Second, we are to remember how He has faithfully forgiven His people in the past.

1. Oh how the church's sins have piled up before our holy God.

- Daniel described the great wickedness that has so often characterised the church through the ages in his prayer of confession in Daniel 9.
 - He said:
 - Daniel 9:4-5: O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land.
 - Even though the LORD has been so faithful to His covenant, we have not been faithful to walk His covenant.
- And I do not speak here of the sins that we commit daily as His people when we walk in the light...
 - the sins that He continually cleanses us from.
 - Those sins are constantly before us and God has made provision for them in Jesus Christ.
 - If He should mark them, we would not be able to stand.
 - But because He does not mark them, but constantly cleanses us of them, we can be said to be blameless if we simply continue in Christ—
 - not in perfection which we never attain...
 - but abiding in Christ, walking in the light, keeping His covenant, continuing in the truth...
 - I am not talking about these daily sins that we commit as faithful servants of God...
 - I am talking about the sin of rejecting our Lord, of turning away from His truth and of no longer walking with Him or seeking Him.

- These are the sins that bring down His chastisement upon us and cause Him to turn away from the church and to take away His lampstand.
 - This is the sin of apostasy!
 - Jesus Himself makes this distinction in Revelation 2 and 3 where some churches are called faithful and others are called to repent.

- 2. You can see in verse 2 that it speaks of how God has forgiven His people in time past from these sins of apostasy and covenant breaking!
 - In verse 2 it says:
 - Ps 85:2: You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin.
 - What wonderful words these are!
 - The word *forgive* that is used here means to bear away or to carry off!
 - It was used to speak of the scapegoat on whom the sins of God's people were laid and carried off into the wilderness!
 - Of course this points to Christ who was crucified outside the camp, as one bearing away the sins of His people.
 - The sins are carried away so as never to be used against us!
 - They are removed from the record, as far as the east is from the west.
 - And in the second clause, it says that they are *covered*.
 - This means that they are buried under the blood of the covenant.
 - In the Old Testament, Christ was represented by the shedding of blood that was poured on the mercy seat.
 - In this way, sin was atoned by the shedding of blood.
 - They are cleansed by the shedding of Jesus' blood, never to be seen by God again.
 - God's people might live continually under this provision, looking to God's cleansing...
 - but even when the people as a whole had broken away and rebelled against God so that they were no longer looking to Him for forgiveness and atonement provided in His covenant,
 - He still, after a time of chastisement, forgave them and covered all their sins!
 - We are to remember that even in the past when our unconfessed sins have been piled up against us,
 - The Lord has, after a time of chastisement, completely removed them from the record and covered them so that His people might be restored again.

- He does this for His elect people as a whole when they as a whole have gone astray,
 - and He does it for elect individuals who depart from Him, but are later pardoned by His restoring grace.

C. Third, we are to remember how He had been angry and then turned His anger away.

- This is brought out in verse 3 where it says:
 - Ps 85:3: You have taken away all Your wrath; You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger.

1. This may seem redundant, because we just saw complete forgiveness in the previous verse,

- But it is an important addition because it is something that is avoided.
 - It is especially important in our day when there are so many people who will talk about the expiation of sin (God removing our guilt),
 - but not about propitiation (God's wrath being appeased).
- We like to think that God is never angry with us,
 - but the language that is used here shows us that God's anger is both real and severe.
 - The word translated *wrath* speaks of an overflow or of excess as when a person boils over with rage.
 - And the word translated *fierceness* refers to heat—it is a word that is used exclusively to speak of God's wrath.
- It is no wonder that we don't like to think about this,
 - It is terrifying to realise that the wrath of the Almighty God who is called a consuming fire is upon you.
 - The dreaded condition is spoken of by David in Psalm 38:
 - Ps 38:1-8: O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your wrath, Nor chasten me in Your hot displeasure! For Your arrows pierce me deeply, And Your hand presses me down. There is no soundness in my flesh Because of Your anger, Nor any health in my bones Because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds are foul and festering Because of my foolishness. I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are full of inflammation, And there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and severely broken; I groan because of the turmoil of my heart.
 - Nothing could be worse than to have God's indignation fall on you...
 - Yet, such was the condition of God's people when they turned from God's covenant mercy...
 - God sent famines and storms and diseases...

- God raised up enemies to oppress them...
 - Many of them died...
 - Others were tortured...
 - Families were torn apart and dragged off into exile in chains...
 - It is no trifling matter to fall under His displeasure!
2. But we are to remember that God turned away from the fierceness of His anger in times past.
- When it seemed that his people would be utterly consumed, He stayed His hand of judgement and restored them.
 - As Isaiah 12 says so well,
 - “you were angry with me, but your anger is turned away and you comfort me.”
 - The great marvel is not that God was ever angry with His people,
 - but that His anger was turned away!
 - Justice would have demanded that His anger settle upon them forever as those who had spurned His grace.
 - The words “turned away” literally speak of “gathering” such that the wrath and indignation was all gathered together in one place!
 - What a terrifying pile it was...
 - all gathered together to be poured upon God’s Son who is not only the expiation of our sins, but also the propitiation of our sins.
 - God’s wrath was turned from us because it was turned upon Him when He bore our sins on the cross.
 - What a relief it is to know that even when God’s people had spurned His grace so that His indignation fell upon them,
 - still it was turned away and laid on His Son!

TRANS> What a great comfort it is for us to remember these things that God has done in the past when we find ourselves under His displeasure in the present.

- He remembers His unconditional promise to His church...
- He forgives all our sins...
- And He turns away the fierceness of His anger!
 - What precious memories these are for us hold on to!
 - That is the first thing you are told to do when the church is under His chastisement.

Secondly, when the church is under chastisement, it is for you to

II. Plead with the LORD for the restoration of the church.

- A. You see the basic request given in verse 4 and verse 8.
1. Verse 4 says
 - Ps 85:4: Restore us, O God of our salvation, And cause Your anger toward us to cease.
 - You see that it is a request that reflects what was just remembered in the first three verses
 - It is a request that God would again do for us what He has done before for His people.
 - That He would restore us and turn away His anger from us!
 - The remembrance of His former mercies encourages us to ask for those same mercies to be renewed!
 2. And verse 8 looks to God's covenant mercy as the foundation...as the basis of the request for salvation.
 - a. The word *mercy* translates the Hebrew word *hesed*.
 - We run into this word a lot in the Psalms.
 - It speaks of God's covenant love—His steadfast love—the mercy that He has promised in His covenant of grace to His people.
 - b. This word reminds us that our salvation is rooted in the free grace of God.
 - Grace that is given freely and that does not depend on anything that we have done.
 - It is rooted in God's gratuitous promise to Abraham and to David that we are reminded of back in verse 1—
 - As we saw, God was favourable to His land because it was there that He had promised to bring forth the One who would save the world and establish a kingdom of righteousness.
 - It is not because of anything that we have done, but a free promise of grace and favour.
 - That promise that can never be broken is at the foundation of our plea.
 - We are like Moses when God threatened to destroy the nation after the golden calf incident,
 - and Moses said, "you can't because you promised!"

B. God's unconditional promise gives us great boldness in prayer when the church is under chastisement.

1. You can see that boldness in verse 5-6...
 - Ps 85:5-6: Will You be angry with us forever? Will You prolong Your anger to all generations? Will You not revive us again, That Your people may rejoice in You?

- If these words were not given to us in God's word to be a prayer on our lips, we might think it to be impertinent!
 - Imagine, coming to the Most High God who is highly offended with His people and asking Him if He is going to keep His anger forever!
 - To dare to ask Him if the day is ever going to come that He will revive us—restore life to us... so that we may again rejoice in Him!
 - What a thing to say!
2. This is an earnest, desperate prayer that arises when we realise that we have lost everything because we have lost communion with God...
- It is a prayer that rises out of this covenanted mercy of God, and that is fuelled by the demonstration of that mercy in former times!
 - It is a prayer that arises when the Lord pours out His Spirit of supplication upon His people.
 - They see how desperate they are and they cry out to Him in the same way that our great High Priest cried out to the Father in the days of His flesh...who...
 - Heb 5:7: “offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.”
 - It is a prayer that says that as long as His anger pressed upon them, they were not able to rejoice in Him.
 - They were dead and needed to be revived by Him...
 - William Plumer says:
 - Truly sin kills. Men are dead in trespasses and sins, dead in law, dead in their affections, dead in a loss of comfortable communion with God. Probably the greatest practical heresy of each age is a low idea of our undone condition under the guilt and dominion of sin. While this prevails we shall be slow to cry for reviving or quickening. What sinners and churches need is quickening by the Holy Ghost.
 - It is a prayer such as Jacob prayed when he thought that his household was about to be destroyed.
 - He wrestled with God and would not let go until God blessed him...
 - He wrestled because he knew that he had a gratuitous promise of mercy, of covenanted love, from God for his household.
 - Though he had no merit before God, he had promise!
 - I wonder if any of you ever pray like this?
 - Are you ever gripped by the desperate condition that you are in and that the church is in so that you pray in this bold, desperate manner,

- knowing that everything depends upon God remembering His promised mercy and coming through for us.

TRANS> This is what you are to do when the church is under chastisement...

- This is what we present to God when we sing this Psalm....
 - First, we remember His mercy in former times...
 - Second, we earnestly plead for that mercy in our own times...

Thirdly, when the church is under chastisement, it is for you to:

III. Hope in the sure promise of the gospel.

A. Be assured that the promise will come to those to whom the promises of the gospel are made.

- This assurance is what we sing about in verses 8 & 9.
 1. The first part of verse 8 speaks of us waiting for God to do what He has promised... being sure of His promise.
 - It says,
 - “I will hear what God the LORD will speak, for He will speak peace.”
 - The “*speaking*” that is in view here is the kind of speaking that the LORD did when He made the heavens and earth...
 - It is His powerful speaking of what was not into being...
 - He said, “Let there be light, and there was light.”
 - That was in the first creation which God spoke into existence for us.
 - But now that we are fallen into sin and misery, He speaks a new creation...
 - You see that He speaks “peace”
 - This is not just peace in the sense of comfort—
 - this is a full *condition* that He speaks into being...
 - We are fallen into misery and ruin and He speaks peace, or shalom.
 - A condition of well-being, of prosperity, of maximum blessedness, of health and happiness!
 - Having prayed in the Holy Spirit, we wait upon God to do this.
 - We hear, we listen, to what He will speak—we look for it.
 - And we know that it will be peace.
 - We do not yet know just what we will be, but we know and are confident that it will shalom in the very fullest sense.

- Like Abraham, we look for a city whose builder and maker is God...
 - We hope against hope believing “God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope believed..”
- We read in Hebrews 4 today about entering into God’s rest...
 - that is, into the work that He is resting from because He has completed it for us!
 - It spoke of God’s rest on the seventh day after He made heaven and earth for us—completed creation...
 - And then it spoke of rest from the work that He completed after He has finished the work of redemption in Christ...
 - We are to see that we enter into this rest—this completed work.
 - We are warned to hear His voice and to see that we do not harden our hearts lest we fail to enter His rest...
 - lest we do not come into and enjoy that work of redemption that He has completed for us.
 - This is the *shalom* that God has spoken into being for us in Jesus Christ who said,
 - John 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.
 - It is His completed work of redemption that we enter into and obtain by faith.

TRANS> And you can see here in this Psalm that we recognise that...

2. Only those to whom this grace is promised will obtain this peace.
 - a. Verse 8 says that He speaks this peace *to His people and to His saints...*
 - The promised peace is only for the *saints* of God,
 - for those who are truly His people
 - The word “saint” here is “*hasid*.”
 - You may have heard before of the *Hasidic Jews*.
 - It is related to the word mercy *hesed* that we asked for in verse 7.
 - It refers to one who responds to God’s *hesed*,
 - to one who is faithful to God’s covenant—a covenant keeper.
 - In other words, it refers to the one who obeys the gospel!
 - to one who receives God’s word and abides in it by faith, so resting in God’s finished work.

- This covenant faithfulness is not a work of merit...
 - It is the work of God's Spirit in our effectual calling when God's salvation is applied to us.
 - He places us into His salvation by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit... who works faith in us...
 - The Spirit convinces us of our sin and misery, enlightens us in the knowledge of Christ, and renews our wills so that He persuades and enables us to embrace Christ.
 - Only those who have embraced Christ will have the blessing of peace.
- b. Verse 9 describes the ones who obtain the promise as those who fear God.
- 1) They have come to see what they are as sinners before God...
 - And they have come to rest in the work that He has done for them...
 - From then on, they live as His disciples, having a new heart from the Holy Spirit, that keeps them clinging to Christ.
 - 2) It is only those who thus fear God who will obtain this peace...
 - You see the word *surely*, at the beginning of verse 9.
 - That word may also be translated *only* which seems to fit the context better...
 - It is *only* those who fear the LORD, who believe the gospel, that will be saved.
 - 3) There are many professing Christians who do not fear God and who are not His hasidic ones...
 - They are yet dead in their trespasses and sins and have not yet been made alive...
 - Unless they repent, they will never have peace.
- c. And you see that there is warning here...
- Those who obtain this peace are those who have a faith that endures to the end...
 - They are those who continue in God's covenant and who do not draw back to destruction as so many did in the wilderness of old.
 - At the end of verse 8, it says,
 - "But let them not turn back to folly!"

- This is exactly the same warning that is found in Hebrews 3 & 4 where we are exhorted to be sure we have truly entered into God's completed work of redemption—the rest...
 - Hebrews 3:12-15 says:
 - Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."
3. And what is the outcome for us if we do enter into the work that God has completed for us in Christ?
- Look at the end of verse 9!
 - Glory will dwell in the land!
 - The church becomes that city whose builder and maker is God and His glory is seen upon us!
 - The glory of the new life that He gives us in Jesus Christ!
 - The glory of His peace that He gives to us in Him.
 - This is our sure inheritance in the gospel!

TRANS> Indeed, the cross of Jesus is the very foundation of our hope.

- Because it is Christ crucified who brings us together with the living God!

B. In verse 10, we learn that the cross is the very foundation of our hope!

- It says,
 - Ps 85:10: "Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed."
1. This explains how God could bring sinners like us into harmony with Himself.
- a. There was this huge problem, if I may say it that way, in the Old Testament—before Jesus came.
 - God had this mercy, this love and acceptance that He had promised to His people!
 - He had promised that He would be their God and that they would be His people!
 - Now it would be a very natural thing for God to be gracious to all human beings that He has made...
 - But the problem was, God made this promise to Abraham after we had fallen into sin!
 - And you see, God is holy and He cannot look upon sin...

- When God and sinners come together, the sinners become enveloped in the holy flames of God's wrath.
 - It is that terrible wrath we saw before that was turned away.
 - It is a necessary response in our holy God to our wickedness...
 - So how God be merciful to us and yet be true to Himself?
- b. And that's not all...
- He had also promised to bless these sinful people...
 - In fact, He had promised to bless all the families of the earth through Abraham's seed.
 - To put in different words—the words that are used in this verse—
 - God had promised to give them *peace*, or *shalom*...
 - But how could God who is righteous in justice bestow peace on the wicked?
 - We have seen the principle taught in Isaiah—
 - *There is no peace for the wicked!*
 - Peace can only come upon the righteous, and God's people were not righteous!

TRANS> How could God make these promises of *hesed* and *shalom* and yet be *true* and *righteous* at the same time?

2. Something of an answer had been given by God to Moses through the rituals that He had appointed at the temple.
- a. God showed His people the problem at Sinai...
- He showed them that He was holy and that if they were to come near to Him they would be destroyed in flames of fiery indication...
 - The people were absolutely terrified when He appeared to them on Mt. Sinai—even Moses was terrified.
- b. But the LORD set up His tent in the midst of them...
- He separated Himself by a curtain and made a prohibition that they not come in to the place that represented His throne.
 - And He appointed a whole system of detailed regulations and ordinances by which the people could approach Him.
 - They had to have priests who were purified, and these priests had to offer animal sacrifices—
 - as whole burnt offerings, as fellowship offerings, as sin and trespass offerings...

- And the people were shown in this way that they must be purified before they could come to God...
 - And because these were just pictures of what needed to be done—it was just ritual purification to symbolise what was really needed,
 - these rituals were preformed over and over and the people were never allowed, even ritually, to go into the holy place.
 - This showed that mercy and truth had not yet met together concerning them...
 - and righteousness and peace had not yet kissed.
 - But it did show them that God would bring these things together—somehow—concerning His people.
 - Some how, they would be purified so that God could be their God and bless them to very fullest with His peace.
 - He would do for them what was symbolised in all the rituals.
 - Showing mercy to them would be fully consistent with truth,
 - and giving them peace would be fully consistent with righteousness.
3. And now that Jesus has come, we see that everything comes together in Christ crucified!
- Our Holy God is able to remain true to Himself and yet pour out His covenant mercy on us because Jesus is our mediator and redeemer...
 - He has become our surety—
 - the one upon whom all our sins were laid and who went to the cross to bear the penalty for those sins!
 - God has fully punished our sins without having to destroy us because Jesus has become our head and He has taken all the punishment.
 - Jesus goes in front of us to represent us, sinners that we are, and He takes all the arrows of God's wrath and indignation for our sins...
 - They all hit Him so that they never reach us.
 - Yet they are counted as having reached us because we are one with Him.
 - And because of this, God is also able to be perfectly righteous and give us peace...
 - Not that we are ourselves righteous, but because Jesus our representative is righteousness.
 - Even after he joined Himself to us, our sins could not eclipse His righteousness...
 - They took Him to the cross, but He arose victoriously having put them all away so that we, in Him, are fully justified!

- Our sins are removed and God's anger is turned away because of Him!
- All praise be to God!
 - Mercy and truth have met together forever, righteousness and peace have kissed each other!
 - They can never be separated!
 - Nothing can ever separate us from the love of God in Christ!
 - We are brought into the communion of love that He has had with the Father for all eternity!

TRANS> This is the foundation for how God could forgive His people and turn His holy wrath away from them...

- In is in Jesus Christ that everything comes together seamlessly without any contradiction or inconsistency.
 - It is a marvellous plan that God has devised!
 - How we ought to love it and enter into the glorious rest, the work that God has completed for our redemption!

C. In verses 11-13, the LORD shows that He is going to bring all this about for His people.

1. In verse 11, it says that truth will spring out of the earth (*erets*)!
 - That is, truth will spring out of the *land*, right where God said it would come from...
 - Remember what we saw in verse 1?
 - The Lord favoured the *land* (*erets* in Hebrew),
 - He restored His people from captivity to the *land*,
 - Because He had promised to bring forth Christ from there for the salvation of the nations!
2. Look at verse 12—
 - Ps 85:12: Yes, the LORD will give what is good and our land will yield its increase!
 - God gave them this land and promised to bring forth Christ from it!
 - He is spoke of all through Isaiah as that which will grow up in the land...
 - He is the branch of the LORD in Isa 4:2 that is beautiful and glorious when the LORD washes away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purges the blood of Jerusalem by the spirit of judgement and by the spirit of burning.
 - He is the root of Jesse in Isaiah 11:10 that stands as a banner for all the people and that the Gentiles seek.

- He is the root out of dry ground of Isaiah 53:2 who is wounded for the transgressions of His people!
- This is the *good thing* that the land of Canaan brings forth for the salvation of the world!
 - It is in Him that mercy and truth are met together and that righteousness and peace kiss!
 - Righteousness looks down from Heaven to see the truth that has sprung up in this glorious root of Jesse!
 - Righteousness does not have to look away from God's people because this glorious branch of the Lord brings righteousness to them so that they are pardoned and fully justified.
 - God's wrath is turned away by Him—He is satisfied!
- 3. And so it is that all those who are chosen of God come after Him... as verse 13 beautifully shows...
 - He is the foundation of our salvation!
 - Righteousness goes before Him—He follows the pathway by which His people are made righteous...
 - He goes, in obedience to the Father's will, to the cross to bear our sins and to open the way for all of us.
 - We do not boast in works of righteousness which we have done, but in Christ Jesus who has procured righteousness for us at the cross.
 - And we whose eyes have been opened to see what He has accomplished,
 - follow after Him—we come in by the pathway that He has made.
 - We glory in the cross—in His cross—by which we are reconciled to God.
 - By Him, we are reconciled to the Father and have access into this grace in which we now stand...
 - In Him where mercy and truth meet together and where righteousness and peace kiss each other.
 - In Him, all the promises of God are yea and amen to the glory of God!

Conclusion:

And so my brothers and sisters,

- He is the One you must look to when the church is fallen into apostasy.
 - The problem is that we have we have turned from Christ and the glorious gospel which is the foundation of God's forgiveness in every age.
 - We plead with God to restore us to Jesus—to turn us back to Him.
 - It is in Him that we shall find peace and righteousness...
 - Let us not be so foolish as to turn back to folly when we have Jesus!