

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: The Master Musician's Melodies

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Psalm 85 — Prayer for Restoration

1.0 Introducing Psalm 85

- Psalm 85 is the second of four Korahite psalms in Book 3 of the Psalter (Psalms 84, 85, 87, 88).
- If the psalm's setting is in the period of rebuilding after the Babylonian exile, Nehemiah 1:3 describes Israel's situation, "The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire."
 - ✓ Psalm 126 is a parallel psalm historically.

2.0 Reading Psalm 85 (NAU)

85:1 A Psalm of the sons of Korah.

O LORD, You showed favor to Your land;
You **restored** the captivity of Jacob.

85:2 You forgave the iniquity of Your people;
You covered all their sin.

Selah.

85:3 You withdrew all Your fury;
You **turned** away from Your burning anger.

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

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

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

85:7 Show us Your lovingkindness, O LORD,
And grant us Your salvation.

85:8 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.

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

85:10 Lovingkindness and truth have met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

85:11 Truth springs from the earth,
And righteousness looks down from heaven.

85:12 Indeed, the LORD will give what is good,
And our land will yield its produce.

85:13 Righteousness will go before Him
And will make His footsteps into a way.

3.0 Understanding Psalm 85

3.1 Outline

- I. Remembering Redemption (vv. 1-3)
- II. Requesting Restoration (vv. 4-7)
- III. Revealing Righteousness (vv. 8-13)



3.2 Notes

- **v. 1** “showed favor”
 - This verb speaks of something more than kindness or good pleasure. In many passages (see Jeremiah 14:10, 12), as here, the context is one of atonement and forgiveness.
 - To “show favor,” therefore, refers to divine acceptance of Israel upon their repentance.
- **v. 1** “restored”
 - In these first eight verses of the psalm, the Hebrew root *shuv* is a key word. Its versatility appears in its various translations: “restored/Restore” (verses 1 and 4), “turned away/turn back” (verses 3 and 8), and “again” (verse 6).
 - The Hebrew verb acts as an inclusio for the first section of the psalm (verses 1-3): “restored” and “turned away.” With the meaning “restore,” it introduces both the first section (verse 1) and the second section (verse 4).
- **v. 2** “You forgave . . . You covered”
 - The psalmist’s remembrance of past redemption is most clearly stated in this verse. That redemption was not merely a physical deliverance, but an atoning work providing forgiveness of sins.
 - Cp. Isaiah 40:2.
- **v. 3** “You withdrew . . . You turned away”
 - Forgiveness includes the withdrawing of judgment.

- God gave up His right to punish Israel for their iniquity.
- v. 4 “salvation”
 - “Salvation” forms an inclusio that brackets the second section of the psalm (verses 4-7).
 - The word occurs a third time in verse 9. This repetition helps to emphasize the salvific/redemptive message of this psalm.
- v. 4 “Your indignation”
 - “Indignation” is used of God only here in the Psalter.
 - In Psalm 78:58 the verb speaks of Israel provoking God.
- vv. 5, 6 Rhetorical Questions
 - Verse 5’s questions emphasize an understood negative answer: “Of course not!”
 - ✓ These two questions are arranged chiasmically. Therefore, the focus is not on “for ever,” but on the anger.

A	for ever?	
	B	Will You be angry with us
	B’	Will You prolong Your anger
A’	to all generations?	
 - Verse 6’s question emphasizes an understood positive answer: “Yes, of course!”
- v. 6 “Will You not Yourself”
 - This translation is an attempt to show the emphatic nature of the personal pronoun employed as the subject of the verb.
 - Only God can revive His people—no human being can do it for himself or herself.
- v. 8 “I will hear”
 - The psalmist now speaks for himself as compared to his speaking on behalf of the people in verses 1-7.
- v. 8 “His godly ones”
 - This word is related to *hesed*, which occurs in verses 7 and 10 (“lovingkindness”).
 - Its meaning is “loyal ones.” Hasidic Jews obtain their name from this very word.
- v. 10 “Righteousness and peace have kissed each other”
 - Kissing in this case is a metaphor of the cooperative harmony of both righteousness and peace.
 - Righteousness = right actions in perfect accord with integrity and justice. It is the thematic word in verses 10-13.
 - Peace = spiritual and physical well being, welfare, and prosperity. It also occurs in verse 8.

- **v. 11** “earth . . . heaven”
 - God’s reign extends over both heaven and earth—everywhere.
 - Compare Isaiah 45:8.
- **v. 13** “make His footsteps into a way”
 - Divine righteousness advances the kingdom.

4.0 Singing Psalm 85

Lord, Thou Hast Greatly Blessed Our Land

Tune: “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”

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| <p>1 Lord, Thou hast greatly blessed our land,
Thou hast brought back our captive
band,
Thy pardoning grace has made us free
And covered our iniquity.</p> <p>3 O will Thine anger never cease,
Forever shall Thy wrath increase?
Receive and quicken us once more,
And Thy salvation’s joy restore.</p> <p>5 The Lord’s salvation will appear
To men of faith and godly fear,
And glory in our land shall dwell
When we shall heed God’s precepts well.</p> <p>7 The Lord will send His blessing down,
And harvests all our land shall crown;
Before Him righteousness abides,
And in His footsteps our feet He guides.</p> | <p>2 O Thou, Who in a former day
Didst turn Thy dreadful wrath
away,
In grace Thy people, Lord, return,
And let Thy wrath no longer burn.</p> <p>4 To us Thy mercy now afford
And show us Thy salvation, Lord;
Yea, Thou wilt answer us in peace,
If from our folly we will cease.</p> <p>6 Now truth agrees with mercy mild,
Now law and peace are reconciled;
Behold the truth from earth arise,
With justice shining from the skies.</p> |
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— Author unknown

5.0 Praying Psalm 85

- Lord, thank you for covering my sin and forgiving my iniquity. [v. 2]
- Father, prevent me from causing You displeasure. [v. 4]
- O God, may I always rejoice in You. [v. 6]
- Show me and my family Your loyal love. [v. 7]
- O Lord, don’t let me “turn back to folly.” [v. 8]
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6.0 Applying Psalm 85

- God alone forgives sin and only God can bring revival.
- Salvation, righteousness, peace, loyal love, truth, and glory characterize God’s reign.