

Restore Us, O God

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[0 : 00] So we're on Psalm 80. We'll read through it first.

Psalm 80, verse 1. Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.

Stir up your might and come to save us. Restore us, O God. Let your face shine that we may be saved. O Lord God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure. You make us an object of contention for our neighbors and our enemies laugh among themselves.

Restore us, O God of hosts. Let your face shine that we may be saved. You brought a vine out of Egypt. You drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it.

[1 : 07] It took deep root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade and the mighty cedars with its branches. It sent out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the river.

Why then have you broken down its walls so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit? The boar from the forest ravages it and all that move in the field feed on it.

Turn again, O God of hosts. Look down from heaven and see. Have regard for this vine. The stock that your right hand planted and for the son whom you made strong for yourself.

They have burned it with fire. They have cut it down. May they perish at the rebuke of your face. But let your hand be on the man of your right hand. The son of man whom you have made strong for yourself.

Then we shall not turn back from you. Give us life and we will call upon your name. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts. Let your face shine that we may be saved.

[2 : 09] Last Friday you guys covered Psalm 79. And tonight we do chapter 80, which is similar in that both of these are community laments.

That is, they were written out of a great trial or disaster that Jerusalem is going through. When we go through trials, how do we express our grief and our struggles, our depression, what we're going through?

In this case here in chapter 80, we see that we have a lament that was written by Israel's worship leader. And they use this as a people to express what they're going through.

To call out to God. To ask him for what they need. To ask him for salvation. So as we go through this, we're going to be looking at three different things. We see that they're crying out to God.

For their sins. They're confirming what God has done for them. And they're committing themselves to follow him. So those are the three things we're going to walk through.

[3 : 15] And while we're doing that, we can see how that also applies to us. It's really a pattern that we don't really move away from as we walk our Christian life. See, as they're singing this lament, the people of God expect to be treated than other nations.

Because they have this covenant between themselves and their creator. But what that means is they're called to something on their side, right? They're not just a people that can do whatever they want.

They're expected to live differently than others. They're to live by faith. Faith in God and faithfully committed to him. But we know that they didn't do that. They failed.

And that comes out in this lament as we go through it. So beginning in verse 1, it says, Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. God being the shepherd, the true shepherd for his people.

He leads his people like he led Joseph. So if we think of Joseph, Joseph was led from his home. He was led into a pit. He was led into slavery.

[4 : 27] He was led into Potiphar's house. He was led into a place of high command. And he was led into jail. He was led into Pharaoh's house. And he was then moved into second in command of Egypt.

Where, if you look at all that, the Lord led him to a place where he could save his family and he could save his people. So they start out by looking to their shepherd.

And then the second half of the verse, it says, You who are enthroned upon the cherubim shine forth. And this is speaking of, if you remember, the Ark of the Covenant.

There's two cherubims that sit on either side. And the presence of God comes down in between the cherubims and dwells there.

And that place was called the mercy seat. And that became a central part of their worship. Where God would come down and he's actually dwelling in the presence of his people.

[5 : 31] So, you know, if we look past this, we're looking forward past the cross. We get to see that Jesus is our true mercy seat.

So while the Israelites have the Ark of the Covenant and God that comes down on occasion to be with his people. We have Jesus who is our constant mercy seat.

And we're able to come to God and come boldly to him because of Jesus Christ. And then as we look to verse 2, there's something I think we can pick up from what the psalmist is teaching us about prayer.

And we see that in verse 2 it says, The interesting thing to note here is we've seen this in other places where actions that God has done is brought out in remembrance.

But here the psalmist is bringing out people's names. And so we kind of ask the question is why is he bringing out people's names? I think what's important for us or helpful to us is God's children are special to him.

[6 : 47] So by bringing out names, specific names of his children, it's not to remind God as if he forgets. But it's that God provides to people who are special to him.

The mention of a child's name has power with a father, right? So I can relate to that because my children's names when they're brought up, there's something special about that.

If they're in need and someone brings up their name, there's a certain power that comes with that. And the same is true with our Heavenly Father. It's almost like an invoking of a special right.

So that's what we have happening here where they bring out the names of his people. Exodus 28, 29 says, So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breastplate of judgment on his heart when he goes into the holy place to bring them to regular remembrance before the Lord.

So here we have Aaron, the high priest, going into the holy place and he's bringing the names of the sons of Israel before the Lord to bring them in remembrance before the Lord.

[8 : 05] So we see kind of the same thing happening with the psalmist here. But why these names? Why Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh? And it's interesting, as I dug into that, Ephraim and Manasseh were sons of Joseph, right?

Joseph and Benjamin, which are listed, are two of Jacob's sons. So he had 12, but if we look, he had 12 by four different women.

Joseph and Benjamin were the only ones that were from Rachel, which was the wife that he truly loved. That was the wife that he wanted but got tricked into marrying somebody else. So it's interesting that there's something special about Joseph and Benjamin, and those are the names brought out.

But there's actually more, because if we look at the tribes of Israel, as they went through the wilderness, they would travel in their families, in their tribes.

And we find that Joseph and Benjamin would have been following right behind the Ark of the Covenant. So not only were they two special sons, but they were two special tribes following in the front.

[9 : 23] So as they came to a land or a trouble spot, and the Lord was in front of them in the Ark of the Covenant, the Lord's power was there.

The Lord conquered and saved them. So they're calling out on that, remembering who these guys are, and that the power and the presence of the Lord went before them as they went through the wilderness.

And next we come to verse 3, which is a refrain that's repeated all through this chapter. And I know we're kind of going a little slow for these first few verses.

We'll go a little faster. But there was just some good things to pull out of these verses that I think are helpful as we work through them. But verse 3 says, Restore us, O God. Restore us.

I was thinking of Sean's message from Sunday. This restore us is turn us, is to turn us back to him. They're not asking to be restored out of their captivity or to be turned from their captivity, but to turn them.

[10 : 30] It's not the circumstance that's the problem. It's their character. It's their heart that needs to be turned and changed. And when our hearts are changed and turned to God, then that affects our condition, our environment changes, because now we are in a different place and we have a God that then is behind us.

But if we think of that turning, that heart change, that's God's work, right? Hearts change not because of something we did, but because of what God does.

Whether that's initially in our salvation or like Sunday's message when we talked about backsliding, that's work that the Lord does.

It's not work that we do ourselves. We have faith. We follow God. But the power to do those things comes from him. So they pray in verse 3, Restore us, O God, that your, let your face shine that we may be saved.

This was, this was the high priest's blessing on the people of Israel that they would be favorable, that the Lord would smile upon them. And his favor was their salvation.

[11 : 43] When the favor wasn't there, then the salvation wasn't there. And they found themselves, whether they were being destroyed or taken into captivity. Numbers 6, 24 through 26, verses 24 through 26, what you guys will find sound familiar, says, The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. So there's favor, there's salvation that comes from God when he's looking at us.

Favorably. And now as we jump down to verse 4, the psalmist is moving on to crying out to God, which is more in line to what a lament is.

Verse 4, How long will you be angry with your people's prayers? I think of, most recently, Lexi, because when she gets punished, she wants to know how long the punishment is for.

Right? And that's normal, because she wants to either do that thing that's fun, or she wants to feel like we're not mad at her anymore. And the Lord is angry with his people because they've been unfaithful.

[12 : 55] So they're asking, How long will you be angry with our prayers? They know they've sinned. They know there's this division between them and God, and they want to put that back. Verse 5, You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure.

So that's just saying that they basically, they're eating tears, they're drinking tears. The idea being that they, basically all they consume is sorrow and misery. Verse 6, You make us an object of contention for our neighbors.

Our enemies laugh among themselves. The purpose of the people of Israel was to be a light to the rest of the world. They were to be an envious example of all things good, right?

In the midst of an evil world. But here we find a total opposite of that. Instead of that, we find that they're a source of contentiousness, and they're anything but envious.

Verse 7 returns back to that refrain that's repeated. Restore us, O God of hosts. Let your face shine that we may be saved. And notice you pick up when he's saying this, that there's a turning that the people are doing, but there's a faith in realizing that God's the one that has to do it.

[14 : 16] God is the one that has to save. So it gets, it just pulls out again that, that part that we can't do it ourselves. We need, we need God to, to save us.

And now we see that the lament moves to a confirming of what God has done. So we did crying out to God, and now we have confirming for what he's done. So as we look at the next few verses, we're going to jump through them kind of quickly.

It's this imagery of a vine to describe how God's people were set apart and made special. But then we see that that vine is ruined because of their unfaithfulness.

So starting in verse 8, you brought a vine out of Egypt. You drove out the nations and planted it. A picture of the Israelites being pulled out of Egypt. And then what happened is God drove out the nations and planted that vine.

He cleared the ground for it. So he like leveled other nations. He leveled other cities. And it took deep root and filled the lands. Verse 10, the mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches.

[15 : 25] It sent out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the root, or its shoots to the river. Shoots being another name for, in some cases, the roots. So the roots are spreading out to the river, which is a source of strength for a vine or for any plant.

And also, its branches to the sea, the idea being the Red Sea or the Mediterranean Sea, and then also the shoots to the river, the river being Euphrates.

This makes the borders of what the promised land would be. So we have a picture of the promised land being part of that as well. Verse 12, Why then have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit?

Did I finish all that? Yeah, okay. The boar from the forest ravages it, and all that move in the field feed on it. So here we have this vine that's growing and giving protection and spreading out all over the place, but then it starts to come against destruction, and people come and pluck its fruit.

The boar, which is a wild animal, come and just ravages it, and all that move in the field. So here it could be insects from the field.

[16 : 50] It could be foxes or rodents. Basically, they're coming and feeding on this thing because there's no protection. It's just being destroyed. And then we come up against verse 14, which is that refrain again, but we find that it's a little bit different.

Turn again, O God of hosts. Look down from heaven and see. Have regard on this vine. So again, similar to restore us and save us and let your face shine, but more related to this vine and how God has raised it up and now God is letting it fall.

So that brings out a question. If God has shown so much care for this vine and creating it, then would he allow it to just lightly be destroyed?

And I think we know from how God works that the answer to that is no. God is patient, slow to anger. But if we look at verse 4, it says, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

So he has allowed sin and unfaithfulness to go on so long, and then he allows this destruction to come among its people and this vine that he has allowed to become strong.

[18 : 16] Isaiah 59 verses 1 through 3 says, Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, or his ear dull that it cannot hear.

But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. So we see that there comes a time where God stops hearing our prayers because of sin, because of our unfaithfulness to him.

So they're praying, they're pleading with God that he would restore them to the place they once were, restore them to being that vine that choice vine that was such a shade and a strength to so much.

And as a side note here, speaking of the vine, we're reminded that Jesus is the true vine, right? So in all the ways that the people of Israel couldn't be a vine and that they failed, Jesus Christ is that true vine.

Verse 15, the stock that your right hand planted, and for the son, which is a reference to Israel as a whole, whom you made strong for yourselves.

[19 : 31] It's talking about how the Lord has planted Israel and made it strong. that's the stock or the vine or the people that they have burned with fire, that they've cut down.

Verse 16, So this sorrowful song that they're singing now turns to a call to God that he would make them faithful once again.

Verse 17, But let your hand be on the man of your right hand. It's interesting that Benjamin's name means son of the right hand. So again, a reference back to a tribe of Benjamin and Benjamin himself.

The son of man, whom you have made strong for yourself. Jesus being the true son of man. So there's a lot of, there's several places in this psalm where we see Jesus being the ultimate fruition of what man couldn't be.

So when it talks about son of man here, it's referring to Israel. But we get a glimpse of the son of man who is going to be fulfilling the purpose for all that Israel couldn't do.

[20 : 47] And then as we get to the last two verses in this, we see that the people are committing to follow God. Right? So we've gone from them crying out, which includes their confessing of their sins, we've gone to confirming what God has done for them and how he's built them up in times past.

And then we've come to them committing themselves to follow God, promising to exercise their true faithfulness, which they have not done. Verse 18, then we shall not turn back from you.

Give us life and we will call upon your name. And then verse 19 is that, the refrain that repeats again, restore us, O Lord God of hosts. Let your face shine that we may be saved.

Again, wanting to be restored, knowing that they need to make things right, but that comes from power from God. They want God's face to shine on them.

They want to be saved. Salvation, again, comes from God, whether it's in the beginning or whether it's as we're backslidden in life. There's nothing that's too great for the power of God.

[22 : 01] Charles Spurgeon says, men can do little with their arm, but God can do all things with just a glance. So the glance, referring back to this, let your face shine that we would be saved.

The only thing that God needs to do is to look favorably on his people. And through that, we're saved from whatever is around us. Through that, we have the power to be his children and to take us out of any difficulty that we're dealing with.

So those three things, crying out to God for sins, confirming what he's done, and committing ourselves. It's what the Israelites did many times, and we get to see that here.

It's also what we practice just as part of our Christian life, right? So we cry out to God for our sins, we confirm what he's done, and we commit ourselves to following him.