

8/6/23 - Psalm 85 - "The Christian Response to God's Promise"

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[0 : 00] The reading today comes from Psalm 85. Psalm 85. To the choir master, a psalm of the sons of Korah.

Lord, you were favorable to your land. You restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people. You covered all their sin.

Selah. You withdrew all your wrath and turned from your hot anger. Restore us again, O God of our salvation.

And put away your indignation toward us. 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?

Show us your steadfast love, O Lord. And grant us your salvation. Let me hear what God the Lord will speak.

[1 : 10] For he will speak peace to his people, to his saints. 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. Righteousness will go before him and make his footsteps away. This is the word of the Lord. Thank you, Duffy. Good morning, everyone. It's a pleasure to be able to speak with you all this morning.

I had the pleasure of preaching for the first time in this pulpit two years ago, and I have the great pleasure of doing so again. My name is Daniel, if you don't know me very well.

And I was a pastoral apprentice a couple of years ago, and now I'm a deacon here at the church. But today we're going to speak about Psalm 85.

[2 : 32] And I want to ask you, how do you respond to God's promises? How do we as a church respond to God's promises?

He has fulfilled many of his past promises, but there are also some promises that have not been fulfilled yet. And really, that's the focus of this passage.

That's the focus of this psalm. So, how are we to respond to God's promises as his people? So, we're going to look at three different things this morning.

We're going to look, firstly, at remembering God's faithfulness. Second, we're going to look at turning to God in light of his promise. And lastly, we're going to look at trusting God's promise.

So, before we jump in here, let's take a moment and pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you. We thank you for this day, this time to gather.

[3 : 32] Lord, we pray that you would be working in each of us. Help us to understand your word. Help us to apply it to our lives.

And help us to live our daily lives, the mundane as well as the more special things. That we would do all of those for your glory.

We pray this in your name. Amen. I am very, very bad at remembering people's names. I'll introduce myself.

I'll say, hi, my name is Daniel. And they'll say, hi, my name is... And then my brain just completely shuts off. The name goes in one ear, out the other, and it is just gone before I even have a chance to process it.

In fact, for many of you listening to this, I probably forgot your name the first couple times that I heard it. The sad thing is that remembering names really is not very complicated.

[4 : 35] People will say, oh, you know, I'm just not good at names. Or as if it's like some personality quirk or like they don't have the gift. And in reality, though, if you want to be good at names, remembering names, you probably could be.

Now, I do want to be sensitive here because I do realize that some people have disabilities or memory issues that might prevent them from remembering names.

So, I realize that this does not apply to everyone. But if you're an average person, you could be good at remembering names. You really only need two things.

It's not very complicated. So, if you're bad and you want to get better, here you go. You ready? I'm going to give you the two things that you need to be good at remembering names. First of all, you have to actually pay attention.

Yeah, it's crazy. You have to actually pay attention to them when they say their name. You can't be thinking about what you're going to say next. And worse, you certainly can't be wondering, like, am I ever even going to see this person again?

[5 : 46] Does it matter if I remember their name? No, no. If you're thinking any of those things, the name is gone. You've already lost it. It's too late. So, that's the first thing. You actually have to pay attention when they say their name.

The second thing is repetition. You have to repeat it in your mind over and over and over again. You know, hi, my name's Daniel. Hi, my name's Tim. Hi, okay, I'm talking to Tim.

Tim, his name is Tim. I'm talking to a man named Tim. Tim, Tim, Tim, Tim. And it turns out, if you do both of those things, if you pay attention and you repeat it, there's a pretty good chance that you'll actually remember that person's name.

So, there you go. If you're bad at remembering names, now you know how to get better, if you like. And as we turn to the psalm for this morning, we see the congregation spending time remembering. Not remembering names, but remembering God and the promises that He has kept. The psalmist sets the stage for the entire psalm by remembering God's fulfilled promises.

[6 : 52] Let's look at verses 1 to 3 again. It says, Lord, you were favorable to your land. You restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people.

You covered all their sin. You withdrew all your wrath. You turned from your hot anger. This is a remembrance of God continually keeping His promises to Israel.

And again, the whole context for this passage is God keeps His promises. They're reminding themselves of that truth.

And when you look at what it is specifically that they're remembering, it's pretty profound. He says, You're favorable to your land. You know, He gave the Israelites a land flowing with milk and honey, a productive, fruitful land.

He says in Deuteronomy 26, 9, it says, And He brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. That was a promise made to Jacob and to Abraham, that He was going to bring them into this promised land, and that it was going to be fruitful.

[8 : 02] So, this is a promise that's been fulfilled already, previously. It also says He restored the fortunes of Jacob. And this brings thoughts of the person Jacob.

You know, God has kept His promises to Jacob. We see in Genesis 35, 11 to 12, A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, shall come from Jacob, and kings shall come from your own body.

The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, again, Jacob, and I will give the land to your offspring after you. Again, this has been fulfilled at this point in time.

A nation has come from Jacob. Kings have come from Jacob. That nation has inherited the land of Abraham. And so, we see that God has fulfilled this promise to Jacob.

And that is also a keeping of His promise to Abraham as well. We see in Genesis 12, 2 to 3, it says, I will make of you, Abraham, a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

[9 : 08] I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. So, again, we've seen God fulfill His promises to Jacob and to Abraham.

But also, when it talks about Jacob, this verse also brings thoughts of the entire nation of Israel, because Jacob is the founder of Israel, and his name even became, eventually, Israel.

So, he restored the fortunes of Jacob, if he forgave the iniquity of his people, and he covered all their sin. And this brings memories back to all the times that Israel has been unfaithful to God, and yet, God forgave them and brought them back to Him.

My mind is drawn more specifically to Judges, where the people continually turn from the Lord, and then the Lord, once again, brings them back over and over again.

The people of Israel, there's this pattern in Judges. The people of Israel do what's evil in the sight of the Lord. God allows them to be, you know, have some sort of hardship, to be taken into slavery, whatever, and then they repent, and then God brings them back out of that, brings them back to Him.

[10:33] We see that continually in the book of Judges. So, the Lord has been faithful to Israel time and time and time again. And we see, even before Judges, in Joshua, we see in Joshua 23, 14, Joshua speaks to the people, and he says this, He says, You know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the Lord your God promised concerning you.

All have come to pass for you. Not one of them has failed. This was true in Joshua's day. That was true when this psalm was written, and it is true today as well.

So, why is the congregation here remembering this? Well, there's a lot of benefits to remembering God's faithfulness, but there's something more specific going on in this passage.

So, we have to look further down to really see. That brings me to my next point, turning to God in light of His promise. So, let's look at verses 4 to 9 once again. He says, Restore us again, or the congregation, I should say.

Restore us again, O God of our salvation, and put away your indignation toward us. Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger to all generations?

[11:58] Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation. Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace to His people, to His saints, 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. So, now, now we can see why they were remembering God's faithfulness.

It's because they need it again. They've turned away from God. The whole nation of Israel has turned away from God once again. They're in trouble, and they need God's help.

At this point, they want to be restored to God, but they can't do that alone. They need revival, they need salvation, and they need steadfast love.

Now, if you're a Christian, this should be very relatable. So often, we spend a season of life in rebellion against God.

[13:13] And then we get to this point of starting to turn. You're not totally on fire for God yet, but you start to turn, turn your focus toward God.

Maybe you feel like God is angry with you, and you're not really sure what to do with that. Maybe you feel like there's a situation in your life that God should take care of, and He hasn't done that. Maybe you feel like you don't even have it in you to be a Christian because you've tried so much and so hard, and you always end up back in the same place.

But you're wanting to be restored to Him, even if you're not really sure that it's possible yet. And we see that especially in this passage in verses 4 to 7.

He says, restore us again. Turn from your anger with us. Revive us again. Like, I want to be close to you, but that doesn't really seem possible right now.

[14:15] There's something keeping us from reuniting, from fully fixating on the Lord. There's this barrier that's keeping us from drawing near to you.

But then, there's a shift in verse 8. In verse 8, once we get to verse 8, we see, like, instead of, oh, that doesn't really seem possible, we can't be reunited with God, we see actually that it is.

Reuniting is possible. In fact, he says in verse 9 that salvation is near. It's close. There's hope now that we didn't see too much of in the verses earlier.

Church, this is the gospel. You know, they're saying, Lord, we, as the nation of Israel, we've turned from you every step of the way. There's this barrier that is keeping us from reuniting fully with you.

That barrier is our sin. You know, we recognize that the barrier was caused by us, not by following, or by us not following you.

[15:23] And even in this passage, we see a little bit of, we even feel like that barrier is caused by you in some ways, even though we know that that's not true. And yet, as Psalm 51, 17 says, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

God removes that barrier for those who turn to Him. The barrier that we created by not following Him, God removes it so that we can be fully reunited to Him.

The Lord is faithful over and over and over and over again. And if you trust in Him, He will be faithful to you over and over and over again.

To be clear, this does not mean that you will have an easy life or even that God will supply your earthly needs. You may have an incredibly difficult life.

You may even die for lack of food or from persecution. You know, we see in this passage, God had promised the Israelites a physical inheritance.

[16 : 39] And so, in some ways, at least, they're looking towards a physical salvation. God hasn't promised us that. His promise to us is a spiritual one.

He's promised forgiveness and the ability to be reunited with Him, which, of course, is a far greater reward than any physical blessings that we could be given.

And He will fulfill that promise to His people always. So, how does this connect to remembering God's faithfulness that we saw before?

Well, really, this helps us understand how we, as Christians, should dwell on God's faithfulness. So often, we forget that God is a promise keeper.

forever. We forget His promises. We forget that God is faithful to His people. When we read in the Bible of God showing faithfulness or fulfilling a promise, it goes in one ear and out the other.

[17 : 45] When we see a prayer answered, whether it's a serious one or a small one, we forget it by the next week. We forget how faithful and awesome our God truly is.

So then, when we get into a place of uncertainty or we get into a place of rebellion or repeated sin and we start to turn to God because we desire His presence, we want that barrier to be removed, we want to be made whole, but we don't fully turn and fixate on Him.

We stay in that place of starting to turn, but not being sure if that's really possible. We don't get to verse 9 where He talks about salvation being near.

At least, we don't get there very quickly. We think that we have to prove to God that we're capable of following Him first. We think we have to make it up to Him.

We think we are the ones that have to remove the barrier between Him and us so that we can be reunited or worse, we question our own salvation because we keep repeating the same mistakes.

[19 : 02] I want to challenge all of you this morning, including myself, to dwell on the faithfulness of God. If you want to do that well, you have to do two things.

First of all, you have to pay attention. If you want to remember something, you have to pay attention. don't gloss over God's faithfulness without wondering and marveling at it.

Sometimes, it feels so obvious that we don't really think about it. The amazing thing in this passage is they're not just remembering things from last week.

This congregation here is remembering things from centuries ago. So, as you read your Bible, as you learn about church history, as things happen in your own life, pay attention to the Lord's faithfulness and to the promises that He keeps.

And secondly, repeat it. I've heard it said that Christians should tell themselves the gospel every day. I think that's good advice because if you are not constantly reminding yourself that God is faithful to His people, you're going to forget it.

[20 : 23] And if you dwell on God's faithfulness and start to internalize that, then when you're coming out of sin or that season of rebellion, it is far easier to fully turn and fixate fully on God.

Because you know that God keeps His promises. He has promised to be faithful to His people, and if you truly believe that God keeps His promises, you can trust in Him.

He is the one who removes the barrier to being reunited with Him, not you. Even though you're a mess, even though you can't do anything right, even though you continue to make the same mistakes over and over and over again, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to take the penalty you deserve, to remove that barrier so that you can be fully reunited with Him.

The Lord is faithful to His people. Salvation is near. And if you remember God's faithfulness, if you dwell on that and internalize it, it is far easier to trust Him.

Which brings me to my last point, trusting God's promise. The psalm turns now to trusting in God. Let's look again at verses 10 to 13.

[21 : 51] Steadfast love and faithfulness meet. Righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs up from the ground and righteousness looks down from the sky.

Yes, the Lord will give what is good and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before Him and make His footsteps away. Now this is vivid imagery here.

We see righteousness and peace, kissing. For the record, in this culture, a kiss on the cheek was a friendly gesture. So really, this is just showing that righteousness and peace are everywhere.

There's a familiarity to righteousness and peace the same way there's a familiarity with a great friend. We see faithfulness springing up from the ground. You know, really, this is a bewildering and beautiful scene.

It's wonderful in how all-encompassing it is. You know, there's joy and faithfulness and righteousness everywhere that your eyes can see. The people in this psalm are trusting that God will bring this about.

[23 : 01] He will restore their land. He will bring righteousness and faithfulness. There's no, you know, well, you know, I hope this is going to happen. I hope He brings this.

No, this is what's going to happen. How do they know that? How can they be sure? We learn very early on that this world is unpredictable and uncertain.

Why are they talking as though God has already restored them when He hasn't restored them yet? When my daughter, Carmel, was six months old, she learned that when we pulled into the garage, it was time to get out of the car.

Now, a lot of babies like the car. A lot of babies will fall asleep in the car very quickly. Carmel hated the car, hated it. She tolerates it now, but especially early on, she hated it.

So, we would be driving down the road and she would be screaming. I mean, red-faced, top of her lungs, she would be screaming. And we would pull into the garage and immediately she would be silent.

[24 : 19] Sometimes she would even crack a smile and start kicking her feet because she knew that she was getting out of the car. Now, she's still strapped into the car seat. Her situation hasn't changed at all.

But she knows that garage equals getting out. It's that simple. Now, if a six-month-old can have that much trust in her sinful, fallen parents, how much more should we trust in our God?

Our God who has never broken a promise, our God who has shown His faithfulness to us time and time again. That's what's going on with this congregation.

They're trusting God because they know that He has promised to be faithful to them. He has promised that if they turn from their sin and run to Him, they will be saved.

You know, they're still strapped into their car seat. Their situation hasn't changed. But they trust in a God who will never fail them. God has made a promise to each and every one of you.

[25 : 32] Whether you have put your faith in Christ or not, He has made a promise to you. Romans 10, 9 says, If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

saved. No ifs, ands, or buts about it. Confession and belief equals salvation. If you put your faith in Christ, you will be saved from your sins.

No matter who you are or what you've done, you will be saved. So if you are a believer this morning, take heart because salvation is near.

If you are on fire for God, if you are passionate about Him, take heart for the Lord will keep His promise to you. If you are struggling right now, wondering how God could love you, you are a rebellious, vile sinner, take heart for the Lord will keep His promise to you.

If you are frustrated because you keep repeating the same sins over and over and over again, take heart for the Lord will keep His promise to you. If you are upset because of repeated doubting of His faithfulness and goodness, take heart for the Lord will keep His promise to you.

[27 : 02] Repent but know that you are forgiven even if you have to repent again tomorrow. God keeps His promises. And if you are not a believer today, if you have not committed your whole life to Jesus Christ, know that salvation and forgiveness is near.

The God that we serve at this church is real and He keeps His promises. If you turn to Jesus, if you repent of your sins and follow Him, you will be saved from the punishment that you deserve.

And believe me, that's not a punishment that you want to endure. If you have any questions about that or want to talk more, feel free, after the service, come talk with me, talk with Pastor Brent or another one of the elders.

But know this, that if you do repent of your sins, you will be forgiven. So in conclusion, remember God's faithfulness.

Remember that God has always kept His promises and dwell on that truth. Don't forget it like we are so prone to do. Know that God forgives those who turn to Him.

[28 : 23] God keeps His promises and because of that, you will be reunited with God if you believe. Salvation is near and it does not depend on you.

God is the one who removes the sin barriers between Him and you. You could never do it yourself. And finally, trust.

Trust that He will fulfill His promise to you. This congregation here knew that restoration is coming. In the same way, you too can know that God will be faithful to those that are His.

Let's pray. Live for the Kais Robert Burns