

## Prayer Focus – September 2007

### **Restore Your Glory Lord.**

We trust you have all had a good summer – albeit, a rather wet one for those of us living in UK and Ireland! Thank you for standing with us in prayer for Ireland and for the Centre – the renovations of the Book Room and Worship Area are nearing completion as I type this. We praise God also, that on the political front at least things have been incredibly peaceful. Let us keep pressing in, in prayer, for God to minister His healing into the deep hurts and divisions in our society.

A few weeks ago, God was drawing our attention in morning prayers to Psalm 85. Since then I have returned a number of times to meditate on it, to see what God would be saying to me regarding praying for Ireland.

The first three verses of the Psalm opens with:

“You **showed** favour to your land, O Lord;  
You **restored** the fortunes of Jacob.  
You **forgave** the iniquity of your people  
and **covered** all their sins.  
You **set aside** all your wrath  
and **turned from** your fierce anger.”  
(NIV. Emphasis mine)

Within the context of the rest of the Psalm, the tenses of the words marked in bold implies that their current sinful state is one that they had been in before, because as he writes, they have known God’s favour before. It also implies that God had acted before in showing His mercy and grace towards them. Take a few minutes now to apply these verses in praise and thanksgiving to God for His work in your own life.

Verse four commences with, “Restore us again, O God our Saviour ....” One senses that he is saying, pleading, crying out, “LORD! You have done it before! We want You to do it again! Yes Lord, You have –shown favour, restored fortunes, forgiven iniquities, covered sins, set aside wrath, turned from anger – DO IT AGAIN!”

With the wonders of computer technology, Hebrew words studies are potentially freely available to us all. The unpacking of some of the key words adds so much more depth to the text and what the writer was trying to communicate. For example, words like “favour” means - pleased with, to satisfy a debt, delight in, set affection on, pardon, reconcile, approve, be accepted. Isn’t that wonderful. Despite our capacity to blow things, God in His covenant love for us and the promises He has made towards us, which flow out of that covenant, looks upon us with favour.

The word “restore” carries with it the sense of “bringing back”, though not necessarily the idea of returning to the starting point. When we have messed up in our walk with God, we do not have to begin from scratch each time. God restores us, when we return to Him from the last “stopping place”. What grace! He doesn’t say, “Harry, you blew it, so I am taking you back to the day when you first met me, I am removing all the things I have given you, all the giftings and callings I have put on your life.” Praise God, He is able to take our failures and somehow build in the

lessons learnt from them into our lives/ministries to enhance our calling, who we are in Him. In the same verse, some translations use the word “captivity” or “exiles” instead of “fortunes”. For those of us who are praying for our “prodigals” to return home – these two words are apt descriptions of them, and yet God is as much their restorer as He was then and wants to be now, for them and the Jewish people.

Verses 3 – 5 also reveals to us some aspects of the character of God, which we don’t often dwell on. Again, I expand on them with the help of the Hebrew word studies: “Wrath”, is an outburst of passion, expressed in anger or rage. “Anger” (v.3.), comes from a word related to the nose or nostrils, carrying with it the idea of the rapid breathing associated with the passion of anger and rage. It also has the sense of it showing in the countenance, the face. “Fierce”, is a word that implies a burning anger, sore displeasure, fury. Verse 4 uses another Hebrew word for anger, which portrays a sense of grief, sorrow and indignation.

In an age when we concentrate on God’s love, mercy and grace, we need to be reminded that these other aspects of His nature and character have not gone away. So often I hear people say, “Oh, that was God in the Old Testament. We’re in the New Testament now.” Has God had a personality change? Has He gone soft on sin? God is capable of being loving, compassionate, merciful, righteous, holy, angry, sorrowful, indignant etc., all at the same time. In fact, when we get a fresh understanding of the righteousness and holiness of God and of His hatred/abhorrence of our sins, it makes the compassionate, redemptive aspects of His character all the more wonderful. This in turn should cause us to hate our sin even more. If we were to understand this in the light of our corporate sin in the Church regarding our disunity (or any other sin), we would be on our knees in deep repentance.

Verse 8 takes us into another phase in the Psalm - “I will **listen** to what the Lord will say ....” “Listen” here speaks of hearing intelligently (with the implication of attention and obedience), of a desire to discern, give ear to, perceive and give regard to. This is similar to the words in Revelation ch. 2: 7,11,17, 29 – “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says ....” He then continues, “he promises peace to his people, his saints BUT let them not return to their folly.” He promises “shalom” – God peace! His health, welfare, safety, favour, rest, wholeness. This is what He wants for us. It’s part of a restored, revived relationship with God. How the Church in Ireland needs to exhibit this to those around us who do not know Him. What an advertisement to a troubled society! This peace is ours provided we do not return, as one translations put it, to our self-confident silliness. According to v.8, God wants us to fear Him, that is He wants us to reverence Him. Why? So that His glory, His weighty presence may be manifestly felt in the land. That is precisely what happens in the height of revival. Surely our prayer in these days is that we, in the Church, may have an increased healthy reverential fear of God!

In finishing, I skip to the last two verses, which again reveals to us something of God’s heart – He wants to give us “goodness”. This can be translated as beautiful, best, bountiful, favour, joyful, kindly, precious, sweet, welfare. “Our land will yield its harvest” speaks to me of the people living in right covenanted relationship with God. In His covenant with Abraham, He promised the early and the latter rains as a sign of blessing. These rains helped them to produce fruitful harvests. Lastly, He leads the way – the Amplified Bible puts it like this – “Righteousness shall go before Him, and will make His footsteps a way in which to walk.” He is saying, “Follow me, I am righteousness and I will show you how to walk in it. Stay close to me, put your feet in the steps I have made.”

There is so much in this Psalm that stirs my spirit. The response from within is an echo of the cry the Psalmist has made here to God. “Restore us, revive us, O Lord, in these days. There is so much regarding You, and what is ours in You, that we need to recover. Come, Holy Spirit revive us! Restore Your Glory!”

*Harry Smith*

### **Hungry We Come Days.**

We ask you to take special note of the information sent with this month’s Prayer Focus and Dairy regarding our monthly “**Hungry We Come**” Days. If you are not able to come, please pray with us regarding it. Also if you are living in Ireland, do pass the information on to your praying friends and any Prayer Ministry you are associated with, and encourage them to get involved. These are crucial days in Ireland and this call to prayer and fasting from us and the Irish Prayer Association is an important one “for such a time as this”.