

Psalm 80 **“A Cry for Revival”**

The cycle of divine blessing followed by spiritual indifference, divine discipline, and a cry for revival dot the pages of human history. Psalm 80 presents one such example. This psalm was written by Asaph and given to the “director of music” for Temple worship in ancient Israel according to the psalm title. It contains a thrice repeated plea for God to restore His blessing to His people (verses 3, 7, and 19). In addition, verse 18 includes the cry for God to “revive” His people. Spiritual revival is the reanimating, reinvigorating, reimagining work of God in the hearts of His people. From this psalm we learn that as God’s people we must cry to God for revival.

Because God is our Shepherd and King we can call on Him for revival (80:1-3).

Psalm 80 begins with a recognition of God as Israel’s Shepherd and King. This fact forms the foundation for a cry for revival since God cares deeply for His chosen people.

God is our Shepherd and King who alone can deliver us (80:1-2).

The phrase “O shepherd of Israel” begins this psalm, the writer obviously stressing the watchful care of God over His people. Because God is our Shepherd we can rightly expect that He will hear our cries for help. As a Shepherd, God leads Joseph (possibly representing the northern tribes) like a flock of sheep. This Shepherd-God also resides “between the cherubim,” referring to His honored place in the Holy of Holies, reflective of His heavenly throne. From this regal position God shines forth in His glory. Such a glorious and powerful God was certainly capable of rescuing His people from their oppressed condition. In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh (probably representing both the northern and southern tribes) the psalmist asked God to stir up His might, to come and save His people. God’s people were oppressed and in need of divine deliverance. This political reality revealed the spiritual reality of their bondage to sin and need for spiritual salvation.

Cry to God to restore His people! (80:3)

Having described God’s caring and powerful nature, the psalmist now pens the first of three cries for restoration to God’s favor. “Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.” Like the ancient Israelites, God’s people today can cry out to God for revival, for restoration, for God’s favor, and for God’s deliverance from the difficult challenges of sin in our lives. “Restore us, O God!”

**Because God disciplines His errant
people we should call on Him for revival (80:4-7).**

God's people were experiencing oppression and trials. These trials were actually inflicted by God as marks of His righteous anger. The discipline of God in the lives of His people makes it all the more necessary for us to cry out for revival in our hearts.

God disciplines His errant people out of His righteous anger (80:4-6).

The psalmist now addresses God as Yahweh God Almighty, literally, "Yahweh God of Armies," a title found also in verses 7 and 14. This title refers to God's sovereign rule and supreme power. Because God is supreme, His anger over sin is just. The psalmist, therefore, asks how long God's anger will "smoke" against His people, specifically against their prayers. Because of Israel's sins God had ceased to answer the people's prayers. God withholds His blessings from those who reject Him and walk in their own ways. In fact, He inflicts His people with disciplinary hardships to bring us back to Him. The psalmist describes these hardships as "bread of tears," and says that God had made them drink tears repeatedly ("by the bowlful" translates "third," possibly a third part of a measuring bowl). Furthermore, God had brought about contention between His people and their neighboring nations to the degree that their enemies laughed at them. No wonder God's people needed to be restored to God's favor.

Cry to God to restore His people! (80:7)

With the thought of divine discipline in the forefront of his mind, the psalmist repeats his refrain, "Restore us, O God Almighty, make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved." When we recognize the hand of divine discipline in our lives and in our land we must cry out for revival. "Restore us, O God!"

**Because God has a path for restoration
we must call on Him for revival (80:8-19).**

These cries for restoration, thankfully, find their way into God's heart as a God who has already prepared a path for revival. God had blessed His people in the past and He would do so once again.

God caringly planted His people in the land of promise and they became a fruitful vine (80:8-11).

The psalmist now reflects on God's past blessings, describing the people of Israel as a vine (compare Genesis 49:22; Isaiah 5:1-7; 27:2-6; Jeremiah 2:21; Ezekiel 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1). God had carried this vine out of Egypt, cleared away the nations in Canaan, and planted it in the Promised Land. The vine took root and flourished under God's blessing. This vine covered the mountains with its shade like the cedars of God. Israel spread from the "sea" (probably the Mediterranean Sea) to the "river" (the Euphrates River)—the fullest extent of the kingdom of Israel under David and Solomon.

God removed His protective hand from His people and they became a trampled vineyard (80:12-16).

However, now God had broken down the walls of the vineyard so that anyone passing by might steal its grapes. Furthermore, wild boars from the forest (unclean animals) and other wild animals from the field were feeding on Israel's prosperity. The psalmist is stating that the surrounding Gentile nations were trampling down the Israelites and plundering their resources. Obviously God's protective hand had been removed from His people.

At this point the psalmist interjects another plea for God to restore His people to a position of favor and blessing. "Return to us, O God Almighty." While not identical to the pleas in verses 3, 7, and 19, the same basic concept is in mind. The psalmist cries out for God to look down from heaven, observe the condition of His vineyard, and once again provide watchful care for His people. The psalmist describes God's people as the "root" God had planted and the "son" He had strengthened for Himself. It had been God's pleasure to establish and strengthen His people in the past. Would God restore His people again? The psalmist makes no mention of the reason for God's displeasure, but the consequences were obvious enough. God's vine had been cut down and burned with fire. Because of God's rebuke, the people were perishing.

Through God's chosen Son He offers His people revival (80:17-18).

In spite of God's anger and discipline toward His people, He still had a plan to restore them to a position of favor and blessing. "Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself." The psalmist seems to be looking toward a promised deliverer, a "man" and a "son of man." These terms point toward Israel's messianic expectations. God had promised a deliverer, a descendant of David who would rescue His people from their oppression. Ultimately, this salvation would come through Jesus Christ, God's Messiah. Our hope for restoration and revival rests in Jesus. The psalmist assures God that, with the promised Messiah, the people of God will not backslide again. He then cries out, "Revive us, and we will call on your name." While many who have found salvation through faith in Jesus

Christ have indeed backslidden, all have the assurance that God will revive us again when we call on Him. God has a path for restoration, a path of repentance and prayer that leads to revival and restoration.

Cry to God to restore His people! (80:19)

Psalm 80 concludes with its common refrain, “Restore us, O Yahweh God Almighty; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.” As God’s people we must cry to God for revival. “Restore us, O God!”