

Evening Sermon – November 15, 2020
“God’s Shining (Smiling) Face” Psalm 80

There was a metaphor or a pair of metaphors I will attribute to the Puritans about God’s providence! When everything was going well for a believer, it was said God was bouncing him or her on His knee, as a loving father might play with a happy laughing child! However, if a believer was going through trials, especially fierce and difficult trials, it was said he or she was under the foot of God’s providence, suffering almost like being stepped on!

In this Psalm we see something similar. Asaph and Israel are going through difficult times, but the repeated chorus expresses a desire to see God shining, smiling face!

I. *A prayer for God’s gracious presence, His shining face -*

¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth! ² Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, Stir up Your strength, And come and save us! ³ Restore us, O God; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved! Psalm 80:1-3 (NKJV)

1. **¹ Give ear - :1 A-** *He asks for God’s “ear” – meaning he wants his prayer heard!*
2. *He asks for the “Shepherd of Israel” :1 B for God’s leading “You who lead Joseph like a flock” :1 C and leadership!*
3. **“Between the cherubim” :1 D** *is a reference to God’s dwelling with Israel, in the Tabernacle or the Temple, meaning he is desiring God’s obvious presence among them again!*
4. **“Shine forth!” :1 E,** *means show us YOUR GLORY, let us exalt in and praise YOU!*
5. **Stir up Your strength :2 A,** *is a prayer for a display of God’s*
 - A. *Activity*
 - B. *Power*

C. *And Movement “come” for this purpose “and save us” :2 B*

6. *Restoration comes with God’s shining face, His smiling, His providential favor –*

³ Restore us, O God; cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved! Psalm 80:3 (NKJV)

This verse is the chorus, it is repeated three times in this Psalm, with slight variation and so it represents the heart of what Asaph is asking for in his prayer -

- A. *God’s sovereignty is recognized in this verse, God ‘caused’ their calamity because of their sin, God is able to “Restore”*
- B. *As a priest who led in worship Asaph prays for “us” and “we”*
- C. *God’s face shining is a metaphor for God’s smile, His favor, since God is a Spirit, He does not actually have a smile or a face, but you know how you feel when someone you love does smile at you! You know if relations were strained, and it was all YOUR FAULT! And you could not blame your friend for being MAD at you – but that Person gives you a loving smile anyway ...*

*Question: How does God “smile” or cause His face to shine on us?
Answer: Through positive providence, through positive people!*

At one of the worst times of my life I received a sweet letter from a friend, and it hit me like a double sun! It brightened my day! Drove the darkness of depression away!

II. *A prayerful complaint about the present difficult providence -*

⁴ O LORD God of hosts, How long will You be angry Against the prayer of Your people? ⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears, And given them tears to drink in great measure. ⁶ You have made us a strife to our neighbors, and our enemies laugh among themselves.

1. *The phrase ⁴ O LORD God of hosts :4 is a reference to God as a God and captain / General of armies, all armies: Armies of men, armies of locusts, armies of storms or wind and hail, even armies of frogs, gnats, flies and great fish ... God is in control of ALL!*
2. **How long will You be angry Against the prayer of Your people?**
 - A. *God's anger and Asaph's asking "how long" are not new to Asaph - :4*
 - B. *Anger against prayer? Has to with God not answering immediately, prayers seem to bounce off Heaven's ceiling*
...
 - C. *Tears were both food and drink*
 - *Meaning they were regular*
 - *Meaning other food was lacking*
 - D. *Both neighbors and enemies were troublesome to Israel - :6*

⁶ **You have made us :6** *Means God is seen as the sovereign cause of these things!*

III. *The prayer is to the God of hosts! The same God Who brings calamity can bring success and joy, He can restore... note this verse is repeated –*

⁷ **Restore us, O God of hosts; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved! Psalm 80:7**

⁷ **Restore us, O God of hosts; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved! Psalm 80:19**

IV. *Israel is the vine; restoration will be gained through the True Vine Christ -*

⁸ **You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it. ⁹ You prepared room for it, And caused it to take deep root, And it filled the land. ¹⁰ The hills were covered with its shadow, And the mighty cedars with its boughs. ¹¹ She sent out her boughs to the Sea, And her branches to the River. ¹² Why have You broken down**

her hedges, So that all who pass by the way pluck her fruit? ¹³ The boar out of the woods uproots it, And the wild beast of the field devours it. ¹⁴ Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts; Look down from heaven and see, And visit this vine ¹⁵ And the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, And the branch that You made strong for Yourself. ¹⁶ It is burned with fire, it is cut down; They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance. ¹⁷ Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself. ¹⁸ Then we will not turn back from You; Revive us, and we will call upon Your name. ¹⁹ Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved! Psalm 80:8-19

1. *The vine (Israel) at first had God's favor, other nations were cast out to make room for it - :8-9 Joshua's conquests!*
2. *Its success which was at its height in Solomon's day - :10-11*
3. *Its breaking down, destruction at the hands of Assyria? Nebuchadnezzar? Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome - :12-13*
4. *A prayer that is ultimately answered in Christ - :14-17*

But Israel, even Judah, is not saved at that time but destroyed –
¹³ **Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" ² And Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Mark 13:1–2 (NKJV)**

It is not national Israel but spiritual Israel that is saved!

5. *When Christ saves God's true people really do see God - :18-19*

¹⁴ **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 (NKJV)**

Beholding God's glory in Christ is the same as beholding God's face, when we abide in Christ, the True Vine, His real life passes to us -

Jesus Christ is the True Vine –

¹⁵ **"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. John 15:1 (NKJV)**

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