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For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by the sons of Korah.

PSALM 85: 1 LORD, you have been favourable to your land. You have restored the fortunes of Jacob.

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Thanksgiving to God for restoration to the Divine favor, Psa 85:1-3; prayer for farther mercies, Psa 85:4-7; the psalmist waits for a gracious answer in full confidence of receiving it, Psa 85:8. He receives the assurance of the greatest blessings, and exults in the prospect, Psa 85:9-13.

The title of this Psalm we have seen before, Psa 42:1-11 : As to the time, it seems to have been written during, or even after, the return from the Babylonish captivity. In the three first verses the psalmist acknowledges the goodness of God in bringing the people back to their own land; he next prays to God to restore them to their ancient prosperity. In the spirit of prophecy, he waits on God, and hears him promise to do it; and then exults in the prospect of so great a good. The whole Psalm seems also to have a reference to the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ.

Verse 1

Lord, thou hast been favorable - Literally, Thou hast been well pleased with thy land.

Thou hast brought back the captivity - This seems to fix the time of the Psalm to be after the return of the Jews from Babylon.

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PSALM 85: 2 You have forgiven the iniquity of your people. You have covered all their sin. Selah.

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Verse 2

Thou hast forgiven the iniquity - נָשָׂאתָ אֲוֹן nasatha avon, Thou hast borne, or carried away, the iniquity. An allusion to the ceremony of the scapegoat.

Thou hast covered all their sin - As thou hast freely forgiven it, its offensiveness and abominable nature no longer appear. The whole is put out of sight; and, as we are restored from our captivity, the consequences no longer appear.

Selah - This is true. Our return to our own land is the full proof.

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PSALM 85: 3 You have taken away all your wrath. You have turned from the fierceness of your anger.

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Verse 3

Thou hast taken away - אָסַפְתָּ asaphta, "Thou hast gathered up all thy wrath." This carries on the metaphor in the second verse: "Thou hast collected all thy wrath, and carried it away with all our iniquities."

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PSALM 85: 4 Turn us, God of our salvation, and cause your indignation toward us to cease.

Verse 4

Turn us, O God of our salvation - Thou hast turned our captivity; now convert our souls. And they find a reason for their prayer in an attribute of their God; the God of their salvation. And as his work was to save, they beg that his anger towards them might cease. The Israelites were not restored from their captivity all at once. A few returned with Zerubbabel; some more with Ezra and Nehemiah; but a great number still remained in Babylonia, Media, Assyria, Egypt, and other parts. The request of the psalmist is, to have a complete restoration of all the Israelites from all places of their dispersion.

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PSALM 85: 5 Will you be angry with us forever? Will you draw out your anger to all generations?

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Verse 5

Wilt thou draw out thine anger - We have already suffered much and long; our fathers have suffered, and we have succeeded to their distresses. Draw not out thy anger against us from generation to generation.

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PSALM 85: 6 Won't you revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?

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Verse 6

Wilt thou not revive us - We have long had the sentence of death in ourselves; and have feared an utter extinction. Shall not our nation yet live before thee? Shall we not become once more numerous, pious, and powerful, that

Thy people may rejoice in thee? - As the Source of all our mercies; and give thee the glory due to thy name?

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PSALM 85: 7 Show us your loving kindness, LORD. Grant us your salvation.

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Verse 7

Show us thy mercy - Blot out all our sins.

And grant us thy salvation - Give us such a complete deliverance as is worthy of thy majesty and mercy to bestow!

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PSALM 85: 8 I will hear what God, the LORD, will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, his saints; but let them not turn again to folly.

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## Verse 8

I will hear what God the Lord will speak - The psalmist goes as a prophet to consult the Lord; and, having made his request, waits an answer from the spirit of prophecy. He is satisfied that the answer will be gracious; and having received it he relates it to the people.

He will speak peace - He will give prosperity to the people in general; and to his saints - his followers, in particular.

But let them not turn again to folly - Let them not abuse the mercy of their God, by sinning any more against him.

PSALM 85: 9 Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.

## Verse 9

Surely his salvation is nigh - To him who fears God, and trembles at his word, his salvation is nigh at hand.

That glory may dwell in our land - That thy worship may be restored, the temple rebuilt, and the Divine shechinah, or symbol of the presence of God, resume its place. The pure and undefiled religion of God preached, professed, and experienced in a nation, is the glory of that land. The Prophet Haggai had said that the glory of the latter house - the temple built after their return from Babylon, should be greater than the glory of the former, viz., of that built by Solomon: but, as a building, it was far inferior to the former; yet it had a superior glory in being visited by Jesus Christ. This was the glory that excelled.

PSALM 85: 10 Mercy and truth meet together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

## Verse 10

Mercy and truth are met together - It would be more simple to translate the original: - **חסד ואמת נפגשו צדק ושלום נשקו**

Chesed veemeth niphgashu;

Tsedek veshalom nashaku, - "

Mercy and truth have met on the way

Righteousness and peace have embraced."

This is a remarkable text, and much has been said on it: but there is a beauty in it which, I think, has not been noticed.

Mercy and peace are on one side; truth and righteousness on the other. Truth requires righteousness; mercy calls for peace.

They meet together on the way; one going to make inquisition for sin, the other to plead for reconciliation. Having met, their differences on certain considerations, not here particularly mentioned are adjusted; and their mutual claims are blended together in one common interest; on which peace and righteousness immediately embrace. Thus, righteousness is given to truth, and peace is given to mercy.

Now, Where did these meet? In Christ Jesus.

When were they reconciled? When he poured out his life on Calvary.

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PSALM 85: 11 Truth springs out of the earth. Righteousness has looked down from heaven.

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Verse 11

Truth shall spring out of the earth - In consequence of this wonderful reconciliation, the truth of God shall prevail among men. The seeds of it shall be so plentifully sown by the preaching of Christ and his apostles that true religion shall be diffused over the world.

And righteousness shall look down from heaven - And be delighted with the reformation of the sons of Adam; and shall be so satisfied with the glorious work which is carried forward, that,

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PSALM 85: 12 Yes, the LORD will give that which is good. Our land will yield its increase.

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Verse 12

The Lord shall give - good - הטוב hattob, The Good thing - what is the supreme good, the summum bonum, for which man has searched in vain through all his generations. Those who are reconciled to him through the Son of his love shall enjoy the favor of their God; to have which is the supreme happiness of man.

Our land shall yield her increase - There shall be neither dearth nor barrenness; for truth, that springs out of the earth, shall yield an abundant harvest, in the conversion of all nations to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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PSALM 85: 13 Righteousness goes before him, And prepares the way for his steps.

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Verse 13

Righteousness shall go before him - Perhaps this verse may receive its best solution from Rom 3:25 : "Whom God hath set for a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his Righteousness for the remission of sins that are past." This term the apostle uses to point out God's method of justifying or saving mankind. And this, in the preaching of the pure Gospel, is ever going before to point out the Lord Jesus, and the redemption that is in his blood. And thus going before him, the sinner, who feels his need of salvation, is Set - in the way of his steps; as Bartimeus sat by the way-

side begging, by which way Jesus walked; and when he came where he was, heard his prayer, and restored him his sight. Or, righteousness - the pure and holy law of God, must be proclaimed as broken by sinners, and calling aloud for vengeance, before they can see and feel their need of Christ crucified. By the preaching of the law they are prepared to receive the grace of the Gospel.