

# THE PROMISE OF REVIVAL



REVIVED! PART 4

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A REVISION STUDY FROM  
THE FELLOWSHIP OF AILBE

The Promise of Revival  
Revived! Part 4  
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## Welcome to *The Promise of Revival*

It is not far-fetched to believe that God can bring a great revival to His Church, and a great awakening to the world in our day.

He is certainly capable of it. And He has done it often in the past. And when He does, He'll be seeking to make Jesus more prominent in us, in our churches, and throughout the earth.

What's not to like about that?

This *ReVision* series, "Revived!", is designed to help you understand why revival is so important, and how we can seek it together from the Lord in prayer.

*ReVision* studies are designed as brief introductions to the subject under consideration. We hope they will enlarge your worldview, help you to become more firmly rooted in Scripture, equip you to minister to others, and stimulate you to want to learn more about the Word of God and the Biblical worldview.

We're happy to provide this study at no charge. If you find these studies helpful, we hope you'll consider sending a gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, to help us in making these resources available to others.

And if you find this study helpful, please let us know. How have you benefited from this study? Go to our website, [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org), and use the Contact Us button to share your story.

May the Lord bless your study of His Word.

T. M. Moore  
Principal

## 1 Through You: Psalm 44

*You are my King, O God;  
Command victories for Jacob.  
Through You we will push down our enemies;  
Through Your name we will trample those who rise up against us.  
For I will not trust in my bow,  
Nor shall my sword save me.  
But You have saved us from our enemies,  
And have put to shame those who hated us.  
In God we boast all day long,  
And praise Your name forever. Psalm 44.4-8*

### *A sense of the past*

The people of ancient Israel understood the importance of keeping the past alive. After all, God had done some pretty remarkable things in the past – creation, deliverance from Egypt, giving the Law, the conquest of Canaan, and more. These were events worth remembering, because they spoke to faithful Israelites in every generation of the greatness of God, the unfailing nature of His love for them, and His always-at-the-ready power to rescue and restore them, when they called upon Him to do so.

The composers of Psalm 44 had a very large request to make of God. For some reason, the nation in their day had fallen on hard times. Their enemies were getting the upper hand on them (vv. 9, 10), and were beginning to take as spoil all the precious resources of the land (v. 11), and to send the people into foreign captivity (vv. 11, 12). No neighboring nations were coming to their aid; instead, the nations around them laughed and derided Israel in her time of trouble (vv. 13-16).

But the psalmists were hopeful. Whatever sin may have been the cause of this season of reversal was no longer an issue (vv. 17, 18). Either they had repented of their sin, or there simply was no particular sin they could identify as the cause of their malaise. They had not forgotten the Lord, and so were stretching out their hands in prayer to Him (v. 20). They had confidence that their hearts were right before the Lord (v. 21); and even though they were in danger of being delivered to enemies like sheep for the slaughter (v. 22), they knew God had the power to deliver them, just as He had done in the past (vv. 1-8).

In our day, believers don't much care about their history. In fact, we have tossed out a good bit of the rich heritage of liturgy, culture, theology, and example that has accrued to us from past generations. We are content, it seems, to define the nature of faith, and to make up its demands, according to our needs in the present, without any reference to the past.

And in ignoring our past, we fail to see what great works of revival God has done – which He stands ready to do in our day as well.

### *Wide-awake God*

God is always wide awake to the needs of His people, especially when they seek Him, depend on Him, declare His grace and truth, and live within His laws and by His power. Over the two millennia that Christianity has graced the earth, great seasons of revival have occurred in which, against all probability, God seemed to have awoken from His slumber and come to His people's aid once again.

In their time of need, the sons of Korah looked back to the conquest of Canaan, and called upon God to deliver them from their enemies as He had done then. In our time of declining interest in Christian faith, a

lack of the reality of faith on the part of church goers, and a practice of Christianity that has been taken captive to forms and philosophies more of worldly than of Biblical origin, we need to call on the Lord to wake up from His slumber – and wake us up from ours! – and revive His people once again.

We can look back to great seasons of revival when widespread repentance rose from believers and their churches, believers were emboldened to live for Christ and bear witness to Him, unbelievers opened their hearts to the Gospel by the multitude, churches filled and new churches were built, and cultures and societies were transformed to reflect the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. They who have an eye for the past know what God did in those first three centuries of the Christian movement. They remember how Irish Christians led a wave of revival that “saved civilization”, in the words of Thomas Cahill. They saw how the Catholic and Protestant Reformations breathed new life into the Body of Christ; how the first Great Awakening spread the fire of revival throughout the American colonies; the Second Great Awakening spawned the end of slavery and gave birth to institutions of mercy, mission, and education; and how other seasons of revival throughout the years have seen the mighty God doing well-nigh unbelievable works of renewal and awakening in times when it seemed like the world was getting darker by the day.

If we could but remember that God is always awake to hear our pleas and cries for revival, and He will not hesitate to rise up on our behalf, when we recognize our affliction and confess our sin and need; then we would give ourselves more diligently to crying out to the Lord, saying, “Through You, O Lord, we will be revived again!”

*Praying Psalm 44 for revival*

As you pray the first eight verses of this psalm, thank God for all the times in Scripture He came to the rescue of His people. Remember His promises concerning revival: 2 Chronicles 7.14, Jeremiah 33.3, Jeremiah 29.11-14, and all those we have seen in the psalms we’ve studied in this series. Call on God to flex His mighty spiritual strength, and to move His people to seek Him for revival.

Remember that we are at all times engaged in a powerful spiritual struggle (Ps. 44.9-19), and in many ways, we seem to be losing ground. Call on God to rise up for us against our enemies, and to equip us with everything we need from His Word to resist the devil and press on in good works and consistent witness (Eph. 4.10-20; 2 Tim. 3.15-17; Matt. 5.13-16; Acts 1.8). Pray that God will go forth with you into your day, into your own Personal Mission Field, and use you to advance the Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit.

Call boldly on the Lord to bring revival and renewal to His people, and awakening to the lost world (vv. 23-26). Seek His face, reach out to Him in prayer, recommit yourself to His Word, and call on Him to arise and go forth with you and all His people, conquering and to conquer for revival (Rev. 6.1, 2).

Then go, in the confidence of God’s faithfulness and power, and sow the seeds of revival by your prayers, your works, and your witness in everything you do each day.

*For Reflection*

1. Why is it important that we remember the great works God has done in the past?
2. What are some indicators suggesting that we need God to do a great work of revival and awakening today?
3. How should we pray, and what should we be seeking, when we come to God and call on Him to “Wake up!” and revive us?

*Next Steps – Transformation. Begin using Psalm 44 to pray for revival. Add it in rotation with the other psalms we have considered thus far in this series. Pray boldly, and encourage other believers to pray boldly, too.*

## 2 Still Sovereign: Psalm 46

*God is our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear,  
Even though the earth be removed,  
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;  
Though its waters roar and be troubled,  
Though the mountains shake with its swelling..* Psalm 46.1-3

### *A world of trouble*

We live in a troubled world. We will *always* live in a troubled world. The grip of sin, the deceitfulness of the lie, and the power of self-interest – together with a creation groaning and travailing under the effects of sin – ensure that life in this world will always be troubled in one way or another.

“And though this world with devil’s filled/should threaten to undo us...” So wrote Martin Luther in his rendering of Psalm 46, which we know as “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” The fact that spiritual warfare rages around us day by day only adds to the troubles we experience in this world.

Dire warnings about the future of our planet seem only to have increased during this time of pandemic. Now the threat of economic collapse is added to that of climate change and the various other maladies that “threaten to undo us” in the days to come.

In the face of such dire prospects, it can seem futile to believe that God will revive His Church and awaken the troubled world to Jesus Christ in a great movement of His Spirit and power.

But He has done it before. And He is still sovereign, still in our midst, still with us, and still determined to be exalted in the earth, in the face of all the nations and their troubles.

### *God in our midst*

Luther’s rendering of Psalm 46 expresses confidence in the reviving power and intentions of God’s Word:

That Word above all earthly pow’rs,  
No thanks to them abideth.  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours  
Through Him Who with us sideth.

Yes, God is still with us. He dwells in our midst by His Spirit, Who daily works with the Word of God to bring us into the Presence of Christ, show us the glory in His face, and transform us increasingly into His likeness (2 Cor. 3.12-18). Mountains can be falling into the sea all around us; armies can be destroying whole nations; but the Spirit of God will continue in us and with us, working to bring us forward by increments to our ultimate destination: To see Jesus face to face, and be like Him (1 Jn. 3.1-3).

What joy and freedom from fear such a prospect engenders in our soul! What hope and confidence it gives us for all our days! Everything else can go by the wayside, but we will not be moved from the sheltering grace of God or the destination He has marked out for us:

Let goods and kindred go,  
This mortal life also!

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The body they may kill;  
God's truth abideth still:  
His Kingdom is forever!

God stands ready to help His Church and to bring in a new day of revival, renewal, and awakening (v. 5). He can command the troubles of the world to stand down, so that righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit can flourish once again (v. 6). In a time of trouble, His Word to His people is clear: "Be still, and know that I *am* God" (v. 10). And His resolve has not changed from what it has always been: "I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" (v. 10).

Like a never-failing river of life, the Spirit flows in and through and from the city of the living God (vv. 4, 5), bringing daily draughts of refreshing grace and truth to revive His people, renew their mission, and awaken the lost and troubled world to the Good News of Jesus and His peace. God will be exalted in all the earth, and no amount of trouble can prevent that from coming to pass (vv. 8-10).

*Praying Psalm 46 for revival*

As we pray for revival using Psalm 46, we must remember that even the troubles of the world do not occur outside the scope of God's sovereign power. The world may be hunkering down and cowering under the gloom of pandemic, but God is not changed. Nor has His purpose changed. Nor has He left His people to fend for themselves.

So we can thank God for the troubles of the world, for we know that ultimately, as the old spiritual has it, "Soon I will be done with the troubles of the world." And while we still exist in them, we can find daily refreshment in God's Word and Spirit to embolden us to exalt the Lord, proclaim His peace, and call the people around us to give up their resistance and hear the powerful Word of the Lord in Jesus Christ.

We must give thanks for the troubles of the world. But we must also see God working above all our troubles to fulfill His eternal plan of exalting Himself; working in the midst of His people in every time of trouble to move us to faith and obedience; and working even in the troubled world to prepare people for the call to repent and believe the Good News.

Let Psalm 46 bring you near to the Lord, where you take refuge in Him and shelter against the troubles of the world. Sing it boldly, using Luther's paraphrase, and make it your resolve to seek and proclaim His Kingdom. The troubled world will pass away – if not by its own troubles, then when the Lord sends the fire next time in judgment. But the Kingdom of God is forever; and we are that city of the Lord to whom and through whom and from whom God channels His river of grace and truth. Let us pray that, whatever the troubles we may face each day, we will stay in the channel of that mighty stream, and offer its many blessings and benefits to all the troubled world around us.

*For Reflection*

1. Why is knowing that God is sovereign over all things such a source of strength and comfort for believers?
2. What is God's determination with respect to the nations of the earth? What should we expect that to look like?
3. What can we do to drink more deeply and continuously from the "river whose streams make glad the city of God"?

*Next Steps – Preparation: Sing "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" as part of your time praying Psalm 46. Then go forth and live each day in the truth of this glorious psalm.*



### 3 To the Ends of the Earth: Psalm 48

*We have thought, O God, on Your lovingkindness,  
In the midst of Your temple.  
According to Your name, O God,  
So is Your praise to the ends of the earth;*

*Your right hand is full of righteousness.  
Let Mount Zion rejoice,  
Let the daughters of Judah be glad,  
Because of Your judgments. Psalm 48.9-11*

*For beauty and joy*

The sons of Korah, who composed this psalm, probably served during the reign of King Solomon. They may have been gatekeepers in the temple, and thus would daily have been exposed to the majesty, brilliance, and splendor of its ornamentation, and the sublimity and mystery of its rituals. They saw the nations of the world coming to Jerusalem to see the beauty of King Solomon's capital and to share in the joy of his wealth, power, and favor. And they knew that all this was because of God – because God was great in the midst of His people, and greatly to be praised (cf. 1 Kgs. 10).

This understanding of the Church – the City of God – as beautiful in elevation and a source of joy for all the earth is shared by the Old Testament prophets (cf. Is. 2.1-4; Is. 62.6, 7; Mic. 4.1-8). This is what we might expect when He Who is all beauty and joy is great in the midst of His people. God is great in the midst of His people when they praise Him greatly (v. 1), and when they see Him as their strong defense and refuge (vv. 12-14). God is great when His people take refuge in Him alone (v. 3), and when they rejoice and are glad because of His judgments – His Law and all His Word (v. 11).

The effects of this – of God's Church being a primary source of beauty, holiness, and joy – is that the enemies of God slink away in shame, marveling at the greatness they see in the Body of Christ (vv. 4-7). They can neither gainsay nor oppose such holy spiritual majesty and greatness, and like the kings who brought gifts to Solomon's court, they submit to the greatness of God, albeit deceitfully (Pss. 66.3; 81.15).

When the Church rejoices in the judgments of God, takes refuge in Him alone, extols His greatness in all they do, and serves as a source of beauty and joy for the world, God's praise extends to the ends of the earth, and revival, renewal, and awakening spread to all peoples (vv. 9, 10).

The grandeur and splendor of Solomon's reign could not last, because he and the people of his generation gave in to the desire for worldly pleasures and political power. Called to live all of life "under heaven", they turned instead to follow the nations in living "under the sun", as Solomon explained throughout Ecclesiastes.

But when the City of God looks to Him in His greatness, honors Him in all their ways, rejoices in His Word, praises Him at all times and in every situation, and seeks His Presence as their true refuge and glory, then the greatness of God spreads out from their midst to reach the nations of the world in revival, renewal, and awakening.

*God's Name and praise*

We must not think of revival as we perhaps typically do – a week or so of special meetings aimed at pumping up the drooping spirits of church members. Revival means being renewed in the Word of God, through

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confession and repentance, in the great salvation He has given us, both as individuals and as churches. Real revival issues in renewal, as believers and their churches find their way back to the paths for personal and congregational growth that God has marked out in His Word. As congregations grow to see more of the greatness of God, and to discover the beauty and joy of holiness, what is happening in them overflows, like rivers of living water, to the people around them in their communities (Jn. 7.37-39). The result is that many hear the Gospel, and many of those who hear, believe, repent, are saved, and become swept up in the reviving and renewing grace of God.

As the praise of God increases, it spreads to other churches, throughout a community or a nation, and even to the ends of the earth. The more God's people extol His Name, take that Name upon themselves, and proclaim the Name of Jesus to their neighbors, the more beauty and joy flow from the Church to reach lost and desperate souls, and to silence recalcitrant enemies. Worldwide awakening can occur when the praises of God fill not only our services of worship, but every aspect of every day of our lives.

Psalm 48 gives us a glimpse of this, and holds out the implicit promise that, if God's people will look to Him and magnify His greatness in holiness, beauty, and joy, revival on a worldwide scale can come to pass.

*Praying Psalm 48 for revival*

Use this psalm to pray for yourself and your church, that God might make Himself great in you, and bring forth from you more of His beauty and joy to bless your neighbors and community.

Pray that He will keep the enemies of the faith at bay, and especially the arch-enemy of the souls of all men, who seeks to blind and deceive them, lest they should hear the Gospel and believe.

Ask God to give you a new love for His Word, and greater joy in reading, meditating, and studying it. Bring more prayer into your daily life, taking refuge in God and His strong "towers and bulwarks", rejoicing in His greatness and calling on Him to embolden you to spread His praises to the people in your Personal Mission Field.

Pray for the churches in your community – and for all churches everywhere – that God might fill them with His greatness, raise them up in beauty and joy for their local communities, and from them send forth the message of His holiness and salvation in Jesus Christ.

And celebrate with exuberance the promise that He is with you always, "even to death", and that He will guide your every step, as long as you continue looking to Him in faith (v. 14).

*For reflection*

1. Do you think most churches see themselves as primary sources of beauty and joy in their communities? Why or why not?
2. What are some ways that the praises of God can be extended beyond the walls of our churches into the daily lives of believers? Into your daily life?
3. What does it mean to rejoice in the judgments of God, and why is this so important to our seeing revival, renewal, and awakening?

*Next steps – Transformation: Use Psalm 48 to bring more praise of God to the ends of your Personal Mission Field every day.*

## 4 Who Will? God Will!: Psalm 60

*Who will bring me to the strong city?  
Who will lead me to Edom?  
Is it not You, O God, who cast us off?  
And You, O God, who did not go out with our armies?  
Give us help from trouble,  
For the help of man is useless.  
Through God we will do valiantly,  
For it is He who shall tread down our enemies.* Psalm 60:9-12

### *In the balance*

David was feeling as though he was in the balance with God in this psalm. He had been struggling against a powerful enemy, and, even though Joab achieved significant victories, David was feeling that, for his part, and those who were with him, God had rejected and abandoned them.

Why? David knew this wasn't true, but he was feeling very strongly this way nevertheless. Enemies were on every hand, streaming through breaches in the Israelite lines, dividing the armies of the Lord, and jeopardizing the safety and wellbeing of the nation.

But David remembered both the promise and past works of God (vv. 6-8). He had promised to give all the land of Canaan to His people, and significant progress had been achieved under Joshua and since. The banner of God's promises still flew over the nation of Israel (v. 4), and as David and his armies sheltered under that irrevocable Word, they would overcome their foes, capture the fortified city of their enemies, do valiantly, and gain the victory (vv. 9-12).

In our day, many are expressing concern that the enemies of Lord are taking aim at His Church. In certain parts of the world – China, Cuba, India, and throughout the Muslim world – that aim takes the form of violent persecution, including beatings, imprisonment, and martyrdom. In other parts, the enemies are less aggressive, but just as determined. They seek to block our freedom as witnesses by prohibiting religious speech in educational institutions and at public events. They insist that religion is a private, personal matter, and ought not be raised in the public square or the university classroom. They try to force the people of God to do business in ways that compromise their faith and convictions. Some Christian leaders fear even further restrictions on our freedoms as followers of Jesus Christ.

Not all of these fears are well-founded. Indeed, some are misguided or exaggerated, and only show that we're seeking to shelter under the banner of "religious freedom" – a secular notion – rather than under the banner of Christ and His Kingdom, come what may. Some may be real, but we can only effectively resist them with the Sword of the Spirit, rather than the sword of the State.

It seems to many that God is leaving us to languish in the seas of secularism and sectarianism. Who will lead us forward for the Kingdom and glory of God? Who will show us the way to overcome all our foes – especially those spiritual forces of wickedness in high places – so that we can make daily progress in our campaign for the coming of the Kingdom? Who will show us the way?

God will.

### *Remember the promises of God*

One of the purposes of such psalms as this is to remind us of the work God has done in the past, and all that such work promises concerning our times and beyond. In the midst of his desperate situation, David was

reminded of God's promise to give the land to Israel, to arm and defend His people in all their struggles, and to lead them to shouts of triumph over their foes.

Our Lord Jesus has told us that the meek and righteous will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5; cf. Ps. 37:9, 11). The Gospel will be preached to all peoples (Lk. 24:46-49). God has unfurled the banner of His promises over us. His banner over us is love (Song 2:4), and it signals the victory of God's salvation over all our spiritual foes and all the nations of the earth (Jer. 50:1, 2). We need to flee to that banner (v. 4), claiming the promises of God – as we see in Psalm 67 – and living toward those promises faithfully, day by day.

God has been faithful to His promises throughout the course of Christian history. When times have seemed bleak and foreboding, and enemies were threatening on every hand, God has turned the eyes and hearts of His people to His precious and very great promises, so that, drawing on the power of the indwelling Christ, believers have overcome all manner of opposition to spread the Good News of the Kingdom throughout their world. Roman persecution could not stop the Gospel. Fanatic Celtic paganism was helpless before a freed slave and the Word of the Gospel he brought to Ireland in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. Cultural sclerosis and ecclesiastical bondage could not keep the Gospel from breaking out with fresh power during the age of reformation. Dying and complacent churches, and status quo pastors could not prevent the First and Second Great Awakenings from bringing multitudes to Christ and realizing significant moral and cultural improvements.

When God's people acknowledge their desperate need, repent of their sins, remember His great works in the past, and flee to the banner of His promises, He appears in their midst to lead them forward to greater progress in Kingdom righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

*Praying Psalm 60 for revival*

Use this psalm to review God's precious and very great promises (Gen. 12:1-3), and to remember that all these promises are ours in Jesus Christ, if we will turn from our worldly ways and embrace Him wholly (2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:20).

Just as David remembered the Personal Mission Field assigned to Israel – Shechem, Gilead, Manasseh, Moab, Edom, and the rest – lay out your own Personal Mission Field before the Lord every day. Call on Him to equip you with the weapons you will need to defeat the devil – who will lie to you every day by telling you that it's not necessary for you to be a witness for Christ or to bring holiness to completion in your life (Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 7:1). He will tell you that every day, until you wield the Sword of the Spirit against him, strap on the breastplate of faith and obedience, and buckle the chinstrap on the helmet of your great salvation (cf. Eph. 6:10-20). He will flee from you when you resist his lies, and then you can go out each day into your Personal Mission Field, carrying the banner of Christ and His promises, and seek His Kingdom and righteousness in every aspect of your life.

Christians are continually under siege. The enemy deploys strategies and tactics against us all day long. He will stream through every breach in your soul, unless you fortify yourself with prayer, repentance, and the determination to follow Jesus into the fray. With God you can do valiantly! He will tread down your enemies, and through you, spread the liberating power and love of the Gospel unto revival, renewal, and awakening.

Make sure you head out each day under the right banner, and look to the Lord to help you do valiantly for Christ and His Kingdom.

*For reflection*

1. How would you define your own Personal Mission Field? Does the devil want you to think about your life this way?
2. Why is it important that we flee to the banner of God's covenant promises every day (Gen. 12:1-3)?

3. What will it look like as God does valiantly through you today?

*Next steps – Transformation: Spend the next few days praying Psalm 60 at various times during the day.*

## 5 Restore Us!: Psalm 80

*Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts;  
Look down from heaven and see,  
And visit this vine  
And the vineyard which Your right hand has planted,  
And the branch that You made strong for Yourself.  
It is burned with fire, it is cut down;  
They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance.  
Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,  
Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself.  
Then we will not turn back from You;  
Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.  
Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;  
Cause Your face to shine,  
And we shall be saved!* Psalm 80.14-19

### *Exposing the darkness*

Psalm 80 is a psalm of Asaph. Appointed director of music and choirs by David, we may assume that Asaph continued his ministry after the temple was constructed under Solomon. His twelve psalms – 50 and 73-83 – would have been composed at the height of Israel's glory and prosperity.

Yet these psalms reveal a growing darkness in the soul of the nation, beginning in Asaph's own tendency to allow his heart to go after the things of the world (cf. Ps. 73). In the psalms of Asaph, we discover a prophet who has perceived the growing accommodation of the Solomonic court with the ways of the unbelieving world. Although outwardly, everything was going great guns – all the numbers were good and everyone seemed to be happy – inwardly, Asaph perceived that the soul of the nation was becoming captive to the lusts of the eyes and the pride of life. He wrote his psalms to jar the people of Israel to their senses, expose the darkness within them, and lead them to repentance before disaster and complete capitulation overtook them.

So clear and necessary is the message of Asaph's psalms that, many years later, when King Hezekiah recognized a need for revival, and resolved to lead the people out of their captivity to pagan ways, he gave specific instructions that the psalms of David *and Asaph* should be used to lead the people in worship (2 Chron. 29.30).

Since the psalms of Asaph were effective for King Hezekiah, as he led the nation to seek the Lord in a time when revival and renewal were greatly needed, we should expect them to be useful for us as well. And Psalm 80 brings together the burden and hope of all of Asaph's psalms.

### *Psalm 80*

Psalm 80 contains everything we need to begin throwing off the cultural chains and overcoming the misguided affections that are keeping us from realizing our full potential as the Body of Christ and temple of the Lord.

The psalm builds in intensity, as we see by comparing the growing plea for restoration in verses 3, 7, and 19. By continuing to stretch out and add titles for God to this refrain, Asaph increases the sense of urgency he wants us to feel as we pray. He knows that only God can deliver His captive people, by causing His face to shine on them once again – an appeal for a return of God's favor, strength, and unfailing Word and Spirit.

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The psalm recalls the great work of God in the past in establishing His people as a fruitful vine. And it laments the broken-down hedges of the Lord's garden, which have allowed the wild beasts of pagan ways to run roughshod over the vineyard of the Lord (vv. 8-11). Asaph led the people to long once again for the fruitful days, when the hand of God was upon His people, and they followed His leading in all things (v. 17). He understood that God had allowed the souls of His people to fall captive to their lusts (v. 12), and to render the vineyard of the Lord unfruitful and waste (vv. 14-16).

The City of God was overrun with beasts, marred by the fires of worldliness, and cut back from realizing its full flourishing (vv. 13, 16). Clearly, revival was the need of the hour.

Asaph knew that only the Lord could return His people from captivity, and he was encouraged, by providing the nation with this prayer, that their using it might be just the primer necessary for the waters of revival to gush and flow once again (v. 18). Praying this psalm might help the captive churches of our day realize the focus, strength, vigor, and fruit of the Lord once again.

#### *Praying Psalm 80 for revival*

Read and meditate on Psalm 80. Pray it daily. Lead your congregation, family, Bible study group, and friends in praying this psalm. Let the images of God's vineyard translate to the state of our churches today, and weep for the comparisons. Let the Lord search your heart, for any ways you might be contributing to the Church's failure to realize its full fruition in our day.

Pray the refrain with increasing passion and urgency (vv. 3, 7, 19). Let that recurring phrase, especially in its final version in verse 19, be a "breathing prayer" for you throughout the day. Take a deep breath: "Restore us, O LORD God of hosts..." Then exhale slowly: "Cause Your face to shine, and we shall be saved!" Pray this throughout the day. Share it with some friends, and encourage them to pray it with you.

If your church is in any way, or to any degree, captive to winds of doctrine and ways of working that are more of the world than of God's Word, praying Psalm 80 can be a place to begin helping your church find its way to the freedom of Christ. And know that, when you pray, and as you enlist others to pray this psalm for revival, God is already at work toward that great issue: "Revive us, and we will call upon Your name."

#### *For Reflection*

1. Asaph wrote this psalm during a time of outward flourishing in Israel. What was he trying to get his contemporaries to see?
2. What are we praying for when we pray, "Restore us"?
3. Why did the psalmist think that God was "angry against the prayer" of His people? Is it possible God could be angry against our prayers? Explain.

*Next Steps – Transformation: Use Psalm 80.19 as a focusing prayer throughout the day.*

## 6 Revive Us Again: Psalm 85

*LORD, You have been favorable to Your land;  
You have brought back the captivity of Jacob.  
You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people;  
You have covered all their sin. Selah  
You have taken away all Your wrath;  
You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger.  
Restore us, O God of our salvation,  
And cause Your anger toward us to cease.*

- Psalm 85.1-4

*Chronic, but not permanent*

The condition of becoming captive is chronic within the Christian movement, flaring up, disabling, distracting, and causing churches to lose sight of their calling as Kingdom signs and outposts for a season. At such times, blown off course by unfavorable winds of doctrine and practice, and drifting from the moorings of our great salvation, churches find their worship lagging, their zeal for evangelism dried up, their unity with all believers fractured, an unhealthy fixation on numbers predominating, and assorted other ills suggesting that the Body of Christ has become captive to views and ways that have caused it to lapse into a period of poor health.

But while the condition of captivity may be chronic, it is not permanent. Churches do not need to languish in captivity to the ways of the world, the demands of the flesh, or the deceptions of the devil. Church leaders at all times should maintain vigilance over their flocks, taking corrective action whenever it appears that the Lord's vine is not yielding fruit, or that His vineyard is being overrun by worldly ways – as we saw Asaph doing in Psalm 80.

And the place to begin that seeking is in prayer, using psalms that have been especially provided for such situations. When we begin praying for revival – for deliverance from whatever may be our current captivity, whether mild or severe – we can know that it is God Who has moved us to prayer, and that His great work of deliverance and restoration has commenced: “Revive us, and we will call upon Your name” (Psalm 80.18).

As we seek the Lord to deliver us from our captivity and restore health and growth, we should be encouraged, as the sons of Korah were, to remember that God has oftentimes brought deliverance to His captive people. Great seasons of revival are as pronounced throughout Church history as seasons of captivity; and, indeed, the dawn of new Gospel surging and Kingdom advance seems always to follow dark times of setback and unfruitfulness.

Psalm 85 can guide and encourage us in calling on the Lord to remember such seasons of renewed favor.

*Seeking deliverance from captivity*

In Psalm 80, Asaph called on the Church in his day to look *around* at the condition of captivity into which they had drifted, and to seek the Lord urgently for deliverance. In Psalm 85, the sons of Korah look *back* at the faithfulness of God in times past, to see that, while we may in many ways deny Him, He will never deny Himself, His Word, or His promises, and is always ready to forgive, renew, and re-energize His people.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy 2.13



The sons of Korah – probably contemporaries and colleagues of Asaph – recalled the many seasons, from the book of Judges through David, Hezekiah, and Josiah, that God had visited His captive people to restore them to Himself. They knew that their present captivity had brought the anger of God against them, taking away their joy and depriving them of the fullness of His salvation (vv. 3-7).

They also understood that seeking restoration meant seeking it on the *Lord's* terms, and not their own. They looked to the Lord, to hear what He would say about how the nation might be restored to His peace (v. 8). They led the people who prayed this psalm to renounce all the forms of folly that had caused them to lose their way and to become separated from the favor of God (v. 8). And they reminded them that restoration from captivity means getting back on track with the great salvation of the Lord, that He might be glorified in all the earth (v. 9).

But the sons of Korah went beyond a merely immediate restoration, and looked toward a glorious and fuller restoring of God's people in the days to come (vv. 10-13). They cast a clear and compelling vision for a great restoration in which God's people would know His mercy and truth, which would fuse righteousness and peace and bring the rule of heaven to bear throughout the earth (vv. 10, 11). They led the people to pray confidently that God would bring "*what is good*" to the land, so that the people might be fruitful in all their ways (v. 12). They set before the people a vision of righteousness increasing, and the people of God, free from false teachings and ways, walking those paths once again (v. 13).

*Praying Psalm 85 for revival*

The sons of Korah remembered such times of revival in the past, and they called on the Lord to remember them as well, that He might renew His promises and covenant, and come with power to humble, cleanse, reorient, redirect, and restore His people once again.

We can see Jesus in that vision of mercy and truth fused, righteousness and peace united, and the world being blessed with the advancing rule of His glory. From the days of the early Church, through the Celtic Revival, the Reformation, the First and Second Great Awakenings, and great periods of revival – local and worldwide – over the last century, God's people have turned from their captive ways to seek the Lord Jesus, and the freedom that comes from knowing and serving Him.

And, precisely as the sons of Korah have taught us to pray, God has been faithful to break the chains of His people's captivity and set them on a course of revival, renewal, and awakening once again. Call upon God to revive us. Plead with Him to prosper our witness, and to show more of Jesus to the world. Rejoice in His promises, and in the work of revival God has done in the past. Ask Him to lead us into paths of righteousness, that He might be glorified, and His goodness might abound throughout the earth once again.

As we recognize our captivity, confess our failings, repent of our sinful ways, and seek the Lord earnestly in prayer – then may we expect the Lord to remember mercy and grace and cause the winds of His pure Spirit to fill our sails for revival, renewal, and awakening.

*For Reflection*

1. Why is it important to know something about God's works of revival in the past?
2. What evidence can you see that churches today may be captive to worldly ways?
3. How does Psalm 85 lead us to think about the revival God might bring to the world?

*Next Steps – Preparation: Call on the Lord, using Psalm 85, to bring His salvation near, and to cause His goodness to abound, and to lead us to repent of our sins and break free of all captivities except to Jesus.*

## 7 The Face of Revival: Psalm 80

*For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying:*

“What is man that You are mindful of him,  
Or the son of man that You take care of him?  
You have made him a little lower than the angels;  
You have crowned him with glory and honor,  
And set him over the works of Your hands.  
You have put all things in subjection under his feet.”

*For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. Hebrews 2.5-9*

*What God seeks*

When God created the heavens and the earth and all things in them, He had a particular goal. His desire was to extend the blessed joy of His own Being to creatures of His own making, that they might know, enjoy, delight in, love, serve, flourish in, and glorify Him.

God does not need creation, nor any of its creatures, including us. His joy and glory are not added to by creation, much less by anything we might do. He is complete and perfect in and of Himself. But in the magnanimity of His grace, it pleases God to bring certain of His creatures into participation with Himself, to know His joy, experience His strength, bask in His pleasures, and experience His glory – both seeing and refracting it.

To that end, He created all things very good (Gen. 1.31). Not perfect. Not even finished or complete. But very good, as a footprint or cornerstone for all that He intended should follow once His initial work was done. He put the man and the woman in the garden, along with His other creatures, that they might *serve* the garden and *guard* it against anything which threatened God’s very good plan (Gen. 2.15).

Then came the fall, and the rest is history. Sad history, mostly.

But the fall of Adam and Eve, and all the rest of us in them, the universal and deleterious effects of that fall on creation – which groans and travails to this day (Rom. 8.22) – and the rampaging and ruinous reign of Satan over the fallen world in no way changed God’s mind about what He seeks. He is still seeking His glory, through His creatures, in all the most quotidian activities of their lives, so that the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and the goodness of God will abound throughout the land of the living (Hab. 2.14; Ps. 27.13).

Thus, the task God originally appointed to humankind – that of bringing the garden to full flourishing and beauty, and, through their children, making such a garden of the whole earth – continues, albeit no longer as a task of *development* per se, but as one of *restoration*. To us, as the image-bearers of God, who are being restored in the likeness of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3.12-18), the task remains to fill the earth with people like ourselves, and to put all our thoughts and all our work, culture, social life, institutions, and aspirations under our feet, as we worship at the feet of Jesus Christ.

But what was true in the first century remains true to this day: Now we don’t see it happening.

*The work we've been given to do*

The readers of the book of Hebrews didn't see it happening because they had opted out of the mandate to subdue and restore the earth. They were drifting from their great salvation (Heb. 2.1-3), and they needed to be recalled to their true purpose as disciples of Jesus Christ. So the writer quoted Psalm 8 to pull his readers back into focus and back to the workbench. He would not accept the excuse, either that this work was too difficult or too unlikely. He simply restated that mandate of Psalm 8 and acknowledged the difficulty of the task.

And then, to incite his readers – including us – to hope, obedience, and energetic entrepreneurial endeavor, he said, “But we see Jesus.” Jesus is what revival looks like. When you and I are revived, like the writer of Psalm 119 pleaded with God to be, we will look increasingly like Jesus. When our churches are revived and renewed, they will increase in unity and maturity in the likeness of Jesus, and will truly be His Body incarnate in our world (Eph. 4.12-16). When the world is awakened to the reality of Jesus, as we live and proclaim Him, they will stream up to Him, eager to learn more of Him, and to be made whole and find peace through His grace (Mic. 4.1-8).

All the work we've been given to do in this life – our jobs, making a marriage, raising kids, keeping a home, participating in church or community life – must be unto the restoration of God's original idea of goodness, beauty, and truth. We are called to the Kingdom and glory of God (1 Thess. 2.12), and nothing lies outside that calling or the implications of its demands (Heb. 2.8). We are in the work of restoration, and we will only succeed in *any* of this work as we keep our eyes on Jesus, stay in communion with Jesus, allow the Spirit to transform us into the image of Jesus, do all our work as unto Jesus and not unto men, and labor to bring the glory and goodness of God to increasing abundance in our spheres of influence.

And this great, continuous, all-encompassing, world-transforming work begins in prayer.

*Praying Psalm 8 for revival*

As you pray Psalm 8, reflect on the cosmic proportions spread out in this psalm – the heavens, the earth, all creatures, all people. God intends that His excellence and glory should be known throughout His creation. You may think yourself of small significance in this great scheme; so did David (Ps. 8.3, 4). But your view of yourself does not change God's view of and plan for you. He calls you to take up the work of restoring the world, and that work must begin in your soul, as you seek the Lord for revival day by day.

Ask the Lord to show you, in specific ways, how you can glorify Him in all aspects of your work. How you can encourage your fellow believers to glorify Him. How you can become more consistent in your witness for Him, as well as in doing all things for His glory.

Contemplate the many excellencies of God which are throughout the world – all His works and gifts, His abundant goodness and provision, His continuous attending Presence and power throughout the cosmos. Rejoice in Him, and look for ways of discovering His Presence with you daily (Prov. 25.2); then praise and thank Him, and be a doцент of His glory to everyone around you.

Above all, as you pray, look to Jesus. See Him as He walked the earth. Envision Him on the cross, and rising from the dead. Look upon His face in glory, as revealed in Revelation 1 and elsewhere. Commit yourself and all your work to seeing Jesus, and to serving Jesus, so that you will become more like Jesus and Jesus will fill your world increasingly with Himself (Eph. 4.8-10).

The way to revival is the way to eternal life itself: see Jesus, and seeing Him, live for Him, and plead with Him to bring His eternal plan for beauty, goodness, and truth to some greater measure of completion through the works of your hands each day.

*The Promise of Revival*

*For reflection*

1. What could you do to improve your ability to see Jesus more consistently and continuously?
2. What does it mean to do all that you do, including all your various kinds of work, to the glory of Jesus Christ?
3. How can praying Psalm 8 help you to be more mindful of your calling as a believer?

*Next Steps – Transformation: Pray Psalm 8 along with other psalms we've studied, so that you gain a growing vision for revival. Download this and the previous series of studies on the theme, Revived!, and share them with some friends.*

*The Promise of Revival*

*Questions for Reflection or Discussion*

1. What do we mean by revival, and why must we look to God to bring it?
2. What reasons do we have to believe that God will bring revival?
3. What is our role in seeing revival come to our church?
4. Summarize the promise of revival, as God offers it in these psalms.
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from this fourth installment in our study on seeking the Lord for revival? How are you putting that lesson to work in your daily life?

*For prayer:*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at [www.ailbe.org](http://www.ailbe.org) to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the contribute button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.