

WHEN GOD SMILES

PSALM 80

Introduction:

All is well when God smiles on His people. The poet spoke of God lifting up His countenance upon a person or a people. Translated into today's language that means to look upon a person with a smile of favor on the face. When God smiles on his people all is well.

The psalmist is praying for the Northern Kingdom of Israel which he calls Joseph. Many place this psalm after the fall of the north in 722 B. C. This was when the armies of Assyrian totally humbled the kingdom of the Israel and transported their leaders away into captivity. They destroyed the capital at Samaria and the other major cities of the land. They re-populated the land with foreign people and established Assyrian rule over the land of Joseph or as it is often called in the prophets, Ephraim.

Whether the psalmist was a citizen from the north or a person from Judah who cared about the spiritual and political welfare of the brothers in the north is not clear. If he was from the north, then it may be the only psalm written by a citizen from Israel after it separated from Judah and turned to idolatry.

The lesson of the psalm is clear. The smile of the Lord upon your life is a desirable thing. You need His smile on your life regardless of the cost, and the first step in that direction is to seek it with earnest prayer.

The three refrains of the psalm indicate that there was a growing intensity in the heart of the psalmist as he prayed. First, he addresses it simple to “O God.” But then he prays, “O God of hosts.” But in the last refrain he prays, “O Lord God of hosts.” The more he considers the need of the divine smile upon the people of God, the more urgent his approach to God becomes.

Let us consider why this was so urgent. And why it needs to be an urgent matter in our petitions before God.

I. HIS SMILE REPLACES HIS ANGER.

1. The frown of the Lord in anger takes all of the joy from life.

“O Lord God of hosts, how long will You be angry with the prayer of Your people? You have fed them with the bread of tears, and You have made them to drink tears in large measure. You have made us an object of contention with our neighbors, and our enemies laugh among themselves.”

(v. 4-6) When God frowns in anger, life becomes extremely difficult.

“Tears” become the diet of the life.

2. The frown of the Lord in anger jeopardizes all of life.

“It is burned with fire, it is cut down; they perish at the rebuke of Your countenance.” Without the smile of the Lord, the vine suffers great loss, even potentially the lost of life.

II. HIS SMILE SAVES HIS PEOPLE.

In the refrain the psalmist asks, “Cause your face to shine on us, and we will be saved.” How are we to understand “saved” in this context?

1. Saved from the penalty of our sins.
2. Saved from the oppression of our enemies.

III. HIS SMILE PROSPERS HIS PEOPLE.

1. The history of the vine reveals this. (v. 8-11)
2. The return of the Lord’s smile restores it (v. 14-15, 18-19)

The prosperity described poetically by the psalmist is both spiritual and material. When the smile of the Lord is upon a life, you walk in sunlight all of the day. It is truly “Heavenly Sunshine!” The psalm begins with an appeal for the Lord to “shine forth!” The need is for the clouds of divine disfavor to be swept away, and for the sunlight of His love to once again warm the souls of His people.

O Lord, please do it again!