

## **Sermon Outline**

### **“God Gives New Beginnings”**

**Psalm 85 – Dr. Ray Ortlund – March 27, 2011**

#### **Introduction**

1. God loves to give us new beginnings. God loves to revive his people. Revival is about God taking sinful, exhausted, discouraged people and bringing felt forgiveness, fresh energy, new hope, invigorated power and a wonderful new sense of himself.
2. True revival cannot be scheduled. Revival belongs to God. It is sacred. Revival is God displaying the glories of his Son with the intensity of the Holy Spirit.
3. Psalm 85 is about new beginnings that only God can give. Psalm 85 answers a question: What does God have for us when we have squandered his grace in the past? The answer is: more grace! At the heart of the universe is a love without limits, a love so great it refuses to be limited by what we deserve. Psalm 85 displays God’s limitless grace in Christ for people who have sinned away all their excuses and now need a new beginning that only God can give.

#### **Blessings Remembered in the Past (vv. 1-3)**

1. The psalmist looked back to a time when God’s people had sinned and recalls in verse 1 that the Lord restored them. But then God’s people sinned again. Their hearts became cold. They believed the lies that the world had what they needed, and they drifted from the Lord. In the analogy of marriage, the bride (God’s people) got tired of her heavenly husband (the Lord) and committed spiritual adultery ... again!
2. We are the same. We sin again and again and have to face the hard reality of the darkness of our heart. But God helps us. He shines his holy light into every area of our lives and exposes our sin because he wants to restore and revive us.
3. For every “again” of sin, there is another “again” of grace.

#### **Blessing Requested for the Present (vv. 4-7)**

1. The key verse is verse 6: “Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? God freely revives his sinful people that they may once again find their joy and satisfaction in God.
2. Verse 6 is a theology of revival that answers five questions:
  - a. What is revival? It is God reinvigorating sinners who ought to know better by now.

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- b. Who needs revival? God's people do.
- c. Who is the reviver? God himself and God alone.
- d. What is the impact of revival? God's people, who are sinful, weak, and unworthy, rejoice in him again.
- e. What are our chances? Excellent. Given who God is, he will surely revive his people. Extolling the immeasurable riches of God's grace in Christ (some 150 years ago), Octavius Winslow wrote the following:

*"The cross of Jesus displays the most awesome exhibition of God's hatred of sin and at the same time the most august manifestation of his readiness to pardon it. Pardon, full and free, is written out in every drop of blood that is seen, is proclaimed in every groan that is heard. O blessed door of return, open to the wanderer from God, and never shut! How glorious, how free, how accessible! Here the sinful, the vile, the guilty, the unworthy, the poor, the penniless, may come. Here too the weary saint may bring his burden, the broken spirit its sorrows, the guilty spirit its sin, the backsliding spirit its wandering. All are welcome here. The death of Jesus was the opening and the emptying of the full heart of God; it was the out-gushing of the ocean of mercy that heaved and panted and longed for an outlet; it was God showing how he could love a poor guilty sinner."*

- 3. Nothing could be more honoring to God than his people being forgiven again and again, with forgiveness so free and infinite that we lose all our pride and simply rejoice in God. We rejoice when we are honest about ourselves and throw away all the props that we think make our lives good—money pleasures, success, etc. —and hurl ourselves at Christ alone for grace.

### **Blessing Awaited in the Future (vv. 8-9)**

- 1. After the prayer of verses 1-7, the psalmist speaks in verses 8-9. In essence he says, "What does God have for us when we have sinned so much that we finally know we deserve hell but we come back to Christ?" Verse 8 says that God will "speak peace to his people." He will forgive and restore and reconcile.
- 2. In verse 9, the psalmist says that our part is to remain humble, to cry out, "I cannot live without your blessing," to be willing for revival at any cost. This is the fear of the Lord that the Lord will honor and bless.

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### **Blessing Enjoyed Forever (vv. 10-13)**

1. It is difficult to understand these verses and to know exactly what the Lord is saying. But we do know this much. When God gives himself to us sinners, he gives all that he is. He gives his whole heart. Forever in heaven, we will experience all that God is. And we will never reach the bottom of the riches of his grace.
2. Revival is a foretaste of heaven on earth. When God revives his people, his steadfast love and faithfulness and righteousness and peace stop being concepts and come down into our experience.

### **Fellowship Starters**

1. Take time as a care group to read Psalm 85.
2. Dr. Ortlund shared that Psalm 85 had a “back story of grace” that recounted Israel’s blessings of being restored from sin. What is your back story of grace? How have you experienced God’s mercy and forgiveness, even through your repeated drifts away from grace?
3. According to Psalm 85, what does God have for us when we have squandered his grace in the past? What does this reveal about God’s love for us?
4. When you sin again for the umpteenth time, what are you tempted to believe about God’s grace to forgive and revive?
5. Dr. Ortlund shared, “For every ‘again’ of sin, there is another ‘again’ of grace.” What does this truth reveal about God’s character and his grace?
6. Psalm 86:6 captures the psalmist’s heart for revival. What are ways that your soul needs revival?
7. When those you know and love sin, how do you respond—with disappointment for their failure or with expressions of God’s forgiving and reviving grace?