

# Psalms: Tuning Our Hearts


Part 2

## “Restore Us, O God!”

# TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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**Talk** together about the glory of God’s kingdom. –*Psalm 145:11*  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –*Joshua 22:5*

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- What from Sunday’s message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you? ...intrigued you? ...upset you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?

- Read Psalm 80:8-11. **Who** nurtured and grew Israel, God’s “grapevine”?

Read Psalm 80:4-6a. **Who** was angry and brought discipline to Israel, God’s “grapevine”?

Read Psalm 80:6b, 13 & 16. **Through whom** (v. 6b & 16) and **through what** (v. 13) did **God accomplish** the discipline for which **he himself takes responsibility** (v. 5-6a & 12a)?

These truths are best stated this way: God is the **ultimate** Sovereign over **all** events, decreeing even the evil actions of men and demons **as a means to accomplish** the good purposes he intends. Is this shocking? Does this sound unbiblical? Why or why not?

- In fact, this is the consistent teaching of Scripture: God is the “ultimate cause” of all; men and demons are only the “proximate cause” of events. Go to **dictionary.com**. What do these words mean?

“ultimate” \_\_\_\_\_

“cause” \_\_\_\_\_

“proxy” \_\_\_\_\_

There are many examples of this (eg. Genesis 45:5-8 & 50:20), but the ultimate is Acts 2:22-24. Who “ultimately” planned Jesus’ death? What “proxies” did God use to accomplish his plan? What good thing did God intend through man’s wickedness?

This truth is “meaty” (see Hebrews 5:11-14). **Why** should we find it comforting?



## Application-Challenge

- Grow in your reverence for God—“the great ‘I AM’, Lord of Heaven’s Armies”.
- **God loves us!** Turn to him in your difficulties—ask him for help.
- Take responsibility for any contribution you’ve made to your problems.

## Psalm 80

- <sup>1</sup> Please listen, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph's descendants like a flock.  
O God, enthroned above the cherubim, display your radiant glory
- <sup>2</sup> to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh. Show us your mighty power. Come to rescue us!
- <sup>3</sup> Turn us again to yourself, O God.  
Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.
- <sup>4</sup> O LORD God of Heaven's Armies, how long will you be angry with our prayers?
- <sup>5</sup> You have fed us with sorrow and made us drink tears by the bucketful.
- <sup>6</sup> You have made us the scorn of neighboring nations. Our enemies treat us as a joke.
- <sup>7</sup> Turn us again to yourself, O God of Heaven's Armies.  
Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.
- <sup>8</sup> You brought us from Egypt like a grapevine;  
you drove away the pagan nations and transplanted us into your land.
- <sup>9</sup> You cleared the ground for us, and we took root and filled the land.
- <sup>10</sup> Our shade covered the mountains; our branches covered the mighty cedars.
- <sup>11</sup> We spread our branches west to the Mediterranean Sea;  
our shoots spread east to the Euphrates River.
- <sup>12</sup> But now, why have you broken down our walls so that all who pass by may steal our fruit?
- <sup>13</sup> The wild boar from the forest devours it, and swarming insects feed on it.
- <sup>14</sup> Come back, we beg you, O God of Heaven's Armies.  
Look down from heaven and see our plight. Take care of this grapevine
- <sup>15</sup> that you yourself have planted, this son you have raised for yourself.
- <sup>16</sup> For we are chopped up and burned by our enemies. May they perish at the sight of your frown.
- <sup>17</sup> Strengthen the man you love, the son of your choice.
- <sup>18</sup> Then we will never abandon you again.  
Revive us so we can call on your name once more.
- <sup>19</sup> Turn us again to yourself, O LORD God of Heaven's Armies.  
Make your face shine down upon us. Only then will we be saved.

# Sermon Summary

## Key Text: Psalm 80

America is experiencing difficult days. 2020 began with a new threat—a virus—but now an ancient foe—failure to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (what the Bible calls “sin”)—has retaken center stage. America looks to be coming apart at the seams. Can God help us? And if so, how? The Psalms show us the way. Last week Psalm 61 showed us how an individual can cope with difficulties; today Psalm 80 will show us how a group of people can draw close to God together. God often called Israel his “grapevine”, emphasizing the meticulous attention God gives to his people (Psalm 80:8-11). But in v. 12-17 we get news of “trouble in paradise”!

In order to see how Psalm 80 applies to us today, we must realize that America is not Israel. God entered into a special relationship with the nation of Israel that he has not entered into with any other nation. He makes promises to Israel which we cannot “claim” (eg. 2 Chronicles 7:14). When handling the Old Testament, we need to distinguish a promise to Israel from the character of God which produced that promise. God has never promised to heal America—but individuals in every nation can know that God will bless them spiritually and individually, even if and when God judges their nation.

In v. 12, the psalmist asked God a question for which he already knew the answer! Israel was suffering because they had sinned (Isaiah 5:1-7). God expected a “crop” of justice and righteousness from his vineyard, but instead he found oppression and violence. God himself brought this adversity as loving, fatherly discipline (v. 4-5; cf. Hebrews 12:6-11). Many Christians today have a sentimental, shallow, unbiblical understanding of love. Many of us think that God’s love means that he’ll never spank us. The Bible teaches exactly the opposite. God’s discipline is proof that we’re his beloved children. That’s why you discipline your kids—because you love them and want better things for them. That’s what’s happening in Psalm 80 (v. 17-19). This principle—that sometimes our suffering is divine discipline for sin—is the balancing principle to what Pastor Doug taught us three weeks ago, from the man born blind. Remember him? With the man born blind, we learned that it is wrong to assume that your particular suffering can always be traced back to some particular sin in your life. Maybe it is; maybe it isn’t. Psalm 80 cautions us to at least ask the question.

God is the ultimate cause of all things, but he uses means to accomplish his will. Much like you clean your house, but you use a vacuum and mop to accomplish it. The vacuum or mop didn’t clean your house—you did it. But you did it indirectly, through those tools. That’s what Psalm 80:12-13, 16 teaches. God is sovereign over everything that touches our lives—even when a virus, the police, or a governor’s guideline is the “visible, instrumental” cause of our circumstances. This teaching is what the Bible refers to as “solid food”, which is for those who are mature enough to handle it. It is explored in today’s [Talking Points](#).

Three times in this psalm they begged God to intervene (v. 3, 7 & 19). America needs God’s help too. Without it we could descend into barbarism. God’s discipline came on Israel because of their oppression and violence (Isaiah 5:7). America is violent and oppressive too. Police violence is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to race relations in America: did you know that unborn African-Americans are 4½ more likely to be aborted than Caucasians? No children should die from abortion, but Blacks are being disproportionately harmed by the abortion industry! This is wickedness and bloodshed!

When Israel suffered for their oppression and violence, their response was to repent (v. 3, 7, 19). The phrase, “turn us again to yourself”, means, “bring us back to the point of departure”. The psalmist was confessing that they had departed from God and his ways, and that they needed to get back on track. Suffering does not necessarily turn a person back toward God; plenty of people curse God in their suffering. The psalmist is asking God to make this suffering profitable. The psalmist grew in his understanding of God through this suffering—and that’s a good thing (v. 3 “God”; v. 7 “God of heaven’s armies”; v. 19 “Yahweh God of heaven’s armies”). Yahweh is God’s personal, covenantal name. “God, you’re in relationship with us! Come save your people!” Since vows should be reciprocal, the psalmist vows “we will never abandon you again” (18). He admits that the Jews had abandoned their faith commitments.

Today there have been a number of high-profile desertions from the Christian faith (either openly, by discarding the faith, or by acting contrary our faith while still claiming it). No, suffering doesn’t always indicate that God is disciplining us, but it’s always appropriate to evaluate our devotion to God. If our suffering does happen to be God’s attempt to get our attention—who wants to prolong it?!

## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

**"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage. We can use it to learn how God restores what has been destroyed...**

**Monday**— 2 Corinthians 3:18 On what should we gaze in order to be transformed?

**Tuesday**— Hebrews 1:1-3 Where do we find that image?

**Wednesday**— 1 John 3:1-3 What realization energizes us for action?

**Thursday**— Colossians 3:1-4 Where is Christ, and the things we must seek?

**Friday**— Colossians 3:5-12 How do we seek those "things that are above"?

**Saturday**— ***In preparation for worshipping your risen Lord tomorrow with your church family, study Psalm 131.***

Bible Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) is it found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text?