Some words have froled from meaning



NOTES ON PSALM 85

The outstanding peculiarity of this Psalm is its sudden transitions of feeling. Beginning with exuberant thanksgiving for restoration of the nation (vv1-3)m it passing, without intermediate gradations, to complaints of God's continued wrath and entreaties for restoration (vv. 4-7), and then suddenly rises to joyous assurance of inward and outward blessings (vv. 8-13).

The condition of the exiles returned from Babylon best correspondings to such conflicting emotions. Schemical supplies precisely such a background as fits the Psalm.

A past of the nation had returned, but to a ruined city a fallen Temple, and a mourning land, where they were surrounded by jealous and powerful enemies. Discouragement had laid hold on the feeble company; enthusiasm had ebbed away; the harsh realities of their enterprise had stripped off its imaginative charm; and the mass of the returned settlers had lost heart, as well as faith.

It falls into three parts, of increasing length, -- the first, of three verses (1-3), recounts God's acts of mercy already received; the second (vv4-7), is a plaintive prayer in view of still remaining national afflictions; and the third (vv8-13), a glad report by the psalmist of the Divine promises which his waiting ear had heard, and which might well quicken the most faint-hearted into triumphant hope.

Note the repeated use of the word, "turn." Vs. 1,3,4,8,) four times.

The prayer of Verse Compare with vs. 1; "turned" and now he is praying for God to "turn" us again. The restoration was incomplete -- both is regard to the bulk of the nation, who still remained in exile, and in regard to the depressed condition of the small part that had returned. The petitions of vs 5 look back to vs. 3.

The partial restoration of the people implied a diminuation rather than a cessation of God's wrath, and he beseeches Him to complete that which He had begun. The prayers of vv 4-7 are founded upon the facts of vv 1-3, which constitue both grounds for the supplicant's hope of answer and pleas with God.

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tube. In Vs 11, it is conceived as a human virtue. It "springs out of the earth", that is, it is produced among men. All human virtue is an echo of the Divine, and they who have received into their hearts the blessed result os God's Faithfulness will bring forth in their lives fruit like it in kind.

The same idea in vs 12. God gives that which is good, and thus fructified by bestowments from above, earth yields her increase. His gifts precede men's returns. Without sunshine and rain there are no harvests.

NOTE vs 13: A wedding between the divine and the human, between the heavenly and the earthly.

Righteousness, which in vs. 10 was regarded as exercised by men, and in v. 11 as looking down from heaven, is now represented both a preceding God's royal progress, and as following in His footsteps. "Righteousness will make His footsteps a way", that is, for men to walk in.

All God's workings among men, which are conceived as His way, have rightousness stamped upon them.

That absolute, inflexible Righteousness guides all Divine acts. But the same Righteousness which precedes, also follows Him, and points His footsteps as the way for us.

What a wonderful thought that is, that the union between heaven and earth is so close that God's path is our way.

(Alexander McLaren, The Expositers Bible.

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The mercies received are incomplete, and His work must be perfect. He did not mean to bring His people back and then leave them in misery. So the contrast between the bright dawning of return and its clouded day is not wholly depressing. (Good ill--a day that dawns with bright sunshine, then clouds up and rains.); for the remembrance of what has been heartens for the assurance that what is shall not always be. (Here Wink's material on prayer -- That prever is spiritual defiance of what is, in the name of what God has promise.)

off til He is done. His beginnings guarantee His endings. This Psalm is rich in teaching as to the right way of regarding the incompleteness of great movements, which, in their incipent days, were evidently of God. It instructs us to keep the Divine intervention which started them clearly in view; to make the shortcomings, which mar them, a matter of lowly prayer; and to be sure that all which He begins He will finish, and that the end will fully correspond to the promise of the beginning.

A "day of the Lord" which arose in brightness may put cloud over as its hours roll, but "at eventide it shall be light," and none of the morning promise will be unfulfilled.

THE THIRD SECTION (vv 8-13) brings solid hopes based upon Divine promises, to bear on present discouragements.

In vs 8, the psalmist, like Habakkuk (2:1), encourages himself to listen to what God will speak. The word, "I will hear" expresses resolve or desire. Faith prayer will always be followed by patient and faithful waiting for response from God.

"Salvation" here is to be taken in its widest sense. It means, negatively, deliverance from all possible evils, outward and inward; and, positively, endowment with all possible good, both for body and spirit.

"Glory" -- the manifest presence of God.

VV. 10-13--The exchanges of Righteousness & Faithfulness. In vs 10 Righteousness and Truth (faifulness), are seen principally as a Divine attri-

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