

On Making a You Turn.

"You showed favor to your land, O LORD; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger. Restore us again, O God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us. Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations? Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation. I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints— but let them not return to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps."

Have you ever had to make a U-turn? Maybe you were going to visit someone out in the country. You have never been there before and it is getting dark. You are watching for the house number carefully, but you drove past their driveway anyway. You will have to stop, make a U-turn, and backtrack. How do you make a U-turn? Well, it is against the law to suddenly jerk your car in a U-turn, especially if you are on a highway. You could cause an accident. I prefer to find a place where I can turn left like into a store parking lot or side street. That way I can make a right turn back into the direction I need to go.

There is an important word in the Old Testament. In Hebrew it is pronounced, "*shoov*." It is used over a thousand times in the Old Testament. Literally it means to turn or return. I suppose if they had cars in those days and you missed your exit, you would say, "I better *shoov*." "I better turn around." The Hebrew doesn't have a word for repent, but it does use *shoov* to describe the sinner turning back to God. That is the prayer of this Psalm, and our prayer too. We ask God to restore us, that is, we pray he makes us make a YOU turn back to him.

I. We are going in the wrong direction again.

U-turns are necessary. You are going in the wrong direction and need to turn around. It is the same in our relationship with God. We find ourselves heading in the wrong direction. ***"You showed favor to your land, O LORD; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger. Restore us again, O God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us."***

The Psalmist has a good memory. Though he summarizes it in one general statement, he remembers all the times that God took his sinful, rebellious people back. Maybe he remembers how he punished them, but then took back his people after the golden calf. The author of this psalm is one of the descendants of Korah. Korah rebelled against Moses and paid the price when the earth swallowed up him, yet God was merciful to his descendants who survived so he might be thinking about that. Perhaps this psalm was written late enough to include the Babylonian captivity and how God would bring his people back. With the phrase, ***"You showed favor to your land, O LORD; you restored the fortunes of Jacob. You forgave the iniquity of your people and covered all their sins. You set aside all your wrath and turned from your fierce anger."*** The author remembered all these past sins and how every time God forgave them.

Well, they are back on their knees before God again. Another sin has led them in the wrong direction. ***"Restore us again, O God our Savior, and put away your displeasure toward us."*** A word that sticks out here is, "again." Again they sinned. Again they were heading in the wrong direction. What sins did you confess today? Maybe there was a sin that you normally don't commit or that was extra severe. But usually we confess the same old sins. "Lord, I have not loved my wife as I should AGAIN." "Lord, I haven't expended my mental energy thinking of noble and pure things, but instead of dreamed of things that are wrong AGAIN." "Lord, I haven't loved you above all things AGAIN." Again we have sinned. ***"Restore us again,"*** the psalmist prays and so do we. The word for "restore" here is that Hebrew *shoov*. This is not the first time God's people has said it, and not the last. They sinned again and pray to God to restore them, or turn them around, again.

You have noticed that we do talk about sin a lot. We confessed them earlier in the service. It is presented in every sermon. Bible classes talk about it. In fact, our church body is often criticized as being too "old fashioned" because we speak out against sin. But are we so strict, or have others gone slack? We don't have a morbid fascination about sin. It is simply honest. Through conscience and the Word we realize how dangerous sin is. It deserves God's anger. It is something that leads away from God. We need to recognize sin. That is why God reminds us of it. He is telling us we are going in the wrong direction.

Kids, have you ever been put in a time out? When was the last time? Why? Was it for doing something good? You cleaned your room and dad says, "Good. Now go in a time out for five minutes." No. The purpose of a time out is to show the child that something he or she did was wrong. They can't play with their toys anymore. They are removed from the dinner table. They are separated from the rest of the family. They say that a child should sit in time out one minute for each year of age, so a three year old gets a three minute time out and so on. I found that sometimes more is necessary. Hopefully in that time out they connect the dots and figure out that they did something wrong.

Then the parent comes and asks the child, "Now why did I put you in time out?" The child may not understand right away and so the parent may have to lead him or her to the answer. "Well, what were you doing right before the time out? What did

I say? What did you do?" Once the child admits it and says, "I'm sorry," then comes one of those real precious moments. The parent should say, "I forgive you. Come out of time out." Remember, kids, how happy you were to get out of time out? You can go back to the dinner table or to playing. You can go on as if nothing happened.

Well, God gives us time outs. It is the law which shows us how our sins separate us from God. But like a time out, it is for our good. That is why we talk about sin a lot. God does. And he shows us our sins so he can restore or turn us around again.

II. The Lord restores us.

"Will you be angry with us forever? Will you prolong your anger through all generations? Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation. I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints— but let them not return to folly. Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land. Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven. The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps."

Kids, when mom and dad put you in a time out, don't think even for a moment that they hate you or stopped loving you. In fact, they put you in time out because they love you. When God puts us in time out, he shows us our sins with only love in his heart. He wants to show us our Savior.

There is a beautiful picture in our text. ***"Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven."*** Picture a couple in love meeting under the oak tree to kiss. Righteousness and peace will kiss. It won't be under the oak tree but under another tree, the tree of the cross where his Savior, Jesus Christ, died for our sins. As a result, righteousness looks down from heaven, not with an angry call for justice, but a divine pronouncement from heaven which says, "Come out of time out. Join your family again. Go on as though you didn't do anything wrong." God loves us so much, he died for us. That is how God restores us, how he turns us back to him, even if we committed the same sins again.

How does that make you feel? ***"Show us your unfailing love, O LORD, and grant us your salvation. I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints— but let them not return to folly."*** Lord willing a child will learn from his time out and realize that such behavior is not good. ***"I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints— but let them not return to folly."*** Lord willing we see what a terrible thing sin is and how it separates us from God. Lord willing we are filled with a desire not to return to the folly of sin again. To that end, we eagerly study God's Word so we may see which path leads to him instead of away from him.

I've made many U turns in my life. Well, you made one today, but it will not be the last. God has restored you again with the gospel of Christ. Guess what? We will be back here next Sunday confessing the same sins again. This bothers us. We are ashamed of it. But don't be afraid or discouraged. That is why keep coming back to God. He will restore you again. Then we can join the psalmist in declaring at the end of this psalm, ***"The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest. Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps."*** God is preparing a way for you to heaven. Follow it. INJ Amen.