

**Tuesday, February 28, 2023 • Read Psalm 81**

Questions from the Scripture text: Into whose hands was this Psalm committed (superscript)? With what instructions? By whom was it penned? What is the first word/command of this Psalm (v1a)? How are they to sing? To Whom? Who is He to us? What is the second command (v1b)? What sort of shout? To Whom? What is the third command (v2)? Accompanied by what three priestly instruments? What is a priest also to do (v3)? At what ceremonially commanded time? Why (v4a)? For whom was this a statute? From Whom was this a law (v4b)? What is God called here? Where, especially, did God establish what (v5a)? What is the northern kingdom called here? Of what season of Israel's life was God's law a reminder/testimony (v5b-c)? What had God done in Egypt (v6)? In response to what (v7a)? From where (v7b)? Then what else did God do (v7c)? What new command does God give in v8a? What are they to hear from Him? What would have made this admonishment beneficial (v8b)? What did He forbid to be, and where (v9)? Who is Yahweh, covenantally, to them (v10a)? What has He done (v10b)? What will He do now (v10c)? How did Israel respond (v11a)? What did Israel refuse to have (v11b)? To what did Yahweh give them over (v12a)? To what did He hand them over in which to walk (v12b)? Yet, what does He urge them to do instead (v13a)? In what does He urge them to walk instead (v13b)? How will the Lord respond to His people's repentance (v14)? How do His enemies respond to His punishment (v15a)? But how long will it last (v15b)? What would the Lord do for those who sincerely repent (v16)?

**Why should we worship God's way?** Psalm 81 looks forward to the opening portion of morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these sixteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **we should heed God to worship His way, because He has heeded our cries by delivering us from bondage into the freedom and blessedness of having Him.**

**The Lord listened to His people's cries.** v7 says "You called in trouble, and I delivered you; I answered you. How gracious our God is, that He Who is on high listens to us. Even from the "secret place of thunder," God hears and responds to His lowly people who are on earth. He treated the Egyptian tongue like a foreign language; v5 pictures Him going through the land of Egypt with His ear attuned for the Hebrew cries of His people. Of course, God knew Egyptian too. But this is a poetic way of describing how mercifully and attentively the Lord listens to His people's prayers.

**So, we must listen to Him.** This is the great theme of the Psalm. In a moment, we'll think about the four-verse-command with which the Psalm begins. For now, however, notice these repetitions: "Hear, O My people!" (v8a). "O Israel, if you will listen to Me!" (v8b). "But My people would not heed My voice" (v11a). "O that My people would listen to Me" (v13).

**To listen to God is to Have Him Himself.** It is horrible when people refuse to listen to God, simply because He is God. But it is even worse when we realize what is at stake. Their not heeding God's voice was because they did not want Him (v11b). We live in a culture that tells us to listen to our heart. But v12a describes being given over to listen to their heart as a punishment that the Lord inflicted for refusing Him. Walking in our own counsels (v12b) is slavery and destruction, while walking as God's own people in God's own ways (v13b) is freedom and salvation. The Psalm carries this point so far as to describe those who walk in their own ways as "haters of Yahweh" (v15a).

Frighteningly, many of these haters of the Lord are in the church. How do we know? v15a tells us that they pretend submission to Him. These are people who know what He says and that they should do it; they even appear to be doing so. But their hearts are far from Him. They do what He says because it seems good to them, not simply because it seemed good to Him. Because of our capacity for self-deception, it is a mercy of God when He tests and tries us to show what is in us. The testing at the waters of Meribah (v7c) was an act of divine kindness.

When He gives us repentance, we get not merely manna from heaven but "the fat of wheat" (v16a), not merely water from the rock but honey (v16b). Wheat does not have fat, and honey does not slake thirst. So what is God getting at here? The Lord Jesus is the true Bread that came down from heaven. When His generation wanted a repeat of loaves-and-fishes or manna, He pointed to Himself instead (cf. Jn 6:31-58). When we come to Him to drink, we get something qualitatively different and better than water that can be drawn from a well (cf. Jn 4:13-14) or poured out on temple steps to remind people of the water in the wilderness (cf. Jn 7:37-38).

As v10 reminds us in taking us back to Ex 20:1, God's laws are a good gift whereby He gives us to walk with Him in fellowship with Him. He prefaced the Ten Commandments with the same words, teaching us that He gives His statutes (v4a) and laws (v4b) in part as a testimony (v5a) to our relationship with Him. He gives His law especially to those whom He has saved and whom He has given the privilege of belonging to Him and His belonging to us.

This Psalm is full of that wonderful belonging. "God our strength" (v1a). "The God of Jacob" (v1b). "The God of Jacob" (v4b). "O My people" (v8a). "Yahweh your God" (v10a). "My people" (v11a). "My people" (v13a). This is what is so wonderful about His commands: they are His. "My voice" (v11a). "Listen to me" (v13a). "My ways" (v13b).

**And the most important place to listen to God and reject the counsel of our own heart is in the worship of God.** This brings us back to those opening four verses. For, the rest of the Psalm gives rationale for obeying this command to worship this intensely (v1) in this particular way (v2-3). The loudness, joy, and shouting of v1 is the intensity of joy at having God Himself in worship. The particularity of the instruments appointed to the temple worship (v2) and the calendar that God ordained with tabernacle worship (v3) was a particularity and a calendar that rejoiced in the fact that God Himself instituted their worship. Having God Himself be the One Who establishes how to worship demonstrates that it is God Whom we have in worship—not just feelings about God, but God Himself. If we come up with how to worship, or we come up with a liturgical calendar, then we are handed over to a condition like that of the strange nations (v12). It is fundamentally the same as worshiping a strange God (v9), even if we are pretending submission to the Lord (v15a). In fact, the "them that hate Me" language is repeated form the second commandment.

The Lord heard our cries and saved us for Himself. And when we come to worship in the way that He has commanded, according to the calendar that He Himself has devised, we open our mouth now not to dictate how we will worship but to be filled and satisfied with Him. To have God Himself in Christ as "the fat of wheat and honey from the rock." This is what He especially gives us now, having removed the priestly instruments and the Levitical calendar and replaced them with Christ Himself (cf. Heb 1:1-12:29)!

What instruments has God commanded to be used in New Testament worship? What calendar Has God commanded for the New Testament church? What (Whom!) are we having (and happy to have), when we worship only as He has commanded?

*Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for hearing us and saving us from ourselves and our own ways. Thank You for speaking to us, so that we might hear You and heed You. Thank You for giving Yourself to us in Christ as the "fat of wheat and honey from the rock." Please give us to love to walk in Your ways, rather than listening to our hearts. We come to You now with open mouths not to be heard, but to have You Yourself fill our mouths and our hearts. Satisfy us with Yourself, by Your Spirit, we ask through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, AMEN!*

**Suggested songs: ARP81A "To God Our Strength" or TPH81A "Sing Aloud to God Our Savior"**

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Psalm 81. These are the words of God to the chief musician on an instrument of gap. A song of ASAP. Sing aloud to God our strength, make a joyful shout to the

god of jacob. Raise the song then strike the timbrel, the pleasant tarp. With the loot, blow the trumpet.

At the time of the new moon at the full moon. On our solemn feast day for. This is a statute for Israel law. Have the god of Jacob. This established in Joseph is a testimony. When he went throughout the land of Egypt, where I heard a language, I did not understand.

I removed his shoulder from the burden. His hands were freed from the baskets. You called in trouble and I delivered you, I answered you. In the secret place of thunder. I tested you at the waters of Meribus a lot. Here are my people and I will admonish you. Who is roll, if you will not, listen to me.

Sorry, who is real if you will listen to me. There shall be no foreign god among you. Nor shall you worship? Any foreign god? I am your god. Who brought you out of the land of Egypt? Open your mouth wide and I will fill it. But my people would not heed my voice and Israel would have none of me.

So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart to walk in their own councils Oh, that my people would listen to me. The Israel would walk in my ways. I would soon subdue their enemies. Turn my hand against our adversaries. The haters of Yahoo would pretend submission to him.

But their fate would endure forever. He would have fed them also with the finest of wheat. And with honey from the rock. I would have satisfied, you

So far the reading of God's inspired and an aren't worth. We must have genuine dealings with the Lord God. This is that for which he saves his people. Noticed that the Egyptians generally speaking here are Not saved. They are the ones from whom. The Lord saves them verse 10.

Presence of verse 10. At the center of the psalm. I am your way. Your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt reminds us? That we have been saved to belong to the lord. And that this is the nature of obedience. The nature of obedience is The life expression of someone who knows God and belongs to him, and loves him.

Who knows that God is God and that we are not. And so, the Lord I heard their cries, and Saved them from Egypt. Amazing thing is. He heated them. But then they did not heed him. And so, He says.

You called. I answered you. Verse 7. He did not answer or hear. Egypt. Verse 5. He answered and heard. Israel. Verse 7 and no, he is. Telling them verse 8, hear my people. Verse 8. Oh Israel, if you will listen to me

Verse 13 O that my people. Would listen to me. And so, The Lord has saved us. And then given us his word, which is An additional blessing, a mercy. In order that we would listen to him.

Lord's responding in this psalm to verse 11, my people Would not heed my voice. No, we may not think that, that means us. But there are people who have a superficial. Hearing of the Lord's voice verse 15. Should stir us up to seek from God by his spirit that we would have genuine dealings with them.

From our hearts. Because the haters of Yahweh. Pretend submission to him. The Lord however is not fooled. Their fate indoors. Forever. And so we need the god who saved Israel from Egypt. To be the God, who gives us real repentance in our hearts. That I would not just be a pretended or a superficial.

Only in the outward actions. Submission to him or repentance. To him. But that he who saved for me, just he who Established. A testimony. I am Joseph. That he Would give us hearts that heed him. And that we would have the benefit. Of having him as our god. When he tested them at the waters of Mirabeau.

When he was giving them mana. And water from the rock. He was showing them what was in their hearts. So, we need to have Shown by our trials. What was in our hearts? So we may turn from ourselves to the Lord. Because what he gave them in the wilderness.

Was just the slightest fortaste. Remember.

The Jews in John 6, wanted to eat mana again. They were asking Jesus, what sign do you show? Right. Because there was one who is coming after Moses that was supposed to be greater than Moses, and they said, well, Moses gave her father's Man on the wilderness. If you're better than Moses, they're saying.

Shouldn't you give us something better than Mana? And perhaps they even thought of Psalm 81, And God's comparing mana unfavorably to the finest of wheat. The Lord Jesus says he himself. Is the bread is from heaven and then it wasn't Moses. They gave the man up at the father.

Who gave the man of then has now given Jesus as the bread of life. Which comes down from heaven. Life of men. Jesus is better than that, isn't it? He is what the psalm describes here. Is the finest deplete. And where's they only had honey. Sorry. They only had water from the rock.

God promises, honey. From the rock. Honey, you're just being something that is Qualitatively. Superior of a different order of a different kind. Just as Lord. Jesus says that. When we drink from him, he makes rivers of living water to flow. Out of us. Qualitative of a different kind. To the one who has Jesus.

Will have repentance given. Real repentance given in the heart. Not the superficial. Pretended submission to him. And which we're still a hater of the Lord, and still will endure the same fate forever. Button, which the Lord himself. Gives us Jesus himself. Who is unto us finest of wheat? Honey, from the rock.

And he gives genuine repentance from the heart. So that we will heed his voice. So the just as the Lord has listened to us and care. Out of his love for us. That when we hear him, we won't just hear. Oh, here's the stuff we should do. But that will heed his voice.

And that will care what his word says, because it's his And we love him. And our hearts. Respond to the fact that it is he Who says these things? The place that this comes out, most is And our worship and in our life, It is a judgment of God verse 12.

To be given over to our own heart. And to walk in our council, that's To have none of the Lord Jesus for 11. When the Lord loves us, He gives us to love him. So that we want to be. Given up to his heart. And to walk in his council.

Because that heart and that council. Are his.

My father in heaven. Pray that you'd have mercy upon us. Even those whom you save have remaining sin, In which we tremble to consider. How much we still

walk according to our own heart and our own council. And see in that the remnant. Of the hell that we deserve.

We pray that your spirit would shut abroad in our hearts or out in our hearts. How much you have loved us? So that we would be full of love to you. So that we would desire, you above all things. And so that your word would, Be significant to us would mean much to us, because it is yours.

And then we would want to walk according to your heart. And according to your council, we thank you that you have first loved us. That you have actually listened to the cries of men. And cared to hear us. And we pray. Oh God. That you would make us to love you.

And live by your voice and That your spirit who has. Made such a change in us. Would indeed satisfy us up on the Lord Jesus himself. And that we would look back on deliverance from Egypt and don't mana and the wilderness and water from the rock. And consider those things to be.

The most inferior little fortets. I've deliverance from sin. And of Jesus is our bread from heaven. In Jesus. As our honey of the sweetness. And goodness of our life. Grant to us to know him that way, Grant to us to know you that way in him. For we ask it in his name.

Amen.