

Listen to the Answer from the Secret Place of Thunder

Ps 81:1-7

1 Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.

2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.

3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.

4 For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.

5 This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not.

6 I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.

7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

I. Introduction

A. Do as You Are Told and Survive

1. More than 90 people conducted an all-night search for an eight-year-old boy named Dominic. While on a skiing trip with his father, this little boy apparently had ridden a new lift and skied off the run without realizing it. They hoped to find Dominic somewhere on the snowy mountain slope before it was too late.
2. As each hour passed, the search party and the boy's family became more and more concerned. By dawn they still had found no trace of him. Two helicopters joined the search, and within fifteen minutes had spotted ski tracks. A ground team followed the tracks which changed to small footprints. The footprints lead to a tree where they found the boy at last.
3. "He's in super shape," the area search and rescue coordinator announced to the anxious family and press. "In fact, he's in better shape than we are right now." A hospital spokesman said the boy was in fine condition and was not even admitted.
4. The rescuer explained why the boy did so well despite spending a night in the freezing elements: His father had enough forethought to warn him what to do if he became lost, and his son had enough trust to do exactly what his father said.
5. Dominic protected himself from possible frostbite and hypothermia by snuggling up to a tree and covering himself with branches. As a young child, he never would have thought of doing this on his own. He was simply listening to the voice and obeying the guidance of his wise and loving father.¹
6. There are benefits of following father's instructions. Our survival depends on it.

B. Band-aid or Band Director

1. Most people who call out to God for the first time, do that because of trouble they are going through that has reached a state of being out-of-control and they can't do anything about it.
2. And God will hear that cry for rescue from anyone who cries out to Him in sincerity from the middle of their troubles.

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Ps 145:19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

3. And after God throws them a lifeline and they find relief, they do a little happy dance, and some will say, “Thank you God for that help. I’ll see you next time. Bye bye.”
4. But what God really wants to happen after the crisis, is to lead us from our crisis into a secret place with Him where He can communicate His will for our life, for a closer and daily walk with Him.
5. God doesn’t want to simply be a band-aid for our boo-boos, but a Savior, a Father and friend, to walk with every day.
6. This is like the story we just read about in Psalm 81 where He heard Israel’s cry from slavery in Egypt and miraculously lead them out.
7. But after leading them out of their trouble, He led them to a mountain top called Mt. Sinai to give them His plans for walking with Him.
8. And in this passage, that place is called, “The Secret Place of Thunder.”
9. Today I want to preach on this thought: “Listen to the Answer from the Secret Place of Thunder.”
10. And if in stead of telling God, “Thanks for your help, see you next time,” and walking away from Him, if we will listen to His voice and follow His Word and Will for our lives, there are some great benefits that will come with obeying His voice.
11. But if we choose to ignore or reject that answer from the Secret Place of Thunder, we are choosing to miss out on those blessings.

II. The answer from the secret place of thunder

A. Rejoice for the victory!

1. Psalm 81 starts off with a celebration!

Ps 81:1-4

1 Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.

2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.

3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.

4 For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.

2. That announces a festival and the call to worship that includes the choir and an orchestra of percussion, stringed instruments, and trumpet.
3. Verse 4 says it was a statute and a law, and verse 5 a testimony/ commandment. In other words, God commanded His people to celebrate in worship Him in a festival!
4. Israel had several festivals on their annual calendar, and each of them had the purpose of looking back and honoring God for something He had done for them in their past.
5. The festival mentioned in Psalm 81 seems to be the one connected with God giving Israel the 10 Commandments and other laws on Mt. Sinai.
6. It is one that is a favorite of the church. It was the Feast of Weeks, and later became known as Pentecost. We’ll come back to that later.

B. God fought and brought them out

1. We see that in verse 5 this feast celebrated when God delivered Joseph (Israel) “when he **went out** through... Egypt”.
 2. You may remember that when a king “goes out and comes in”, it refers to his battle plans. He goes out to fight and comes in after victory.
 3. So this psalm celebrates when God battled through the land of Egypt.
Ps 81:5-7
5 This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not.
6 I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.
7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.
 4. Verses 6 and 7 add that it was when God heard their cry for help and removed the burden of slavery and their labor of carrying pots of mud and baskets of bricks.
 5. The people were called to celebrate what God had done all those years back. They were in a good place. God had rescued them. He had smacked down their enemy.
- C. A different voice
1. But as important as it is that God brought them out and away from the enemy, it is also important to get on the right track after you get away from that enemy.
 2. Getting out of bondage is only the first part of victory. You need to know how to walk with God after you get out of bondage.
 3. And for that purpose, starting with verse 5, God brought them to a place that verse 7 calls, “**the secret place of thunder,**” and there they heard “**a language that I understood not.**”
 4. That means they heard a voice they had not known or recognized. It was different than the voice they had heard during their rescue.
 5. Back when they were rescued from Egypt, what they heard was God’s voice of mercy toward them as He stood against their enemy and stood up for Israel’s deliverance.
 6. That voice of rescue and mercy brought them out of bondage.
 7. But now God was speaking differently. It is not only good enough to be delivered from something, we also need to be instructed on how to walk once we are delivered. So that voice of instruction that comes later, will sound different to you than the voice of deliverance.
 8. It’s like when parents are in a state of panic when they can’t locate their child. They fear the worst has happened as they frantically search for their lost child.
 9. But then the parent finds them lost and wandering among a crowd of people. The parent runs to and reaches out to them, pulls them close, hugs them, and probably cries tears of relief and joy expressing their love to their child.
 10. But then it happens. The parent’s voice changes. “What were you doing? What were you thinking? Why did you wander off? I want you to stick by my side and never wander off again. It is dangerous to get away from me in this crowd!”
 11. The kid might say, “I heard a language that I understood not.”
Ps 81:5 This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not.

12. That new tone of voice came to Israel on that place called “the secret place of thunder.”
*Ps 81:7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; **I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.***
 13. That is how it sounded to them. God changed His voice from the language of love and mercy, to a language of separation and instruction.
- D. Instructions from the secret place of thunder
1. Why was God’s instructions here called an “answer from the secret place of thunder?”
 2. It sounds a little mysterious and scary.
 3. Let me say this plainly. Sometimes when God speaks to us, we don’t always understand why He asks something of us. And often stepping into full obedience to God’s plan sounds pretty scary to us.
 4. The answer from the thunder is referring to how God appeared to Israel at the beginning of their journey to the promised land.
*Ex 19:16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were **thunders and lightnings**, and a **thick cloud** upon the mount, and the **voice of the trumpet exceeding loud**; so that all the **people** that was in the camp **trembled**.*
 5. **[image: Mt. Sinai and lightning]**
 6. The Voice they heard in the secret place of thunder was a Voice giving important guidance for how to continue to walk in a life of deliverance.
 7. It is God who miraculously delivers us from the bondage of our past, but then, importantly, He instructs on how to remain in that walk.
 8. That answer from the secret place of thunder is a voice that will keep us on that walk. There on the mountain, God gave Israel the 10 commandments and many other laws to govern them by.
 9. The Psalm mentions only the first commandment that they heard from that secret place of thunder:
Ps 81:8-10
8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;
*9 There shall **no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god.***
 10. It sounded simple. I am your God. I brought you out, now follow only me. And if you do, I’ll take care of you:
10 I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.
 11. Psalm 81 started off by celebrating God’s deliverance from Egypt, something Israel was commanded to do every year at the festival of Passover.
 12. But Passover was followed by Pentecost where Israel was to remember God giving His commandments that would be their daily guidance, and also represent the power of what kept them united and different from the rest of the world.
 13. You have one God—me! The rest of the world follows after all sorts of gods and worships all sorts of idols, but you are different!
 14. I called you to be a special people, chosen.
1 Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar

people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

15. If we follow after God only and listen to His answer from the secret place of thunder, which is His call to follow after Him and live by His Word, our way will not only be blessed, but more than blessed!

- E. Rejecting the Answer
 1. They heard the answer to their cry for help from the secret place of thunder. It was, “Follow me! Follow my commands! I will bless you!”
 2. But those who have read the story of the children of Israel, know that they decided NOT to follow God alone and decided to reject His commandments.
Ps 81:11-12
11 But (1) *my people would not hearken to my voice* [listen to or obey]; and (2) *Israel would none of me* [not willing to submit to God].
12 So (3) *I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust* [stubborn desires]; and (4) *they walked in their own counsels* [foolish plans].
 3. You decided to do it your own way and I gave you the space to follow your own desires.
 4. You wouldn't listen to me, so I gave you over to your hearts' lusts.
 5. You see, that is a story that has a very familiar ring to it.
 6. God rescues someone from some major catastrophe, and then they think they can just go about their merry way ignoring God, even though it was God who rescued them!
 7. God gives commands to live right for Him, but He never forces us to obey them. Submitting our life to Him and His Word is our choice.
 8. Just as is rejecting God and His Word is our choice.
 9. And since we are a people who demand freedom and independence, God gives us over to our own hearts' lusts and lets us walk in our own counsels, or foolish plans.
 10. And more often than not, we rebel our way right back into the same or worse bondage that God had delivered us from in the first place.

- F. If you had only listened
 1. But God says, “If you had only listened to the answer from the secret place of thunder!”
Ps 81:13 **Oh that** [if only] **my people had hearkened unto me** [listen to or obey], **and Israel had walked in my ways** [rather than their foolish plans]!
 2. God had a plan. And there in that secret place of thunder, He said follow after me only. Don't follow the example of the world around you. Don't follow after your own lusts.
 3. That is the path that will lead you right back into bondage. If you had only listened to the answer from the secret place of thunder, then:
Ps 81:14-16
14 (1) *I should soon have **subdued*** [make them back off] *their enemies, and (2) turned my hand against [attacked] their adversaries.*
15 (3) *The haters of the LORD should have **submitted** themselves unto him [fall in fear before Him]: (4) but their time [and their **punishment/sentence**] should have endured **for ever.***

16 He should have (5) fed them also with the finest of the wheat [necessary bread]: and with (6) honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee [godly pleasures].

- a. Make enemies back off
 - b. Attack adversaries
 - c. Make haters of God fall down in fear
 - d. Keep them away forever
 - e. Provide you what you need
 - f. Provide you satisfying godly pleasures
4. But if they had listened to me and walked in my ways, then...

III. Conclusion

1. If only we had listened, **God would take care of our enemies for good, and not only supply our needs, but also some of our desires.**
2. As we close, I want to point out that the answer from the secret place of thunder that Israel received, became the celebration they would later call the Feast of Pentecost.
3. And I can point you to another secret place of thunder that happened on another Day of Pentecost.
4. For 10 days prior to this, Jesus' disciples had been praying for the promise of the Father. And then came the answer from the secret place of thunder.
5. This time that thunder came as a sound of a rushing mighty wind that filled the house and fire fell on all present.
6. What am I talking about? The Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 was when the Holy Ghost fell on all those who had gathered in the upper room.
Acts 2:1-4
2 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.
2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.
3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.
4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.
7. That is our answer from the secret place of thunder—the gift of the Holy Ghost.
8. Like Israel, that voice from the thunder was the power that kept them united and separated from the world.
9. The Holy Ghost is our answer that came with the rushing mighty wind that keeps us united as a people, and separated from the world and holy unto the Lord.
10. And by listening to that answer from the secret place of thunder, God will also take care of our enemies for good, and not only supply our needs, but also some of our desires.