



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

PSALMS: SONGS FOR LIFE TOGETHER •

PSALMS OF PROPHECY (A CALL TO REPENTANCE) •

PSALM 81:1-16 • 6/18/2023

MAIN POINT

Christians are called to live in continual repentance before God.

INTRODUCTION

How would you define “repentance”?

Is repentance something you do once or something done many times throughout your Christian life? Explain.

When thinking of repentance, many Christians likely first think of the moment they recognized their sin before God and turned to Him for forgiveness and salvation. This certainly is a moment of repentance, but it cannot be the only moment of repentance

in the life of a believer. God's people are called to continual repentance as they seek continual growth in the character of Christ.

UNDERSTANDING

READ PSALM 81:1-5.

What event was beginning at the start of this psalm?

What did the psalmist call the people to do?

What reasons did the people have to rejoice? What reasons do we have to rejoice before God?

At the beginning of this psalm, the writer called the people to worship God in a holy feast. This was most likely the Feast of Tabernacles. The psalmist called the people to celebrate the God of Jacob. In display of this celebration, the people were called to play instruments and make much noise in worship before the Lord. The Feast of Tabernacles took place each fall and had three purposes: remind the people of God's care for them in the wilderness after being led out of Egypt; bring thanks to God for His provision in the fall harvest; and signify the end of the year's religious festivals. This festival was a statute given by God as a means by which His people would regularly remember His work on their behalf and give Him praise.

READ PSALM 81:6-12.

Who was the speaker in these verses?

Why was it important for the people to remember the past work of God on their behalf? Why is this important for us?

What promise did God make to the people if they were faithful to Him?

How are we, like the people of Israel, quick to forget God's goodness in our lives and go our own way?

Throughout the exodus, God had continually delivered His people and they were called to remember His great work for them. As the people remembered God's faithful work in the past, they would be encouraged to trust Him in the present moment. God promised to provide for the people if they would faithfully seek Him. However, they were quick to forget God's faithfulness to them, instead seeking their own wisdom and ways. Because of their sinfulness, God gave them over to their passions.

READ PSALM 81:13-16.

What promises did God make to the people if they would turn back to Him?

Why was it important that the people of Israel living during the time this psalm was written live in a state of ongoing repentance?

Do you think there were some people there who had no need for repentance, since they were not directly involved in the exodus events? Explain.

Why is continual repentance important in our lives? What are some means by which the Holy Spirit regularly brings to mind the things we need to repent of?

God promised that if the people would turn to Him in repentance, He would provide for them greater than they could ever provide for themselves. The language used in this passage is reminiscent of the description of the promised land. The fact is, we all have a continual need for repentance before God. We all sin against Him on a daily basis, and we regularly need to seek His forgiveness and submission before Him. If we are not careful, we will turn repentance into a bad word in the church. We must recognize that we are all those who have committed heinous sins before God. To live before Him faithfully is to continually be repentant before Him, desiring new faith in the grace He has shown you in Christ to walk obediently in this life.

APPLICATION

Where is God calling you to repent currently?

How might God use you to call others back to Himself by reminding them of His past faithfulness and future promises?

What impact might it make on our community if our group and our church were known as people who regularly repent before God and others?

PRAYER

Pray and thank God for the gift of repentance. Thank Him that it is His kindness that leads to our repentance.

COMMENTARY

PSALM 81:1-16

81:1-2. This psalm starts by calling Israel to worship God in a holy feast, most likely the Feast of Tabernacles. Asaph urged the people, Sing for joy to God our strength. Shout aloud and celebrate the God of Jacob. “Jacob,” a reference to the entire nation of Israel, should celebrate because God is their “strength.” Calling out to the instrumentalists, he said, Begin the music, strike the tambourine, an instrument used on joyful occasions (Ps. 68:25; Jer. 31:4). In addition, play the melodious harp, a long, narrow-necked instrument resembling a guitar, and lyre. This was a designated time for God’s people to worship God joyfully.

81:3. Sound the ram’s horn, a trumpet-like instrument that was used to summon God’s people together to praise him. The occasion was the New Moon, or the day of our Feast, probably the Feast of Tabernacles. This occasion was a seven-day annual festival celebrated every fall, beginning on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, to: (1) call the people to remember God’s providential care of them during their wilderness journey (Lev. 23:43), (2) express thanksgiving for God’s provision in the fall harvest (Lev. 23:39-40; Deut. 16:13-15), and (3) mark the end of the year’s religious festivals.

81:4-5. This is a decree for Israel, meaning this festival was required by God in his law, an ordinance recorded in Scripture. God established it as a statute for Joseph, meaning for all the descendants of this patriarch, or the entire nation Israel. The basis for this New Moon festival was when he went out against Egypt, namely, when Israel was delivered out of Egypt. At this time, they heard a language they did not understand, the Egyptian language. This “going out” was the entire exodus experience.

81:6-7. God himself called the people to remember his dealings with them in the past. Referring to their time of Egyptian bondage, God says, I removed the burden from their shoulders, picturing when God released their hands from forced labor. It was in this context that God reminded them, you called and I rescued you. On many

occasions during this exodus, God delivered his people. One such rescue involved a thundercloud, a reference to God's presence on Mount Sinai at the giving of the law (Exod. 19:16-25; 20:18-21). Another occasion was at the waters of Meribah when Israel tempted God, yet he remained faithful to them (Exod. 17:1-7; Num. 20:1-13; Pss. 95:8; 106:32).

81:8-10. God continues as the speaker, saying, Hear, O my people, and I will warn you. He declared sternly, You shall have no foreign god among you from the surrounding nations. This was the fundamental requirement of the first of the Ten Commandments (Exod. 20:3). God requires exclusive loyalty from his people. They are never to bow down to an alien god. Identifying himself as the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, he lovingly urged his people to look completely to him. By remembering how God had delivered them in the past, they would be encouraged to trust him in the present. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it, God pledged, just as he had provided for them earlier in their wilderness wanderings.

81:11-12. But in stark contrast to the gracious works of God, Israel was stubborn and would not listen to him. God reminded them of this insubordination, saying, But my people would not listen to me. Israel resisted him and would not submit to him, choosing instead to follow their own ways. They were an obstinate people. Because of their unbelief, God gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices. They had abandoned God, and he, in turn, abandoned them, giving them over to their sins. Such abandonment by God is the most fearful of judgments (Rom. 1:24-31; Isa. 6:9-10).

81:13-15. In light of such past terrifying dealings with God, Israel must be concerned to repent in the present, lest God abandon them again. But the hearts of the people remained unchanged. If my people would but listen to me, God says, and follow my ways, how quickly would I subdue their enemies. In the Mosaic Law, God had already promised Israel that he would defeat their enemies if they would obey him (Num. 33:52-56; Deut. 6:16-19; 7:16-24). If they would repent, those who hate the Lord (i.e., Israel's enemies) would cringe before him because God would utterly defeat them. So complete would be their punishment that it would last forever.

81:16. As for Israel, if they would repent and obey God, he promised, they would be fed with the finest of wheat—a reference to the full blessings of the promised land—and be satisfied with honey from the rock. This pictures his sweet and abundant provision (Deut. 32:13). The goodness of God should lead them to repentance.