



Psalm 81-82: The God Who Gives Free Choice

The Psalms of Asaph are some of the most relevant for us today. We can easily recognize ourselves in the pain and the joy of the writer. There are striking similarities and warnings that we need to be mindful of today. Chapter 81 focuses on God trying to speak to His people, wanting them to trust Him, listen to Him, and obey Him. Instead, they choose to be stubborn, and to follow their own counsel.

I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it. But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices. If my people would but listen to me, if Israel would follow my ways, how quickly would I subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes! Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him, and their punishment would last forever. But you would be fed with the finest of wheat; with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.

Psalm 81:10-16

Time and time again, God had proven Himself to be the God who provides and cares for His people supernaturally, but His people choose their own path; they rebel. In Chapter 82, things take an interesting turn. Suddenly, we see people ask for God to judge the wicked.

Rise up, O God, judge the earth, for all the nations are your inheritance.

Psalm 82:8

It is really interesting to see the dynamics of Psalms 81 and 82. Starting with a people who rebel, and finishing with a people who are at the end of themselves, asking for rescue. In some sense, it is a yearning for God to come and establish His kingdom; for God's justice to be enacted, a justice that is fair, kind, and loving. This is something at the heart of mankind. God has designed us to desire Him.

The people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.

Isaiah 43:21

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:9-11

And he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come, and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water."

Revelation 14:17

God will give us over to our stubborn heart, but we have been created to worship Him and praise Him. All of creation points toward Him. We know there is a design, because there is a Designer. God will always give us the choice to follow Him or not. We will always have the choice to serve or not. However, following Him is so much greater than not, because this is what we have been designed for.

DISCUSSION

- What is free will, and how does it unfold in our everyday life?
- If God created us to serve Him anyway, why doesn't He force us to serve Him?
- How can God be omniscient and omnipotent, *and* give us free will? Aren't both opposed ideas?

POSTURING

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." James 5:16

Confession: (admit, acknowledge, reveal, make known)

- In light of our conversation, is there anything that the Lord is asking you to confess and be made known?

"Praise the Lord! Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!" Ps 106:1

Thanksgiving: (a prayer expressing gratitude)

- Thank Him for all that He has promised and for His faithfulness upon your life.

EMPOWER

"God will strengthen you with His own great power so that you will not give up when troubles come, but you will be patient. And you will joyfully give thanks to the Father who has made you able to have a share in all that He has prepared for His people in the kingdom of light."

Colossians

1:11,12

- Pray for each other for strength, strategy, wisdom etc.
- Listen in prayer for words of encouragement and edification.
- Spur each other on!