

Hardness of Heart
Part 1
A Study of Psalm 81

Psalm 81:7–16 (NKJV)

⁷You called in trouble, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah

⁸“Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you! O Israel, if you will listen to Me!

⁹There shall be no foreign god among you; Nor shall you worship any foreign god.

¹⁰I am the LORD your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

¹¹“But My people would not heed My voice, And Israel would have none of Me.

¹²So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, To walk in their own counsels.

¹³“Oh, that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways!

¹⁴I would soon subdue their enemies, And turn My hand against their adversaries.

¹⁵The haters of the LORD would pretend submission to Him, But their fate would endure forever.

¹⁶He would have fed them also with the finest of wheat; And with honey from the rock I would have satisfied you.”

Psalm 81:7–16 (NKJV)

⁷You called in trouble, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah

- **“You called in trouble, and I delivered you” – *This is a direct reference to God hearing their cries when they were slaves in Egypt and delivering them.***
- **“I answered you in the secret place of thunder” – *This refers to the power that God manifested in His wonderful deliverance for Israel .***
- **“I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah”**
- **“Selah” *can be translated as “pause” and almost like a moment of reflection.***
- **“I tested you at the waters of Meribah” - *Here is a familiar pattern in Scripture. God reveals His faithfulness to us and then we encounter an event to test what we have learned.***
- ***Meribah in the Hebrew means “strife, to strive against one another”. Israel was striving against God and complaining that He was unfaithful.***

- *The context of Psalm 81:7 is found in Exodus 17.*
- *Exodus 15:1-21 describes Moses, Miriam and all of Israel singing, worshipping and dancing before the Lord because they had just crossed the Red Sea and the pursuing Egyptian army was drowned.*
- *Exodus 15:22-25 – Israel went three days journey into the wilderness of Shur and they found no water except the water of Marah but they could not drink because the water was bitter.*
- *The people murmured but God did not rebuke the people but instead showed Moses a tree which when it was cast into the water, the waters were made sweet.*

Exodus 15:26–27 (NKJV)

²⁶and said, “If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you.”

²⁷Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.

- *Through their experience with God at the waters of Marah the Lord makes a statute and an ordinance for Israel from which they can guide their lives.*
- *“If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God” – If they will hearken and obey God’s voice then He will protect them from all the plagues of Egypt and bring healing to them.*
- *Exodus 16 the children of Israel murmured against God because they said, “in Egypt we had flesh pots that were filled with meat and we ate bread to the full, but in this wilderness we are going to starve to death.*
- *God did not rebuke their murmuring but instead said, “in the evening you will eat flesh to the full and in the morning the Lord will provide you bread from Heaven.”*
- *Now we are going to look at Exodus 17:1-7, which is what Psalm 81 is dealing with.*

Exodus 17:1–7 (NKJV)

¹Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink.

²Therefore the people contended with Moses, and said, “Give us water, that we may drink.” So Moses said to them, “Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the LORD?”

³And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, “Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

⁴So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!”

⁵And the LORD said to Moses, “Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go.

⁶Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

⁷So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”

- *“I tested you at the waters of Meribah” - Here God tested the people when they came to a place where there was no water.*
- *A test is not necessarily a bad thing but can actually be the door to receive blessings.*
- *A test not only can expose weaknesses that need to be dealt with but also can show what things we have learned and mastered.*
- *If we pass a test it brings us to a new place, a new authority and a new experience.*

Deuteronomy 6:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶“You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah.

- *How come God can test us but we can't test God?*

- *⁷You called in trouble, and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder; - God already had proven His faithfulness and He had passed the test.*
- *The problem is not that God does not want to prove Himself to us but that once He has, we must not continually testing Him because that is unbelief.*
- *At the waters of Meribah Israel had failed to learn the lesson that God was faithful and therefore they failed the test.*

⁸“Hear, O My people, and I will admonish you! O Israel, if you will listen to Me!

- *In Hebrew the word “admonish” has the meaning, “to instruct, teach, guide, or direct over and over again.” It also can mean to bind something together with a rope and therefore keep something in the proper position.*
- *If we are willing to listen to God He will admonish us, instruct us and guide us over and over again no matter how long it takes for us to learn but we must be willing to listen.*

⁹There shall be no foreign god among you; Nor shall you worship any foreign god.

- *The first two of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament deal with idol worship.*
- *“There shall be no foreign god among you” – 1st Commandment - You shall have no other gods before Me.*
- *“Nor shall you worship any foreign god” – 2nd Commandment – You shall not bow down or serve them.*
- *The heart of the issue was that every time Israel encountered any kind of difficulties they wanted to return back to Egypt and to their pagan lifestyle.*

¹⁰I am the LORD your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt; Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

- *“I am the LORD your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt” – “I have proven Myself to you for I have delivered you from your bondage and slavery.”*

- **“Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” – “Step out in faith and open your mouth and I will give you words of faith.”**
- ***We need to empty our mouths from unbelief and complaining so that God can fill us with His Word.***
- ***“Don’t return back to Egypt where all you did was complain and murmur under the heavy bondage of sin but proclaim what I have done for you and what I will do for you.”***

¹¹“But My people would not heed My voice, And Israel would have none of Me.

- **“And Israel would have none of Me” – “Israel hath not consented to Me” (YLT)**
- ***Instead of Israel opening their mouths so God could fill them they refused to consent or yield to God.***

¹²So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, To walk in their own counsels.

- ***The Hebrew word “stubborn” means “hardness” when used in the context of the heart and is properly translated “their heart’s hardness.”***
- ***The Hebrew word “stubborn” comes from the Hebrew root word meaning “twisted”.***
- ***The Hebrew word for “gave them over” means “to release from one’s control, set free, to let loose, give over”.***
- ***We may struggle with a hardened heart because of a number of factors but if we continually resist trying to listen to God then He will release us to be controlled by our hardened heart.***
- ***God is not saying we are the ones that must change our hardened heart but we are the ones that need to heed His voice so that He can take us through the process of having our hearts changed.***
- ***“To walk in their own counsels” – when a person chooses to embrace their hardness of heart it will result in them following a path that will lead to a place of many tears, failures, losses and disappointments.***

¹³“Oh, that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways!

- **“Oh, that My people” – *This expresses the real heart of God for His people. It is a sigh from the Almighty desiring that His people would walking in the victory, freedom and purposes He has for each of us.***

¹⁴I would soon subdue their enemies, And turn My hand against their adversaries.

- ***The Hebrew word for “soon” means, “a very very short time, almost immediately”***
- ***The Hebrew word for “subdue” means, “to bring under, to bring under subjection” and can mean, “stop the noise of a collection or mass of noise-making objects.”***
- ***All the internal conflicts that the enemy produces with in us would be quickly silenced.***
- **“And turn My hand against their adversaries” – *When we submit to God and hearken to His voice we are no longer the one fighting the enemies of our soul because God is fighting them for us.***

¹⁵The haters of the LORD would pretend submission to Him, But their fate would endure forever.

- ***Even those hidden fleshly ways that try to hide themselves even from us, God will deal with so that we can be totally free to worship Christ in spirit and truth.***

¹⁶He would have fed them also with the finest of wheat; And with honey from the rock I would have satisfied you.”

- **“He would have fed them also with the finest of wheat” – *The Bread of Life, the Word of God would so fill us and sustain us through every moment of every day.***
- **“And with honey from the rock” – *The Rock is Christ and the sweetness of Calvary would make our lives an absolute delight.***
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- “I would have satisfied you” – *God desire is that we be in a state of complete contentment because we are overflowing with His blessings.*

Philippians 4:11–13 (NKJV)

¹¹Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:

¹²I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

¹³I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

- *Paul came to a place of being totally content and at rest in the will of God for his life.*
- *Israel’s first test in the wilderness occurred at the waters of Meribah.*
- *Israel’s response at the waters of Meribah set a pattern for the rest of their lives and for their journey through the wilderness.*
- *The journey through the Wilderness was not meant to be a long journey but because of the choices they made it took 40 years.*
- *Most never entered the Promised Land but died in the wilderness.*
- *The Promise Land is not a picture of Heaven but of spiritual maturity and entering into God’s plans and purposes for our lives.*
- *There are two ways we can respond to every circumstance we face: faith or unbelief.*
- *Faith: God I know you are faithful and I am in trouble right now and I need Your help.*
- *Unbelief: God why are you doing this to me?*

Psalm 34:8 (NKJV)

⁸Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!