

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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As Desperate and Insistent as a Baby Bird

by Dan Trygg

“I am Yahweh your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” Psalm 81:10

One of the most difficult parts of sermon preparation is determining *what* to talk about. There is *so much!* You want it to be relevant and applicable. You want it to be timely, ...especially *God's* timely Word for His people. Unless God has given me a definite series to work through, I try to keep my eyes and ears open to either recognize a need, or some lesson that seems to be what God is bringing up for our attention. This happened to me the past couple of days. Four times in the past 36 hours Psalm 81:10 was brought up in conversation. First, I was talking with a prospective minister, and they brought it up. I mentioned that this was the verse that God had used to spark George Muller's vision for his ministry to orphans. Secondly, it came up in a conversation about prayer. I was texting with someone about a need a family member had, and we agreed together to pray that God would bring in the finances to meet that particular need. The other person got on their knees at their house, and we texted back and forth the specifics of what we felt the need was, asking God to supply. This morning, I shared that verse in an email with this person, and how we are to come to God like baby birds, crying out for Him to meet our needs. Then, this afternoon, someone brought over a bike we had been praying that God would supply for some neighborhood kids. As we talked for a moment, he shared how *he* was just finishing up the Autobiography of George Muller, and referred to *that* verse! Finally, *as* I was going over the emails and texts from that prayer partner from last night, they sent me another text! God had supplied the need we had prayed about, but there was another situation that we agreed to pray about. As we texted back and forth, that verse came up *again*. It seems pretty clear that *this* should be the topic for today's message.

Following our three most important principles of interpretation, context, context, and context, there is not a lot of *specific* information here to help lay out the background. However, what we *can* deduce *is* significant. As far as the author, all we know is that **it is a psalm “of Asaph”**. Asaph was a Levite from the family of Gershon, a singer and musician, who along with Heman and Ethan, was set over the “service of song” (I Chr. 6:31,33,39,44) in the temple that Solomon built. **Asaph was a “seer” who prophesied through singing and music, especially in giving thanks and praise to Yahweh** (I Chr. 25:1-3; II Chr. 29:30; Neh. 12:46). A number of Psalms are attributed to him (Psa. 50; 73-83). Of the notation in the introduction, “on the Gittith”, no one really knows if this was *a tune* that David learned from Gath, or if it is from a similar-sounding word, which would mean, “*winepress*”, indicating that **the song was to be sung on a joyful occasion, such as during the grape harvest**. Two other Psalms (8 and 84), also have this notation, and are also joyous in tone and content. **This certainly fits the content of Psalm 81, since it recalls the wilderness wandering of the nation, which fits with the Feast of Booths, in the fall**. This psalm was probably especially highlighted during this feast, though it may have been sung at new moon or full moon festivals (vs. 3). **It was composed for pilgrims to learn and sing as part of these gatherings, to remind them of their salvation history.**

The first four verses are a call to worship and praise God. It is their responsibility, a statute or regular reminder that God established for them. **Verse 5 and 6 state that God established a testimony or demonstration of who He really is, by delivering Israel from the bondage of Egypt.**

A key catalyst for God taking action was that they called out to Him (vs. 7). Think back to the beginning of that story. Moses had tried to deliver the Israelites by his own hand, but had failed. He was forced to flee for his life, and found himself a stranger in a strange land. He began to make a new life for himself there, and it looked like the unique promise of his childhood was going to be lost in the obscurity of the barren wilderness of Midian. But then, Ex. 2:23,24 declares that, after many days, “...the sons of Israel *sighed* because of the bondage, and they *cried out*; and their cry for help because of their bondage rose up to God. ²⁴ So *God heard* their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” **They cried out, ...and God heard and took action. He called Moses to become His spokesman, and by a mighty hand delivered the Israelites from captivity and bondage.** Later, at Mount Sinai, when God spoke to them in thunder from the mountain, again, they *cried out*, and *God listened* to them. He “tested them” by His fiery presence and thunderous voice, so that they would “reverence Him” (Ex. 20:18-20). They soon forgot, however, and when Moses was gone on the mountain, they turned away from God to the golden calf (Ex. 32). The psalmist also refers to another test. This time, *they* “put *Yahweh* to the test”. When they were running out of water, they grumbled and complained against Moses. *Moses cried out* to God on their behalf, and *He listened* to him, and miraculously gave them water from the rock (Ex. 17:1-7).

God turns this around in Psalm 81:8. He says, “*Listen, My people, and I will testify to you. Israel, if you would only listen to Me!*” Now it is *their* turn to listen. They had called out to God, and *He* had listened to *them*, and responded to their need. Now He is commanding *them* to listen, and was thoroughly testifying that *if only* they would listen, ...*implying that some blessing would follow if they did.* **What are they supposed to give heed to? God’s charge that they would acknowledge or serve no other god.** Here, some 500 years after the incident with the golden calf, God’s concern is *still* the same, that they would not divide their devotion between *Him* and *anything else.* **What does He say? “I am Yahweh your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.”** God introduced Himself to Moses as Yahweh (Ex. 3:15), and instructed him to tell the Israelites, “I am Yahweh, and I will deliver you from the forced labor of the Egyptians and free you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. You will know that I am Yahweh your God, who delivered you from the forced labor of the Egyptians. ⁸ I will bring you to the land that I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you as a possession. I am Yahweh” (Ex. 6:6-8). **God is trying to renew the covenant relationship with His people, once again. If they are willing to be His people, He will be their God. The result? If He is their God, then they can open their mouths wide, and He will fill them. Answered prayer is a covenant prerogative.** “Being filled” is a promise for those willing to be God’s, and who call out to Him. **The word picture is of a baby bird crying out for sustenance. Desperate. Insistent. God says, if we will be His, and be devoted to Him alone, we can cry out to Him like baby birds, and He will satisfy our need.**

Verses 11,12 record how **the people of Israel did not listen to God, or obey Him, ...so He gave them over to their own stubborn hearts to follow their own plans and strategies.** It was *disastrous.* Verses 13-16 restate the offer, “*If only My people would listen to Me and follow My ways, then I would quickly defeat their enemies*”, and even the people who hate Yahweh would yield to Him. On the other hand, **God would give His people the best of everything,** “...the finest of the wheat”, **and supernatural blessings,** “honey from the rock”.

Flash forward nearly 2800 years to England. **The year was 1835. A young German immigrant pastor was burdened by the large numbers of infants and children being orphaned, due to a cholera epidemic.** Many children were left to fend for themselves on the streets, and were preyed upon by unscrupulous people. Something had to be done. **He began to think God was leading him to start an orphanage. But how would it be supported?** At the time, most orphanages were made available only to children whose families had the means to pay for their care. Muller felt that was outrageous. To God, *all* human life was valuable, whether they had money, or not. Also, many orphanages used fundraising efforts to supply for the orphans. Many of these were almost shameless in their tactics, and some had been found to be fraudulent. Muller had already been trusting God to provide for his support. He felt that if God had called him to the work, and he was obediently serving Him in what he did, then God Himself could be counted upon to supply his needs by prompting people to donate toward his support, and his work. *Could God not do the same thing for an orphanage? If God was calling him to organize and staff an orphanage, could He not supply for the daily expenses and needs in answer to prayer alone?* It was one thing to choose to live this way *himself.* Only he and his wife were “at risk” in such a case, if he were mistaken or “over-zealous”. To have helpless orphans and childcare staff members to be responsible for was a much bigger burden to carry. *Was he going too far?* Or, could he trust that the God who created the world, ...who owns all the resources of it, and can give it to whom He wishes..., would be *willing* and *able* to care for the financial needs of a small orphanage in England, ...in answer to prayer *alone,* without asking anyone for any money or even *telling people* about what their needs might be? **Muller was attracted to the idea as a visible testimony that God is a living, hearing, prayer-answering God, ...but was this too extreme?** As he pondered and prayed over this vision, **he turned in his daily Bible reading to Psalm 81:10, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.” It seemed to jump off the page at him.** At once he was convinced that this was God’s way of affirming to him that He would indeed supply the needs of Muller’s orphanage. The first orphanage was in a rented home, and was capable of housing 30 girls. At the height of Muller’s ministry, he was used by God to build 5 large brick orphanages, housing up to 2,500 orphans at a time. He cared for over 10,000 orphans in his lifetime. He also established 117 schools which offered Christian education to over 120,000 children, many of them poor or orphaned. He was well known for the training and education of the children under his care, and was accused of “raising the poor above their natural station in life.” He also purchased and distributed 285,407 Bibles, 1,459, 506 New Testaments and 244,351 other religious texts and publications, and supported a number of other “faith missionaries” (such as Hudson Taylor) around the world, ...*all in answer to prayer alone,* without asking anyone for money, or fundraising at all. In total, Muller “prayed in” over \$117,630,000.00 during his lifetime.

This is *one application* of the principle of Psalm 81:10. But it seems to have credence. **Many other missionaries have followed the same or similar principles, and have seen that God still allows His obedient children to “open their mouths” like baby birds. He hears, responds and fills what is lacking.**