

8/20/23 - Psalm 81 - "Listen to Me!"

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- [0 : 0 0] We thank you and praise you. We pray in your holy name. Amen. You guys can have a seat. And I have a couple of announcements coming up this week.
- We will have our final summer nights for the summer of 2023. On Sunday, August 27th at 5 p.m.
- It will be in Poland, Ohio. And so we look forward to gathering with everyone. It's Saturday. Oh, August 26th. I lied. Thank you. It is Saturday, August 26th in Poland, Ohio.
- And speaking of the 26th, we'll also have the men's breakfast that morning. So please plan to attend. We'll meet here 8 a.m. on Saturday morning with some breakfast to spend some time studying God's Word together.
- So those are the announcements. Unless I'm forgetting anything, we will turn now to the reading of God's Word. Today we're in Psalm 91.
- [1 : 0 9] 81, I'm sorry. To the choir master, according to the giddeth of Asaph. Sing aloud to God our strength. Shout for joy to the God of Jacob.
- Raise a song. Sound the tambourine. The sweet lyre with the harp. Blow the trumpet at the new moon. At the full moon on our feast day.
- For it is a statute for Israel. A rule of the God of Jacob. He made it a decree in Joseph. When he went out over the land of Egypt, I hear a language I had not known.
- I relieved your shoulder of the burden. Your hands were freed from the basket. In distress you called, and I delivered you. I answered you in the secret place of thunder.
- I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah. Hear, O people, while I admonish you. O Israel, if you would but listen to me.
- [2 : 0 7] There shall be no strange God among you. You shall not bow down to a foreign God. I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.
- But my people did not listen to my voice. Israel would not submit it to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own counsels.
- O that my people would listen to me. That Israel would walk in my ways. I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes. Those who hate the Lord would cringe toward him, and their fate would last forever.
- But he would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you. This is the word of the Lord.
- Amen. I'm back again. So today we are going to be finishing up our series in Psalms, and next week Brent will lead us into a series in 1 Timothy.
- [3 : 1 9] But as we finish up our series in Psalms, we haven't really gone through them in consecutive order. The order has been a little bit jumbled, but last week we went through Psalm 80, as Brent led us through, and this week we will go through Psalm 81.

I think Carmen might have got a preview of my message here because his prayer lifted a lot from it, but I think maybe that was the Spirit working in the background, so I appreciated that.

But before we jump into Psalm 81, I want to give you a little bit of an introduction to the book of Psalms. I've mentioned it in the past, but perhaps you're not aware that the book of Psalms is comprised of 150 individual psalms that were written over, if you go from Moses until the very end, over a period of more than a thousand years.

And these psalms were assembled together during the time of the exile by many think Ezra and Nehemiah.

They assembled them into the five books of Psalms that together comprise the book of Psalms. And there are four passages in the Psalms that end with a prayer.

[4 : 46] It's not identical in every one, but it essentially says, May the Lord God of Israel be blessed forever. Amen and amen. This occurs at the end of Psalm 41, and then 72, then 89, and then 106.

And these serve as bookmarks, the end of each of the five books, and signify the beginning of the next book. And many people have studied the Psalms and tried to come up with a sort of single sentence that summarizes what is the meaning or the narrative behind each of the five books.

And they differ, and depending on who you ask, they may see different emphases in them. But I'll summarize them this way. In book one, we see an emphasis on the covenant faithfulness of God, on his past deliverance in delivering people from exile.

Book two focuses on the hope of the restoration of the temple. Many of these Psalms written after it had fallen. And they also focus on the promise of the future reign of the Messianic king.

And then book three, where we are this summer, focuses on the promise of a Messianic kingdom, but also contrast it with the time of the exile.

[6 : 07] If God has promised this kingdom, why are we in exile? Why have our people fallen? Book four calls out to God during the exile for mercy and reminds the people that the Lord reigns as king, even in the midst of exile.

And then book five offers us several prophecies of the Messianic king and the Messianic kingdom, the king who will defeat evil. And then it also contains the *halal*, a call to worship in Psalm 117 and 18.

And then it ends with five songs of praise. And I think it's interesting to note that the book of Psalms were arranged during the time of the exile. They're not just 150 random psalms that were put together.

They were carefully arranged to together create a beautiful tapestry that tells not only the story of God's people, but also of his promises.

But for the Bible nerds out there, if you're like me, it's interesting to know that Psalm 81 is somewhat unique in that if there are five books, the third one is the center of the book.

[7 : 24] And since there's an odd number of psalms in book three, Psalm 81 is right in the center of the book. So maybe that doesn't have any significance.

I'm not sure if the scribes during the exile were that careful to put 81 there, and I don't want to make it sound like this sermon on Psalm 81 is grand and significant for that reason.

But I do think it's important to know that Asaph, he wrote this song during the reign of David. And I think it had great significance to him when he wrote it, and we'll see that as we move through it.

But I wanted to tell you this about the psalm so that you know that it also had significance to the people of God who sung it for hundreds of years after he wrote it.

It had significance to the scribes, to the people of God when they were in exile, when they compiled these together. It also had significance to Jesus when he sung it with his disciples on the feast days.

[8 : 28] And it should have significance to the church today. And so with that in mind, Psalm 81 was written primarily to bring remembrance about the exodus, to bring remembrance about God's past deliverance of his promises.

But it was also written to admonish, to warn his people. And I think it was placed in the middle of the psalms to remind the people while they were in exile that God will remain faithful to his promises as he did in the past, that he will uphold his covenant even if the people do not, that he will deliver them.

But also to remind them to listen to God. And so I've titled this sermon, Listen to Me, not me, to God.

Hopefully speaking, through me. But I've also broken this psalm into four sections. I know, breaking from Baptist tradition. Got four.

Brent's not here to stop me, so we'll go with four. And, as Kimberly read, the word Selah falls right in the middle, breaking this psalm nicely into two parts.

[9 : 44] But I've broken each of the two parts down into quarters, hopefully to make more clear as we go through. So if you're taking notes and you want to make an outline, the title would be Listen to Me.

The first section will be called Sing Aloud to God, and it will take us through verses one through three. The second section will be titled A Statute for Israel, and will take us through verses four through seven.

The third section, Hear, O my people, we'll look at verses eight through twelve. And then, in the last section, we'll title Listen to My Voice, verses thirteen through sixteen.

But before we dive into these verses, I want to take a moment to pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the honor to assemble together as the people of God, to take time to study your word, Lord, to reflect on your people's past, past, to reflect on your promises, to reflect on our own past, and to be encouraged in the promise that we have in you, that you will not fail to uphold your word.

Lord, we thank you. We pray for wisdom, for clarity, for ears that are open to listen, to hear what you have to say. We pray this in your holy name.

[11 : 15] Amen. So as I said, the first section will be titled Sing Aloud to God, and we will focus on the first three verses. I encourage you to follow along in the Bible.

I'm not going to reread the verses, but I'll make mention to them as we move through. The psalm starts with a halal, a call to worship. It simply means praise.

And so the people are called to offer singing to God. not any God, but the God who is their strength. They're called to shout for joy to the God of their father, Jacob, a reminder of which God.

And then they're called to raise in the second verse a song, which is to be accompanied by the music of the tambourine, of the lyre, and of the harp.

Their singing is set to music, and it is meant to be lifted aloud to God. They're also called to sound the trumpet blast at the new moon in the third verse, the full moon on the feast day.

[12 : 27] Many commentators note that this song was likely sung at the Passover, that is, the feast day that comes to mind, and I believe it likely was. There were many songs that would have been sung during the Passover, but the Passover takes place in the middle of the month, and this song takes place on the new moon, the beginning of the month.

And so it sounds more like the feast of trumpets from Leviticus 23, 24, which takes place on the first day of the seventh month and begins with the blast of the trumpet.

This feast of trumpets was a memorial that was proclaimed. It was a holy convocation or a holy assembly of the people, and as with most of the feast, there was to be a Sabbath day with no work, and food was to be offered before the Lord.

I think it's interesting that this feast takes place during the seventh month, not only because of the significance of the number seven in the Bible, but also because this would be in our western calendar mid-September.

And for the Israelites, this would take place in the middle of their grape harvest. They would have to take a day off of the harvest to focus on a Sabbath rest and to offer to the Lord.

[13 : 55] This feast was also a couple days before the Feast of Atonement, another significant feast from the seventh month, and also a few days before the Feast of Booths.

And if you know the Feast of Booths, often called the Feast of Tabernacles, this was when the people of Israel spent a week in tents being reminded of the conditions their ancestors knew during the Exodus.

And so I think this song serves as a reminder to the people of their past, of their slavery, of their time in the wilderness, of their deliverance by the hand of God, but also of their rebellion and of God's provision.

And so this song was sung in celebration and remembrance, perhaps to prepare their hearts for the upcoming Feast of Atonement and the Feast of Booths.

But a few things I want to point out about this. First, the people are called to sing aloud with shouts of joy, indicating this was to be a festal occasion where rejoicing and song were expected.

[15 : 02] It was set to music, it was written to the choir master, and so it was to be led before the congregation of Israel, and it was to be sung corporately in assembly by the people of Israel and also with their families.

But if we look at the second half of this song, it's not a particularly uplifting one, not a particularly joyous one.

It is in some sense, but not in its entirety. Specifically, the admonition or warning in the second half seem at odds with this joyous call to worship that we find in the first three verses.

But the people are still called to sing aloud to God, to raise a song with tambourine and lyre and harp. I think maybe for us we can kind of feel the same at times when we're called to worship, often by Kimberly at the start of the service.

Our hearts and minds might be distracted by difficult things. Maybe the week didn't go well. Maybe the upcoming week is going to be difficult. Perhaps it's the weight of sin that draws our eyes to the floor and not to worship.

[16 : 21] I know all of these feelings, and I'm sure many of you do as well. But I think this psalm is a reminder as it was to Israel that we can set the past behind us.

We can look to God before us and we can be freed in that moment to lift high, lift aloud our song to God, to shout for joy to the God of Jacob.

So whether you're an excellent and trained singer like our musicians or perpetually off-key and off-tempo like me, the call is the same.

Lift your voice aloud. Sing to the God of our strength. This is not singing motivated by a desire to be heard or admired. It's singing from the heart, motivated by a desire to praise the Lord.

The literal meaning of hallelujah, praise Yahweh. So when the church gathers in holy assembly to lift praise to the Lord, the call must be for fervent, heartfelt adoration.

[17 : 27] There's no room for frenzy or distraction, but assembled together we are to rejoice in the truth that God is our strength. As we move into verses 4 to 7, I've titled section 2 A Statute for Israel.

The song continues in verse 4 with a reminder of the statute and rule of God. This may be in reference to the feast which came in verse 3.

There were actually seven feasts that were decreed in Leviticus 23, and these were to be held every year perpetually as a holy convocation, as the ESV puts it, or a holy assembly of the people.

Verse 5 says that he made it a decree in Joseph when he went out over the land of Egypt. When God went out over the land of Egypt, this is likely in reference to Exodus 11 and 12, when God went out and slew the firstborn children of the Egyptians and through doing so delivered his people.

that night he decreed the Passover. But later, he also decreed the remaining six feasts while the people were in the wilderness.

[18 : 52] But we find in these verses that when God went out against the Egyptians, as in verse 5, he delivered his people from the overwhelming burden of mud and bricks, of baskets and straw, of slavery to a people of an unknown language.

And this is in reference to Exodus 6 when the work upon the people was increased. When Moses requested that his people be let go, Pharaoh increased their labor and made them not only gather the mud and make the bricks but also gather their own straw.

They were crushed under this burden. But when God went out against the Egyptians for their disobedience and their hard-heartedness, he delivered his people. It says that he went out from the secret place of thunder, meaning perhaps the clouds.

Clouds show up many times during the Exodus, whether it's God's spirit coming from the clouds in Exodus 12 or his spirit guiding them through a cloud, a pillar of fire through the wilderness or the cloud above Mount Sinai.

The people knew what Asaph was referring to, the secret place of thunder. But all to say that God's spirit went out and he rescued his people, he delivered them.

[20 : 23] But we must also note that he didn't immediately bring them into the promised land. Each time Moses went before Pharaoh, he asked specifically that the people be allowed to go a three-day journey into the wilderness to lift offering and sacrifice before God, never making mention of the promised land.

The plan all along was that God's people meet him in the wilderness after crossing the Red Sea. We can see this in Exodus 5 and 7 and 8 if you want to look back on those references.

But it was there in the wilderness where the people spent many days at the base of Mount Sinai where God decreed the seven feasts and the Sabbath day.

And so that is what this psalm is referring to when God made his decrees in the wilderness. As we move into verse 7 of this psalm, we see that when the people called upon God in their distress, he delivered them.

He answered them in the secret place of the thunder. But then he also tested them at the end of the verse. And I want to focus for a minute on how he tested them.

[21 : 42] It was in the wilderness that God tested his people. Specifically, this psalm makes mention of the waters of Meribah, which is likely a reference to Exodus 17 when the people quarreled with Moses.

If you remember, they were without water. We don't know for how long, but they quarreled with Moses. They tested God. Moses said to them, why do you quarrel with me?

Why do you test the Lord? And then as instructed by the Lord, he struck the rock and water poured out and the people and their livestock drank. And the place was called Meribah and Massah because the people quarreled with the Lord and they tested the Lord.

But notice the difference. Here it says that the people tested the Lord and that's what the place was named after. But in Psalm 81, verse 7, it says that God tested the people.

So why the difference? Maybe this isn't in reference only to Exodus 17, but also to Numbers 20, verse 6, when after spending time at Mount Sinai, the people are wandering in the wilderness and they find themselves back at Meribah, again, without water, again, quarreling with Moses and testing the Lord.

[23 : 06] But if you know the story, you know that this time, Moses struck the rock twice. out of anger. And God rebuked him. And God said to him, because you did not believe in me to uphold me as holy in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them.

The test that Moses failed was to uphold the holiness of God before the people of God. The same test that the people of Israel would fail again.

And again and again. They failed to believe in the abundant providence of God. They were deprived only for it seems a moment of water.

And yet they wavered. But here in Psalm 81, the people of God are reminded that they are called before God to gather in holy assembly, to uphold his holiness before the people of God, and to guard their hearts.

So how does this apply to us? First, I think we must make note that the feasts were a decree, a statute, as the psalm says, specifically for Israel.

[24 : 27] And so this decree, it doesn't apply to us, which is why as Christians we do not keep the feast. We are free to do so, as Corinthians makes clear, but we are not required to do so.

But in addition to the seven feasts, we're the Sabbath rest and the holy assembly. And as we know from the book of Acts, the New Testament, and specifically Hebrews 10, 25, we are to continue in the holy assembly and the Sabbath rest.

So when we meet, we're called, as Hebrews 10 says, to encourage one another, to stir one another to love and good works. We're also called in Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5 to sing aloud to God our strength, to sing with shouts of joy, with thankfulness, always with thankfulness, but to be accompanied to psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

And so that is why we meet to this day and into eternity. Second, we're also called to remember our deliverance. We often do this in communion, but I think we must do so more often.

We were not delivered from literal slavery. However, we have been freed from slavery to sin, as Romans 6 makes clear. For we have been set free from sin, but have become slaves of God.

[25 : 57] The fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. Indeed, we have been delivered into newness of life, liberated from slavery to sin, slavery to self-righteousness.

We have been freed to uphold the holiness of God before the people of God and also before the world, as Colossians 3 and Ephesians 4 point out. But as we continue in this psalm and move into section 3, we'll see that the psalm turns from a call to rejoice to an admonition or a warning.

We see at the end of verse 7 that the word *selah* means rest or pause in the music. And then the theme transitions from remembrance to admonition.

Verse 8 says, Hear, O my people, while I admonish you. O Israel, if you would listen to me, there shall be no strange God among you. You shall not bow down to a foreign God.

This again recalls the Exodus. In Exodus 20 at Mount Sinai, God decreed his Decalogue, his Ten Commandments to the people, the first one being, You shall have no other God before me.

[27 : 17] You shall not make for yourself a carved image, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God. I'm summarizing it there. But the people are reminded here in Psalm 81, that the Lord is their God.

Verse 10, I am the Lord your God, the one who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. God is the one who delivered, the one who delivered the Israelites, the one who delivers us.

Therefore, we owe fealty to no other God. We will receive nothing from any other God. We owe nothing to no other God.

The people are also called at the end of verse 10 to open wide their mouth and God will fill it.

In essence, if God's people would open their mouth wide, sing aloud with song and praise, pray with petition, God will provide their every need.

[28 : 24] God will and lest the people too quickly forget, they're reminded as well in verse 11 and 12 that their fathers, the generation before them, did not listen to the voice of God when they were in the wilderness.

They refused to submit to God. Even before they made it out of the wilderness, what did they do in Exodus 32? At the base of Mount Sinai, while Moses is receiving the decrees of God, they give all of their gold, they smelt it down into a calf and they bow down before it as if this block of gold could deliver them.

And then they were given over, as we see in verse 12, to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own evil counsel. And thus an entire generation of Israel's people, the ones who saw the Red Sea parted, the ones who saw God go out against the Egyptians, they would never see the promise because they followed their own hearts and their own counsels rather than the voice of God.

And so this song, Asaph's song, reminds the people of God as in verse 8, that they must listen, they must submit, because if they refuse, he will again give them over to their hard hearts to follow their own counsel.

This doesn't apply only to them. We see the exact same warning in Romans 1, verses 21 to 31. Paul says that God gives people up to the lust of their hearts when they exchange the truth of God for a lie and worship and serve the creature rather than the creator.

[30 : 22] Those who do not acknowledge God are given up to debased minds and do what not ought to be done, filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice, envy, strife, deceit, and maliciousness.

They become gossip, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, and ruthless.

Though they know God's righteous decrees, that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but they give approval to those who do them.

Just look around. We know this is true. There is no doubt. In fact, Paul says that we are without excuse.

It is clear to us. We can see that the world has set itself to live out this madness to the fullest extent. They've plugged up their ears and closed tight their eyes to the decrees of God.

[31 : 28] They know these decrees to be true, and yet they run headlong towards death while giving approval to one another. Their end will be destruction, and great will be their destruction.

However, it does not have to end in self-deception or in self-destruction. There is another way. As Asaph reminds us, we need only listen to our God to forsake the idols, to uphold his holiness.

And that's what we'll focus on as we move into section 4 in verses 13 to 16. And I've titled this section, Listen to My Voice.

It starts out, God speaking through Asaph's pen. Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways.

And then it shows us how quickly he would deliver and how abundantly he would bless. In verse 13, I see a deep sense of tenderness in God's words, like a father distressed by a disobedient prodigal son.

[32 : 41] But even in their rebellion, notice God does not call them these people, those people. He calls them my people.

And he doesn't call them to sacrifice or offering. He simply calls them to listen.

I love the way David put it in Psalm 40, verse 6. In sacrifice and offering, you have not delighted, but you have given me an open ear.

I think the literal translation is a little more visceral. It says, ears you have dug for me. In my words, though my skull is dense, you've drilled through it and opened ears that I may hear your word and obey it.

If the people would just listen, if they would just walk in God's ways, then he would deliver them again. He would quickly subdue their enemies and defeat their foes.

[33 : 48] All those who hate the Lord would cringe toward him. And in some translations, it says they would feign obedience to him. In essence, out of fear of God, out of fear of the righteousness of his people, those around would be forced to obey.

And yet their fate would last forever. just as God had done in Meribah, even when his people were disobedient.

Verse 16 says, he would satisfy the thirst of his people with honey from the rock, if only they would listen.

I believe Asaph knew this story well. The Exodus was an oral tradition, often spoken of and sung by his people. They knew the story well.

They didn't have to be reminded of the details, which is why the psalm is relatively short. Brief mentions of Egypt, of burdens in baskets, of Meribah and water. They knew exactly what he meant, if only they opened their ears to listen.

[35 : 08] There was no sense in trying to deny their past. They remembered the wilderness, the time of Joshua, the time of the judges, the sins of their fathers. They knew that they had often repeated this same cycle again and again, doing what was right in their own eyes, following their own counsels, building idols and altars, bowing before foreign gods only to be given over to the desires of their hearts.

And then, crying out to God, deliver us. Many times he delivered them, but they were rebellious in their purpose and were brought low through their iniquity.

Nevertheless, he looked upon their distress when he heard their cry. For their sake, he remembered his covenant and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

Psalms 106, verse 43. Those who were singing this song, Psalms 81, they knew that if they hardened their hearts, if they did not listen, if they did not obey, they would be counted among God's enemies.

They would cringe toward him and their fate would last forever. As such, Asaph set this song before them to be sung every year as a perpetual reminder that they would listen to the voice of God and they would obey.

[36 : 38] That they would turn from deceitful counsels and that they would listen because he will provide their every need as he did through 40 years of rebellion in the wilderness.

Notice that the book of Psalms has two psalms sometimes joined together as one at the very beginning that start out with the words, Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, skipping down a few lines, but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.

Psalms 81 falls at the center of the book of Psalms and echoes the same, listen to me, with an exclamation point for emphasis.

W. Robert Godfrey says, this psalm falls at the center for a reason. Seems quite obvious when you say it, God wants his people to listen to him.

Moreover, he wants us to listen to his son. On the Mount of Transfiguration, God said from the cloud, from the secret place of thunder, with disobedient Moses standing as witness, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

[38 : 05] Listen to him. It doesn't tell us specifically what to listen to, but I think as he answered the Pharisee who asked him which of the commandments was most important, perhaps it was a tax collector, I don't remember the story.

But he was referencing Deuteronomy 6 when Moses encouraged the people in his farewell. Fear the Lord your God by keeping all his statutes and his commandments.

All the days of your life, hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them. In verse 4, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. I agree. This is an overwhelming task and an impossible one.

Moses could not listen. David could not listen. And Asaph could not listen. Nor could Israel, nor could anyone else.

[39 : 10] And although no one could uphold God as holy in the eyes of his people, God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do.

He's condemned sin in the flesh and fulfilled the righteous requirement of the law that we could not. He showed his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus Christ lived the perfect, obedient life of listening to the Father. And then he died for our sins. He was buried and he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

And we're reminded by Paul, if we just confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord, if we just believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, we will be delivered.

Therefore, I encourage you, listen to his voice. Submit to him. He will feed you with the finest of the wheat and satisfy your thirst with honey from the rock because in his presence is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

[40 : 23] But even if you have already believed, even if you have already confessed, then continue listening to God and submitting to him. Christ's death on the cross did not purchase you freedom to practice sin.

But instead it empowers you to walk in newness of life. The command of Exodus 20, the encouragement of Psalm 81 remains for those in Christ. Have no strange God before you.

Do not bow down to any foreign God. Instead, put to death what is earthly in you, all sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Ignoring the voice of God, listening to that which is earthly in us is idolatry. And when idolatry takes the place of God in our hearts, we will be given over to evil counsel.

Therefore, I implore you, listen to his voice. As Psalm 1 says, meditate upon his word. Know his word, that you may walk in his way.

[41 : 43] In closing, let's be honest for a moment. If you were, Kimberly, choosing worship music for next week, or maybe planning a party for the church, would you choose Asaph's song?

Would you choose this to bring about jubilation and rejoicing? Probably not. At least not the way I've presented it.

Maybe if someone else presented it. But no, I don't think we would. So then why did Asaph think that this song would bring rejoicing and exuberance to his people?

Asaph has three songs that are titled, Upon the Gittith, the wine press. And he's known as the patriot of the people of Israel.

And I think to him, this song was his, their national anthem. This was the story of his people. This was the story of his God, the one who chose that which was foolish and weak and lowly in the world in order to bring to nothing the things of the world.

[42 : 56] Deuteronomy says, it was not because Israel was more numerous than the other peoples that the Lord set his love on them and chose them, for they were the fewest of all the peoples.

But because the Lord loves them and kept his covenant. Therefore, he brought them out with a mighty hand and redeemed them from the house of slavery.

Therefore, they, like we, can be confident that the Lord is our God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, even to a thousand generations.

That's why I think this song, written a millennia before the promise was fulfilled, 500 years before Jesus arrived, the scribes assembled it into the scroll of the book of Psalms.

During the time of the exile, when the people of God were again enslaved in a foreign land, surrounded by a foreign tongue, this song brought them encouragement when they sang it with faith because they believed that God would hear their cries, that he would redeem his people with a mighty hand.

[44 : 12] They believed the word of God. They listened. And like their father Abraham before them, it was counted to them as faith, as righteousness. And so this song brings rejoicing because it is a reminder of God's past, present, and future faithfulness to deliver his people.

He cannot fail. He will not fail. Let's pray.