

# HOW A COMMUNITY STAYS FAITHFUL

An exposition of Psalm 81  
at West Hills San Jose on Nov 14, 2021

**INTRODUCTION:** If you know the Lord's prayer by heart, would you join me in it's recitation, our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses just as we have forgiven those who have trespassed against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever amen.

Lord we confess with one mind, and one heart that you are our God, we love you and we want to hear from you this morning. We lift our hearts to you, fully open, with all our sin, all our folly, all our regrets and all of our uncleanness from this past week and receive by faith, your gracious cleansing and forgiveness through the cross of Christ.

Lord I pray for all mankind across the whole earth would you bring your great and glorious salvation to all people everywhere. Would you raise up missionaries and evangelists and workers for the Kingdom from all over the globe and thrust them out into the places where Christ has not been named.

I want to pray specifically for Damien and Sara Jourdan this morning who are ministering the gospel in Toulouse France. I pray that you would encourage their hearts and their witness for evangelism and witness. Would you open doors for the gospel, and for relationships with the community's they are trying to reach there. I pray that you would be at work in all four of their girls, bringing them to Christ, establishing them in the faith and shaping them into workers for the kingdom as well.

Finally, I want to bring before you the burdens and concerns of our local body. We pray for the Clarkes and especially for Marge as she deals with the pain of her kidney stones. Would you heal her body and encourage her heart to endure with joy. We pray for Mark and Katie as they deal with their own health issues, would you heal and bless them as well. Lord would you minister to the Cortez and the Song family as they grieve the deaths of loved ones. Would you help them to hope in you, to trust in you, to put their faith in you. We bring before you the ongoing process of our merge with a sister church here in the area. Would your gracious oversight, your faithful sovereign care pervade the situation and lead us to a place of worship, love and mission. Thank you for loving this church, blessing this church, and establishing this church in your gracious care. Incline our hearts to you, our Rock and our Redeemer, in Christ's name, Amen.

**PROBLEM:** Grace and peace West Hills Community church. It is my joy and privilege to be with you this beautiful morning considering God's word together and stirring one another up to love and good deeds. This morning we get to talk about something awesome, but in order to talk about the awesome thing we have to talk about something painful and difficult. We have to talk about a word may stir up an unpleasant memory for some of you, or maybe even a grievous reality of the present. And that word is apostasy. The way the dictionary defines the word apostasy, is the act of renouncing or abandoning ones religious beliefs. Rejecting beliefs you once embraced as part of your religious life. **But that is not how the Scripture thinks about**

**apostasy.** And understanding the difference is essential to understanding why apostasy is such a bad thing.

In Scripture, apostasy is not turning your back on a set of beliefs...it's turning your back on God. It's rejecting God the person. It's rejecting the God who saves and loves and helps and seeks to bless us. When we give our lives to Christ, we are baptized into a relationship with a living, thinking, feeling, sovereign God and into a covenant with Him, a covenant more permanent than your marriage.

Our Psalm this morning is going to remind us of a time in Israel's history where apostasy occurred in order that we might consider it, learn from it, and let it push us towards faithfulness. And the goal of the Psalm is not only to warn us but to show us the way toward faithfulness (which is the opposite of apostasy). And that is the thing that is so cool about this Psalm. You would expect that the way to faithfulness is to try harder, do better, be stronger, work more strenuously or something...but that's not it. Of course effort is involved but NOT THAT kind of effort. Here is my main point today, and this Psalm is for the whole people of God for every stage of their life. Whether you have walked with Christ for 6 months or 6 decades, the threat of apostasy always remains. Here is the Psalms main point ready?

**MAIN POINT:** The way to stay faithful to God, is to wage the war for joy in Him.

**SETTING THE CONTEXT:** Please open your bibles with me to Psalm 81. Today's Psalm is a little bit different than previous Psalms. It's very difficult to place it historically: there are reasons to think it could be very early from the reign of David or Solomon, and there is also an argument for placing it later, after the exile in the early 400's BC. But what is unique about it is that it seems like it was a psalm composed specifically for one of Israel's annual feast days. The heading says it was written for the choirmaster like many of our previous psalms, but verse 3 gives commands to sing this at the new moon, at the full moon of our feast day.

If you aren't familiar with this, the nation of Israel, after being established as a nation by God at mount Sinai, was commanded to commemorate certain events in their tribal life, so that they would remember what God had done to save them. You have probably heard of the Passover, where Israel remembers the night God came through the land of Egypt and took the life of every firstborn from every family except the homes that had the blood of a lamb spread over their door posts. Those houses were passed over in God's judgement upon Egypt.

This Psalm was very likely written for a less familiar feast day, the feast of booths or the feast of tabernacles depending on your translation. The feast of booths was established to remember the wilderness journey between Egypt and the land of Canaan or Israel, where God's people would make their homes. On the feast of booths, every family in Israel would construct a temporary shelter to live in for one week, as they brought in the fall harvest, which was a big one, because in the fall you harvested the olives and the grapes. And as the people were celebrating the rich and abundant produce of the land, the Lord wanted them to remember their humble beginnings, lest they say in their hearts, it is by my wisdom and my strength that I have come to possess this rich harvest. But he didn't just want the people to remember their wilderness wanderings, he wanted them to rejoice in His rich provision. The feast of booths was a 7 day feast that climaxed with the day of atonement. So the people were reminded of God

bringing them through the wilderness to the land of Israel, they were encouraged to rejoice and feast because of the rich production of the land, and the climax of this week was when a bull was offered as an atonement for the sins of Israel, that they might remain in covenant with their God.

And it seems for various reasons that this Psalm was written to be read and sung during the feast of booths. It is a Psalm that invites us to reflect on that time of wandering and to learn from it and worship. Let's now humble our hearts and open our minds for the reading of the word of the Lord.

**READING: Psalm 81 To the choirmaster: according to The Gittith. Of Asaph.**

[1] Sing aloud to God our strength; shout for joy to the God of Jacob! [2] Raise a song; sound the tambourine, the sweet lyre with the harp. [3] Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day. [4] For it is a statute for Israel, a rule of the God of Jacob. [5] He made it a decree in Joseph when he went out over the land of Egypt. I hear a language I had not known: [6] "I relieved your shoulder of the burden; your hands were freed from the basket. [7] 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 [8] Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me! [9] There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. [10] 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. [11] "But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me. [12] So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels. [13] Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways! [14] I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes. [15] Those who hate the LORD would cringe toward him, and their fate would last forever. [16] But he would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."

**PRAYER:** God would you open our hearts, and lead us to the rock that is higher than I, nourish our souls with your grace, as honey from a rock I ask, in Jesus name amen.

**ROAD MAP:** Today we are going to look at our text in three parts, 1.) The pattern of faithfulness, 2.) the pattern of apostasy, 3.) waging the war for joy.

**THAT PATTERN OF FAITHFULNESS (v. 1-7)**

1. This Psalm opens with God commanding his people to sing, joyfully, beautifully and regularly to Him. He says sing aloud to God our strength shout for JOY, sing joyfully. Then he qualifies this loud and joyfully singing, by wanting it to be beautiful, verse 2 Raise a song, sound the tamborine, the sweet lyre with the harp. So bring your sounds into harmony with tuned instruments. And finally he says blow the trumpet AT THE NEW MOON AT THE FULL MOON ON OUR FEAST DAY.

1. So at one level he's reminding them of the command to celebrate the feast he has ordained...but at another level he's pointing out, do this regularly. I want joyful, beautiful, regular worship from my people. And I want you to worship me, in the context of a feast.

2. Jesus, while he was on earth, participated in all of these feasts. He feasted with his disciples, and the early church followed his example, as you see in Acts.
3. And it seems to me that the early church understood that all of the Jewish feasts were shadows that ultimately pointed to Christ. Christ was their true shelter in the wilderness, he was the true booth or the true tabernacle. Christ was the true bull of atonement, who takes away the sins of the people. Christ is the true Passover lamb whose blood covered the home and caused the just wrath of God to pass over the family. But these facts didn't cause the early church to feast less. It caused them to feast MORE. Acts 2:47-47 they were selling things and providing for needs and breaking bread in every house every day with glad and generous hearts.
2. One of the things that marked the people of God pre-Christ, and only marked his people more after the incarnation was the desire to celebrate and share all the gifts that God has given us with glad and generous hearts. One of the stranger things I've encountered since becoming a Christian is the propensity to think of stinginess as a virtue.
  1. I read books in seminary telling stories about people who lived on virtually nothing so that they could give all they had to missions or to the poor or to some other worthy cause. And I'm not saying there is something inherently wrong with them doing that. I'm sure for many of them, that was a true act of faith and obedience to God. But what I will say is that the net effect of those stories that I have seen is not to cause people to grow in faith and grace in the God who loves us, but to make people feel guilty for wanting to enjoy anything in any circumstance.
  2. Living a life of generosity was never meant to be a zero sum game. You see in Acts 2 that people were both radically generous and also radically inclined to feast. It's not ONE OR THE OTHER. It's both. You don't want to emphasize the Lord's teaching on self-denial to the extent that you have to trample on the texts that encourage feasting. God wants both for us, and not one to the exclusion of the other. Let's come back to our text and think a little more deeply about this point.
3. As I said before, given the reference to the new moon and the full moon on the feast day, this is likely a reference to the feast of booths. And that being said, I would like to read for you what God says the feast of booths is for. Listen to this passage from Deuteronomy 16:
  1. Deuteronomy 16:13-15 [13] "You shall keep the Feast of Booths seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your winepress. [14] You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. [15] For seven days you shall keep the feast to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.
4. Did you know that God commanded the annual feasts of Israel with the expressed intention of making the people joyful?
  1. Why would God say that? Doesn't he want us to be miserly and stingy? Aren't the people wasting their produce by feasting on it. Think about how much more money they would have if they skipped the feast and just sold it all.

2. Here is my final point on this: God didn't create you to horde or narrowly channel wealth. He created you to love Him and celebrate Him with joyful, beautiful and regular feasting upon the goodness of His provision. This part of the pattern of faithfulness.
5. Coming back into verse 4, the author uses three synonyms to emphasize the fact that this was a command. It is a statute in Israel, it is a RULE in Jacob, and He made it a DECREE in Joseph. The use of the name Joseph to describe part of the nation, or as a synonym for the whole nation would suggest a possible earlier date for this Psalm. But it could also just be a poetic freedom of the author.
  1. But I think the point is that the people are supposed to celebrate and rejoice and feast, because God commanded them to. And some folks see a problem with this. They think to themselves how can God command us to enjoy ourselves. Doesn't that create a context in which it is impossible to actually do it? And my answer is, God tells me to feel all kinds of things. He tells me to rejoice always and to give thanks in all my circumstances. Some days I'm really having a hard time, and giving thanks is the opposite of what I want to do. But do you know what happens when I start giving thanks out of a sense of obedience to God?
    2. I start remembering all the things I have to be thankful for. I start remembering how much good there is in my life and I start to see my reasons for sorrow in their proper context and it leads to joy. I kind of feel like the command to feast is like the command to be intimate with your spouse... God WANTS you to be happy in your marriage. In real life. He wants you to take pleasure in his creation. He wants us to live a life that is rooted in celebrating and remembering all he has done with joy. This is part of how we wage the war for joy.
6. In verse 5 we are reminded that God issued this command when he went out over the land of Egypt. And as he does this he summons the collective memory of the community. He talks about their time in Egypt with the assumption that you all know what he is talking about. He doesn't say, specifically that you used to be slaves in Egypt, oppressed, burdened without hope or a future. But that's the underlying framework.
  1. Instead God calls to mind the very graphic reality of their deliverance. He doesn't say I redeemed you from Egypt. He says I relieved your shoulder, I freed your hands from the basket. Probably baskets used to transport mortar and stone.
  2. In distressed you called and I delivered you; I answered you in the secret place of thunder, which is probably mount sinai, I tested you at the waters of Meribah.
7. This is describing in concrete terms the nature of the covenant relationship. God delivered us by His gracious life giving power. God was tested by Pharaoh, and God was found faithful, and sovereign and good. But at the waters of Meribah, the second we became concerned about the water supply, we were ready to turn on God and abandon him. But God in His grace...rather than abandoning us as we deserved gave us water from a rock. He caused a spring to burst forth from dry land.
8. And this part of the text is really key for feasting well. You don't really feast if you think in your heart, I provided all these things for myself. That is an empty consumption of goods. That is a simple feeding of the flesh that has no eternal value. But if you feast in the context of God's grace. If you feast recognizing I don't deserve this, but you have given it out of the

overflow of your abundant kindness...than you find yourself praising God, wanting to share, looking for ways to include others that the Lord's goodness might be enjoyed by all.

9. Feasts of worship are feasts shared in the context of grace. In other words, you shouldn't just feast because you are hungry...you should feast to celebrate the goodness of what God has done and you should do it joyfully, beautifully and regularly. This is how you establish a pattern of faithfulness.

So what have we seen thus far. We have seen that this Psalm was composed for the feast of booths. And as it was sung, the author reminds us that we should feast joyfully, beautifully and regularly. Additionally we have seen that this is a command from God because God actually wants us to live lives of joy and happiness. And finally, this joyful feasting is meant to be deliberately connected to God's gracious acts, so that our enjoyment of God's world is always connected back to God's goodness in our hearts and minds. This is the pattern of a faithful life. Obviously there is more you would add to what constitutes a faithful life, but this is definitely a significant part of it. Let's now turn to the patterns of apostasy.

### **THE PATTERN OF APOSTASY (v. 8-12)**

1. God says in verse 8 "Hear, O my people while I admonish you! O Israel if you would but listen to me! 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 to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels.
2. What is this talking about? Is this talking about something that is present happening? Or are we still dwelling on the memory of the community?
3. I think this is describing the experience of Israel after they left Egypt and there are a couple of reasons why. It's challenging to know for sure because the descriptions are so general. But these descriptions are deliberately general as to call many separate instances to mind. God says there shall be no strange god among you, which reminds us of when Israel erected the golden calf for worship and God sent Moses down in a fury to destroy it.
  1. Hear and listen is a refrain that is repeated constantly in the Song of Moses following the parting of the red sea in Exodus 15.
  2. God giving the people over to their stubborn hearts, feels resonant with the people refusing to enter the land of Canaan from fear of the inhabitants and God finally turning them away and saying you are going to wander the desert until this entire generation has perished and the next generation can enter Canaan. You don't want to go in, fine. Wander in the wilderness until you have perished.
  3. So could this be a description of some present circumstance in Israel? I suppose it could. Could it also be a general description of what took place on the journey between Egypt and the promise land? I think it's likely. But it's also very possible in my mind...that the ambiguity is almost kind of the point.
  4. This vaguely describes numerous experiences, and in doing so, I think the author gives us a fairly realistic picture of the pattern that leads to apostasy. It's almost like the point is, what happened in the desert can happen to every generation of Israelites. This pattern isn't unique or new. Think about it and learn from it. Let's look at the pattern verse 8:

4. Apostasy happens when:
5. Verse 8 You stop listening to God. HEAR... that is the first word of the shema, the primary command to Israel given in Deuteronomy 6. Hear O Israel the Lord your God the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and all your strength. GOD says in our Psalm listen to me while I correct you. If you would just listen.
  1. Step one to apostasy stop listening to God. Stop listening to the Scripture, which is God's definitive voice. Stop listening to the people that God normally communicates through, the elder teachers of the church, the faithful godly people in your life, books, podcasts, articles that are aimed at helping you bring the truth of God to bear on your life.
  2. Step number one to apostasy... is to replace God's voice in your life with other voices. You are ALL OF YOU...listening, every day to voices. And these voices are either trying to help you hear God's voice...or they are leading you away from God's voice.
  3. The biggest thing in this Psalm, it's repeated 5 times...is listening to God. When you stop listening, you begin on the path to apostasy. If being in the word of God, or being present with God's people at church and in other contexts, is not a priority for you, you are taking the first steps into the pattern of apostasy. Step one in the pattern of apostasy...stop listening to God.
6. Step 2 verse 9 there shall be no strange god among you. You start tolerating lesser gods. The psalmist doesn't assume you immediately jump into idol worship. It starts with simply tolerating the presence of idols being around. Practically speaking, this would mean recognizing that your neighbors are worshipping Baal or something, and not saying anything. Not doing anything about it. Just sort of letting it happen.
  1. For you it would mean seeing the other members of this church in sin and not saying or doing anything about it. And this is always complex because we don't worships physical idols any more. We worship money, and cultural approval, and political influence, and social status, and the places of privilege that those things afford.
  2. And it's not always super obvious that someone is doing that...but you notice things that seem a little off, and you say nothing. I remember the week after I came to peace with the fact that God was calling me to serve as a pastor this congregation. That following week I was asked to go up to Joni and Friends to teach. And so I had a long drive to and from the Santa Cruz mountains during a Wednesday or something.
    1. I was listening to 1 and 2 kings and I was really struck by how God characterized good and bad kings. And one of central the ongoing problems in Israel that ultimately led to their exile to Babylon was that the kings never dealt with the high places in Israel. The places where idolatry took place.
    2. Josiah finally did something about it but at that point it was too late. I remember listening to those passages to and from Joni and Friends and resolving in my heart...I will not allow high places to persist in myself or in any one around me if I can help it. Why? Because tolerating high places is step 2 of apostasy. That is worth thinking about....am I tolerating anything in my life...that might jeopardize my allegiance to God. Am I participating in things that are morally dubious. Am I watching and laughing at things that are leading my heart away from God? What am i tolerating in my life...that if I stopped and listened to God...he would say depart from that?

7. Step 3 of apostasy is that you start bowing down to false gods. You start putting your faith in them for your joy, your life, your subsistence your future in the second part of verse 8. you shall not bow down to a foreign god.
  1. You start telling yourself, if I just had X or Y or Z...THEN I would be secure and prosperous and happy. Whenever you start looking at ANYTHING in this world...and telling yourself if I just had THAT...then I would be satisfied...you are walking in the pattern that leads away from God. When you do that you have lost sight...you have forgotten WHO GOD IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE to establish his relationship with you.
8. Verse 10 the Lord says I AM the LORD your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. And that is a statement in context of verse 9. Don't bow down to foreign God's I am YHWH your God who brought you out of Egypt. God is saying...THOSE LESSER THINGS AREN'T your God...I am your God.
  1. These lesser things aren't going to save you. I am the one who saved you. Remember Egypt. When you were really in need, and you really had nowhere to turn, I WAS THE ONE WHO WAS THERE...remember?
9. Step 4 on the road to apostasy...when you've stopped listening...you tolerated idols, then began hoping in them...what happens...you forget the Lord. You forget what he's done. You lose sight of the fact that everything you have was a gift from his hands. Every blessing you enjoy every moment of every day comes from him. You forget...and your heart begins to say...that the key to life...and satisfaction...and peace...and a future...is these lesser things. I can see these lesser things. I feel like I can control these lesser things. These lesser things don't require me to trust in and wait upon the Lord...and eventually I forget about him. And what finally happens?
10. God gives you over to the stubbornness of your own heart. Verses 11 and 12, But my people did not listen to my voice, Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels.
  1. Listen to me, because this is very important. The worst thing that can happen to you on this earth...is that God gives you up to what you want, apart from Him. In verse 12, the people are given over, to follow their own counsels. And listening to themselves is set in contrast with listening to God.
  2. God says the way to go is to the right, but you say I'm going to go to the left...because that is what I want and I'm going to do it no matter what you say.
  3. And when you've gone there, you have apostatized. You have forsake the God of the covenant...you stopped listening...you've stopped worshipping...you are now elevating other things above God and pursuing your desires apart from God. That is the way that leads to death.
11. If you see yourself in part of this pattern, that right thing to do is to repent to God. To seek forgiveness in Christ, to turn in your heart and say whatever it is you desire for me, that I will do, no matter what it costs, no matter how difficult it seems. Not my will but your will be done for the glory of Christ on earth.
12. In my 13 years of walking with Christ I've never seen someone who has embraced the harder path in God, live to regret it. And I've never seen someone embrace the easier path apart



from him, live to give thanks for it. There is a way that leads to life, and a way that leads to death. And you are on one of those ways...in this life, and it will either lead to everlasting joy, or everlasting shame. I would call you, all of you to choose life. Let's now close with some summary comments of how this Psalm teaches us to wage the war for joy.

#### WAGING THE WAR FOR JOY (v. 13-16)

1. Verses 13-16 say this "Oh 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 wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you."
  1. The central command of this Psalm and probably the whole book of Psalms is LISTEN to God, verse 13. In verse 13, it becomes clear that God isn't going to give up on His people. He laments that they won't listen and walk in his ways. God doesn't want us to sin because it leads to our sorrow and shame. He wants us to live holy and upright lives so that we would have life and joy.
  2. Our hearts and minds were hardwired to find life and joy in God. And when we seek it there...we actually find life and joy. When we seek it other places we find disappointment, discouragement and a lack of fullness. This is the story of human history.
  3. But if we would listen, there are pleasures at God's right hand forevermore.
  4. Now let me be super practical about this. All of us are seeking joy in this life. And we are either listening to GOD about how we will find it. Or we are listening to other things, like ourselves or whatever. If you are listening to other things...you are losing the battle. If you are listening to God, you are on the road to victory. And to be sure, God can communicate to us through many different kinds of things including nature. But God's will is always consistent with His word. Waging the war for true and everlasting joy begins with listening to God.
2. Strategy 2 in the war for joy is Feasting with gladness. Choosing to celebrate what God has done by enjoying His gifts. I'm not saying be irresponsible. I'm saying you should build into your budget, and this can look small or big...a line item for generosity and celebrating God's goodness and gifts.
  1. And I want to give you two super practical reasons why. The first is, it's good to remind yourself of the goodness of God. Many of the sacrifices that Israel offered to God had absolutely nothing to do with sin, they had to do with thankfulness for the harvest and stuff like that. And in a number of situations, you were supposed to eat the thing you sacrificed, as an act of worship. You were supposed to say, rather than sell this for a profit, I'm going to burn some of it as an offering to God, and eat some of it to acknowledge that you have given this to me...to bless me and encourage me. You eat that food, rather than sell it, to remind yourself that God is good and that he loves you and that he is the one who provides for you. You feast to make war in your heart against the temptation to trust in yourself or in riches.
  2. The second reason to feast with gladness is to make war in your heart against the temptation to live in sorrow. There are many reasons to grieve in this world. There are many truly sad things that have happened and are happening every single day. And it's

important to feast to keep those things in perspective. There isn't ONLY sad things... there are also reasons to rejoice. God is good. He has saved us in Christ. He has given us the gift of this community, the Spirit, the gospel, His worship, the sacraments... EVERYTHING. We have reason to rejoice in the midst of a broken world.

3. Third strategy: We come to Him with all the needs of our hearts and look to Him to satisfy us. Verse 10 says OPEN YOUR MOUTH WIDE and I will fill it. Verse 16 says, that if you would just listen to God, he would feed you with the finest of wheat and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.
  1. God doesn't say open wide and I'll give you something. He says OPEN WIDE and I will fill you. He doesn't say I will give you honey from the rock to get you to stop complaining. He says I want to satisfy you. Does honey come from a rock? No it doesn't. In what circumstance would honey come from a rock? When the God of power and of miracles calls forth blessing from barrenness. Honey comes from rocks the way children from the womb of Sarai...by the sovereign power of the God of love.
  2. One of the biggest ways you will successfully wage the war for joy, is by adjusting your expectations of God to fit the expectations of this Psalm. God WANTS to fill you, GOD WANTS to satisfy you. Does that mean God wants to give me what I want. Not necessarily. We are not good at wanting what's best for ourselves. God wants to truly satisfy us.
  3. And you might be saying to yourself, I don't see how listening to God, and rejoicing in him can help at all in my situation. How would any of that even work? It works the same way...that honey comes from rocks.
4. Verses 14-16 describe a world in which God fights on our behalf against our enemies. Those who hate the LORD live in deep fear of his wrath, while he cares for us in supernatural ways. This is the era you live in. Your enemies were defeated on the cross, and they now cringe towards God and their fate has been sealed forever. But YOU, he wants to generously pour out His Spirit and His grace upon you and satisfy you in supernatural ways. If you would listen, seek Him, draw near, and wait upon His mercy.
5. This isn't like ordering something on amazon. This isn't taking a pill to feel better. This is putting your trust in a living, moving, loving God, who has told you that He wants to satisfy your soul. And this is the difference between the road to faithfulness and the road to apostasy. The road to faithfulness says I will be satisfied in God, and I will wait patiently for Him to fill me. The road to apostasy says, God isn't moving fast enough...i will take things into my own hands and do it myself. I will hope in lower things...rather than the God who saved me and has given me life.

Last week, I thought to myself this is going to be a rough week of serving others. I'm going to fly back and forth from TN, do two funerals in two days and then immediately go to the mens retreat. And if you know me and how empathetic I am you know the kind of toll that sort of thing takes on my heart. But do you know what happened...I went to go try and serve...and the whole time God kept bringing people into my path to share the gospel with. People of all ages and backgrounds and experiences. I went to go try and serve others...and the whole time... it was like God was serving me. Hope in God, West Hills, because He brings honey from rocks. The way to stay faithful to God, is to wage the war for joy in Him.