

Psalm 116

Psalm 116 is really a psalm of thanksgiving *to* the Lord and a renewal of one's walk and relationship *with* the Lord. It's a very personal psalm with the words like, "I," "me" and "my," even "you" and "your" used in the 3rd person referencing himself being used no less than 30 times throughout the course of these 19 Vs.

It's a welcome reminder of God's listening ear; the fact that His ear is attentive to the cry of His children; that we can call *upon Him* and He will listen *to us* and respond appropriately *for us* in our time of need.

With this particular psalm it would appear as though there was some physical affliction that brought the psalmist near to death and having cried out to the Lord the Lord restored his health which in turn caused him to praise the Lord and celebrate his deliverance from death. Because of that there are those who attribute this psalm to King Hezekiah; whether or not he actually wrote it we don't know.

But his story is definitely fitting to a psalm like this; perhaps you recall there in 2nd Kings Ch 20 we read that in those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet went to him and told him to set his house in order because he was going to die and not live. Hearing that news devastated him and when Isaiah walked out he turned his face toward the wall and began to pray and cry out *to* the Lord, weeping bitterly *before* the Lord beseeching the Lord that God would remember the fact that he'd walked before Him in truth and with a loyal heart; that he'd done good in His sight and he was just seeking the Lord for his life. So God turned Isaiah around and said, "Go back and tell Hezekiah I've heard your prayer, I've seen your tears and I'm going to heal you and give you 15 more years."

Now that's a beautiful story, and it certainly fits the fingerprints of this psalm (though we can't know conclusively). Having said that I would remind you that Hezekiah also discovered that setting your affections on the things of this world can serve as a snare; he would've done well to simply submit to the Lord and say, "This is my desire, nevertheless not my will but Thy will be done."

It was during those 15 yrs in which Manasseh was born who would be the single most-wicked king that Judah would ever know; and after he was healed some Babylonian ambassadors came to congratulate him on his recovery and he showed them every detail of treasure concerning his kingdom which ultimately led to the Babylonian invasion and captivity. So sometimes we need to be careful what we ask for because we just might get it. But be that as it may, the psalm before us is a beautiful “love psalm” nonetheless. In it we find the psalmists danger, his deliverance, his devotion and his delight.

Vs1-2

We occasionally bring up the fact that the word “Therefore” is often times a word that serves as a hinge that takes us from principle to practical; or from *information* to *application*. We find that such is the case here as well; the information? “The Lord has heard my voice, and my supplications (that is my heartfelt pleas and/or passionate requests); He’s *inclined* His ear to me.” That is He’s stretched out *toward* me to give His attention *to* me, He’s bent down in order to listen to me. That’s the information; what then is the application?

“I will call upon Him as long as I live.” If you had the exclusive attention of the Creator of all the universe, if every time you called *upon* Him or cried out *to* Him, if every time there was something on your heart that you laid *before* Him He would give to you His undivided attention and would actually lean *toward* you so that He might focus *on* you don’t you think you would take advantage of that resource? Yet that’s exactly what the bible teaches as it pertains to the relationship that exists between God and His children.

Of course we should concede to the fact that if God gives to us *His* undivided attention, we should give to Him *our* undivided attention. Yet so often we fall short of that; but God is gracious and merciful; His ear is always open to our cry.

The psalmist says, “I love the Lord for that.” You guys this is really what it’s all about; a *love relationship* with Jesus Christ That He be vital and real to you; do you love Him whom you’ve not seen rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory? That’s really what the Lord wants from us, we think He’s all about what we need to be doing for Him; but God’s way more concerned for *you* and in love with *you* than He is your ministry. Should we serve Him? Absolutely, but it’s to be an overflow of our love *for* Him, not a legal regimen that we ascribe to so that we can right *with* Him.

Those are 2 totally different things. Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love Me, Peter?” “Yes, Lord, you know I love You.” “Feed my sheep.” You see the one was to spill out and be the result of the other. Jesus said, “*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*” John 14:15 Some translations render that, “If you love Me, *you will* keep My commandments” Either way the point remains that obedience *to* the Lord issues from the overflow of love *for* the Lord.

“I love the Lord...because,” why is it that you love the Lord? It could be that you’re good about saying, “Lord I love You so much,” but I think that many times we fail to mention *why* we love Him. Let me challenge you to get alone somewhere at some point and begin to pray to God letting Him know how much you love Him and why it is that you love Him; because He hears your voice, He’s loved you 1st. He’s given Himself for you, laid down His life *on* behalf *of* you, He gives wisdom *to* you, He provides for your needs, so often times beyond your needs, He’s gracious and compassionate, your strength and your shield; the fairest of 10,000 and thousands of thousands, you get the idea, He’s given you the Person of His Spirit, beyond that gifts *of* the Spirit.

He’s made your righteous in the sight of God, on and on the list could go, why do you love the Lord? He’s willing to use your life, He thinks good thoughts toward you and has a plan and purpose for you, to give you a future and a hope. Why do you love the Lord?

There’s plenty of cause for which I should love the Lord. On the other hand the reason He loves me/you is with out cause, with out reason or merit; He just loves us. God told Israel, “*The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you...*” Deut 7:7-8 No special significance, He just loves you; remember these words? Rom 5:8 “*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” We weren’t reaching out to Him, longing for a relationship with Him, we wanted nothing to do with Him; yet He loved us and gave Himself for us. Now, if God loved you when you were *against* Him, how much more secure are you in His love today now that you’ve given your heart *to* Him? Our love for Him is a response to His love for us 1st...

Vs3-4

So whatever misery was upon this man this much is for sure, he was close to death and he felt like he was sinking into the ocean of affliction and was most likely going to drown. Then he did what we generally do when we feel like we're in a desperate situation; he called upon the name of the Lord; "Oh Lord, I implore You (that is I *beg* You) deliver my soul!" The bible declares, "*The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit.*" Ps 34:17-18 That doesn't mean of course that God brings physical healing to every affliction but we can count on the fact that He will always work in such a way that will make for our eternal good and His eternal glory.

This little passage sort of reminded me of when Peter was in the midst of the storm; was being over taken and pulled down by the turmoil of the waves and the water; and when he felt like things were out of his control he cried out, "Lord, save me!" And the Lord saved him...

So often that's just the way it is; it's only when we've exhausted every other avenue of what we perceive to be hope that we cry out to the Lord. That happens in the world to, how many people come to Christ only after they're at the end of themselves, they've exhausted every other avenue, they're now with out any other place or person to turn so they implore the Lord; "Deliver my soul!" And as we see in Vs 5; "Gracious is the Lord..." We would do well to learn that we could avoid so much sorrow, so many problems and so much pain if we'd simply call upon the name of the Lord *Ist* instead of *last*.

Vs5-7

That is, He has *rewarded* you, He's done *good* to you; He's *delivered* you. Of course it's in the goodness; and the deliverance of the Lord that our soul finds rest. Jesus said, "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*" Matthew 11:28-29

We receive peace *from* God when we relinquish our cares and our concerns over *to* God, “*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*” Phil 4:6-7

“I was brought low, and He saved me.” Again so often that’s our testimony, we’re failing, we’re falling; we’re brought low and God saves us; He rescues us and gives us help in an otherwise hopeless situation. In what bountiful way was the psalmist dealt?

Vs8-9

Here’s the idea: “You saved *me* from *death*; now I will *serve* You and walk *with* You for *life*.” When God saves you from *death* (physically or eternally) it’s only appropriate that we then walk obediently to Him for *life*.

Vs10-11

Now although we’ve demonstrated the last week or so the categorical nature of man as being liars; it seems as though here he’s saying, “Look, I was bit out of my senses and just said something hastily; yet even so God has dealt with me graciously.” We thank God that He deals with us graciously even when we spout off categorically in a malicious or spiteful kind of manner.

But Paul grabs Vs 10 and applied it personally in the book of 2 Cor when he said, “*For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you. And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed and therefore I spoke,’ we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus, and will present us with you.*” 2 Cor 4:11-14 When you catch the context of the passage you’ll find Paul in the midst of perplexing times as well, the point being that regardless of how we feel, by faith we stand on and speak out what is true. We’re going through the fire but this much is true, “*...we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*” Rom 8:28 We believe therefore we speak, not to make “positive confession” but in order to encourage our inner man, in order to strengthen the hands that hang weak; “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” We believe therefore we speak...

Vs12-14

Ok, the psalmist has been talking about God's actions toward him, He's heard Him, He's delivered Him, He's been gracious and merciful to him, He's saved him and dealt bountifully with him, He's dried his eyes and kept his feet from falling. Now he's beginning to get into his *reaction* to God's *actions*.

In Vs 9 he said, "I will walk before the Lord, (or unto the Lord) in the land of the living." That is, "I'll let my light so shine so that men might see my good works and glorify my Father who is in heaven."

In Vs 12 he asks the question, "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" He's thinking, "What's an appropriate way to respond to the goodness of God toward my life?" "I will take up the cup of salvation," I think we have the freedom here to see application to this in 3 ways.

1st of all (as was mentioned) I'm going to receive and walk intimately with Jesus Christ I'm going to exhibit the salvation so graciously provided *for* me *by* the Lord through the way I lead my life both personally and publicly. 2^{ndly} This would represent a drink offering that would be poured out on the altar as a symbol of the worshipers life being poured out in service to the Lord. "Here's my life Lord, it belongs *to* You, to be used *by* You however You see fit, pour it out unto Your glory." 3^{rdly} We can glean from this the cup, the cup of communion whereby we commune *with* the Lord, and reflect *upon* the Lord, the shedding of His blood for the sake of our salvation; focusing *on* Him giving our worship and honor *to* Him in thanksgiving for His sacrifice on our behalf.

He says, "I will call upon the name of the Lord, I will pay my vows to the Lord Now in the presence of all His people." Again the worship and service of the Lord in the corporate/collective body of Christ, one way you can demonstrate your love for God is through serving His body, serving Him in the presence of His people.

Vs15

Now, although this Vs is used many times in funerals and that's completely acceptable because the intent is appropriate; the context in which this statement was made wasn't speaking of someone dying but rather God granting them life. God spared His saint from death here so that what the psalmist is seeking to communicate is that God doesn't take the death of His saints lightly, He cares deeply for His children. The word "Precious" here could've been rendered "costly" God desires to use His saints to the full for the benefit of His kingdom as long as they're on the earth. So though their death to Him is precious in the sense that He's able to welcome them home and dwell with them for eternity; the truth of the matter is that what this is saying is that God spared His saint so that He could use him all the more in the land of the living to bring Him honor and glory.

Vs16-17

What can we give to God but that it doesn't already belong to Him, the earth and all that's contained therein is but the work of His hands. "I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving" "You have loosed my bonds" "You've set me free" "The one the Son makes free shall be free indeed."

We spoke earlier about being open with God about our love for God, why we love Him. By the same token I would say that many times we fail to be truly thankful to God.

We might offer up an occasional "thanks" for this or for that, but I wonder how often we really take the time to stop and begin to list the things for which we're thankful? Thankful for His love for us, the life He's given to us, that He's called us and chosen us in Him from before the foundations of the earth, perhaps He's given you a godly wife, or a husband who fears the Lord, He's given you a family and has loosed your bonds and made you free. You get the idea; offer to the Lord the sacrifice of thanksgiving. The writer of Hebrews said, "*Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.*" Heb 13:13

The breath of life is in your being, you have the capability to give God thanks, to sing praises to His name; His mercies are new every morning; regardless of how you may feel presently God is worthy of our thanksgiving personally and from the heart.

Vs18-19

He will walk with the Lord personally, fostering a relationship of intimacy and he will serve the Lord publicly, giving praise to Him whole heartedly. May ours be a like testimony...

Prayer Points:

Lord God we thank You for the richness of Your word; for Your faithfulness to be there for us and to give ear to us. May we call upon you as long as we live, may our lives reflect how thankful we are for all that you've done for us and may we walk with You intimately, personally/privately and may we serve You publicly in the midst of the assembly, have Your way in our lives to the glory of Your name.