

# PSALM 66

This is a thanksgiving-psalm, and it is of such a general use and application that we need not suppose it penned upon any particular occasion. All people are here called upon to praise God,

- I.** For the general instances of his sovereign dominion and power in the whole creation (v. 1-7).
- II.** For the special tokens of his favour to the church, his peculiar people (v. 8-12). And then,
- III.** The psalmist praises God for his own experiences of his goodness to him in particular, especially in answering his prayers (v. 13-20). If we have learned in every thing to give thanks for ancient and modern mercies, public and personal mercies, we shall know how to sing this psalm with grace and understanding.

## PSALM 66:1-7

### ALL MANKIND EXHORTED TO PRAISE GOD

*To the chief musician. A song or psalm.*

- I.** In these verses the psalmist calls upon all people to praise God, *all lands, all the earth*, all the inhabitants of the world that are capable of praising God, v. 1.
- 1.** This speaks the glory of God, that he is worthy to be praised by all, for he is good to all and furnishes every nation with matter for praise.
- 2.** The duty of man, that all are obliged to praise God; it is part of the law of creation, and therefore is required of every creature.
- 3.** A prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ; the time should come when all lands should praise God, and this incense should in every place be offered to him.

4. A hearty good-will which the psalmist had to this good work of praising God. He will abound in it himself, and wishes that God might have his tribute paid him by all the nations of the earth and not by the land of Israel only. He excites all lands,

(1.) To *make a joyful noise to God*. Holy joy is that devout affection which should animate all our praises; and, though it is not making a noise in religion that God will accept of (hypocrites are said to *cause their voice to be heard on high*, <sup>2804</sup>Isaiah 58:4), yet, in praising God,

[1.] We must be hearty and zealous, and must do what we do with all our might, with all that is within us.

[2.] We must be open and public, as those that are not ashamed of our Master. And both these are implied in making a noise, a joyful noise.

(2.) To sing with pleasure, and to *sing forth*, for the edification of others, *the honour of his name*, that is, of all that whereby he has made himself known, v. 2. That which is the honour of God's name ought to be the matter of our praise.

(3.) To *make his praise glorious* as far as we can. In praising God we must do it so as to glorify him, and that must be the scope and drift of all our praises. *Reckon it your greatest glory to praise God*, so some. It is the highest honour the creature is capable of to be to the Creator for a name and a praise.

II. He had called upon all lands to praise God (v. 1), and he foretels (v. 4) that they shall do so: *All the earth shall worship thee*; some in all parts of the earth, even the remotest regions, for *the everlasting gospel shall be preached to every nation and kindred*; and this is the purport of it, *Worship him that made heaven and earth*, <sup>6446</sup>Revelation 14:6, 7. Being thus sent forth, it shall not return void, but shall bring all the earth, more or less, to worship God, and sing unto him. In gospel times God shall be worshipped by the singing of Psalms. They shall *sing to God*, that is, *sing to his name*, for it is only to his declarative glory, that by which he has made himself known, not to his essential glory, that we can contribute any thing by our praises.

III. That we may be furnished with matter for praise, we are here called upon *to come and see the works of God*; for *his own works praise him*, whether we do or no; and the reason why we do not praise him more and

better is because we do not duly and attentively observe them. Let us therefore see God's works and observe the instances of his wisdom, power, and faithfulness in them (v. 5), and then speak of them, and speak of them to him (v. 3): *Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works, terrible in thy doings!* 1. God's works are wonderful in themselves, and such as, when duly considered, may justly fill us with amazement. God *is terrible* (that is, admirable) in his works, through the greatness of his power, which is such, and shines so brightly, so strongly, in all he does, that it may be truly said there are *not any works like unto his works*. Hence he is said to be *fearful in praises*, <sup><0511></sup>Exodus 15:11. In all his doings towards the children of men he is terrible, and to be eyed with a holy awe. Much of religion lies in a reverence for the divine Providence.

**2.** They are formidable to his enemies, and have many a time forced and frightened them into a feigned submission (v. 3): *Through the greatness of thy power, before which none can stand, shall thy enemies submit themselves unto thee; they shall lie unto thee* (so the word is), that is, they shall be compelled, sorely against their wills, to make their peace with thee upon any terms. Subjection extorted by fear is seldom sincere, and therefore force is no proper means of propagating religion, nor can there be much joy of such proselytes to the church as will in the end be found liars unto it, <sup><0529></sup>Deuteronomy 33:29.

**3.** They are comfortable and beneficial to his people, v. 6. When Israel came out of Egypt, *he turned the sea into dry land* before them, which encouraged them to follow God's guidance through the wilderness; and, when they were to enter Canaan, for their encouragement in their wars Jordan was divided before them, and *they went through that flood on foot*; and such foot, so signally owned by heaven, might well pass for cavalry, rather than infantry, in the wars of the Lord. There did the enemies tremble before them (<sup><0514></sup>Exodus 15:14, 15; <sup><0601></sup>Joshua 5:1), but *there did we rejoice in him*, both trust his power (for relying on God is often expressed by rejoicing in him) and sing his praise, <sup><0612></sup>Psalms 106:12. There did we rejoice; that is, our ancestors did, and we in their loins. The joys of our fathers were our joys, and we ought to look upon ourselves as sharers in them.

**4.** They are commanding to all. God by his works keeps up his dominion in the world (v. 7): *He rules by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations*.

(1.) God has a commanding eye; from the height of heaven his eye commands all the inhabitants of the world, and he has a clear and full view of them all. *His eyes run to and fro through the earth*; the most remote and obscure nations are under his inspection.

(2.) He has a commanding arm; his power rules, rules for ever, and is never weakened, never obstructed. *Strong is his hand, and high is his right hand*. Hence he infers, *Let not the rebellious exalt themselves*; let not those that have revolting and rebellious hearts dare to rise up in any overt acts of rebellion against God, as Adonijah exalted himself, saying, *I will be king*. Let not those that are in rebellion against God exalt themselves as if there were any probability that they should gain their point. No; let them be still, for God hath said, *I will be exalted*, and man cannot gainsay it.

## PSALM 66:8-12

### THE SAINTS EXHORTED TO PRAISE GOD

In these verses the psalmist calls upon God's people in a special manner to praise him. Let all lands do it, but Israel's land particularly. Bless our God; bless him as ours, a God in covenant with us, and that takes care of us as his own. Let them *make the voice of his praise to be heard* (v. 8); for from whom should it be heard but from those who are his peculiar favourites and select attendants? Two things we have reason to bless God for: —

**I.** Common protection (v. 9): *He holdeth our soul in life*, that it may not drop away of itself; for, being continually in our hands, it is apt to slip through our fingers. We must own that it is the good providence of God that keeps life and soul together and his visitation that preserves our spirit. *He puts our soul in life*, so the word is. He that gave us our being, by a constant renewed act upholds us in our being, and his providence is a continued creation. When we are ready to faint and perish he restores our soul, and so puts it, as it were, into a new life, giving new comforts. *Non est vivere, sed valere, vita* — *It is not existence, but happiness, that deserves the name of life*. But we are apt to stumble and fall, and are exposed to many destructive accidents, killing disasters as well as killing diseases, and therefore as to these also we are guarded by the divine power. He *suffers not our feet to be moved*, preventing many unforeseen evils, which we ourselves were not aware of our danger from. To him we

owe it that we have not, long ere this, fallen into endless ruin. *He will keep the feet of his saints.*

## II. Special deliverance from great distress. Observe,

**1.** How grievous the distress and danger were, v. 11, 12. What particular trouble of the church this refers to does not appear; it might be the trouble of some private persons or families only. But, whatever it was, they were surprised with it as a bird with a snare, enclosed and entangled in it as a fish in a net; they were pressed down with it, and kept under as with a load upon their loins, v. 11. But they owned the hand of God in it. We are never in the net but God brings us into it, never under affliction but God lays it upon us. Is any thing more dangerous than fire and water? *We went through both*, that is, afflictions of different kinds; the end of one trouble was the beginning of another; when we had got clear of one sort of dangers we found ourselves involved in dangers of another sort. Such may be the troubles of the best of God's saints, but he has promised, *When thou passest through the waters, through the fire, I will be with thee*, <sup><S></sup>Isaiah 43:1. Yet proud and cruel men may be as dangerous as fire and water, and more so. *Beware of men*, <sup><M></sup>Matthew 10:17. When men rose up against us, that was fire and water, and all that is threatening (<sup><P></sup>Psalm 124:2, 3, 4), and that was the case here: *"Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads, to trample upon us and insult over us, to hector and abuse us, nay, and to make perfect slaves of us; they have said to our souls, Bow down, that we may go over,"* <sup><I></sup>Isaiah 51:23. While it is the pleasure of good princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects it is the pride of tyrants to ride over their heads; yet the afflicted church in this also owns the hand of God: *"Thou hast caused them thus to abuse us;"* for the most furious oppressor has no power but what is given him from above.

**2.** How gracious God's design was in bringing them into this distress and danger. See what the meaning of it is (v. 10): *Thou, O God! hast proved us, and tried us*. Then we are likely to get good by our afflictions, when we look upon them under this notion, for then we may see God's grace and love at the bottom of them and our own honour and benefit in the end of them. By afflictions we are proved as silver in the fire.

**(1.)** That our graces, by being tried, may be made more evident and so we may be approved, as silver, when it is touched and marked sterling, and this will be *to our praise at the appearing of Jesus Christ* (<sup><P></sup>1 Peter 1:7)

and perhaps in this world. Job's integrity and constancy were manifested by his afflictions.

(2.) That our graces, by being exercised, may be made more strong and active, and so we may be improved, as silver when it is refined by the fire and made more clear from its dross; and this will be to our unspeakable advantage, for thus we are made partakers of God's holiness, <sup><820></sup>Hebrews 12:10. Public troubles are for the purifying of the church, <sup><715></sup>Daniel 11:35; <sup><610></sup>Revelation 2:10; <sup><880></sup>Deuteronomy 8:2.

3. How glorious the issue was at last. The troubles of the church will certainly end well; these do so, for

(1.) The outlet of the trouble is happy. They are in fire and water, but they get through them: "*We went through fire and water, and did not perish in the flames or floods.*" Whatever the troubles of the saints are, blessed be God, there is a way through them.

(2.) The inlet to a better state is much more happy: *Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place, into a well-watered place (so the word is), like the gardens of the Lord, and therefore fruitful.* God brings his people into trouble that their comforts afterwards may be the sweeter and that their affliction may thus yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness, which will make the poorest place in the world a wealthy place.

## <sup><663></sup>PSALM 66:13-20

### DAVID RESOLVES TO PRAISE GOD

The psalmist, having before stirred up all people, and all God's people in particular, to bless the Lord, here stirs up himself and engages himself to do it.

I. In his devotions to his God, v. 13-15. He had called upon others to sing God's praises and to make a joyful noise with them; but, for himself, his resolutions go further, and he will praise God,

1. By costly sacrifices, which, under the law, were offered to the honour of God. All people had not wherewithal to offer these sacrifices, or wanted zeal to be at such an expense in praising God; but David, for his part,

being able, is as willing, in this chargeable way to pay his homage to God (v. 13): *I will go into thy house with burnt-offerings*. His sacrifices should be public, in the place which God had chosen: “I will go into thy house with them.” Christ is our temple, to whom we must bring our spiritual gifts, and by whom they are sanctified. They should be the best of the king — *burnt-sacrifices*, which were wholly consumed upon the altar, to the honour of God, and of which the offerer had no share; and burnt-sacrifices *of fatlings*, not the lame or the lean, but the best fed, and such as would be most acceptable at his own table. God, who is the best, must be served with the best we have. The feast God makes for us is a *feast of fat things, full of marrow* (<sup>2216</sup>Isaiah 25:6), and such sacrifices should we bring to him. He will *offer bullocks with goats*, so liberal will he be in his return of praise, and not strait-handed: he would not offer that which cost him nothing, but that which cost him a great deal. And this *with the incense of rams*, that is, with the fat of rams, which being burnt upon the altar, the smoke of it would ascend like the smoke of incense. Or *rams with incense*. The incense typifies Christ's intercession, without which the fattest of our sacrifices will not be accepted.

**2.** By a conscientious performance of his vows. We do not acceptably praise God for our deliverance out of trouble unless we make conscience of paying the vows we made when we were in trouble. This was the psalmist's resolution (v. 13, 14), *I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered when I was in trouble*. Note,

**(1.)** It is very common, and very commendable, when we are under the pressure of any affliction, or in the pursuit of any mercy, to make vows, and solemnly to speak them before the Lord, to bind ourselves out from sin and bind ourselves more closely to our duty; not as if this were an equivalent, or valuable consideration, for the favour of God, but a qualification for receiving the tokens of that favour.

**(2.)** The vows which we made when we were in trouble must not be forgotten when the trouble is over, but be carefully performed, for better it is not to vow than to vow and not pay.

**II.** In his declarations to his friends, v. 16. He calls together a congregation of good people to hear his thankful narrative of God's favours to him: “*Come and hear, all you that fear God, for,*

1. You will join with me in my praises and help me in giving thanks.” And we should be as desirous of the assistance of those that fear God in returning thanks for the mercies we have received as in praying for those we want.

2. “You will be edified and encouraged by that which I have to say. *The humble shall hear of it and be glad,* <sup><B></sup>Psalm 34:2. *Those that fear thee will be glad when they see me* (<sup><B></sup>Psalm 119:74), and therefore let me have their company, and I will declare to them, not to vain carnal people that will banter it and make a jest of it” (pearls are not to be cast before swine); “but to those that fear God, and will make a good use of it, I will declare what God has done for my soul,” not in pride and vain-glory, that he might be thought more a favourite of heaven than other people, but for the honour of God, to which we owe this as a just debt, and for the edification of others. Note, God's people should communicate their experiences to each other. We should take all occasions to tell one another of the great and kind things which God has done for us, especially which he has done for our souls, the spiritual blessings with which he has blessed us in heavenly things; these we should be most affected with ourselves, and therefore with these we should be desirous to affect others. Now what was it that God had done for his soul?

(1.) He had wrought in him a love to the duty of prayer, and had by his grace enlarged his heart in that duty (v. 17): *I cried unto him with my mouth*. But if God, among other things done for our souls, had not given us the Spirit of adoption, teaching and enabling us to cry, *Abba, Father*, we should never have done it. That God has given us leave to pray, a command to pray, encouragements to pray, and (to crown all) a heart to pray, is what we have reason to mention with thankfulness to his praise; and the more if, when we cried to him with our mouth, *he was extolled with our tongue*, that is, if we were enabled by faith and hope to give glory to him when we were seeking for mercy and grace from him, and to praise him for mercy in prospect though not yet in possession. By crying to him we do indeed extol him. He is pleased to reckon himself honoured by the humble believing prayers of the upright, and this is a great thing which he has done for our souls, that he has been pleased so far to unite interests with us that, in seeking our own welfare, we seek his glory. *His exaltation was under my tongue* (so it may be read); that is, I was considering in my mind how I might exalt and magnify his name. When prayers are in our mouths praises must be in our hearts.



(2.) He had wrought in him a dread of sin as an enemy to prayer (v. 18): *If I regard iniquity in my heart, I know very well the Lord will not hear me.* The Jewish writers, some of them that have the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, put a very corrupt gloss upon these words: *If I regard iniquity in my heart, that is (say they), If I allow myself only in heart-sins, and iniquity does not break out in my words and actions, God will not hear me, that is, he will not be offended with me, will take no notice of it, so as to lay it to my charge; as if heart-sins were no sins in God's account.* The falsehood of this our Saviour has shown in his spiritual exposition of the law, Matthew 5. But the sense of this place is plain: *If I regard iniquity in my heart, that is, "If I have favourable thoughts of it, if I love it, indulge it, and allow myself in it, if I treat it as a friend and bid it welcome, make provision for it and am loth to part with it, if I roll it under my tongue as a sweet morsel, though it be but a heart sin that is thus countenanced and made much of, if I delight in it after the inward man, God will not hear my prayer, will not accept it, nor be pleased with it, nor can I expect an answer of peace to it."* Note, Iniquity, regarded in the heart, will certainly spoil the comfort and success of prayer; for *the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.* Those that continue in love and league with sin have no interest either in the promise or in the Mediator, and therefore cannot expect to speed in prayer.

(3.) He had graciously granted him an answer of peace to his prayers (v. 19): *"But verily God has heard me;* though, being conscious to myself of much amiss in me, I began to fear that my prayers would be rejected, yet, to my comfort, I found that God was pleased to regard them." This God did for his soul, by answering his prayer, he gave him a token of his favour and an evidence that he had wrought a good work in him. And therefore he concludes (v. 20), *Blessed be God.* The two foregoing verses are the major and minor propositions of a syllogism: *If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear my prayer;* that is the proposition: *but verily God has heard me;* that is the assumption, from which he might have rationally inferred, "Therefore I do not regard iniquity in my heart;" but, instead of taking the comfort to himself, he gives the praise to God: *Blessed be God.* Whatever are the premises, God's glory must always be the conclusion. *God has heard me, and therefore blessed be God.* Note, What we win by prayer we must wear with praise. Mercies in answer to prayer do, in a special manner, oblige us to be thankful. He has *not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy.* Lest it should be thought that the deliverance was

granted for the sake of some worthiness in his prayer, he ascribes it to God's mercy. This he adds by way of correction: "It was not my prayer that fetched the deliverance, but his mercy that sent it." *Therefore* God does not turn away our prayer, because he does not turn away his own mercy, for that is the foundation of our hopes and the fountain of our comforts, and therefore ought to be the matter of our praises.