

PSALM 116

This is a thanksgiving psalm; it is not certain whether David penned it upon any particular occasion or upon a general review of the many gracious deliverances God had wrought for him, out of six troubles and seven, which deliverances draw from him many very lively expressions of devotion, love, and gratitude; and with similar pious affections our souls should be lifted up to God in singing it. Observe,

- I.** The great distress and danger that the psalmist was in, which almost drove him to despair (v. 3, 10, 11).
- II.** The application he made to God in that distress (v. 4).
- III.** The experience he had of God's goodness to him, in answer to prayer; God heard him (v. 1, 2), pitied him (v. 5, 6), delivered him (v. 8). **IV** His care respecting the acknowledgments he should make of the goodness of God to him (v. 12).
 - 1.** He will love God (v. 1).
 - 2.** He will continue to call upon him (v. 2, 13, 17).
 - 3.** He will rest in him (v. 7).
 - 4.** He will walk before him (v. 9).
 - 5.** He will pay his vows of thanksgiving, in which he will own the tender regard God had to him, and this publicly (v. 13-15, 17-19). Lastly, He will continue God's faithful servant to his life's end (v. 16). These are such breathings of a holy soul as bespeak it very happy.

~~BBE~~ PSALM 116:1-9

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In this part of the psalm we have,

- I.** A general account of David's experience, and his pious resolutions (v. 1, 2), which are as the contents of the whole psalm, and give an idea of it.
 - 1.** He had experienced God's goodness to him in answer to prayer: *He has heard my voice and my supplications.* David, in straits, had humbly and

earnestly begged mercy of God, and God had heard him, that is, had graciously accepted his prayer, taken cognizance of his case, and granted him an answer of peace. *He has inclined his ear to me*. This intimates his readiness and willingness to hear prayer; he lays his ear, as it were, to the mouth of prayer, to hear it, though it be but whispered *in groanings that cannot be uttered*. He *hearkens and hears*, ^{2006}Jeremiah 8:6. Yet it implies, also, that it is wonderful condescension in God to hear prayer; it is bowing his ear. Lord, what is man, that God should thus stoop to him! —

2. He resolved, in consideration thereof, to devote himself entirely to God and to his honour.

(1.) He will love God the better. He begins the psalm somewhat abruptly with a profession of that which his heart was full of: *I love the Lord* (as ^{2006}Psalm 18:1); and fitly does he begin with this, in compliance with the first and great commandment and with God's end in all the gifts of his bounty to us. "I love him only, and nothing besides him, but what I love for him." God's love of compassion towards us justly requires our love of complacency in him.

(2.) He will love prayer the better: *Therefore I will call upon him*. The experiences we have had of God's goodness to us, in answer to prayer, are great encouragements to us to continue praying; we have sped well, notwithstanding our unworthiness and our infirmities in prayer, and therefore why may we not? God answers prayer, to make us love it, and expects this from us, in return for his favour. Why should we glean in any other field when we have been so well treated in this? Nay, *I will call upon him as long as I live* (Heb., *In my days*), every day, to the last day. Note, As long as we continue living we must continue praying. This breath we must breathe till we breathe our last, because then we shall take our leave of it, and till then we have continual occasion for it.

II. A more particular narrative of God's gracious dealings with him and the good impressions thereby made upon him.

1. God, in his dealings with him, showed himself a good God, and therefore he bears this testimony to him, and leaves it upon record (v. 5): "*Gracious is the Lord, and righteous*. He is righteous, and did me no wrong in afflicting me; he is gracious, and was very kind in supporting and delivering me." Let us all speak of God as we have found; and have

we ever found him otherwise than just and good? No; *our God is merciful, merciful to us, and it is of his mercies that we are not consumed.*

(1.) Let us review David's experiences.

[1.] He was in great distress and trouble (v. 3): *The sorrows of death compassed me*, that is, such sorrows as were likely to be his death, such as were thought to be the very pangs of death. Perhaps the extremity of bodily pain, or trouble of mind, is called here *the pains of hell*, terror of conscience arising from sense of guilt. Note, The sorrows of death are great sorrows, and the pains of hell great pains. Let us *therefore* give diligence to prepare for the former, that we may escape the latter. These *compassed* him on every side; they arrested him, *got hold upon him*, so that he could not escape. *Without were fightings, within were fears.* “*I found trouble and sorrow; not only they found me, but I found them.*”

Those that are melancholy have a great deal of sorrow of their own finding, a great deal of trouble which they create to themselves, by indulging fancy and passion; this has sometimes been the infirmity of good men. When God's providence makes our condition bad let us not by our own imprudence make it worse.

[2.] In his trouble he had recourse to God by faithful and fervent prayer, v. 4. He tells us that he prayed: *Then called I upon the name of the Lord;* then, when he was brought to the last extremity, then he made use of this, not as the last remedy, but as the old and only remedy, which he had found a salve for every sore. He tells us what his prayer was; it was short, but to the purpose: “*O Lord! I beseech thee, deliver my soul; save me from death, and save me from sin, for that is it that is killing to the soul.*” Both the humility and the fervency of his prayer are intimated in these words, *O Lord! I beseech thee.* When we come to the throne of grace we must come as beggars for an alms, for necessary food. The following words (v. 5), *Gracious is the Lord*, may be taken as part of his prayer, as a plea to enforce his request and encourage his faith and hope: “*Lord deliver my soul, for thou art gracious and merciful, and that only I depend upon for relief.*”

[3.] God, in answer to his prayer, came in with seasonable and effectual relief. He found by experience that God is gracious and merciful, and in his compassion *preserves the simple*, v. 6. Because they are simple (that is, sincere, and upright, and without guile) therefore God preserves them, as he preserved Paul, who had his conversation in the world *not with fleshly*

wisdom, but in simplicity and godly sincerity. Though they are simple (that is, weak, and helpless, and unable to shift for themselves, men of no depth, no design) yet God preserves them, because they commit themselves to him and have no confidence in their own sufficiency. Those who by faith put themselves under God's protection shall be safe.

(2.) Let David speak his own experience.

[1.] God supported him under his troubles: “*I was brought low, was plunged into the depth of misery, and then he helped me, helped me both to bear the worst and to hope the best, helped me to pray, else desire had failed, helped me to wait, else faith had failed. I was one of the simple ones whom God preserved, the poor man who cried and the Lord heard him,*” ^{<1346>}Psalm 34:6. Note, God's people are never brought so low but that everlasting arms are under them, and those cannot sink who are thus sustained. Nay, it is in the time of need, at the dead lift, that God chooses to help, ^{<1326>}Deuteronomy 32:36.

[2.] God saved him out of his troubles (v. 8): *Thou hast delivered*, which means either the preventing of the distress he was ready to fall into or the recovering of him from the distress he was already in. God graciously delivered, *First, His soul from death*. Note, It is God's great mercy to us that we are alive; and the mercy is the more sensible if we have been at death's door and yet have been spared and raised up, just turned to destruction and yet ordered to return. That a life so often forfeited, and so often exposed, should yet be lengthened out, is a miracle of mercy. The deliverance of the soul from spiritual and eternal death is especially to be acknowledged by all those who are now sanctified and shall be shortly glorified. *Secondly, His eyes from tears*, that is, his heart from inordinate grief. It is a great mercy to be kept either from the occasions of sorrow, the evil that causes grief, or, at least, from being swallowed up with over-much sorrow. When God comforts those that are cast down, looses the mourners' sackcloth and girds them with gladness, then he delivers *their eyes from tears*, which yet will not be perfectly done till we come to that world where God shall *wipe away all tears from our eyes*. *Thirdly, His feet from falling*, from falling into sin and so into misery. It is a great mercy, when our feet are almost gone, to have God *hold us by the right hand* (^{<1372>}Psalm 72:2, 23), so that though we enter into temptation we are not overcome and overthrown by the temptation. Or, “*Thou hast delivered my feet from falling into the grave, when I had one foot there already.*”

2. David, in his returns of gratitude to God, showed himself a good man. God had done all this for him, and therefore,

(1.) He will live a life of delight in God (v. 7): *Return unto thy rest, O my soul!*

[1.] “Repose thyself and be easy, and do not agitate thyself with distrustful disquieting fears as thou hast sometimes done. Quiet thyself, and then enjoy thyself. God has dealt kindly with thee, and therefore thou needest not fear that ever he will deal hardly with thee.”

[2.] “Repose thyself in God. Return to him as thy rest, and seek not for that rest in the creature which is to be had in him only.” God is the soul's rest; in him only it can *dwell at ease* ; to him therefore it must retire, and rejoice in him. He has *dealt bountifully with us* ; he has provided sufficiently for our comfort and refreshment, and encouraged us to come to him for the benefit of it, at all times, upon all occasions; let us therefore be satisfied with that. Return to that rest which Christ gives to *the weary and heavy-laden* , ^{<11B>}Matthew 11:28. Return to thy Noah; his name signifies *rest* , as the dove, when she found no rest, returned to the ark. I know no word more proper to close our eyes with at night, when we go to sleep, nor to close them with at death, that long sleep, than this, *Return to thy rest, O my soul!*

(2.) He will live a life of devotedness to God (v. 9): *I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living*, that is, in this world, as long as I continue to live in it. Note,

[1.] It is our great duty to *walk before the Lord* , to do all we do as becomes us in his presence and under his eye, to approve ourselves to him as a holy God by conformity to him as our sovereign Lord, by subjection to his will, and, as a God all-sufficient, by a cheerful confidence in him. *I am the almighty God; walk before me* , ^{<11B>}Genesis 17:1. *We must walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing* .

[2.] The consideration of this, that we are in the land of the living, should engage and quicken us to do so. We are spared and continued in the land of the living by the power, and patience, and tender mercy of our God, and therefore must make conscience of our duty to him. The *land of the living* is a land of mercy, which we ought to be thankful for; it is a land of opportunity, which we should improve. Canaan is called the *land of the*

living (^{<330>}Ezekiel 26:20), and those whose lot is cast in such a valley of vision are in a special manner concerned to *set the Lord always before them*. If God has delivered our soul from death, we must walk before him. A new life must be a new life indeed.

<350>PSALM 116:10-19

DEVOUT RESOLUTIONS

The Septuagint and some other ancient versions make these verses a distinct psalm separate from the former; and some have called it the *Martyr's psalm*, I suppose for the sake of v. 15. Three things David here makes confession of: —

I. His faith (v. 10): *I believed, therefore have I spoken*. This is quoted by the apostle (^{<4043>}2 Corinthians 4:13) with application to himself and his fellow-ministers, who, though they suffered for Christ, were not ashamed to own him. David believed the being, providence, and promise of God, particularly the assurance God had given him by Samuel that he should exchange his crook for a sceptre: a great deal of hardship he went through in the belief of this, and therefore he spoke, spoke to God by prayer (v. 4), by praise, v. 12. Those that believe in God will address themselves to him. He spoke to himself; because he believed, he said to his soul, *Return to thy rest*. He spoke to others, told his friends what his hope was, and what the ground of it, though it exasperated Saul against him and he was greatly afflicted for it. Note, Those that believe with the heart must confess with the mouth, for the glory of God, the encouragement of others, and to evidence their own sincerity, ^{<500>}Romans 10:10; ^{<496>}Acts 9:19, 20. Those that live in hope of the kingdom of glory must neither be afraid nor ashamed to own their obligation to him that purchased it for them, ^{<4022>}Matthew 10:22.

II. His fear (v. 11): *I was greatly afflicted, and then I said in my haste* (somewhat rashly and inconsiderately — in my *amazement* (so some), when I was in a consternation — in my *flight* (so others), when Saul was in pursuit of me), *All men are liars*, all with whom he had to do, Saul and all his courtiers; his friends, who he thought would stand by him, deserted him and disowned him when he fell into disgrace at court. And some think

it is especially a reflection on Samuel, who had promised him the kingdom, but deceived him; for, says he, *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul*, ^{<1021>}1 Samuel 27:1. Observe,

1. The faith of the best of saints is not perfect, nor always alike strong and active. David *believed* and *spoke well* (v. 10), but now, through unbelief, he spoke amiss.
2. When we are under great and sore afflictions, especially if they continue long, we are apt to grow weary, to despond, and almost to despair of a good issue. Let us not therefore be harsh in censuring others, but carefully watch over ourselves when we are in trouble, ^{<1301>}Psalms 39:1-3.
3. If good men speak amiss, it is in their haste, through the surprise of a temptation, not deliberately and with premeditation, as the wicked man, who *sits in the seat of the scornful* (^{<3001>}Psalms 1:1), sits and *speaks against his brother*, ^{<1310>}Psalms 50:19, 20.
4. What we speak amiss, in haste, we must by repentance unsay again (as David, ^{<1302>}Psalms 31:22), and then it shall not be laid to our charge. Some make this to be no rash word of David's. He was greatly afflicted and forced to fly, but he did not trust in man, nor make flesh his arm. No: he said, "*All men are liars; as men of low degree are vanity, so men of high degree are a lie, and therefore my confidence was in God only, and in him I cannot be disappointed.*" In this sense the apostle seems to take it. ^{<1304>}Romans 3:4, *Let God be true and every man a liar* in comparison with God. All men are fickle and inconstant, and subject to change; and therefore let us cease from man and cleave to God.

III. His gratitude, v. 12, etc. God had been better to him than his fears, and had graciously delivered him out of his distresses; and, in consideration hereof,

1. He enquires what returns he shall make (v. 12): *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?* Here he speaks,

(1.) As one sensible of many mercies received from God — *all his benefits*. This psalm seems to have been penned upon occasion of some one particular benefit (v. 6, 7), but in that one he saw many and that one brought many to mind, and therefore now he thinks of all God's benefits towards him. Note, When we speak of God's mercies we should magnify them and speak highly of them.

(2.) As one solicitous and studious how to express his gratitude: *What shall I render unto the Lord?* Not as if he thought he could render any thing proportionable, or as a valuable consideration for what he had received; we can no more pretend to give a recompense to God than we can to merit any favour from him; but he desired to render something acceptable, something that God would be pleased with as the acknowledgment of a grateful mind. He asks God, *What shall I render?* Asks the priest, asks his friends, or rather asks himself, and communes with his own heart about it. Note, Having received many benefits from God, we are concerned to enquire, *What shall we render?*

2. He resolves what returns he will make.

(1.) He will in the most devout and solemn manner offer up his praises and prayers to God, v. 13, 17.

[1.] *“I will take the cup of salvation, that is, I will offer the drink-offerings appointed by the law, in token of my thankfulness to God, and rejoice with my friends in God’s goodness to me;”* this is called *the cup of deliverance* because drunk in memory of his deliverance. The pious Jews had sometimes a *cup of blessing*, at their private meals, which the master of the family drank first of, with thanksgiving to God, and all at his table drank with him. But some understand it not of the cup that he would present to God, but of the cup that God would put into his hand. *I will receive, First, The cup of affliction.* Many good interpreters understand it of that cup, that bitter cup, which is yet sanctified to the saints, so that to them it is a cup of salvation. ^{<PHI>}Philippians 1:19, *This shall turn to my salvation;* it is a means of spiritual health. David’s sufferings were typical of Christ’s, and we, in ours, have communion with his, and his cup was indeed a cup of salvation. “God, having bestowed so many benefits upon me, whatever cup he shall put into my hands I will readily take it, and not dispute it; welcome his holy will.” Herein David spoke the language of the Son of David. ^{<JHN>}John 18:11, *The cup that my Father has given me, shall I not take it and drink it? Secondly, The cup of consolation:* “I will receive the benefits God bestows upon me as from his hand, and taste his love in them, as that which is *the portion* not only *of my inheritance* in the other world, but *of my cup* in this.”

[2.] *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving,* the thank-offerings which God required, ^{<LEV>}Leviticus 7:11, 12, etc. Note, Those whose hearts are truly thankful will express their gratitude in thank-offerings. We must

first *give our ourselves* to God as *living sacrifices* (^{<511>}Romans 12:1, ^{<485>}2 Corinthians 8:5), and then lay out of what we have for his honour in works of piety and charity. *Doing good* and *communicating* are *sacrifices* with which *God is well pleased* (^{<385>}Hebrews 13:15, 16) and this must accompany our *giving thanks to his name*. If God has been bountiful to us, the least we can do in return is to be bountiful to the poor, ^{<362>}Psalm 16:2, 3. Why should we offer that to God which costs us nothing?

[3.] *I will call upon the name of the Lord*. This he had promised (v. 2) and here he repeats it, v. 13 and again v. 17. If we have received kindness from a man like ourselves, we tell him that we hope we shall never trouble him again; but God is pleased to reckon the prayers of his people an honour to him, and a delight, and no trouble; and therefore, in gratitude for former mercies, we must seek to him for further mercies, and continue to *call upon him*.

(2.) He will always entertain good thoughts of God, as very tender of the lives and comforts of his people (v. 15): *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints*, so precious that he will not gratify Saul, nor Absalom, nor any of David's enemies, with his death, how earnestly soever they desire it. This truth David had comforted himself with in the depth of his distress and danger; and, the event having confirmed it, he comforts others with it who might be in like manner exposed. God has a people, even in this world, that are his saints, his merciful ones, or men of mercy, that have received mercy from him and show mercy for his sake. The saints of God are mortal and dying; nay, there are those that desire their death, and labour all they can to hasten it, and sometimes prevail to be the death of them; but it is *precious in the sight of the Lord; their life is so* (^{<113>}2 Kings 1:13); their *blood* is so, ^{<924>}Psalm 72:14. God often wonderfully prevents the death of his saints when there is but a step between them and it; he takes special care about their death, to order it for the best in all the circumstances of it; and whoever kills them, how light soever they may make of it, they shall be made to pay dearly for it when inquisition is made for the blood of the saints, ^{<425>}Matthew 23:35. Though *no man lays it to heart when the righteous perish*, God will make it to appear that he lays it to heart. This should make us willing to die, to die for Christ, if we are called to it, that our death shall be registered in heaven; and let that be precious to us which is so to God.

(3.) He will oblige himself to be God's servant all his days. Having asked, *What shall I render?* here he surrenders himself, which was *more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifice* (v. 16): *O Lord! truly I am thy servant.* Here is,

[1.] The relation in which David professes to stand to God: "*I am thy servant; I choose to be so; I resolve to be so; I will live and die in thy service.*" He had called God's people, who are dear to him, *his saints*; but, when he comes to apply it to himself, he does not say, *Truly I am thy saint* (that looked too high a title for himself), but, *I am thy servant.* David was a king, and yet he glories in this, that he was God's servant. It is no disparagement, but an honour, to the greatest kings on earth, to be the servants of the God of heaven. David does not here compliment God, as it is common among men to say, *I am your servant, Sir.* No; "Lord, I am *truly thy servant; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am so.*" And he repeats it, as that which he took pleasure in the thoughts of and which he was resolved to abide by: "*I am thy servant, I am thy servant.* Let others serve what master they will, *truly I am they servant.*"

[2.] The ground of that relation. Two ways men came to be servants: — *First*, by birth. "Lord, I was born in thy house; I am *the son of thy handmaid*, and therefore thine." It, is a great mercy to be the children of godly parents, as it obliges us to duty and is pleadable with God for mercy. *Secondly*, By redemption. He that procured the release of a captive took him for his servant. "*Lord, thou hast loosed my bonds; those sorrows of death that compassed me, thou hast discharged me from them, and therefore I am thy servant, and entitled to thy protection as well as obliged to thy work.*" *The very bonds which thou hast loosed shall tie me faster unto thee.* Patrick.

(4.) He will make conscience of paying his vows and making good what he had promised, not only that he would offer the sacrifices of praise, which he had vowed to bring, but perform all his other engagements to God, which he had laid himself under in the day of his affliction (v. 14): *I will pay my vows;* and again, (v. 18), *now in the presence of all his people.* Note, Vows are debts that must be paid, for it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay. He will pay his vows,

[1.] Presently; he will not, like sorry debtors, delay the payment of them, or beg a day; but, "*I will pay them now,*" ²⁰¹¹ Ecclesiastes 5:4.

[2.] Publicly; he will not huddle up his praises in a corner, but what service he has to do for God he will do it *in the presence of all his people*; nor for ostentation, but to show that he was not ashamed of the service of God, and that others might be invited to join with him. He will pay his vows in the courts of the tabernacle, where there was a crowd of Israelites attending, *in the midst of Jerusalem*, that he might bring devotion into more reputation.