

Summer Psalms
PERSONAL PUBLIC PRAISE

Thursday, August 14

Reading: Psalms 116

Psalm 116:13 *I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. 14 I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all His people. 15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His faithful servants.*

This fourth of the Hallel psalms presents a personal side to praise. Whoever the author is he has been delivered from a situation he describes as “the cords of death” filled with anguish, distress and sorrow (116:3). But he proclaims his love for the Lord because He has “delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living” (116:8-9).

The remainder of this psalm gives the answer to the question stated in verse 12: “What shall I return to the LORD for all His goodness to me?” While God’s goodness does not have a price tag and there is nothing we can do to repay Him, those whom God has saved should express their obedience and thanksgiving to Him.

In his distress, the psalmist had called on the name of the Lord to save him (116:4). Now he again calls on the name of the Lord, but this time in praise (116:13, 17). His praise is expressed in his public statement of faith through the thank offering and drink offering (“cup of salvation”) prescribed in the Law of Moses. It is also expressed in his attitude of service (116:15-16). He had come to realize that by life or by death God’s faithful servants are of great value in His sight.

The feasts at which these psalms were sung were times of joy and celebration. But there was always the reminder of death and struggle. The Jews were ruled by some foreign power whether it be Babylon, Persia, Greece, or the Romans. But this did not dampen their spirit of joy in God’s deliverance. He had done it before and He could do it again!

Psalm 115 was a corporate song calling all Israel to praise the Lord (notice the repeated plural pronouns). Psalm 116 is an individual call to praise the Lord. But even this personal praise was done in the assembly of His people. Together, these psalms remind us that worship is incomplete if it is not shared. We need both personal times of worship and corporate worship with other believers. That is the purpose of the church. We need each other!

The author of the New Testament book of Hebrews reminds us of this truth as well:

Hebrews 10:22-25 ...let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.