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RUF/Yahweh Bible Study  
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Psalm 116

I'm imagining the end of The Prince of Egypt, the part that makes me cry. After the whole story of Moses and the preparing for the Exodus, you finally get God's people crossing the Red Sea into safety, escaping the approaching Egyptian army by God's continued intervention on Israel's behalf. After the rushes of danger upon danger, the drama and anguish of the Passover, of the final last few people struggling across while God held the sea back – after all that, the people see that they actually made it. They made it! And they break out in song, singing praises to their Deliverer, their Redeemer. It gives me goosebumps.

Psalm 116 is like that. It feels spontaneous, like its writer (who we think is David, so we'll refer to him as David) wrote down what came to him out of an expression of joy and thankfulness for what God had done and was doing in his life. Perhaps he was even recalling the exodus of God's people and relating it to his own life and his own passover. This psalm teaches us a lot about our own experiences and about the response we must have to His graciousness in our lives. It gives us words to express what the Lord has done.

Because of the Lord's graciousness, we must praise Him.  
Because of the Lord's graciousness, we must worship Him with our lives.  
Because of the Lord's graciousness, we must worship Him in the church.

***Because of the Lord's graciousness, we must praise Him.***

The psalm starts off with our praise for Him. God's grace produces this response in us, the praise on our lips that can say, "I love the Lord." Can you say that? Is that your cry, your declaration? Are you embarrassed by such a statement?

Many times in college you'll find a couple that is doing what I call "Stealth Dating." Stealth Dating is where they go do stuff all the time, they hang out and talk all the time, they may even hold hands – but if anyone asks them if they're dating, they're incredulous and deny it like crazy. I usually have to call them out because it gets to be a joke. "Look, you're dating. We all know it; you're the only ones who don't seem to know it. Let's call it like it is – dating. Why are you so embarrassed to admit it? Why don't you want to tell people?" Marriage is getting up in front of a whole bunch of people and saying, "I love her! Ya'll here that? You ladies in the back? I love her and no one else! She's the only one for me!"

David does that. "I love the Lord! No one else. He's it!" Why does he say that? Is this rational?

There is a content, a rational behind his outburst. He says it's "because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. Because he inclined his ear to me." David has a real reason for loving God. The image here is of "a tender physician or a loving friend leaning over a sick patient to catch every accent and whisper. When our prayers are so feeble that even we can scarcely hear it, so that we question if we are really praying, God bows a listening ear and considers our supplications."<sup>1</sup>

What was the situation that gave David such assurance? We don't have specifics, but we read that "the snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold upon me; I suffered distress and anguish; The Lord preserves the simple; for you have delivered my soul from death; my eyes from tears; my feet from stumbling; I am greatly afflicted; I said in my alarm, 'All mankind are liars'; precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints; you have loosed my bonds."

This is honesty. God can deal with our honesty and our real situations. We have here a real picture of a troubled soul, of someone who recognizes spiritual warfare all around him; of a person who wished he hadn't said some things in the heat of the moment. The phrase "the simple" is a nice way of putting himself in the company of fools, the gullible, impressionable people of Proverbs. The Psalmist identifies with them. The Psalmist is even contemplating death.

Friends, have you been there? Are you there now? Are you honest with your situation? Can you identify with David here? There has to be somewhere in your life where you are seeing and feeling this. Some of you may be here all the way, depressed and despondent about lost hopes and dreams, about things not going the way you thought, the pressures of life crashing in on you from every side. Others of you are in denial. You may be putting on a happy face in order to not have to deal with reality. Or you may have only a small part of you that is grieving about something.

The message here is that God knows. He sees. God knows your heartache. He knows your depression and anguish. Go ahead and cry out to Him. He hears. That is the psalmists hope. God is standing over you listening even to your most feeble prayers. Pray them.

In this there is hope. David doesn't just leave us there. He shows us God's graciousness. "Then I called on the name of the Lord: O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul!" Verse 5 answers – "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous, our God is merciful." In just that verse alone, we see eternal grace, which is the purpose of love; we see infinite justice, as God's holiness and righteousness was satisfied in the atonement; and we see boundless mercy, which is the outcome of the life and death of Christ for us.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, p. 1067.

<sup>2</sup> From Spurgeon's notes.

Verses 6-8 say, “When I was brought low, he saved me. Return, O my soul, to your rest; for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. For you have delivered my soul from death.”

The Lord did not pass you by. Even though you were a fool, God turned toward you and gave you His grace. Even in your weak and helpless position, when you have nothing to offer Him, He offers Himself to you. He has saved you. We don’t eat at a miser’s table, but one who has set a bounty in front of us and bids us to come, eat and be satisfied.

So what is our response to this?

We are to praise Him. We must praise Him. We must stand up and say with our whole hearts, “I love the Lord!” When we are in trouble again, we must call out to Him with prayer. We must also, as a part of our praise, return to His rest for us. David is preaching the gospel to himself here.

He’s been depressed, so he preaches the gospel to himself by saying – return to the place where you don’t have to strive. Return to the place where you don’t have to work for your salvation. Return to place where you don’t have to scrounge for approval and admiration. Return to the place where you are loved and accepted for who you are and set free to follow and worship me. You’ve been wandering around searching after other idols and it’s wearing you out. Rest in me. Me alone for salvation and significance. Are you weary and heavy-laden? Take my yolk upon you and learn from me and I will give you rest. For my yolk is easy and my burden is light.

We’ve discussed the problem and God’s graciousness and one response we should have, so let’s move to the other two responses to this tremendous blessing we’ve received. We’re seeing that the words “He has” moves us into saying “I will.” The indicative (what God has already done for us) leads us to the imperative and the affirmative (what we must and want to do). We cannot switch these or we’ll be operating in works righteousness. But we also cannot just say, “Hey, thanks for the grace – now I’m out of here.”

### ***Because of the Lord’s graciousness, we must worship Him with our lives.***

Verse 9 says, “I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.” And verse 15 says, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.”

In the children’s catechism, Drew can answer the question of “Can you see God?” with the answer, “No but he can always see me – nothing can be hidden from God.” Nothing can be hidden from God. God sees and knows all things. David says that he is actually going to live in light of that truth.

Men, an amazing thing happens, or should happen, when you get married. You stop doing a lot of stupid things you did when you were single. Your wife will have an amazing effect on you to bring you in better conformity into God’s will. Simply because she’s around, you’ll probably stop doing things that you shouldn’t have been doing anyway. Some of you have experienced this anyway. You’re watching a tv show that in your head and heart you know you shouldn’t be watching but you’re doing it anyway. Your wife, or your parents, or your roommate walks in the room and – bam – you’ve changed it in a half second.

The presence of someone else can have an effect. We tell the RUF students that are dating that you shouldn’t do anything in private that you wouldn’t feel comfortable doing in front of the whole group at RUF on Thursday night.

Jesus is with us, but we forget about that. He should dampen our desire for sin. He should be the one who we want to please and not embarrass by our thoughts and actions. But we forget don’t we. But nothing can be hidden from God. Hebrews 4:14 says, “And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”

Just like in your marriage, in our relationship with God there should be no secrets. There should be an openness and integrity through and through. But unlike our marriages, God can already see.

David also contemplates his death. I think he’s thinking about it because it’s a real possibility in this situation. But because he knows God’s goodness to him, he’s okay in thinking about death. There’s a peace and calm there because he is resting in God’s graciousness to him already. Christians should have this. We should hate death because it is an intrusion in our lives caused by the fall, but ultimately it has no grip over the Christian. We should pray that we will have the faith and courage someday to die well, to die honorably and with peace that can only come with knowing that we will be eternally in the arms of our Father and Savior. That sort of thinking influences the way you live your life on earth. Not in a frantic accumulation of wealth and accolades, but in a humble fulfilling of our calling; it’s the gentle and quiet spirit that the Lord praises.

One last thought on this point. The text says in verse 16, “O Lord, I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant.” What else is a picture of serving God with our whole lives than being a servant of God? Before, we were slaves to sin and children of the Devil. Now we’ve been redeemed and we are servants of the Most Holy Loving God and His beloved children. We aren’t free agents, but we are called by our Father to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever.

At a recent presbytery meeting, we heard testimonies from men who were coming under care of the presbytery. They were to tell us of their calls from the Lord and their calls to ministry. One of them stood out in particular to me. He said that he was baptized as a baby, and although that didn’t mean anything to him at the time of course, he knows it meant something to God and that God was faithful to that vow. God pursued him throughout his career in the navy and in his marriage and in directing him to the care of a PCA pastor who met with him and loved him and eventually called him to quit flirting with Jesus and get serious about loving Him or not. He did and became a Believer. Eventually, after laughing at the idea originally, he decided to go to seminary and now will be serving an internship so he can plant a church in the Dallas area. God is faithful.

This man's response to the overwhelming graciousness of God was and is to serve him with all his life. Is your response the same?

Lastly, we see that *because of the Lord's graciousness, we must worship Him in the church.*

Verses 12-19 offer a tremendous expression of this gratitude of God's graciousness. The things that have transpired in private prayer between David and God pour out into public expression as a witness to God's people.

You can lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. We don't want to immediately make an

anachronism and say this is the Lord's Supper. David is probably thinking of the cup offered up on the drink offering of Numbers 15:10 and 28:7. This was an expression of gratitude for the atoning work of God. It is also an understanding of plenty or abundance. Although some will drink of the "cup of trembling or staggering" depicted in Isaiah 51:22, the people of God will drink from the table set for us in Psalm 23 – "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows."

Now we've moved to see that this indeed is the Lord's Supper, the cup set for us to experience the blood shed for us, the meal set for us to taste the body broken for us. Spurgeon writes about this verse in Psalm 116, "With joyful hearts, let us laud and magnify the gracious One, who has filled it so that we may drink and be refreshed. We can do this figuratively at the sacramental table. We can do it spiritually every time we grasp the golden chalice of the covenant, realize the fullness of blessing that it contains, and by faith receive its divine contents into our souls. Beloved reader, pause here and take a long and deep drink from the cup that Jesus filled, and then with devout hearts, worship God."<sup>3</sup>

When we moved to Stillwater, we attended a church that did the Lord's Supper on Sunday nights. Since we didn't go to church on Sunday nights, we therefore didn't take the Lord's Supper for three years. And the sad part is it never would have occurred to us what we were missing, and no one would have thought it was a problem either. We didn't understand. We missed out on the blessing of Christ depicted for us, a real means of grace God has given to us to renew the covenant with Him. This can only be done properly in the context of the bride of Christ with the teaching and preaching of the Word by an ordained man. This is no private thing, but a public table for God's children and He has a big and ugly and varied family.

That's why twice he says, "I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all the people." If you can't get up before a crowd and say you love a woman, you don't really love her. It has to be made known in public. So it is with God. We say things to Him with others around us. We hold each other accountable and say to each other, "Hey, I heard you say that, now stick with it." We offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving with each other. We do this in the courts of the house of the Lord.

It's good to have witnesses. "We need not be ashamed to have witnesses see us fulfill our holy vows, for this shows that we are not ashamed of our Lord. It may be a great benefit to those who see and hear us publicly praising our prayer-hearing God. How can people do this who have never with their mouths confessed their Savior? Secret disciples, what do you say to this verse? Be encouraged to come into the light and acknowledge your Redeemer. If you have been saved, come forward and declare it in His appointed way."<sup>4</sup>

This is the covenantal family. You must be welcomed here. Are you a terrible singer? I used to love to stand next to Larry Glabe, the Navigator campus minister when Julie and I were in college, because he was the worst singer I have ever heard and he knew it full well, but he loved the songs of the faith and he sang them loud and with passion. It was beautiful. Do you have doubts? You are welcome, for we all have doubts. Do you struggle? You're in good company, for we never seem to get it right and we are grieved by our lack of faithfulness, our lack of obedience and our lack of passion for the Savior. Yet we confess and are forgiven. Are you a bad parent or spouse or child or friend or student or teacher or employee or boss? Join the club – none of us fulfill our responsibilities and relationships like we ought. Yet we serve The Father, The Bridegroom, The Son of God, The Friend, The Teacher and Master, The Lord of all, The King of the Universe.

You see, it's only here that you can come as you. It's only here that you can be real and also be forgiven and called to holiness. We are the church. We are the worshipping community, God's family.

Because of the Lord's graciousness, we must praise Him.

Because of the Lord's graciousness, we must worship Him with our lives.

Because of the Lord's graciousness, we must worship Him here, together.

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<sup>3</sup> Spurgeon, p. 1071.

<sup>4</sup> Spurgeon, p. 1072.