

The Vows of a Psalmist

Psalm 116 relates some of the commitments the psalmist made to God because his heart was filled with thanksgiving. Many consider this to be a psalm of deliverance after the Babylonian captivity. However, many Israelites faced death and were saved by God. Since the author of this psalm is not named, nor is a specific instance of deliverance mentioned, it shines forth as a statement of the love of one who has perfect faith in where their salvation came from. It also shows the rejoicing, thankfulness, and praise given by a humble heart restored from the pits of despair. The psalm concludes with the psalmist's heartfelt praise, "Hallelujah," which in English is "Praise The Lord."

In Psalm 116:9, the psalmist declares that he will; provide good management of all the Lord has blessed him with, care for the inheritance given to his family, and set an example of righteousness before the people. "I will walk before the LORD In the land of the living." As long as we are in the physical realm, we also receive God's blessings. We are to use what we have been given, from one talent to vast riches, to "walk" before all humanity in a way that honors and praises God. We "walk" with what we have as we wait for Christ's return (Ephesians 4-6).

In the first half of Psalm 116:13, he vows to be satisfied with his place with God and among God's people. "I will take the cup of salvation ..." The psalmist is saying something similar to a wedding vow. "For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish." This promise is to take the whole "cup" and everything it involves. In Matthew 20:21-22 is the story when two of Jesus' disciples asked for positions in the kingdom. Jesus asked them, "Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They answered, "We are able." Shortly after that, they saw Jesus hanging on the cross and by evening, buried in a tomb. Later they understood the full meaning of the "cup" which Christ spoke of. The labor of spreading the gospel to a lost world while the physical suffering is overwhelmed by the joy of spiritual salvation. Most of us will never suffer the beatings, stoning, shipwreck, and imprisonment that the apostles endured. But can we say as Paul did; "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

The second half of Psalm 116:13 says, "I will ... call upon the name of the Lord," which is a vow that will change lives. It is a vow to stay in contact with God, grow closer to Him, follow His guidance, and obey His every command. It is a vow to stay near enough to be of service to Him and His children instantly. It's being part of the family, calling Him Father, to talk to Him in prayer, and listen for His counsel contained in His word.

One result of "calling upon the name of the Lord" is the overpowering desire to thank Him. Since He is God and owns everything, what can be given in return for the blessing He gives us? The psalmist says in Psalms 116:17, "I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving ..." Other passages show what pleases God. Psalm 51:17 and Isaiah 57:15 tell of the humble, contrite heart that is acceptable to God. Psalms 107:21-22 indicates that God longs for expressions of thanks from His children. "Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing." The attitude of the individual will be displayed by what is in the heart. Thankfulness in the heart will be displayed by the peace and contentment that caused Paul and Silas to pray and sing

hymns while in prison (Acts 16:25). The heart that does not honor God with love and thanksgiving will show in the dress, manners, speech, and general attitude of the person.

Is your heart filled with love and thankfulness to and for God? Do you feel the magnitude of what God did when He sent His Son to die for you? Are you being drawn ever nearer to Him in your studies, through your prayers, and the songs in your heart? If not, please let us help you.