

Because He first loved us

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Date: 18 July 2010

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[0 : 0 0] Psalm 116 and it's on page 615. Psalm 116 beginning at verse 1.

I love the Lord for he heard my voice. He heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. The cords of death entangled me. The anguish of the grave came upon me.

I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord. O Lord, save me. The Lord is gracious and righteous. Our God is full of compassion.

The Lord protects the simple-hearted. When I was in great need, he saved me. Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.

For you, O Lord, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed, therefore I said, I am greatly afflicted.

[1 : 1 5] And in my dismay I said, all men are liars. How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. O Lord, truly, I am your servant.

I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have freed me from my chains. I will sacrifice a thank-offering to you and call on the name of the Lord.

I will fulfill my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord.

Thank you. Thanks, Chris. I'm going to ask Tom. He's going to come up and speak. Before he does, I'm going to pray for Tom.

[2 : 1 9] Is that okay? Yep. Easy. Good now. Let's pray for Tom. Father, we thank you again for your goodness to us, and we thank you for your gifts towards us in people.

We thank you for Tom. We thank you for Tom. And we ask now that you would help him as he preaches and seeks to explain this psalm to us.

We pray that our attention, our focus will be drawn not to him, but to you. We pray that you would fill him and us with your Holy Spirit, so that we may not only hear your words, but understand them.

That they would take effect in our lives, changing us and transforming us. And so we pray that we will all be encouraged and built up through what we are now going to do together.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Sorry, before you start, there are pens around.

[3 : 3 4] If anybody wants to take notes, on the back of your new sheet, there's a little spot there. If you'd like a pen, I have some here. Anybody want one? Okay.

Okay. Well, it wouldn't be right unless I had my usual Sunday morning greeting. So, good morning, everyone. Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. So, as Johnny has mentioned, today we're going to be talking about love.

And by way of introduction, I'm going to talk a little bit about who or what do we love. So if we can think of some things that we love in our lives. And as Johnny mentioned, how do we know that we love them?

So I'm going to play a little, well, it's not a game, but a little exercise. That if you know that I love these things, raise your hand, nod your head, whatever it might be.

So when I was younger, I loved the turtles. Did anyone know that? Yeah. Now, I love football. I don't know that. Yeah.

[5 : 00] I love grace. Does anyone know that? Okay. And I hope that you all know that I love the Lord. Some of these things were demonstrated.

So like with the turtles, people knew that I loved the turtles because I dressed up like Raphael. The red turtle. I had borrowed my mum's red bandana. She didn't mind.

But yeah, so the way we show that we love things is we live it out. We demonstrate that love. So with football, I play football. I talk about football.

With grace, I show her my love. I tell her about my love. And it's the same with the Lord that we need to show him that we love him. We need to tell him that we love him. Yeah, so this psalm is all about God's love.

So we're going to go behind the scenes first. And we're going to look a little bit about this psalm and where it fits in with the Bible. So a bit of background is that this psalm makes up what is called by the Jewish the Hallel.

[6 : 05] This word means praise. And if you haven't made the connection, Hallelujah means praise the Lord. And Hallel is the Hebrew word for praise. So there are six psalms in the Hallel, 113 to 118.

And these psalms form part of their liturgy, their customary public worship together, things they sing at feasts. So it's part of that.

It's a psalm of praise. And looking more specifically at this psalm, it's a personal experience of a man. It could have been a king. It may have been David.

But we're not told who it was. So there's one man's experience of death. When communally sung, that death may have been understood as a deliverance from Egypt of the Jewish people.

But nonetheless, this psalm is about the experience of God's love in the psalmist's life. So this psalm can be roughly taken in two sections. From verses 1 to 11, which is talking about God's love being shown.

[7 : 07] And verses 12 to 19, where we can see the response to God's love. Okay, so the first point is that the Lord loves the psalmist.

So when I was preparing this, what hit me straight away was the first four words. I love the Lord. And that's what I kind of focused on in preparing that it's about the psalmist's love for the Lord.

About how he loves the Lord. But then in thinking a bit more, it's not actually his love that's primary. It's God's love for the psalmist.

So as we read on, we see how God demonstrates his love to the psalmist. So we see in verses 1 to 2, that the Lord hears the psalmist's cry for mercy.

The psalmist was in a terrible situation. Death was very close to him. But he cried out to God. And the Lord heard him. So in verses 1 to 2, I love the Lord, for he heard my voice.

[8 : 07] He heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. So our God is a God who listens.

He's not a far off and distant God who we can't be in touch with. But he is one who hears and answers when we talk to him. Okay, so how else does the Lord show his love to that psalmist?

He delivers him from death. We are made aware of this, again, terrible situation that the psalmist is in in verse 3. The cords of death entangled me.

The anguish of the grave came upon me. I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Okay, so this man is in fear of death. He suffered anguish.

As we read, he was overcome by trouble and sorrow. Yet the Lord delivered him from that situation. In verse 6, we see that he was in great need and the Lord saved him.

[9 : 04] In verse 8, he declares that his soul has been delivered from death. His eyes from tears and his feet from stumbling. So the Lord has shown to the psalmist his great love by delivering him from death.

Okay, and another way in which the Lord shows his love is that he protects him. So in verse 6, it says, The Lord protects the simple-hearted. When I was in great need, he saved me.

Okay, so the psalmist comes out with a statement of how the Lord protects the simple-hearted. It's just a simple, sincere, it's not complicated. He trusts and that's it.

There's no complication about his faith. And the psalmist has the assurance that the Lord will continue to protect him. It's not, he says this in the present tense. The Lord protects.

It's not a past thing only. It's not only for the future, but it's a present protection for the simple-hearted. Okay, so having looked at how the Lord demonstrates his love to the psalmist, we can ask, why does he show that love?

[10 : 09] Okay, so in verse 7, we can see that the Lord shows his love to the psalmist so that he can rest. Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.

In the Lord's deliverance and protection, the psalmist can rest. A good note I saw on rest was that he can enjoy a state of unthreatened well-being, knowing that the Lord is protecting him.

So he can rest. Another reason why the Lord delivers the psalmist is so that he can walk before the Lord. So in verses 8 and 9.

For you, O Lord, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living. So delivered so that he can rest, and delivered so that he may walk before the Lord.

And this walking for the Lord, living his life for him, is a public thing. It's in the land of the living. It's not in his bedroom. It's not in his own house. It's in the land where there are people all around him.

[11 : 17] And we see in verse 10 that these things come about by faith. So that resting and that walking for the Lord is by faith. In verse 10 it says, I believed, therefore I said, I am greatly afflicted.

So these, in verse 4 and verse 10 and 11, there are quotations. And I think those can be taken as the psalmist's prayer when he was in trouble. So it was his faith that caused him to cry out to God.

And it's through his faith that he can rest. And that he can walk and live for God. So now having, we can see how this psalm talks to us about how the Lord loves the psalmist.

How he does that and why he does that. We can move on to talk about how the Lord loves us. This psalm points us to how the Lord loves us. So how does he show that love?

As I previously mentioned, this psalmist may have been a king. It may have been David. But there is a king who went through anguish, trouble and sorrow for us.

[12 : 24] Let's look back at verse 3. It says, So when preparing this, what came to mind was Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane.

He was overcome by trouble and sorrow because of what was ahead of him. Listen to his words in Matthew. Then he said to them, this is Jesus speaking, My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.

Stay here and keep watch with me. Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, My father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.

Yet not as I will, but as you will. So he cried out to his father that if it were possible, that this task that God had prepared for him would be taken away.

But he was obedient. He followed through with what God the Father had planned for him. And Jesus was delivered over to death at that time for us.

[13 : 33] So that we can have life. We, like the psalmist, are in danger of death. Not only a physical death, but also a spiritual one, because of our rebellion against God.

Because of our natural state, we deserve to be separated from God because he is perfect. We have a sinful nature and we deserve to be separated. But like God shows in verse 5 to the psalmist, his graciousness, righteousness and compassion, likewise he does to us in Christ.

Listen to this in Romans 5 verse 8. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

So we deserve not only punishment in the future, but we deserve immediate punishment, that is death, for our rebellion. There's nothing stopping God, apart from his own grace towards us, from ending everything now because of our sin.

But God has delivered us from that. And then by faith, he promises to protect us and give us life for all eternity, trusting in what Jesus has done.

[14 : 49] So like the psalmist, we can see how the Lord loves us and how he's shown it to us in Christ. And likewise, there are also reasons why he delivers us.

So again in verse 7, we can have rest. We can have perfect rest in Jesus and listen to his invitation to us in Matthew chapter 11.

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

We can have rest in Jesus because he has done it all for us. We don't need to earn God's love. He has already loved us. And yeah, when speaking this, when preparing, rest is something that I need to preach this to myself as much as to anyone else.

That we can have rest from fear of punishment, rest from feeling the need to earn a salvation, rest from fear, rest from worry, rest from feeling that you have to get everything right.

[15 : 58] Rest from everything because of what Jesus has done. So, another reason, just like the psalmist, is that we are delivered so that we can walk before the Lord.

So we can rest in Jesus and we are delivered so that we can walk before the Lord. And again, it's in the land of the living. God saves us and then sends us into the world to be his witnesses, to demonstrate that love that he has shown us to other people.

And again, this resting and walking comes by faith. In verse 10, I believed, said the psalmist, therefore I said, I am greatly afflicted.

And it's through faith that we can rest, through faith that we can walk. So we need to trust in him and we will find rest and we will be commissioned to live for him in this world.

So we have seen that the Lord loves the psalmist and the Lord loves us. But how did the psalmist respond to the Lord's love? Okay. The psalmist loves the Lord.

[17 : 10] In verses 1 and in 12 to 19, we can see the psalmist's response to the Lord's love that was shown to him. As I mentioned earlier on, what I focused on initially was the psalmist's love.

But that in fact was a response to God's love. Listen to this. I love the Lord for he heard my voice. He heard my cry for mercy. So it was the love expressed because of love towards him.

And as we read through the rest of the psalm, we can see how he responds. In verse 12, the psalmist asks the question, How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?

He then goes on in the following verses to explain to us how he responds to the Lord's love towards him. Okay. So in verse 13, it says, I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

One translation of the Bible puts it like this. I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. I think this is helpful to understand what is meant by this lifting up of the cup of salvation.

[18 : 23] That it's a receiving of what God has done. The receiving of God's love. It's not something that he needs to do to add on to what God has done, but it's something that he needs to receive, receiving God's love.

From what I understand about the cup of salvation, that this could be referring to a cup of wine drunk by the Jews at a meal, which would then result in a thank offering.

They had sacrifices at Thanksgiving in the Old Testament. Or it could be referring to the cup drunk at the Passover meal. But whatever cup has been referred to, it's been in reference to Thanksgiving for what God has done.

So in response to God's love, the psalmist is thankful. And we can see that thankfulness in verse 17. I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the Lord.

So, in receiving God's love with thankfulness, he calls on the name of the Lord. So he is thankful for what God has done and he calls on the name of the Lord. The Lord is the one that he will call on, who he will cry out to for help.

[19 : 30] He is the one he can trust in and depend on for the rest of his life. Like in verse 2, I will call on him as long as I live. So another response, so there's being thankful, calling on God's name and service.

In verses 14 and 16 and 18 we see how he wants to serve the Lord. He's talking about fulfilling his vows about how he is God's servant.

Again, fulfilling my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people. So the psalmist declares himself to be someone who is going to serve the Lord. And again, it's not a private matter, it's a public thing, to be lived out in the presence of all the Lord's people.

So the response is to God's love, receiving that love, being thankful, calling on the Lord and service. So having looked at the psalmist's response, let's ask the question, what will our response be?

Do we love the Lord? What is our response to God's amazing love? Will we, like the psalmist, take the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord?

[20 : 48] Have we received what the Lord has done for us? It's not something we need to do more, but it's an accepting of what he has done. So as I mentioned, the cup of salvation could be referring to a cup drunk at the Passover meal called the cup of redemption.

And this is something that the Jews use at the Passover meal to symbolize the blood of the Passover lamb back in the times of Egypt when that blood saved them from the punishment that the Egyptians faced of the death of the firstborns.

And Jesus, on the night that he was betrayed, while observing the Passover meal, he took a cup and he used it to symbolize his own blood. Not the blood of the lamb of long ago, but his own blood shed for us.

So have we received that cup of salvation that Jesus offers to us? The salvation that is available to us by faith. That in Jesus' blood shed for us for our sin, we can be forgiven and enjoy spending eternity with him.

Okay, so have we received? Do we call on the name of the Lord? In verse 13, I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

[22 : 08] So this calling, it's not just a vocal exercise, it's a living exercise. It's not just a verbal expression, it's not just words. In Romans, Paul says, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

And it's not just a verbal thing. The word that Paul uses for calls is the same that he uses when talking about how he appeals to Caesar in Acts.

In that case, he was asking that his case as he was arrested would be judged by Caesar. He was throwing himself on Caesar's mercy. He was submitting to Caesar's authority.

And there were implications of calling on Caesar. He would have to be obedient to Caesar's ruling. Whatever Caesar said, that is what would go. He had to be obedient to Caesar's procedure, the way of doing things.

And it's exactly the same with us. That calling that we need to do on the Lord is an obedience to God's authority. It's to throw ourselves at his mercy and to submit to what he wants for us.

[23 : 18] But it's not submission to a tyrant or to a far-off king, but to a loving, gracious, righteous, and compassionate God that we can see in this psalm.

Verse 5, The Lord is gracious and righteous. Our God is full of compassion. So have we received? Do we call on the name of the Lord?

Do we respond with thanksgiving? So like the psalmist, he offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Lord. But for us, we don't need to offer those same types of sacrifices like they did in the Old Testament.

But we have a different way of doing things. And Paul explains a bit about this in Romans chapter 12. Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices.

Holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship. So this is our sacrifice done to God. This is our thank offering.

[24 : 23] This is to offer ourselves in service to him out of thankfulness for all that he has done. So this verse in Romans also talks about service. Another way that the end of it can be translated is that this is your rational service.

And the word that's used there is *logikos*, it's the Greek word, and that means logical. And when Paul says in view of God's mercy, the logical thing, the rational thing to do is to serve him because of all that he has done for us.

So as the psalmist offers his service to the Lord, in verses 14, I will fulfill my vows to the Lord, 16, I will fulfill my, 18, I will fulfill my vows to the Lord, and 16, he declares himself to be God's servant.

And just like the psalmist, so should we declare ourselves to be servants to the Lord. But what does that service look like? What is it like to serve God?

Well, it's to live as he wants us to. He wants us to get to know him more through reading his word, through talking to him, through spending time with his people. He wants us to be representatives for him in this world, doing what he would do, saying what he would say, if it were him in that situation.

[25 : 47] He wants us to make him known to other people through what we say and how we live. We need to live God's way, not our own. We need to live like Jesus lived.

So, in response to God's love, do we receive what he has done for us? Are we thankful? Do we call on his name and will we serve him?

And one of the ways, as we've seen, that the psalmist responds is with rest. And that, too, should be our way of responding. We can be responding by resting in all the ways that I was mentioning earlier.

And that resting is one of the ways in which we can publicly demonstrate our love for the Lord. Resting in Jesus. People will notice that we are a peaceful, a joyful, a loving people because of that rest that we have.

So, like in the case of the psalmist, these acts of receiving, of thanksgiving, of calling, of service, of resting, are all public demonstrations of our own love for the Lord.

[26 : 58] So, as sinful people, we will never be able to love the Lord as we should. We'll never be able to love him as he wants us to love him. But thanks to God's amazing grace, his love for us doesn't depend on whether we love him or not.

He has already loved us. The title of this, of what I'm talking about is, we love because he first loved us. And it is Jesus' life that counts for us if we trust in him.

He is the one who loves God as we should. And because of God's grace, through faith in Jesus, it's as if we are not only Jesus has done it, it's as if we have done it as well by faith.

So we can rest in Jesus, that we don't need to love God any certain amount, any degree before being loved by him. That's already done. God has already loved us. And then we are free to respond to God's love by loving him in return.

So from this psalm we can see how the Lord loves the psalmist. And he shows that love to him and has reasons for it. And it's the same with us.

[28 : 12] It points to how the Lord loves us. Again, he demonstrates it to us and there are reasons for it. The psalmist's response to God's love is in loving him in return.

And then the challenge is, do we love the Lord? Do people around us know that we love the Lord? If I were to do that same exercise at work or in college or in school with my friends or if you did it with your friends, would people raise their hands?

Would people nod their heads if they asked? If you asked, do you know that I love the Lord? Let's make that a challenge. Can we make that known to other people that we love the Lord?

Can we, like the psalmist, declare in verse 1, I love the Lord? And it's because of how he first loved us. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your great love to us.

thank you that before we were born, before we could walk or talk, you loved us.

[29 : 32] And Lord, thank you that that love doesn't depend on what we do. It just depends on you and how much you love us. Thank you for your word which teaches us about your love.

love. Thank you for how you have loved the psalmist and demonstrated that to him for our benefit as well as his. Thank you for how you love us in Christ.

Please help us to trust in what Jesus has done, that he has taken our punishment. And by faith we can have life. thank you for the psalmist response modelling how we are to respond to your love in loving you in return.

Please help us to love you as we should in a public way, not just on a Sunday, not just with our church family, but amongst our friends, to be someone, to be people who are known to love the Lord.

Lord, please help us with this. Help us to be confident in our love for him. Lord, thank you that you teach us and Lord, thank you that you help us to live as you want us to.

[30 : 53] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.