

PM Psalm 66 Come and hear - the power of testimony

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- [0 : 00] Come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. We looked at Genesis 6 and verse 18.
- Come into the ark. Seeing Christ as our ark, in whom we find safety. And we looked at Luke 14 verse 17.
- Come, for everything is now ready. Also on Easter morning we looked at Matthew 28 verse 6. Come, see the place where he lay.
- Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead. In the first four of those texts the speaker was God.
- Either in person or in a parable. In the fifth it was an angel. Now in our text today the speaker is a man.
- [1 : 06] Though that man of course is inspired by God. The word come actually occurs twice in this psalm.
- In verse 5, come and see what God has done. He is awesome in his deeds toward the children of men. And in verse 16, come and hear.
- All you who fear God. All you who fear God. And I will tell what he has done for my soul. Both of them are what we would call testimonies.
- And that is my theme tonight. As you have seen from the title on the notice sheet. The power of testimony. The first is Israel's national testimony.
- The second is the psalmist's personal testimony. The first, the national testimony.
- [2 : 15] The national testimony is to be seen. In the sense that it is evident to the whole world. It's written in the history books.
- The second is more private. And therefore it has to be heard. From the mouth of the psalmist himself.
- Who alone can tell us. How God has helped him. In his own personal life. Well I want us to look at both of these tonight.
- And to go on from there. To consider what kind of testimony. We might have. In these New Testament times. And to ask you.
- Do you have a testimony? Let me say at the outset. How important.
- [3 : 14] I believe testimony to be. I could preach. All kinds of doctrine. About God.
- I could speak of his majesty. Of his holiness. Of his power. And his love. And it would all be wonderfully true. But it would remain.
- Just theory. Unless I could. Flesh it out. With real life experience. Either. Either.
- Experiences. In the world. Or. In my own. Personal. Experience. That is what testimony does. It demonstrates.

Doctrine. In a practical way. And it can be very powerful. People can be.

[4 : 14] Unmoved. By doctrine. They shouldn't be. They should be. Deeply moved. By it. But very often. People are. Unmoved. By doctrine. Because they just don't.

See. Its relevance. To their own lives. But a testimony. Shows them. Its relevance. Now when I use.

The word testimony. I'm not using that. In a limited sense. As if it were limited. Just to conversion. Testimonies. You know.

In some. Evangelical churches. If you are asked. To give your testimony. You're being asked. To tell. How you became. A Christian.

And some. Find that easy. And some. Don't find it. So easy. To see. But a testimony. Is more than that. A testimony.

[5 : 17] Is any evidence. Of God. At work. Whether in conversion. Or. In any other way. Neither of the testimonies.

Here. Is actually. A conversion testimony. But they are no less. Powerful. Than that. For that. Now.

A testimony. Is. Speaking. Of what. God. Has done. I will tell. What. He has done.

For my soul. The psalmist. Says. A testimony. To what. God. Has done. It's not a testimony. To what. We have done. Very important.

That we. Fix that. In our minds. Sometimes. I've listened. To conversion. Testimonies. And the word.

[6 : 17] I. Seems to. Appear. More often. Than the word. God. We hear. All about. That person's.

Lurid. Past. Before. They were. Saved. And. Sometimes. You get. The impression. That. They relish. Talking about. These things.

I'm sure. You've heard. Testimonies. Like that. Where people. Will speak. A great. Length. Of how. They were. Into. Drink. And drugs. And all the rest. And then.

The Lord. Saved them. Full stop. But. It's all. Been. About. Their terrible past. Rather than. Focusing. On what. God.

Has done. For them. Here. However. In Psalm 66. The psalmist's. Concern. Is for what.

[7 : 12] God. Has done. He says. Very little. About himself. The focus. Is on God. Come. Come. And see.

Come. And hear. And I will tell. What he has done. For my soul. He's recommending. God. To us.

And that's what a testimony. Is meant to do. He's not telling us. These things. Simply out of interest. He's certainly not saying them as a matter of boasting.

He wants. Everyone. To worship God. For what they have seen. And heard from him. So.

Let's come now. To this psalm. No one. Knows for sure. Who the author was. It doesn't state an author. At the beginning. But it could very well.

[8 : 15] Be David. It's surrounded. By psalms. That are. By David. Headed up. To the choir master.

The song. A psalm. It's one of 55. Five psalms. Addressed. To the choir master. Clearly intended. To be sung.

It was David. Who first. Created a choir. For the singing. Of the psalms. When the ark. Was brought. To Jerusalem. So it seems.

Quite likely. That it was by David. We can divide it. Into two parts. Corresponding. With those two.

Invitations. To come. Verses. One to twelve. Are national. Inviting. All the earth. To consider.

[9 : 11] What God. Has done. For Israel. But then. Verses. Thirteen. To twenty. Are personal. Inviting.

Us. To consider. What God. Has done. For the psalmist. Himself. So first then. God's mighty works.

For Israel. In verses. One to twelve. With the invitation. Coming in verse five. Come. And see. What God. Has done. The psalmist.

Begins. With. A call. To worship. To all. The earth. In verses. One to four. Shout. For joy. To God. All the earth.

Sing. The glory. Of his name. Give. To him. Glorious. Praise. Say. To God. How awesome. Are your deeds. So great. Is your power. That your enemies.

[10 : 07] Come cringing. To you. All the earth. Worships you. And sings. Praises to you. They sing. Praises. To your name. We sometimes.

Think. That the. Old Testament. Was concerned. Exclusively. With Israel. And that it was only. In the New Testament. That the vision. Is broadened.

To all nations. But even in the Old Testament. There is this. International. Vision. In the beginning.

God created the heavens. And the earth. All of them. The earth. Is the Lord's. And all its fullness. And all the earth. Owes him.

Worship. And obedience. Israel. Israel. Israel. Was intended. To be the light. Of God. To the whole world.

[11 : 01] Abraham. Was promised. Not just. I will make of you. A great nation. But also. That in. You. All the families. Of the earth. Shall be blessed.

Yes. The ultimate. Fulfillment. Of that. Is in Christ. Christ. But even before that. It was God's intention. That the world. Should see. His love. And his power. In Israel.

And that the world. Should worship him. On account of that. And that is the thought. Behind the invitation. In verse five. Come.

And see. What God. God. Has done. And from what follows. We gather. What he means. Is what God. Has done. For Israel. This is the reason.

Why the whole earth. Should praise him. He goes on. To describe. What God. Has done. For the nation.

[12 : 00] In verse six. He turned the sea. Into dry land. They passed through. The river on foot. There did we rejoice. In him. Who rules. By his might. Forever. Whose eyes.

Keep watch. On the nations. Let not the rebellious. Exalt himself. The reference is of course. To the crossing.

Of the Red Sea. When Israel. Passed through. On dry land. With the waters. Stacked up. Either side of them. But then.

The Egyptians. Pursuing them. Were drowned. As the waters. Came and flooded. Back over them. There. The Israelites.

Had indeed. Praised God. God. You can read that. In the song of Moses. In Exodus 15. I will sing to the Lord. For he has triumphed. Gloriously.

[12 : 55] The horse. And his rider. He has thrown. Into. The sea. The psalmist. Wants the world.

To acknowledge this. He wants the world. To worship God. For the powerful God. He is. The God. The God. Who could do.

Such a miracle. Bringing his people. Out of Egypt. Come and see. He says. Come and consider. These. Well known.

Historical. Events. See how powerful. Our God is. See how he has loved Israel. And delivered them.

From their enemies. Come and see. We use the same language today. Don't we? When something remarkable happens.

[13 : 50] Occasionally Jane will call out to me. Come and look at this. And maybe a deer has walked across the field. Opposite us. Or maybe a pair of pheasants is walking across the driveway.

Here's something extraordinary. Something worth getting out of your chair to come and look at. Well that effectively is what the psalmist is saying here.

Here's something worth getting out of your chair to look at. Come and see what's going on for Israel. Come and consider. The power.

That God has shown. This is something that is worthy of the whole world's attention. Not that they could literally come and see.

The waters of the Red Sea parted of course. That had happened long ago. But these things were written in the history books. They were well known.

[14 : 50] And the whole world should pay attention. He urges the whole world to bless God for this. In verses 8 to 12.

Bless our God, O peoples. And the plural is intentional. Nations. Let the sound of his praise be heard.

Who has kept our soul among the living. And has not let our feet slip. And he goes on to reflect on this.

For you, O Lord, have tested us. You have tried us as silver is tried. You brought us into the net. You laid a crushing burden on our backs. Quite literally, when they were slaves in Egypt.

They had burdens upon their backs. You let men ride over our heads. We went through fire and water. Yet, you have brought us out to a place of abundance.

[15 : 46] To the land of milk and honey. Interestingly, the same language is used in Isaiah 43. Regarding the exile in Babylon.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned.

That was Israel's testimony. And Israel today could likewise speak of great deliverances. As a nation.

How remarkable it is that after the horrors of the Holocaust. Israel should emerge as one of the most powerful nations in the Middle East.

God has done wonderful things for them. As a nation. Come and see. The psalmist says.

[16 : 48] And worship God. But then he goes personal. Verses 13 to 20. With the invitation in verse 16.

Come and hear all you who fear God. And I will tell what he has done for my soul. He begins this second section of the psalm.

With a personal promise. To worship God. Remember the first section began with. A universal call. To the world to worship.

The second personal part of the psalm. He begins with a personal promise. To do so. I will come. Into your house with burnt offerings. I will perform my vows to you.

That which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble. I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals. With the smoke of the sacrifice of rams.

[17 : 49] I will make an offering of bulls and goats. You could see that as a personal response to God's goodness to the nation of Israel.

But as we read on we realize that something more is going on here. The psalmist has had his own personal experience of deliverance.

He's had his own mini exodus if you like. He'd been in trouble. Like the Israelites in Egypt.

And God had delivered him. In answer to prayer. He had evidently prayed and vowed.

That if God would help him he would worship God. And God had helped him. And now he promises to fulfill that vow.

[18 : 49] And worship the Lord. In the Old Testament manner. With sacrifice. We may just pause to reflect on our duty to keep our vows.

How often people pray in a time of trouble. Make all sorts of promises to God. Of what they will do if he helps them. And then when things begin to go right again.

They forget all about it. I remember Dick Lucas. Preaching to a large congregation. Regregation of men. In St. Helen's Bishop's Gate.

In the city of London. Back in the 1970s. Reminding them of how many of them. Had made vows during the Second World War. And in a time of trouble.

They had vowed. That if God brought them home in safety. They would worship God. They would serve God. They would keep the commandments. They would do all kinds of things. If only God would save them.

[19 : 50] And God had saved them. And decades had gone by. And not a sign of those vows being fulfilled.

Now remember Dick Lucas pressing upon them. Now is the time to pay your vows. Now of course we don't.

Worship the Lord with bulls and goats. With animal sacrifices. Now the sacrifice that we offer up.

Is the sacrifice of our lips. Praising God. And trusting. In the one true sacrifice. Of Christ on the cross.

The psalmist then had prayed. God had delivered him. And he promises that he will now worship God. But he wants us to share in this.

[20 : 51] And so we come to that invitation in verse 16. To consider this personal experience of his. He invites us into the inner sanctuary of his heart.

Come and hear. All you who fear God. And I will tell what God has done for my soul. Only those who fear God will be interested.

The rest will dismiss it as just his imagination. But those who fear God will know. That this is real. He describes his experience in verse 17.

I cried to him with my mouth. And high praise was on my tongue. If I cherished iniquity in my heart. The Lord would not have listened. But truly God has listened.

He has attended to the voice of my prayer. And he ends with praise. Blessed be God. Because he has not rejected my prayer.

[21 : 55] Or removed his steadfast love from me. This is the psalmist's testimony. God had heard his prayer.

Now if it was David who wrote this psalm. We can easily imagine some of the circumstances. In which he might have written it. We know that David prayed often.

When he was being pursued by Saul. And God saved him. And brought him into the kingdom. He prayed no doubt in Saul's palace.

When Saul was threatening him with a spear. He prayed no doubt in the fields. When he was waiting for Jonathan to come. And give him the all clear.

Or otherwise. He prayed out in the wilderness. He prayed in the cave. He prayed in exile amongst the Philistines.

[22 : 58] He prayed in battle. And God had heard him. Again and again. But whether it was David or not.

All of the Lord's people. Surely can testify to this. That God has heard our prayers. Consider this.

The psalmist is saying. God really does answer people's prayers. He has answered mine. Consider this. And worship God.

And trust in him yourself. And he will hear your prayers too. But now let's take it a step higher.

And consider the testimony. That we have. In these New Testament times. God has delivered us.

[23 : 58] In a far more powerful way. Than he delivered the psalmist. He has delivered us from our sins. Through the death.

Of Jesus Christ. Conversion experiences vary. It may have been. A dramatic conversion.

Like Paul. On the road to Damascus. Or it may have been. A much quieter experience. Like Timothy. Who from a child. Had known. The Holy Scriptures.

We may have been. Lifted from the. Depths of despair. Like David. In Psalm 40. Which we sang. He drew me up. From the pit of destruction.

Out of the miry bog. And set. My feet upon a rock. Or the light. May have dawned on us. More gently. But either way.

[24 : 58] We have passed. From darkness. To light. We have passed. From death. To life. That's. A big change.

We have been rescued. From God's judgment. And brought in. Into the kingdom. Of God. That. Surely. Is a testimony.

Worth talking about. People. Talk about. The things that have happened. In their lives. And they get. Very excited. Because they've enjoyed.

A nice holiday. Or perhaps. They've met an old friend. In the street. And yes. These are. Nice things. Good things. Worth talking about. God. But the great.

Spiritual change. That has happened. To us as Christians. Isn't that. Rather bigger. Than all those things. That we talk about. Day by day. Isn't it worth.

[25 : 55] Talking about. And it doesn't end. Of course. With. Conversion. Since then.

We can say. That we have gone through. Many experiences. And God has been with us. We've been tried. As silver is tried. As the psalmist says here.

And he's brought us out. Into. A place of abundance. Paul says. Blessed be the God. And Father. Of our Lord. Jesus Christ. Who has blessed us. In Christ.

With every spiritual blessing. In the heavenly places. Is that just theory. To you. Or is that your experience. If it's your experience.

It's worth talking about. If you are a Christian. Then you can say. With the psalmist. In Psalm 40. He put a new song.

[26 : 51] In my mouth. A song of praise. To God. The New Testament. Is full. Of testimonies.

To God's saving grace. And power. There is. For example. That man. In Mark 5. Who was. Delivered. From a whole. Legion.

Of devils. Jesus said to him. Go home. To your friends. And tell them. How much. The Lord. Has done. For you. And he did.

Indeed. He did. He did. More than that. The Bible. Says. He went throughout. The Decapolis. Telling everyone. The Decapolis. Were the ten cities. Greek cities.

Sophisticated cities. He was this man. Who. So. Wanted people. To know about his savior. He went throughout. The region. Where he lived. Telling them.

[27 : 52] What God. Had done. For him. There is that. Bold. But. Simple. Testimony.

Of the man. Born blind. In John 9. Dragged. Before the Pharisees. He says. One thing. I know.

That though. I was blind. Now I see. Testimony. Doesn't have to be long. To be effective. And of course.

There is Paul. Whose conversion experience. Is related to us. Three times. In the book of Acts. Story itself. Is told in. Acts 9.

But then again. It's told by Paul. Himself. Before a hostile crowd. In Acts 22. And then before a gripper. In Acts 26. How the Lord himself.

[28 : 49] Had met him. On the road to Damascus. How he'd actually. Been on his way. To persecute. The Christians there. When the light. Shone from heaven. The risen Lord.

Had appeared to him. And had called him. To be an apostle. He gives his testimony. Again. In his letters. In various ways.

1 Timothy 1. 12. For example. I thank him. Who has given me strength. Christ Jesus. Our Lord. Because he judged me. Faithful. Appointing me. To his service.

Though formerly. I was a blasphemer. Persecutor. And insolent opponent. He concludes from that. Christ Jesus. Came into the world.

To save sinners. Of whom. I. Am chief. And Paul's testimony. Didn't end there. In his letters.

[29 : 47] He relates. His experience. All the trials. That he'd been through. As an apostle. And how the Lord. Had helped him. In those trials.

One of my favorites. Is in. 2 Timothy 4. At my first defense. No one came. To stand by me. But all deserted me. May it not be charged.

Against them. But. The Lord. Stood by me. And strengthened me. So that the message. Might be fully proclaimed.

And all the Gentiles. Might hear it. What a wonderful testimony. The Lord. Stood by me. Now the question is.

Do you have. A testimony. I hope you do. Every true Christian. Does have a testimony. testimony. If you really don't have.

[30 : 50] Any testimony. Of any kind. Then maybe. You still need to be saved. But if you have. If you are a Christian.

Then you will have a testimony. And you should not be afraid. To give it. You shouldn't be afraid. To tell people. What God has done.

For your soul. When a useful opportunity. Arises. To do so. At the very least. If you are hesitant.

About sharing your. Personal experience. You can obviously. Testify to the great truths. Of the gospel. You can speak.

You can speak. Of how Christ Jesus. Came into the world. To save sinners. That I suppose. Is the equivalent. Of the national testimony. Here in Psalm 66.

[31 : 45] Come and see. The mighty works of God. You can say. How Christ. Came into the world. And died. For our sins. True.

Like Israel's deliverance. Out of Egypt. It happened long ago. But these things are written. And they're true. And they're wonderful. And they're worth speaking about.

But hopefully. You can go further. And speak also. Of your own. Personal. Testimony. Of how you yourself.

Found salvation. In Christ. And how he has helped you. Along the way. Now I know.

Our church. Doesn't give many opportunities. For public testimony. We used to have. A men's breakfast. Where sometimes. Testimonies. Which were given.

[32 : 44] Which were. Sometimes. Very helpful. Though that hasn't been possible. For some time now. But it doesn't have to be. Public in the church.

There's nothing to stop you. From giving your testimony. Privately. In conversation. With other Christians. To encourage them. And occasionally.

If people are interested. And are willing to listen. To non-Christians. As well. It could. Just change their lives.

Maybe we're reluctant. To speak about. Our personal experience. Maybe these things. Seem too private. Or maybe we're afraid.

That we might appear. To be boastful. Or drawing attention. To ourselves. But the scripture. Encourages us. To speak.

[33 : 42] Let the redeemed. Of the Lord. Say so. Is what it says. In Psalm 107. Let them not keep it. To themselves.

Let them say so. Let them tell. What God has done. For their soul. Maybe we should encourage. One another in this.

Ask your fellow Christian. Over a meal perhaps. How they became. A Christian. Or how the Lord has helped them. Through some recent trial.

And you may be surprised. What a blessing it is. To hear of the Lord's work. Amongst his people. Today. May the Lord. May the Lord.

May the Lord. Give us all. Rich experiences. Of his love. And his power. And help us to share them. To his praise.

[34 : 39] Amen.