

Something In Return

Introduction. Psalm 116 is a psalm of thanksgiving where the writer has enjoyed deliverance from peril by the hand of God, causing him to praise God and express his gratitude. While there is a lot to digest in the psalm, we will focus on a question raised in vs. 12.

We enjoy vast benefits from the hand of God, and we must personally deal with the matter of how we will respond. This is entirely relevant for us in this dispensation because the New Testament is about heaven's grace manifested in Christ and man's response to that grace.

I. ***The Blessings Given By A Gracious God***

- A. There are two broad categories of blessings.
 1. There are physical benefits (Genesis 9:3; Job 5:10; Psalm 136:25; Acts 14:17; 17:25).
 2. There are spiritual benefits.
 - a) These benefits are found only in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3).
 - b) He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).
 - c) He predestined us (Ephesians 1:5).
 - d) Redemption and forgiveness are through His blood (Ephesians 1:7).
 - e) He revealed His will to us (Ephesians 1:9).
 - f) We have obtained an inheritance (Ephesians 1:11).
 - g) He sealed us with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13).
- B. The blessings of Psalm 116.
 1. Answered prayer (vs. 1).
 - a) Through knowledge and experience, the writer knew God had heard his voice and had considered his supplications.
 - b) Prayer is a privilege, not a demand; it is not a right or "telling" God what to do, but an advantage given to us by God (cf. John 11:41).
 2. Preservation (vs. 6).
 - a) The "simple" are those without guile; those who are sincere, honest, and genuine in their dedication to God.
 - b) We are still "kept by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5). This military term indicates the guarding done by soldiers and the present tense emphasizes our need for the continual protection in the struggle of the soul. This protection is the guarantee of the final victory.

3. Salvation (vs. 6).
 - a) Most believe this psalm was written either by David or Hezekiah. In either case, one of these men were "brought low," and God saved them.
 - b) But we can apply and echo the same confession; we were brought low by our practice of sin, but when we responded to the gospel, God saved us (Titus 3:5).
4. Providence (vs. 7).
 - a) "Providence" comes from the Latin *providentia*, signifying "foresight." It is the God-conceived power which sustains and guides human destiny (Genesis 50:20).
 - b) In the context of Psalm 116, God's providential dealings are demonstrated in His hearing our prayers, in preservation, and in salvation.

II. **How We Are To Respond To A Gracious God**

A. Love.

1. This is written as cause and effect. Because the writer's supplications were heard, he loved God (cf. 1 John 4:19).
2. God has so manifested Himself to us, and so loved us and provided for us, there is every reason for me to love Him (Matthew 22:37; 1 John 5:3). Real obedience is based on real love, and that produces a real relationship with God!

B. Praise.

1. "Praise" comes from the Latin *pretium*, and is generally defined as an ascription of value or worth. True praise is produced by your being convinced that something has worth or value; the expression of that conviction is praise (Psalm 48:1).
2. You begin with a knowledge of God; knowing Him, you are impressed by His power, worthiness, and love; you develop convictions about God, and as those convictions find expression in words, deeds, songs and behavior -- that is praise (Psalm 109:30). The better we know God, the more we will express our conviction of His worth.

C. Worship.

1. Worship is the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity (Psalm 95:6-7; 96:8-9; Revelation 14:7).
2. Worship is the response from the heart touched by the goodness of God. In view of all His benefits to us, how can we claim to be too tired or too busy to worship Him?

D. Fear.

1. When we consider who God is, we should be prompted to love, praise, and worship Him. But there is also fear.

2. This is not terror; it is respect or holding God in the highest esteem and dreading any thought of displeasing Him (Psalm 4:4; 33:8-9; Proverbs 8:13; Ezra 10:3).

E. Sacrifice.

1. There may be in many the attitude, "My body is mine and I do whatever I want with it." So there are people abusing and neglecting their bodies because "it feels good."
2. The right attitude is reflected in Romans 12:1-2. Can we have Christians who present their bodies as a living sacrifice, denying the carnal elements of the world?

F. Service.

1. No human being can escape service of some sort; either you are serving God or you are serving sin (Matthew 6:24). You certainly are not doing both at the same time.
2. Sin has nothing to offer you. Satan promises what he cannot give, and he gives what he never promised. Serve God (2 Timothy 2:4; Hebrews 12:28).

G. Gratitude.

1. As we meditate on all the good we have received from God, our hearts should swell in gratitude.
2. Colossians is a brief document, but it contains five different references to gratitude (1:3, 12; 2:6-7; 3:17; 4:2).

H. The payment of our vows.

1. Under the Law of Moses, the Jews could participate in vows, indicating penitence or renewed dedication, but they had to be kept (Numbers 30:2; Ecclesiastes 5:4-5).
2. What does this mean to us? It means that every good commitment we have made to God, we must take seriously, starting with our obedience to the gospel.

Conclusion. God is not up in heaven begging us to please worship and be faithful to Him. Our response to God should be based on what He has done for us. The hymn, "There Is A Sea", by Lula Zahn, expresses the idea of the psalm very well:

There is a sea which day by day,
Receives the rippling rills,
And streams that spring from wells of God,
Or fall from cedared hills.
But what it thus receives it gives,
With glad unsparing hand,
A stream more wide, with deeper tide,
Flows on to lower land.

There is a sea which day by day,
Receives a fuller tide,
But all its store it keeps, nor gives,
To shore nor sea beside.
It's Jordan stream, now turned to brine,
Lies heavy as molten lead,
It's dreadful name doth e'er proclaim,
That sea is waste and dead.

Which shall it be for you and me,
Who God's good gifts obtain?
Shall we accept for self alone,
Or take to give again?
For He who once was rich indeed,
Laid all His glory down,
That by His grace, our ransomed race,
Should share His wealth and crown.

If you are ready to throw off the yoke of sin and serve God from an obedient heart, then do so because of how God has blessed you and the promises which He has given.