

## SUMMER PSALTER: BOOK FIVE

### Eyes and Skies of Faith

#### Psalm 116:1-19

#### *Overcome By Trouble*

Intro: Some think this is probably a Psalm of David.

Everyone knows the overwhelming feeling of contemplating a flood of problems in the dead of night. Nothing looks so bleak as a host of fears in the dark.

God rescues us through his goodness. Rest for the soul comes with the knowledge of God. He delivers us from sorrow, tears, and stumbling. His light pierces the darkness, the deceit, and the dismay.

**I. Picture God Turning His Ear:** "He turned his ear to me" (v2). \*\*\*You are in a noisy restaurant, and a friend gets your attention and wants to tell you something. So you turn your ear toward him, letting him know that of all the sounds around you, his voice is the one you want to hear.

A. Historical. This is what God did for Israel. They were dying in the mud pits of Egypt, and they cried to the Lord, and he heard them.

Think of the deliverance from Egypt which Israel so often thought and talked and sang about. Some see in it the deliverance from Egypt an ancient author.

Can you remember when you prayed and received an answer? Do you remember how God heard your cry when you were lost in sin? He saved you by his grace. Do you remember how he heard your cry for your children?

B. Your love of God is in a part a product of his attention to you: "I love the Lord, for he heard my voice." This language may seem strange to you. The author expressed this love for God before Jesus came to die on the cross for us. He came to love God because he saw God's activity in his life, his deliverance, and he knew that God loved him and was caring for him. We love God because he first loved us. When you have a keen sense of God's deliverance, you love him.

C. His history with you calls for persistence and faith on your part: "I will call on him as long as I live." No doubt you could become more cynical as you age. But you do not have to. You can become more trusting, faith-filled, as you age.

**II. Feel the Cords:** "The cords of death entangled me" (v3)

A. Historical: the Israelites in Egypt

B. Picture these slimy cords all around you, sliding along your arms and legs and torso, capturing you. These are the cords of death, and they are tripping you up—entangling you. What does it mean? Is the author about to die? Maybe.

C. Further description of these cords of death:

1. ANGUISH of the grave came upon me. This could be sorrow for the death of a loved one or fear of your own death

2. OVERCOME by trouble and sorrow.

C. The cords of death are the same whether the impending death is yours or another's that you love.

D. "O Lord, save me!" (v4). Here is the cry of one trapped by death. Hebrews 2:14-15: Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

1. God delivers us in our salvation. He rescues us from our sin.

2. After this rescue, we know that no rescue is impossible for him. We are eager to call out for his help. We do not need to know the cause of this trouble. Maybe the author is reaping a just reward for his sin. Maybe he is suffering from the sins of others.

Maybe it seems to him like a random event in nature—the cancer has struck him instead of another. In any and all events, the one who has been delivered from the mud pits of Egypt cries out to the God he loves for rescue.

**III. Be at Rest:** "Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you" (v7)

A. The restless soul syndrome: you are always tossing and turning on the inside. You cannot figure things out. You want to work the puzzle, solve the problem, make all add up, but you cannot get to the satisfying outcome.

\*\*\*We like puzzles and novels and television dramas because they resolve with neat endings. Unlike Sudoku or the Crossword puzzle, life doesn't resolve perfectly for you.

B. Talk to Yourself. The author here is instructing himself, correcting himself.

C. Rehearse the goodness of God. When you get into the downward cycle of despair and anxiety, remind yourself that God is good. He is watching over you. The goodness of God is a fundamental tenet of our faith. We believe in the goodness of God in the land of the living.

D. Internal peace and rest are achievable because God is good.

E. Internal rest is NECESSARY. We need this quality of rest. Life is difficult without it. Some of us seem genetically prone to save the world. We are continually worried about achieving success. We are always reaching for more. We need to be careful in all our efforts and activities that we do not operate in the flesh, in our own strength, supposing that we are the rescuer. God is the one in charge. He will do it. Every night when I put my head on the pillow, I know that the work is not done. But I have to be able to rest even in the midst of the battle and storm.

F. Rest is REPEATED: "Be at rest ONCE MORE"

#### IV. Believe and Speak: I Believed; therefore I have Spoken (v10; quoted by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:13)

A. Paul calls this the "spirit of faith." "With that same spirit of faith..."

1. The unbelieving seem to full of words. I got a magazine this week that is specifically against faith. It is full of articles about why faith is silly. The unbelieving have lots of words.
2. There are times when the unbelieving have nothing to say. Their mouths are shut, and their hearts are shut. They stand in silence before the mystery that none can fathom.

B. In the face of death, those who do not believe are often speechless. But the Apostle Paul quotes this verse, and then talks about faith in Christ and the assurance of the resurrection.

C. People of faith need to speak. We have something to say in the most difficult times of life. We do not need to understand how things happen. We just need to communicate the WHO of our faithful God. He delivered us in our trouble, and he is the great deliverer for all who call upon him.

#### V. See Death through Eyes of Faith: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (v15)

A. God's children do not die without purpose or plan. Death itself is of great concern to God. He often pulls us back from the brink of death, rescuing us as he did this author who was wrapped in death's cords.

B. And when the time approaches for us to die, God is our nurse. He stands by our death bed. He smooths our pillow and touches our brow. This moment of transition from time to eternity is of great importance to him. You will find him there when death draw nears.

C. I want you to be comforted by this phrase, all of you who are grieving the loss of a loved one, whether recent or many years in the past. God attends the funerals of his people. He is there by the casket. He is in the viewing room. He is with us in the chapel when we rehearse the truths to which we hold.

D. "You have freed me from my chains" (v16).

\*\*\*I remember the first time I heard a chain gang approaching. It is a distinctive sound. The chains strike rhythmically on the concrete. The prisoners have to walk in unison because they are not only chained hand and foot—they are chained to each other.

We all have chains that bind us—chains of fear and guilt, addictions that keep us from being all we should be. It is an ancient condition, being a prisoner to these internal terrors.

Jesus came to liberate the captive. He does this essentially by breaking the hold of sin upon the soul. The chain of guilt is broken because he forgives us. The chain of evil habits is broken because he has the power to conquer sin. Even the fear of death that stalks us falls to the one who rose from the dead. He sets us free from our chains.

Conclusion: Have you ever been set free from the chains of guilt and sin? Do you know what I am talking about?