

When You've Been Delivered.

Psalm 116

INTRODUCTION

Me and others

The first few verses of this Psalm are taken in part and thought from the 18th Psalm Egyptian Hallel Psalm, see bookmark from Mays. God tends to grant longevity of life to people who obey him. Allen translates v 15, *Yahweh counts too costly the death of his lieges*. First commandment with a promise this may well tie into the idea of Psalm 115:17 **The purpose of this Psalm is to Praise God for His deliverance and to encourage others to take hope. Public acknowledgement of God's goodness is expected and exhorted.** Service to God is freedom

Allen

It consists mainly of testimony, but direct praise of Yahweh occurs in vv. 8, 16, 17a. It was evidently composed for recitation at a service of thank offering in the temple courts during one of the great festivals (vv. 14, 18, 19). It uses traditional language which may often be paralleled elsewhere in the Psalter, but it has a vivacity of its own. **The actual situation of distress envisaged is not clearly described, except that it represented a threat to life, vv. 3, 8, 15, and involved human infidelity, v 11.** To a certain extent this vagueness is typical: "The psalmist does not intend to relate what happened to him, but to testify what God has done for him" (Westermann, *Praise*, 109). But this psalm is more indefinite than usual. Sickness which led to ostracization and persecution is a probable background. Persecution in the form of false accusation (Kraus, *Psalmen*, 970) is hardly implied by v 11. Perhaps the psalm was deliberately framed indefinitely to cover more than one occasion for thanksgiving.¹ ... **DATE:** The psalm is generally assigned to the post-exilic period on account of the Aramaisms in vv. 7, 12, 16 (l indicating the object). If this dating is correct (contrast Dahood, *Psalm III*, 145), as it probably is, it rules out attempts to regard the psalm as royal.²

BACKGROUND

Allen

The people had gathered for a festival. Amidst the communal worship in the temple courts there were services in which individuals had opportunity to bring thank offerings and to accompany their sacrificial worship with words of testimony and praise for answered prayer. This psalm was composed for recitation in front of the congregation on such happy occasions. It expresses well the joy and gratitude of a person delivered from an overwhelming crisis which had threatened his life.... The psalmist declares his love and commitment to lifelong thanksgiving in return for Yahweh's positive hearing of his previous complaint. His praise rehearses how his life had been pervaded by an aura of death. He was being lured to his doom—until he used Yahweh's powerful name in appeal. He has learned a lesson he commends to others, that Yahweh fulfills his obligations to those in covenant relationship and shows himself true to his promises. This divine act of love is what prompts his own love of v 1 (cL 1 John 4:19). The general truth that Yahweh looks after the helpless who cannot cope by themselves has been proved from his personal experience of grace. Yahweh has taken away his source of anxiety (cf. 42:6 [5]), and now he may enjoy new peace of mind. He challenges himself to enter into this blessing. The human mind does not quickly lose its habit of worrying and needs urging to keep pace with reality instead of dwelling on the nightmares of the past.¶It is all over now. In relief and fervent praise the psalmist

¹ Allen, *Psalmen*, p. 114

² Allen, *Psalmen*, p. 114.

turns from the congregation to address God directly, giving thanks for renewal of life and for the gifts of security and happiness. He can now enjoy fellowship with God in God's World, whereas before he felt already in Sheol and far away from Yahweh (cf. 22:2, 16 [1, 15]; 88:4—6 [3—5]). How right he was to keep his faith in his extremity! Dire circumstances forced him to admit human infidelity and to turn to the only one who was reliable (cf. 62:9—10 [8—9]; 118:8). **His faith has been vindicated and implicitly he encourages others to hold onto their faith, come wind, come weather.** Yahweh has certainly proved worthy of his trust. So indebted does he feel that he despairs of responding adequately to divine blessing. But the unpayable nature of the debt does not absolve him from making what contribution he can. He has come forward to offer a libation of wine as part of the ritual of the thank offering. It is a testimony to God's salvation for all to see, accompanying a vocal testimony to his great name for all to hear. He is thus publicly fulfilling the vows to bring a thank offering, which he made in his time of distress. ¶ **Psalm 116 is a devout and radiant song of thanksgiving.** Its negative reminiscences serve to enhance the greatness of the God who keeps faith and delivers. Its positive assessment of everyday life is that it has rich potential for enjoying God's grace and peace. **God is here—in this world—and that to bless us, is his grateful testimony' vv. 5—6.** A Christian thanksgiving cannot resist a reference to eternal life, and properly so (2 Tim 4:17—18), but the Israelite believer's lack of such a long-sighted perspective at least made him set maximum value upon the God given resources of this life, and so upon God himself.³

Mays

Psalm 116 is a song of thanksgiving (Introduction, sec 5.3). It is the praise of one whose prayer for help has been answered. The heart of the song is a narrative of salvation. In a past predicament of life-threatening trouble (vv. 3, 10, 11), prayer was made (v. 4); the **LORD** heard and helped (vv. 1, 2, 6, 8, 16). In the prayer, vows of sacrifice and praise were made. Now the one who has been saved comes to the temple bringing sacrifice (vv. 13—14, 17—19) and singing this song as thanksgiving to the **LORD** (vv. 8, 16) and as testimony about the goodness of the **LORD** (vv. 5, 6, 9, 15) to the people of the **LORD**.¶ In the Greek and Latin Bibles, Psalm 116 is divided into two psalms. Verses 1—9 appear as Psalm 114 and verses 10—19 as Psalm 115. In liturgical practice also, parts of the psalm have been used separately. There is, however, a literary design that unifies the song. Something essential is missing when its performance begins, for instance, with the question, "What shall I return to the **LORD** for all his bounty to me?" (v. 12). The song is composed of three parts (so L. C. Allen and others).⁴ ... Though Psalm 116 was composed for use by an individual in a service of thanksgiving, it came in time to play a liturgical role in celebrations of the larger community. The text of the psalm required an occasion when a cup and a sacrifice figured in the rituals of celebration. It found two closely connected occasions. The first was the celebration of Passover. Psalm 116 is the fourth in the sequence of psalms, "the Egyptian Hallel," that were read during the course of the Passover meal (see Psalm 113, sec. 4). According to the Mishna (*Pesachim* 10:1—9), reporting on the way the meal was ordered, four cups were raised and blessed in its progress. Psalms 115—118 were recited in connection with the fourth cup, which supplied a ritual reference for "the cup of salvation." The recitation of the psalms was introduced by a thanksgiving to the **LORD**, who "brought us from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to a Festival-day, and from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption" (*Pesachim* 10:5). Introduced in this way, the psalm's language is turned into thanksgiving for the salvation celebrated at Passover. The psalm becomes the thanksgiving of every participant in Passover who thereby acknowledges that each was delivered in the salvation of Exodus.⁵

6116:1

³ Allen, *Psalms*, p. 116.

⁴ Mays, *Psalms*, pp. 368, 369

⁵ Mays, *Psalms*, p.371.

⁶ Allen, *Psalms*, p. 114.

Mays, Love Five Ideas

The song opens with a declaration of love for the **LORD** (v. 1). The declaration attracts attention because of its uniqueness in the Psalter; there is only one direct parallel, the opening of the great thanksgiving Psalm 18, where a different verb is used. But no other declaration so rightly responds to salvation from death! Indeed, “I love the **LORD**,” as introductory theme, defines the whole song as a declaration of love. The psalm says what form thankful love takes. **First**, love “calls on the name of the **LORD**.” The lover calls out to the beloved by name. The set expression is used for prayer (v. 4) and praise (vv. 13, 17). The name invokes the person and the presence of the other; its use is a confession of belonging (cf. 79:6; 80:18). **Second**, love finds rest in the beloved (v. 7). The soul freed from distress and anguish goes where the beloved is to shelter thenceforth in God’s keeping. **Third**, love lives always as if in the presence of the beloved (v. 9). It keeps the **LORD** always present to memory and will (cf. 16:8). **Fourth**, love fulfills its vows to the beloved (vv. 14, 18). Promises made are promises kept. Faithfulness in the keeping of promises binds the saved to the savior. The promises are kept in public, “before all the people of the **LORD**,” as a witness of love to the one who is loved. (On vows and their role in praise, see the discussion in Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, pp. 75—78.) **Fifth**, love serves the beloved. A servant is one whose life is defined by belonging to another (see Introduction, sec. 6.16). “**LoRD**, I am your servant, the child of your serving girl” (v. 16; cf. 86:16) is a declaration of unconditional, everlasting fealty and devotion.⁷

Word Study

The word *Love* in the Psalms in the NIV is translated from one of two Hebrew words. One is from the Hebrew דָּסַגְ, but in verse 1 the word בָּהָא: Gildersone makes this comment: It indicates desire, inclination, or affection, in some passages “intimacy and affection, the cleaving of soul to soul is implied.”⁸

Word Study

NIV Mercy רַחֵם־נִי־יָהּ gracious (רַחֵם־נִי־יָהּ) from רַחֵם־נִי־יָהּ and righteous צַדִּיק־נִי־יָהּ [PSA072NT.doc - Righteousness](#)

116:2

Leupold

The Lord is represented as bending down from heaven to catch the plea from the lips of His child. The conclusion of the writer’s resolve is that he will continue to call upon the Lord as long as he lives, implying quite likely, whether he is in trouble or out of it. What these two verses say emphatically is that the writer has grown to love God. All this is quite obviously based on the opening verses of Ps. 18, which must have been known to the psalmist.¹⁰

116:3

leupold

How precarious the situation had been is now described in figurative language (vv. 3, 4). He was like a being who was entrapped and all but fully caught in the meshes of the hunter, who

⁷ Mays, *Psalms*, pp. 370, 371

⁸ Gilderstone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 110. See 111 for דָּסַגְ.

⁹ From Allen, *Psalms*, p. 112. For this shortened traditional formula cf. 103:8 and note. Heb. רַחֵם־נִי־יָהּ “dutiful” refers to the relationship between master and servant: see K. W. Neubauer, *Der Stamm CUNN*, 126—30 (cf. 27:7, 9; 86:2—4; 102:14—15). In v 5b רַחֵם־נִי־יָהּ echoes the more customary רַחֵם־נִי־יָהּ.

¹⁰ Leupold, *Psalms*, p. 805.

was death. The **second** figure likens the danger to narrow walls that are closing in on a man, for that is the root meaning of the term “distress.” “Sheol” is here synonymous with death. Even as distress found *him*, so *he* found trouble and sorrow. Whether this suggests sickness unto death or some form of danger cannot be determined. **The psalms often seem to be purposely vague regarding such situations so that any man might find his own situation reflected.** When everything thus closed in on him, he “called on the name of the Lord,” which is more than the bald statement of calling on the Lord. The name implies the fullness of revelation that the Lord has made concerning Himself. His cry is given in brief and seems rather poignant: “O Lord, I beseech Thee, save my life” or soul as the Hebrew states it, life often being the meaning of the word. Petition is not so much a matter of many words as it is the effective approach to the name of the Lord. The poet does not go on to say that the Lord then heard him. That has already been said at the very outset. V. 3 is again based on Ps. 18:4.¹¹

Mays DEATH

The thematic word is “death.” This terrible, final word is used in all three parts of the psalm (vv. 3, 8, 15). The psalm speaks of death in a special way that is found in a number of prayers for help and thanksgiving psalms. This way of speaking of death has two aspects, both of which are present in this song. First, death and Sheol are equated; the phenomenon and the place are used as synonyms (vv. 3, 8, *16b*). Together the condition of being dead and the location of the dead are conceived as a sphere of power that invades the realm of the living and entangles life. Where distress and its tears, and anguish and its stumbling, grasp the living, one is already in the sphere and power of death. The living are not dead, but death conditions their living. By speaking of death in this way, the psalms give expression to the mortality that is unveiled by serious trouble. They assign the ultimate category of death to a fiction to reveal the possibility it evokes, the possibility of not being there. The psalms then can speak of God’s help as deliverance from death, salvation from its sphere and power, the liberation of life. (See 30:3; 33:19; 49:15; 56:13; 86:13; 89:48.) There is a telling illustration of the interpretive use of death language in Psalm 88:3—7. Consult the comment on Psalms 30 and 88. By casting neediness and divine help in the categories of death and life, the prayers reveal what is always at stake in human dependence on God.¹²

116:4

116:5

Leupold

The next section (vv. 5—9) describes the new experience of the nature of the Lord that grew out of being delivered from such trouble. Two attributes are combined that do not usually appear in union. They are “gracious” and “righteous.” The first stresses the undeserved character of the help given, the second the energy with which God maintains His honor according to His covenant obligation to His people. He is also marked by a deep sympathy for the one in need—“merciful.” These qualities are intensified when one considers that the psalmist belonged to the class of those individuals who were called the “simple,” which implies keeping the mind open to instruction though this word is not always used in the good sense. After this explanation as to why the Lord extended His help to His true follower the writer summarizes his experience from another point of view: “I was brought low, and He helped me,” the implication being that He lifted him up.¹³

116:6

¹¹ Leupold, *Psalms*, p. 805.

¹² Mays, *Psalms*, p. 369.

¹³ Leupold, *Psalms*, pp. 805, 806.

116:7**Leupold**

Still elaborating on what befell him (vv. 7—9), the writer soliloquizes by exhorting himself to enter into the full enjoyment of the rich rest that God has created for him by delivering him and saying to his soul: “Return to your rest.” Luther rendered this beautifully: *Sei nun wieder zufrieden, meine Seele* (Be content again, O my soul). As a motive for enjoying this newly won rest to the full the writer describes what has just transpired: “The Lord has dealt bountifully with you,” which, by the way, is an inimitably beautiful touch of the *KJV*. It seems as though his experience was so rich that the psalmist can do nothing more than again and again to describe what he lived through. The effective summation of it all is classic in its beauty: “Thou hast delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from slipping.” He must have skirted very close to the edge of destruction. This statement was not original; it appears in Ps. 56:13, which with a slight variation includes also v. 9 of this psalm. This last verse seems to express, not so much a resolution (“I will walk,” *KJV*) as the permissive idea: “Now I am permitted to walk again before the Lord,” a feeling that is often very strong after deliverance and seems to imply that one’s whole life is now actually being lived in the sight of the Lord.¹⁴

116:8**Allen, Death issues, 8, 9, 15**

The psalmist has learned by experience how reluctant Yahweh is to allow the premature death of those who are united to him in covenant relationship, and how quickly he rushes to avert such a tragedy (cf. 72:14). His earlier appeals to that relationship had borne fruit, thank God. True to his obligations as Lord, Yahweh came to his aid and released him from Sheol’s prison. So he brings his thank offering and thanksgiving in humble gratitude to his divine patron. He is glad to stand there in the temple precincts, testifying to Yahweh’s faithfulness.¹⁵

116:9**116:10****Leupold**

The last two verses of this section (vv. 10, 11) are admittedly difficult, even to the point of the despair of some commentators. It would seem that the writer had said some things during the time of his great trouble, words that might have been construed as though he had been driven to the point of abandoning the faith. It appears that he here speaks in self-defense. With this approach in mind, let us paraphrase what he says: I did not cast away my faith at the time when I said what could be misconstrued; true, I was greatly afflicted and spoke under the stress of strong emotion; but what I said at the time was: “All men are utterly unreliable.” That was, however, not so much a pessimistic reflection upon how evil other men are but rather a statement to the effect that, in the last analysis, help must be sought from Him who alone is absolutely dependable. Thus that statement led me back to seek help from God. It would seem that these two verses help to clear up a little issue that had arisen at a time when great distress was upon the psalmist. He disposes of the matter briefly, for it was not of great moment. The important truth was throughout that he had not at any time denied the faith.¶When Paul quoted this statement (IL *Cor.* 4: 13) he followed the *Septuagint* version strictly, which was then commonly in use in the Greek-speaking world. This version does, indeed, render this passage: “I believed, therefore have I spoken.”

¹⁴ Leupold, *Psalms*, p. 806.

¹⁵ Allen, *Psalms*, pp 115, 116.

Though this may not be a defensible translation, it is not out of harmony with the spirit of the original utterance and, therefore, not a distortion of it.¹⁶

116:11

116:12

Leupold

Though the one subject of the payment of vows is under consideration, it is developed in two parts. The first of these thinks in terms of vows as such and the need or manner of the payment of them. **Vows were never commanded in the old covenant.** The point stressed was always that, when they were made, they had to be kept punctiliously. Here all this is considered under the head: “What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?” First of all he mentions what may well have been a kind of symbolic gesture: a man would take up a cup filled with good wine, and the drinking of it, perhaps publicly, would typify that, even as the pleasant draft is drunk, so does a one gratefully take to himself all that the Lord has granted him. For in that connection the person involved would “call upon the name of the Lord,” which had, perhaps, better be translated, “proclaim the name” (*des Herrn Namen predigen*). This would then mean that a man would tell all that the Lord had done for him. This is the first step in proper thanksgiving. ¶He then vows (v. 14) that he will pay his vows, whatever they may have been—a matter that is too personal and need not be specified precisely. That is to be done publicly so that men may learn that some mercies of God are being acknowledged. To this the writer at this point appends a new bit of knowledge that he acquired as a result of his experience, namely, that the death of the Lord’s saints is precious in His eyes (v. 15). That seems to involve at least two things. One is that He is manifestly watching over what takes place even when His saints are not rescued but seemingly perish. The other is that He frequently intervenes and will not allow them to perish. His saints can have assurance either way. This thought is closely analogous to Ps. 72:13, 14. ¶The psalmist then continues to dwell on the same thought of paying his debt of gratitude to Him who delivered him (vv. 16—19). What seems to have gained new meaning for him is that he stands in the relation of a servant to the Lord, that is, a member of His household even as his godly mother had been before him. He has been true to the family tradition (cf., Ps. 86:16). This was why the Lord set him free when bonds entangled him. Thus he again vows to pay those obligations that a grateful heart promised to the Lord when his great deliverance came, and pay them publicly and in the holy city, which was sacred with many associations for the people of God.¹⁷

116:13

116:14

116:15

Mays

Second, death and Sheol are viewed as a condition and place that is beyond any possible relation to God. The dead are not reached by God’s steadfast love, nor are songs of thanksgiving heard in Sheol. Death and Sheol are used phenomenologically to describe the final helplessness of the dead rather than interpretively of the living (see 6:5; 30:9; 115:17; and the comment on Ps. 88:10—13). This way of speaking about death is present in verse 15. The death of the faithful is

¹⁶ Leupold, *Psalms*, pp. 806, 807.

¹⁷ Leupold, *Psalms*, pp 807, 808.

“costly,” or “grievous” to the **LORD**, because when they die their praise is silenced and their witness in the land of the living is lost to God.¹⁸

Me

God tends to grant longevity of life to people who obey him. Allen translates v 15, *Yahweh counts too costly the death of his lieges*. First commandment with a promise this may well tie into the idea of Psalm 115:17

116:16

My Notes

Service to God is freedom

116:17

116:18

My Notes

If you love the Lord, public declaration should never be a problem.

116:19

¹⁸ Mays, *Psalms*, p. 370.

When You've Been Delivered.

Psalm 116

BACKGROUND

Verse 13...The text of the psalm required an occasion when a cup and a sacrifice figured in the rituals of celebration. It found two closely connected occasions. The first was the celebration of Passover. Psalm 116 is the fourth in the sequence of psalms, "the Egyptian Hallel," that were read during the course of the Passover meal. According to the Mishna reporting on the way the meal was ordered, four cups were raised and blessed in its progress. Psalms 115—118 were recited in connection with the fourth cup, which supplied a ritual reference for "the cup of salvation." Introduced in this way, the psalm's language is turned into thanksgiving for the salvation celebrated at Passover. The psalm becomes the thanksgiving of every participant in Passover who thereby acknowledges that each was delivered in the salvation of Exodus.¹⁹

The purpose of this Psalm is to Praise God for His deliverance and to encourage others to take hope. Public acknowledgement of God's goodness is expected and exhorted.

It is the praise of one whose prayer for help has been answered. In a past predicament of life-threatening trouble (vv. 3, 10, 11), prayer was made (v. 4); the **LORD** heard and helped (vv. 1, 2, 6, 8, 16). In the prayer, vows of sacrifice and praise were made. Now the one who has been saved comes to the temple bringing sacrifice (vv. 13—14, 17—19) and singing this song as thanksgiving to the **LORD** (vv. 8, 16) and as testimony about the goodness of the **LORD** (vv. 5, 6, 9, 15) to the people of the **LORD**.

God Delivers an Individual in Great trouble.

An individual in great trouble.

vv. 1, 3, 4, 8, 11.

The actual situation of distress envisaged is not clearly described, except that it represented a threat to life, vv. 3, 8, 15, and involved human infidelity, v 11.²⁰

Doing the right thing in great trouble,

vv. 1, 2, 4,

Confidently calling upon the Lord

V 6, with "simple faith"

See Luke 18:17

Having great confidence in the LORD.

He knew his Lord well

¹⁹ Mays, *Psalms*, p.371.

²⁰ Allen, *Psalms*, p. 114

V 5, 6**Gracious²¹ and righteous**

The first stresses the undeserved character of the help given, the second the energy with which God maintains His honor according to His covenant obligation to His people. He is also marked by a deep sympathy for the one in need—"merciful."²²

Merciful, full of compassion

See above.

He knew the Lord's attitudes towards the death of Saints

The Lord tends to prolong the live of those who live for his Glory.

See verse 8,9, 15

The psalmist has learned by experience how reluctant Yahweh is to allow the premature death of those who are united to him in covenant relationship, and how quickly he rushes to avert such a tragedy (cf. 72:14).²³ See also Psalm 115:17, 18

Allen translates v 15=

Yahweh counts too costly the death of his lieges (saints).

Perhaps reflected in Paul's writings in Phil 1:21-26

Doubtless in Eph 6:2-3.

How the individual responds to great deliverance.***Public, unashamed fulfillment of vows, 13-14, 18-19***

Vows were unnecessary on OT, but allowed.

Public Thank offerings, v 17***Joyful submission and service, 16***

Service to God is perfect freedom.

Continued trust, v 2***Love, v 1***

²¹ See Also Psalm 103:8 Heb. חַנּוּן "gracious" refers to the relationship between master and servant, (cf. 27:7, 9; 86:2—4; 102:14—15).

²² Leupold, *Psalms*, pp. 805, 806.

²³ Allen, *Psalms*, pp 115, 116.

The word *bh'a*: Gilderstone makes this comment: It indicates desire, inclination, or affection, in some passages “intimacy and affection, the cleaving of soul to soul is implied.”²⁴

Here Love does five things:²⁵

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1. Calls on the Name of the Lord—calls the Beloved by name | 2. Rests in the beloved, v 7
freed from distress and anguish | 3. Lives always as if in the presence of the beloved (v. 9). It keeps the LORD always present to memory and will. |
| 4. Love fulfills its vows to the beloved (vv. 14, 18). Promises made are promises kept. | 5. love serves the beloved, v 16 | |

²⁴ Gilderstone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 110. See 111 for *dsj* .

²⁵ Mays, *Psalms*, pp. 370, 371