

THANKS BE TO GOD

Psalms 116:1-19

Introduction:

The writer of this Psalm did not put his name on the opening like any other ones. However, it is evident from the song that he had been greatly afflicted and even to the point of death. It appears that those he trusted proved to be fakes and they even afflicted him but when he puts his trust in God, deliverance came. The psalm is a personal testimony as the pronouns "I", "my" and "me" are used over 30 times. It also appears that He borrowed from other psalms 18, 27, 31 and 56. He also took from King Hezekiah's prayers in Isaiah 37 and his thanksgiving in Isaiah 38. Therefore this psalm is a robust one to give thanks to God for all that He had done. If Ps 115 is a congregational song, Ps 116 is a personal song of thanksgiving for deliverance from imminent death.

Why must we give thanks?

It is often said that 'he who does not think well will never know how to give thanks' and this is true of many of us including me as the chief of the ungratefults.

Let me share the attributes of the ungratefults: we do not see what works, we only see what does not work; we are not happy that we are alive, we are only concerned about our ill health; we are not thankful for our jobs, we only grumble about lack of advancement; we are not appreciative of the friends and people around us; we only complain about their inadequacies; we are not thankful for children God has given to us we are only concerned about their insubordinations; we are never happy about our vulnerability but are only concerned about our self sufficiency; we are not thankful for the bread that is on the table but complain about the lack of butter in it; we are always ungrateful for the clothes that cover our nakedness but are concerned that they are not designers brand; we are not happy about the roof over us but about our inability to renovate it for the past 5 years when thousand are living rough. The list can go on and on but I will stop there. And I am sure you would have found yourself in one or two of these categories. (to be used as prayer points at the end)

But all these constitute ingratitude and are abhorred by God

And for me in 2009, this psalm is my personal song too. The year 2009 has been a challenging one for me personally and some of you know part or all of them and some do not know and I am not going to enumerate them or mentioning them because God has been good to me and has lifted me to the top of the mountain. He has lifted the clouds of illness, disappointment, frustration, pain and despair out of

my life. Therefore all I set out to do is to praise Him and give thanks to the Almighty God my deliverer and Saviour and I encourage you all to join me.

No matter what your circumstances and situations are just give thanks to God. You may say pastor I do not have anything to thank for, my situation is different. Yes I hear you and understand, I have felt like that before and one day I just heard a song on Premier radio and it changed my perception of life and gave me the assurance that I am safe under the shadow of the Almighty, please listen and I pray that it will help you too. (Ozioma)

The writer of this psalm affirms four things about God.

GOD ANSWERS THE PRAYER OF HIS CHILDREN 1-4

The writer could not trust himself for deliverance nor healing neither could he trust the people around him because they are all flesh like him with limited knowledge, understanding and power if they have any. This does not suggest in any way that those people are untrustworthy, they may and will always want to be helpful in their own way but many times they are incapable, hence he had nowhere else to turn to other than the One who created him and breathed a breath of life into him and the one who hold his breath for help. And what happened? He received help, his life was spared and his health restored and his enemies put to shame.

How many times have you been to the Hospital and GP surgeries and they have taken blood and did X-rays and found nothing. How many times people have promised to help and they have been unable. It is not because they do not want to help you, they sincerely want to but because their knowledge and understanding is limited and the efficacy of their equipment are limited too, they cannot help you. And the people that promised you are unable to deliver their promise because they are finite and limited in resources, they are unable. But God is able and He has said in Psalms 91:15

"He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him." NKJV

Therefore, when you are in trouble or distress, call on God, ask for help and He will help you.

Zechariah 13:9 Zech 13:9 "I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; And each one will say, 'The Lord is my God.'" NKJV

GOD IS MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS 5-11

God's name represents His character. He is gracious by giving us goodness we do not deserve; He is merciful by not withholding the penalty we deserve; He is righteous because He is just and fair in his dealings and He never does wrong; He is compassionate and his love for us prompts Him to act on our behalf; and He is all powerful that nothing can stand on His way to help us.

God did not only saved him from death, He wiped his eyes from tears; He held him up and prevented him from falling.

God is the same today He will deliver you from death, held you up so that you will not fall and He will not allow you to cry. That is what he did for me this year and he also promised me that that he will do so for you now and even in the future. Only call on the name of the Lord because there is salvation, deliverance, healing, protection and blessing on calling on His name.

GOD HOLDS HIS CHILDREN PRECIOUS 12

After God delivered him, he expressed his gratitude to God in four ways according Moses' command.

1. He brought a thank offering to the sanctuary of God 17 in obedience to Leviticus 3:7; 11-17
2. Part of the sacrifice will be poured out on the altar as a symbol of the worshipper's life poured out in worship of and to serve God.
3. The priest saves part of the offering for feast after the sacrifice for the person to share his joy with families and friends and it is at that feast the psalmist publicly thank God for what He had done.
4. After the feast, the psalmist kept the promise he made during his afflictions to serve and worship God. we must not see this as a holy bribe or as contract, but as our worship to God. There is no way we can pay God for what He had done for us, all we can do is to thank Him and be helpful in His work and to others.

God loves us so much that He gave us Jesus to die in our place and because of this he is not only interested in how we live but also when we are sick and even die. Our living and dying are precious in His sight; in short God cares about us.

GOD IS FAITHFUL TO HIS COVENANT

Warren Wiersbe comments, the phrase 'I am your servant' means I am a covenant child', brought to the Temple on the eighth day, got the mark of the covenant (circumcision) and was dedicated on the fortieth day, hence he has the right to bring all his request and cares to God if he obeys Him.

But believers are under a new covenant with God in Jesus Christ because of what He had done for us on the Cross through the shedding of His blood we have eternal life. This is no guarantee for protection against pains and trials of life. In fact, He uses the pains and trials of life to bring His glory out for people to see. Because He works everything for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28; John 21:1-19; 2 Peter 1:12-15)

Conclusion:

Our Lord Jesus lived a divine timetable, he did not allow his crucifixion before the time, we would have our trials at the appointed time and we will have our deliverance at the appointed time.

But meanwhile, while we are still in pain and trials, let us give thanks to God. Do not grumble but give gratitude, may God help us to be thankful always as the year is running out.