

Sacrifice of Praise

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[0 : 00] We're in Psalm 66, and the title of the psalm says, To the Choir Master, a song, a psalm. It's a great psalm of praise to God.

I'll read it out loud first. But before I do that, let me pray. Heavenly Father, we have gathered in your name as your people.

We want to be reminded of your glory, of your awesome deeds, of your salvation, so that we can pour forth our praise to you as this psalm does.

So please speak to us, meet with us this evening. Lead us and guide us as we pray. Help us to sing and pray in a way that pleases you and according to your will.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Psalm 66. Shout for joy to God all the earth.

[1 : 07] 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 come cringing to you.

All the earth worships you and sings praises to you. They sing praises to your name. Selah. Come and see what God has done. He is awesome in His deeds toward the children of men.

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 themselves. Selah. Bless our God, O peoples. Let the sound of His praise be heard. Who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip?

For you, O God, 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. You let men ride over our heads.

[2 : 09] We went through fire and through water. Yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance. 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, I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Selah. Come and hear all you who fear God, and I will tell what He has done for my soul.

I cried to Him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. If I had 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.

Blessed be God, because He has not rejected my prayer or removed His steadfast love from me. In his reflections on the Psalms, C.S. Lewis writes about how he initially, quote, found a stumbling block in a demand so clamorously made by all religious people throughout the Psalms that we should praise God.

Still more in the suggestion that God Himself demanded it. He thought that it was a vein of God to demand praise, and unnecessary for man to encourage it, because after all, He is the eternal God, right?

[3 : 25] I mean, why should He need or want praise from us, just finite creatures? And then, as he was reflecting on this, Lewis realized that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising Him.

Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that's magnificent? The psalmists, in telling everyone to praise God, are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about. I think we delight to praise what we enjoy, because the praise not merely expresses, but completes the enjoyment.

It is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are. The delight is incomplete till it is expressed.

And that's what's happening here in Psalm 66. The psalmist tells us, and indeed the whole world, that we should offer up a sacrifice of praise to the God who saves us. And unfortunately, often we are not as effusive as we should be about praising God, because we don't delight in God as much as we should.

But this psalm can help us by priming the pump, so to speak, so that we pour forth the praises of God. And this psalm can be divided into two main sections. First, in verses 1 to 7, it's the praise for the salvation of the God who sees.

[4 : 45] And then in verses 8 to 20, it's the praise for the salvation of the God who hears. And each of these two sections can be subdivided into two different sections.

So four subdivisions that each end with the break, musical break, signified by Selah. Except for the last section, which doesn't need a break, so it doesn't have Selah.

And then there's an alternating parallelism. So in the first subsection, in verses 1 to 4, the psalmist exhorts all the earth to shout for joy to God. And then in the second subsection, in verses 5 to 7, there's the invitation to all the earth to come and see.

And then the third subsection begins with the exhortation again to bless our God. And then the fourth subsection begins with the invitation to come and hear. So the pattern is exhortation, invitation, exhortation, invitation.

And so let's first look at the praise for the salvation of the God who sees and how he exhorts and invites all the earth. So in verses 1 to 2, the psalmist exhorts all the earth to praise God.

[5 : 51] He says, Shout for joy to God all the earth. Sing the glory of his name. Give to him glorious praise. So God's glory is the sum of all his divine attributes. It's the glory is the manifestation of Godness, of this deity on display.

So when the psalmist says, Sing the glory of his name. Give to him glorious praise. He's basically saying, praise God because he alone is God and he alone deserves our praises and bring to him praises that befit his identity, who he is as God.

That's what he's saying. And then he continues the exhortation in verses 3 to 4. Say to God, how awesome are your deeds. So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you. All the earth worships you and sings praises to you.

They sing praises to your name, Selah. All the earth should praise God because his deeds are awesome and his power is great. No enemy can resist him so they come cringing to him.

So having exhorted all the earth to praise God in that way, the psalmist then invites them to come and see in verses 5 to 7. Come and see what God has done. He is awesome in his deeds toward the children of men.

[6 : 59] 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 themselves, Selah.

All right, so in verses 1 to 4, I don't know if you're noticing the connection. The psalmist exhorted all the earth to praise God for his awesome deeds and power. And now he invites them in verses 5 to 7 to come and see his awesome deeds and might.

So there's a parallel there. And the primary example that he uses to illustrate God's awesome deeds is his deliverance of Israel from Egypt. It says, He turned the sea into dry land.

They passed through the river on foot. This is a reference to Exodus 14, 15, where the Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground because God parted the sea on their behalf for safe passage. And then the psalmist assumes the voice of the entire congregation. And when he says, There did we rejoice in him who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations. Of course, the psalmist wasn't there in person at the time of the Exodus because this psalm was written hundreds of years later.

[8 : 04] But the psalmist writes as if he himself were there because the Exodus kind of is the prototype of God's salvation of God's people. It's the first deliverance event after which God's people were really born.

It's what constituted God's people from slavery. And so because of that, it symbolically represents all the different ways in which God delivers his people over the centuries.

And so he sees himself in the Exodus as being delivered by God. And there is a connection also between the invitation to come and see with the description that God's eyes keep watch on the nations.

All the earth should come and see the God who sees and praise him because he's an all-seeing God who watches over the nations. And then in verses 8 to 15, we turn to another exhortation to all the peoples to praise God.

And he says in verses 8 to 9, Bless our God, O peoples. Let the sounds of his praise be heard who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our foot slip.

[9 : 06] The word people is the same Hebrew word for the word that means nation. And when it's in plural here, it doesn't refer just to God's people in particular, but to all peoples and nations, all the people groups in all the nations.

And so the psalmist is exhorting all the peoples of the earth to praise God for the way he has kept and delivered his people. And he says that he has kept their soul among the living and has not let our foot slip.

And soul is really another way of just referring to their life because God has kept them. And then in verses 10 to 12, the psalmist elaborates on how exactly God has kept their soul. And he says, For you, O God, 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. You let men ride over our heads. We went through fire and through water. Yet, you have brought us out to a place of abundance.

Here, the psalmist compares the various tests and trials that God's people have experienced through the years, through their national history. And he compares that to the refining that takes place for silver.

[10 : 12] It's those trials and sufferings that they experienced were the ways in which God tested them and refined them to burn away the dross and to form the character that he desires in them, the faithfulness he desires from them.

And the psalmist describes that as we went through fire and through water. So, that's a literary device called merism where you use two extreme words to inclusively refer to everything in between.

So, when you say God created the heavens and the earth, it means God created all the world, right? Not just heaven and the earth. And when it says that God is from the beginning and the end, it doesn't mean that God's just at the beginning and the end.

It means that he's eternal and occupies all time, right? So, when he says here that he went through fire and through water, that means God's people went through all kinds of trials and sufferings.

They've experienced it all and God's brought them through it.

And yet, that's not the end of the story because those trials had a purpose and he says though God brought them into the net, later he says he also brought them out to a place of abundance.

[11 : 15] God's goal, his intention was to bring them to a place of abundance. And when he reflects on this corporate deliverance of God's people, then he can't help himself but to praise him personally as an individual.

And so, that's what he begins to do in verses 13 to 15. I will come into your house with burnt offerings. I will perform my vows to you 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. I will make an offering of bulls and goats to say that. So, we can see here that Psalmist is also thinking about his personal ways in which God's delivered him and kind of connecting that to God's deliverance of his people.

And the Psalmist wants to fulfill his vows that he made to him and offer sacrifices of worship to God. Then in verses 16 to 20, the Psalmist once again turns to invitations. Having exhorted them to praise God, now he turns to invite them and he says he wants them to come and hear unlike the come and see earlier.

So, he says in verse 16, come and hear all you who fear God and I will tell what he has done for my people. And the phrase all you who fear God also refers to all people, all those who fear God, not just God's chosen people, the Jews, but to all the God-fearers.

[12 : 31] So, God-fearers were the technical way in which Jews referred to Gentile converts. So, all those who fear God all over the earth, he's calling them, inviting them to come and hear.

And then in verse 9, he had spoken of how God has kept our soul among the living and now he tells personally of what he has done for my soul. And then he continues in verses 17 to 20, I cried to him

with my mouth and high praise was on my tongue.

If I had 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. Blessed be God because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me.

It's okay. And the psalmist himself had personally cried out to God in times of trouble and then God heard his prayers and rescued him. And the word hear and the word listen are the exact same Hebrew words.

And so just as earlier the psalmist invited all the earth to come and see the God who sees, now the psalmist is inviting all peoples to come and hear the God who hears. And so the great God who is worthy of all our praises, this God who sees and hears, and this God who does not forsake his steadfast love from us, he's the God that came to us in Jesus Christ.

[13:50] In 1 Corinthians 10, 1-2, Paul says, For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

So we see there that Paul sees the Exodus as the passing through the Red Sea from which the people of God was born, as a type of foreshadowing of Christian baptism from which the new covenant people of God are born.

So it was Moses that led Israelites out of slavery from Egypt, but for us it was Jesus who led us out of slavery from sin. And this is the greatest of all of God's awesome deeds.

So then what should be our proper response? And it's the same as a psalmist. The psalmist verses 13 to 15 brought offerings and sacrifices to God. But the sacrifices that we bring to God are no longer the ritual sacrifices of animals because Christ is the new temple and he offered himself as the ultimate once and for all sacrifice to atone for our sins.

Therefore there's no longer animal sacrifices left for atonement. But instead as Romans 12 1 says we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God which is our spiritual worship.

[15:11] And as Hebrews 13 15 says through Christ then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God that is the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. So we should offer up a sacrifice of praise to the God who saves with both our words and our deeds.

God and this worship is really ultimately what propels us into mission as well.

It's like the psalmist who desires that all the earth praise God for his awesome deeds because we love God and because we're grateful to him and because we want to celebrate and complete that delighting that we have in God by praising him.

And we want all the earth to praise him and that's what leads us into mission because we want others to be able to enjoy him and appreciate him and to praise him as we are because of what he has done.

So my prayer this morning or I mean this evening is in my prayer as I was preparing this psalm is just that God would fill us with that kind of delight in him so that we pour forth praises to him wherever we go whatever situation we're in.

[16:32] So with that let's sing a song of praise to God and pray.