

# PSALM 116



GOD, MY EXCEEDING JOY  
A JOYFUL JOURNEY THRU THE PSALMS

## THE CUP OF SALVATION – September 3, 2023

### I. GENRE: Song of **Thanks** of the Individual

A. Unlike some of the previous pss in this collection, Ps 116 is easily categorized.

1. Songs of thanks were often intended to accompany the presentation of thank offerings—fully voluntary sacrifices which worshippers brought to express their gratitude or to show their love for Yahweh. Lev. 3; 7:11-36.
2. Ps 116 contains clearer-than-usual references to the presentation of thank offerings (vv. 14, 17-19) and perhaps even to the fellowship **meal** afterwards (v. 13).

B. The flow of thought in Ps 116 is sometimes difficult to track due to sudden changes in voice and audience. For example, see vv. 6, 7, 8.

C. The latter half of the psalm explicitly and repeatedly mentions the presentation of thank offerings, and it is possible that this portion of the song was meant to accompany the actual sacrifice itself.

1. The verbs in vv. 13-14 and 17-18 could be rendered in the present tense.
2. Instead of “I shall take up ... I shall pay,” it might better be, “I am taking up ...I am paying,” speaking of the very moment.

### II. SETTING

#### A. AUTHOR & BACKGROUND

1. The psalm is anonymous, an “orphan psalm.” Whoever he was, he endured a time of great trial that brought him near death (vv. 3, 8) and into **conflict** with deceptive people (v. 11).
2. The reference to the temple in v. 19 means the song could not have originated during the exile. But the temple could refer to the sanctuary of David, the temple of Solomon, or the second temple of Zerubbabel.
3. Because the psalm recycles phrases from songs of David and other early authors, many scholars believe Ps 116 is from the 2<sup>nd</sup> temple period (516 BC or later).
  - a. Pss written in the latter end of OT times tend to recycle phrases more often than older songs.
  - b. Ps 116 shares phrases used in Pss 18, 56, 86, and others..

#### B. PLACEMENT

1. Ps 116 is one of the main parts of a collection of psalms that came to be known as “The Egyptian Hallel.”
  - a. Pss 113-118 are all songs of praise and thanks of one kind or another, often celebrating God’s deliverance.
  - b. Ps 114 celebrates the exodus more explicitly than any other of the pss in this series.
  - c. Ps 116 celebrates the deliverance of an individual, but the song was often sung with the whole nation in mind.
2. The reference to “the **cup** of salvation” (13) made this song feel quite suited to the traditional

Passover meal which had a ritual of order of courses and prescribed times for **sipping** & singing.

3. Jesus would have sung this song with his disciples just before leaving Passover dinner for Gethsemane. Matt. 26:30. What great significance the lines about death and deliverance would have had for Him!

### III. OBSERVATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

- A. **Love and Faith (1 & 10):** The opening lines of vv. 1 and 10 are jarring in the Hebrew text. They read, literally, “I love, for the LORD hears my voice ....” and “I believed and I have spoken.” These striking phrases may have provided bold introductions to the major halves of the psalm. They stress in their unusual wording the place of love and trust in the believer’s relationship with God in trials.
- B. **A God Who Hears (2):** The attentiveness of God (2) is in striking contrast to the deafness and do-nothingness of idols (Ps 115: 5-7).
- C. **Calling on God (2, 4, 13, 17):** Four times the psalmist mentions “calling on” Yahweh. While this phrase sometimes means to call out for help (4), it can also mean to call to Him in praise (13, 17), as well as to call out to others about His greatness. The usage in v. 2 could be a mixture.
- D. **Underserving (6):** The psalmist groups himself with simpletons who amble into trouble with clueless abandon. Despite being so clueless and helpless, Yahweh lovingly condescended to help him.
- E. **Soliloquy (7):** The psalmist engages in a form of self-exhortation, calling on his own soul to respond to God’s grace. Cf. 103:1-2, 22.

**F. Tough Faith (10-11):** The psalmist believed Yahweh despite all the adversities he faced. He felt he could trust no one, but he knew he could still cry out to God.

1. Paul quotes the Greek translation of v. 10 in 2 Cor. 4:13 in a context where he’s discussing his own trials for Christ’s sake.
2. Just as the psalmist was emboldened to speak in prayer because he had tough faith, so Paul was emboldened to speak **for** God in the midst of his gospel trails.

**G. The Cup of Salvation (13):** The meaning of this phrase is debated.

1. Some think it is a metaphorical cup of joy in salvation, referring to the happy impossibility of paying back Yahweh (12).
2. Some think it refers to a literal cup used to **pour** a drink offering when the thank offering was made at the altar (13).
3. In the Pss, all others cups are something given by God, not given by man.
4. Perhaps this cup refers to the worshipper’s drinking in the thank offering meal after the sacrifice has been made.
5. Both the thank offering and the thank offering meal symbolized the fellowship that the worshipper had with Yahweh—as if sitting at table with Him.

**H. The Preciousness of Yahweh’s Saints (15)**

1. This verse is easily to misunderstand. It does not mean that God enjoys watching His people die! The psalm celebrates being delivered from death.

2. The term “precious” can also mean “**costly**,” indicating that God does not take the death of His people lightly. He does not allow death to take them at will but cares for His own.

- I. **Freed to Serve (16):** The psalmist confesses that he is a lowly servant, like a child born into servitude (“the son of your handmaid”). But he finds this relationship liberating. It is far better than being in the chains of death (3).

From the Book of Common Prayer

*“O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom: Defend us, thy humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies; that we, surely trusting in thy defense, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*

<b>PSALM 116</b> <small>© M. Scott Bashoor 2023</small>			<b>PURPOSE:</b> The psalmist thanks Yahweh for delivering him from near death experiences, culminating in the celebration of public thank offerings for the great care of Yahweh, offered with much love & thanks.			<b>Type:</b> Song of Thanks from the Individual <b>Author:</b> Unknown <b>Date:</b> Unknown. Perhaps in the post-exilic period after the re-establishment of the Temple, c. 516 BC. <b>Collection:</b> Pss 113-118 traditionally called the “Egyptian Hallel”		
<b>A SONG OF LOVE AND THANKS FOR DELIVERANCE</b> vv. 1-9			<b>A CEREMONY OF FAITH AND THANKS FOR DELIVERANCE</b> vv. 10-19					
<b>Announcement of Deliverance</b> vv. 1-2	<b>Recounting of His Tribulation</b> vv. 3-4	<b>Celebration of Yahweh’s Deliverance</b> vv. 5-9	<b>Recounting of His Tribulation</b> vv. 10-11	<b>First Celebration of Deliverance</b> vv. 12-15	<b>Second Celebration of Deliverance</b> vv. 16-19			
Opening Confession of Love to Yahweh v. 1a	His Near Death Experience v. 3	Confession of Yahweh’s Gracious Character v. 5	Opening Confession of Faith in Yahweh v. 10a	Declaration of Yahweh’s Kindness v. 12	Confession of His Grateful Servitude v. 16			
Declaration of Yahweh’s Deliverance vv. 1b-2a	His Calling out to Yahweh v. 4	Confession of Yahweh’s Condescending Grace v. 6	Recitation of His Prayers for Help vv. 10b-11	Pledge to Fulfill His Vows for a Thank Offering vv. 13-14	Pledge to Fulfill His Vows for a Thank Offering vv. 17-19b			
Confession of Loyalty to Yahweh v. 2b		Self-Exhortation to be at Peace v. 7	<i>Calling to Yahweh out of Faith</i> v. 10b	<i>To Drink with Joy and Praise at the Meal</i> v. 13	<i>To Offer the Sacrifice as an Act of Public Worship</i> v. 17			
		Prayer of Thanks for Deliverance from Death v. 8	<i>Realization of Man’s Untrustworthiness</i> v. 11	<i>To Offer the Sacrifice before the People</i> v. 14	<i>To Fulfill All His Vows of Gratitude before the People at the Temple</i> vv. 18-19b			
		Confidence in Yahweh’s Renewal of Life v. 9		Celebration of Yahweh’s Cherishing His People v. 15	Concluding Hallelujah v. 19c			