

Psalm 116: I Love The LORD

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[0 : 0 0] well if we could with the lord's help and the lord's enabling we could look at this favorite psalm this evening psalm 116 psalm 116 we're going to look at the whole psalm just walk through it but we'll just take as our text the opening verses verses one and two i love the lord because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy because he inclined his ear to me therefore i will call on him as long as i live i love the lord i love the lord the opening words of this psalm remind us that that is the testimony of every christian in every generation throughout the world doesn't matter about their upbringing their background their color their past their income their social status their home their family their nationality their tribe or even the language they speak all these things that make us so different and so unique on one level they don't really matter because the testimony of the christian is i love the lord i love the lord and that statement and confession it encapsulates and it summarizes all of the commandments because the summary of the ten commandments is to love the lord your god with all your heart with all your soul with all your strength with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself and so the testimony of every christian is that because we love the lord we are now striving to love him more and more and we're striving to love him with all our heart with all our soul with all our strength with all our mind and we're striving to love our neighbor as ourselves that that's the personal testimony of the christian and that's our personal testimony tonight and many of the lord's people love this psalm and we love it because it's so personal in fact psalm 116 you could say it is the personal testimony of the christian we're not sure who wrote these words some have claimed it was david others have said it was hezekiah after he was recovering from his illness we don't know and to be honest it doesn't really matter what physical hand penned these words because it was the holy spirit who inspired its composition and he made it you could say the holy spirit made this psalm applicable to every christian in every generation the holy spirit has applied this psalm to our lives and made it the personal testimony of every christian and it really is a personal testimony because it uses the words i my and me over 30 times in this psalm which not only highlights the personal nature of the psalm but it also highlights the personal nature of our own conversion because when we come to that point in our lives where we can say openly and publicly i love the lord we are confessing that we have a personal relationship with the lord and i suppose you could say that there is this great paradox in the testimony of every christian because on the one hand our love for the lord and our relationship with the lord it's very private

and it's very personal but on the other hand our love for the lord and our relationship with the lord it's very public because in our profession of faith we are issuing an outward confession of an inward reality an outward confession of an inward reality in which we're praising the lord outwardly because we have begun to praise him and love him within our own heart and that's what's expressed in psalm 116 the psalmist praises the lord publicly because he has come to praise the lord privately he praises him publicly because he has come to praise him privately and you know that's why psalm 116 is part of this group of psalms called the Egyptian Hallel Psalms they are the psalms numbered from Psalm 113 to Psalm 118 they are the Egyptian Hallel and as you can guess they were called the Egyptian

Hallel Psalms because they recount the experience of the children of Israel as they were delivered from bondage and slavery in Egypt and they were sung during the Passover meal which remembered that great moment of the Passover when the angel of the Lord passed over just before the Israelites were freed from Egypt and they're called Hallel Psalms from the word Hallelujah which means praise the Lord and their purpose is to praise the Lord for his great act of redemption and that's also the reason every Christian sings the Hallelujah and that's why we confess I love the Lord because we too have been delivered from slavery and sin by being redeemed by precious blood and so Psalm 116 is a Hallel Psalm it's the personal testimony of a Christian who praises the Lord

for their salvation and this evening as I said

I'd just like to walk through this Psalm and see four aspects of the Christian's testimony four aspects of the Christian's testimony there is the confession the change the conversion and the commitment the confession the change the conversion and the commitment so we look first of all at the confession the confession read again just verses 1 and 2 I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my plea please for mercy because he inclined his ear to me therefore for I will call on him as long as I live and as we said the opening words of this Psalm are the confession of every Christian but it was Spurgeon who said in his treasury of David he said that the words I love the Lord they are a blessed declaration and Spurgeon says every believer ought to be able to declare without the slightest hesitation

I love the Lord and he says that this command it was required under the law as we said to love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your mind your soul and your strength and your neighbour as yourself but he says that love was never produced in the heart of mankind except by the grace of God alone in fact Spurgeon says that it's a great thing to say whether publicly to others or privately to yourself it's great to repeat the statement the blessed declaration I love the Lord I love the Lord I love the Lord because he says the sweetest of all graces and the surest of all evidences of salvation is love and that's so true because one of the key attributes of God is love John says God is love and God Paul says God has demonstrated his love towards us in that whilst we were yet sinners Christ died for us

[8 : 07] Jesus says to us greater love has no man than this that a man lays down his life for his friends and that we cannot be separated from this love of Jesus Christ because the love of God it has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit and the first evidence of the Spirit indwelling in our hearts the first fruit of the Spirit says Paul it's love it's love and you know I've always loved that passage in John chapter 21 the passage after Peter had denied Jesus denied ever knowing Jesus Peter had denied Jesus so publicly and yet Jesus went to Peter so privately and he asked Peter personally do you love me do you love me and Peter responded to Jesus and he was restored by Jesus when he publicly confessed

Lord you know all things you know that I love you and it's a beautiful passage John 21 and it reminds us of the love and compassion of Jesus in restoring his people but Peter's confession it also proved that he was repentant from he had repented of his disobedience and that the Lord was working in his heart he says Lord you know all things you know that I love you and for Peter and you could say the psalmist here and for every Christian we not only know that we love the Lord but we also know why we love the Lord because he says as he says here he heard my voice he has heard my pleas for mercy he has inclined his ear to me he heard me I love the Lord because he heard me he heard me and the language which the psalmist is using it's the language of humiliation because the title

Lord as you know I love the Lord the title is the title of the covenant king he's the one who keeps covenant with his people and he loves his people with an everlasting and an unchanging love and the psalmist is saying the covenant king the Lord he has stretched down he has lowered himself and humbled himself to listen to my pleas for mercy the Lord has humbled himself to listen to me and this is not just he's not just making this statement of fact this is a statement of absolute amazement the psalmist is amazed and honoured that and even privileged privileged to have had the king of glory the covenant king who sits enthroned on high he feels honoured that he would bow down his ear and listen to his cry for mercy and his response to such humiliation of the Lord is love he loves him

I love the Lord because he heard me I love the Lord because of what he has done for me he has heard me he has heard me and you know when we look back over our own lives many of us can confess that there was a time when we didn't love the Lord yes we may have respected the Lord and the Lord's house and the Lord's cause and the Lord's day and the Lord's people but we didn't love him he loved us because he spoke to us many times in the gospel we heard his voice on many occasions because even then he was telling us that he loved us and he spoke to us through his word he spoke to us through other Christians he spoke to us through all the providences in our lives the Lord spoke to us time and time again through many different mediums and many different experiences but we never listened to his voice he was speaking but we weren't listening but then something changed and that change it caused us to start listening and to start speaking and the more he spoke the more we listened and the more we listened the more we spoke and the more we

spoke the more he listened and he listened to our voice and that's when it became a relationship with the Lord that's when we began to love the Lord more and more when we spoke to him he heard us and the psalmist says that because we have heard his voice he has heard our voice and we have to maintain this relationship he says as long as

I live as long as we live we have to maintain the relationship because if we stop if we stop well it's just like any other relationship they become a stranger to us we can't confess that we love a stranger so we have to keep listening to his voice we have to keep speaking to him we have to keep confessing our love for the Lord because we are in a living and active relationship with him but we have to ask how did this change take place how did that change happen in our lives what caused us to start listening to the Lord and speaking to the Lord and loving the Lord what was the change which brought about this confession what was the change well that's what I'd like us to consider secondly because as we said in this psalm there are four aspects to the

[14:16] Christian's testimony there's the confession in verses 1 and 2 and then the change and we look secondly at these at the change in verses 3 to 6 the change he says the snares of death encompassed me the pangs of the grave laid hold on me I suffered distress and anguish then I called on the name of the Lord O Lord I pray deliver my soul gracious is the Lord unrighteous our God is merciful the Lord preserves the simple when I was brought low he saved me and what the psalmist wants to make clear in these verses is that the change which came about in his life and experience and in ours the change was from death to life because he describes death and the sorrows of death he says it's like a snare he says that death was like an army that was hemming us in on every side with no way of escape death had its grip on us we were ensnared by death and the power of death because of our sin and because death was surrounding us with no way of escape he says the grave was closing in on us the grave was moving closer and closer towards us and the way the psalmist describes death and the grave it makes me think that they were like two kings two powerful kings who were allied together in order to bring destruction upon us in which death's army was hemming us in and the grave's army was slowly moving in to destroy us but you know what I love about this verse 3 and these enemies you could say death and the grave is that

Peter quoted these verses or this verse 3 on the day of Pentecost when over 3,000 souls were saved and Peter says to them that they have been delivered from death and the power of the grave and he quoted them because they have been saved and delivered because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and he stressed to his congregation those thousands that were in front of him he stressed to them that even though Jesus was delivered into the hands of death and the grave they couldn't hold him they couldn't hold him these two kings death and the grave they couldn't hold them these kings who ruled this world for millennia they were defeated by King Jesus because death was destroyed in the death of Christ or as John Owen put it the death of death was in the death of Christ but Jesus he not only destroyed death with his death he also conquered the grave by his resurrection and that's what Paul affirms to us again and again in the New Testament that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ death and the grave have been swallowed up in victory and now King Jesus he stands over these enemies these dead kings you could say and he says to them death where is your sting grave where is your victory and Paul is saying to it all thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ my friend the wonder of our salvation is that King Jesus has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel and for the Christian who loves the Lord death is no longer the enemy it once was and yes there is the pains of this life and there's no hiding that there's the pain of separation and loss because of the death of loved ones but the hope for the Christian is that death is not eternal because death it cannot separate us from the love of

Christ and we may ask well what brought about this change in our experience what how did we come to embrace the love of Christ and the blessedness of eternal life and all we can say is that it was through the humiliation of Jesus Christ it was the humiliation of the Lord that enabled him to first of all hear out please for for mercy that's what he said in verses 1 and 2 but it was also the humiliation of the Lord in dying our death God manifest in the flesh God himself dying our death that's what brought about the change from death to life because when we heard the Lord speak to us in his word that's what enlivened our hearts by his spirit we were made to see the seriousness of our condition that our sin our sin it had separated us from

God we were made aware of these two kings death and the grave we were made aware that they were fierce enemies and that we were in the grip of death under the power of the grave and we

were made to know that for many years the God of this world he had blinded the minds our minds with unbelief but you know when the veil was lifted when our eyes were opened when our mind was renewed we not only saw the brokenness of our condition but we were also enabled to see the beauty of Jesus the beauty of Jesus and when we were brought to the end of ourselves we could do no other but call upon the name of the Lord and cry to him for salvation and the promise of scripture came to us with such comfort and clarity that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved but what the psalmist reminds us here is that we were saved and our soul was delivered and our pleas were heard he says it's not because of who we were or even because we were asking it was all because the Lord he says in verse five the Lord is gracious righteous and compassionate he says that the

[20 : 58] Lord who saves is the Lord who bestows favour he's the Lord who imputes righteousness and he's the Lord who loves unconditionally and with that the psalmist says that the Lord as he says in verse six he preserves the simple the Lord keeps the simple he guards us he watches over us and when he says that the Lord keeps the simple he's highlighting that when we are brought from death to life from darkness to light we're also brought from ignorance to knowledge because from the moment of our conversion we begin to grow we grow not only in our love for our saviour but also in the knowledge of our saviour and we grow because we spend time reading the bible there's this desire to read the bible there's a desire to listen to the Lord speaking to us through his word and that's what we were singing about when we were singing in psalm 19

David emphasises the change that the word makes in our life when we take time to read it and study it and meditate upon it he said God's law it's perfect what does it do it converts the soul and sin that lies then he says God's testimony it's most sure and it makes the simple wise the word of God makes us wise to salvation and it frees us from the grip of death and the power of the grave but as we said Psalm 19 highlights that God's word not only makes the simple wise as we grow in our knowledge of the Bible it also emphasises that God's word converts the soul it converts the soul I'd like us to see that that's the third aspect of the Christian's testimony and that's what we see here in Psalm 116 there's the confession

I love the Lord then there's the change from death to life from the power of the grave to new life in Christ then thirdly there is the conversion the confession the change the conversion if you look at verse 7 he says return oh my soul to your rest for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you for you have delivered my soul from death my eyes from tears my feet from stumbling I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living I believed even when I spoke I'm greatly afflicted I said in my alarm all mankind are liars what shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me and in many ways the change and the conversion you could say that they're synonymous they mean the same thing change and conversion because the transformation of a person from darkness to light from death to life it's a change and it's a change that happens at conversion but I want to highlight that this aspect of

I want to highlight the aspect of conversion just simply because the psalmist does he's emphasized that the change which takes place in our life from death to life he says that change it's all of the Lord we love the Lord because he is gracious righteous and compassionate he bestows favour he imputes righteousness he loves unconditionally that's the change which the Lord has brought about in our life but when the psalmist speaks about conversion he does so in the sense of his own active involvement in turning away from sin meaning that conversion is not just a work of the Lord it is primarily a work of the Lord but the psalmist draws attention to the fact that we have a responsibility in our conversion because the word return in verse 7 it literally means to turn back and that's what the word conversion means that's what it means to convert we are facing away from the Lord walking in sin but when we are converted we turn around we turn back to the Lord it's to turn back to turn around and to actively turn away from our sin back to the Lord and that's what he's saying here return oh my soul to your rest for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you for you have delivered my soul from death my eyes from tears my feet from stumbling the psalmist he's speaking to his own soul and he's making this conscious decision to turn away from the things of the world and away from sin and to turn back to the Lord he's active in his own conversion he's not passive and just saying well this is all the Lord's work anyway the Lord's going to do it the Lord's going to do the converting he'll do it no he's actively converting he's actively turning away from his sin and turning back to the Lord and you know this is why repentance is not enough because repentance means to change our mind it's a turning of the mind in which we know something or someone or

some place is wrong and it's sinful and we repent of that sin we turn our mind we turn our mind away from it and we seek forgiveness from the

[26 : 49] Lord but my friend repentance will not succeed unless we convert repentance will not succeed unless we convert because repentance is to have the change of mind but conversion is to have the change of character the change of character and we need to actively be involved in both because we can know that something is wrong maybe it's wrong to say or wrong to do or wrong to go to this place and we can experience conviction of sin for doing it we can repent of that sin and yet not convert we can have a change of mind but not a change of character but the Bible stresses that both repentance of the mind and conversion of the character both of them must be active in our lives both sorrow for sin and turning away from sin must be part of our

Christianity and that's what the apostle Peter preached about when you read Acts chapter 3 he's preaching to the Israelites and he's saying to them repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out so my friend we are to continually repent of our sins and convert we are to actively turn away from our sin and turn back to the Lord and when we grow in our Christian walk by spending time listening to the Lord and his word and speaking to him in prayer and gathering like this and in homes for fellowship with the Lord's people our conscience our conscience it needs to be active and it needs to be alert to what is of Christ and of life and we should be actively turning away from what is of death and what is of the grave and you know the psalmist he's confessing his desire not to walk amongst that which is of death and the grave because he says in verse 9

I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living his conversion means that he doesn't want to walk amongst the dead and seek pleasure amongst the things of the world he doesn't want to walk you could say among the valley of the dry bones and the graveyard of this world where there is no life and just dead speech no he wants to walk in the land of the living he wants to spend time speaking about the things that are of Christ and of life and it's all because he is alive in Christ he has been begotten again to a living hope he has become a new creation and he has been brought from that darkness into the marvellous light of the gospel but he also says in verses 10 and 11 that because of his love for the Lord and the change in his life and his conversion from his old life there's opposition he says that he's been afflicted because of it verbally maybe even physically but it only reveals to him these things only reveal to him the true colors of the world what the world is really like and of course there's a great lesson for us here as those who confess to love the

Lord with all our heart our mind our soul our strength the lesson is we have to walk in the land of the living we're to actively turn away from death to life from darkness to light from Satan to Christ and we're to repeatedly turn away from it we're to actively turn away from the things that we know are unholy and unbefitting for a Christian and we're to actively turn away from the things which contradict our confession that we love the Lord and we're to actively convert and keep away from the things that will ever contradict the confession and mar our precious relationship with the Lord my friend as those who love the Lord we have to actively guard our conversations our company and our conduct as those who love the

Lord we have to actively guard our conversations our company and our conduct but as I've said before separation is not isolation it's contact without contamination and there has to be that balance but there also has to be a line that is not to be crossed because far too often the Christian is in the world and the world is in the Christian we need to remember that our confession is not only private it's also public and it's before an unlooking world that we are confessing that we love the Lord therefore we must strive to live up to our confession not only for our name but for the Lord's name and in doing so in living up to our confession we must acknowledge the benefits which the Lord has bestowed upon us and we do that as the psalmist indicates we do it by our commitment as we said there are four aspects to the

[32 : 42] Christian's testimony that we see in Psalm 116 there's the confession I love the Lord there's the change from death to life there's the conversion we actively turn away from sin and back to the Lord and then lastly there is the commitment the commitment you look at verse 12 he says what shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people we mentioned earlier that the Psalm Psalm 116 it's part of a group of six Psalms called the Egyptian Hallel Psalms and they're the Psalms as we said numbered from Psalm 113 to Psalm 118 and they were traditionally sung during the

Passover meal which was eaten in Jerusalem when all of the Israelites the Israelites Israelite pilgrims they would gather together for the festival of Passover and as we said the purpose of the Passover was to recount the experience of the children of Israel as they were delivered from bondage and slavery in Egypt and brought out to go towards the promised land but this Passover meal that remembered that great occasion in the course of the Passover meal as we've said before there were four cups filled with wine and these four cups they were passed around the table passed around at the Passover meal and each cup it was associated with the benefits that the children of Israel received in being delivered from Egypt and so when the Passover meal was prepared there would be the Passover lamb the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs and many other things and the

Passover would begin by singing from Psalm 113 which is a psalm that praises the Lord for his faithfulness towards his people and then after that the first cup the first of four would be passed around the table the cup of consecration and the cup of consecration it reminded the Jews that God delivered the children of Israel from Egypt because of his faithfulness to his covenant and then the Israelites they would sing Psalm 114 which is a psalm that begins with the words when Israel went out from Egypt and it's after that after Psalm 114 was sung the second cup of wine was passed around the table and it was called the cup of release so there's the cup of consecration then the cup of release and as the cup of release was passed around the table the history of Israel coming out of Egypt and the occasion of the Passover when the angel of the Lord passed over all the houses that story was then retold and then the

Passover meal of lamb and unleavened bread and the bitter herbs that would all be eaten but after the Passover meal was finished the Israelites would then sing Psalm 115 and Psalm 116 which are about Psalm 115 is about dedicating and Psalm 116 is about committing your life to the Lord Psalm 115 it begins with a dedication of worship to the Lord not unto us Lord not to us but to your name give glory and as we've seen this evening Psalm 116 begins with the confession I love the Lord because he heard my voice but as we see down in verse 12 in verse 12 the psalmist he considers how he should render thanks to the Lord for the Lord's gift of salvation and then in verses 13 and 14 in this act of public commitment the psalmist acknowledges the Lord for his salvation he says I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of his people and during the Passover meal it would be at the end of singing Psalm 116 that the third cup of wine would then be passed around the table and the cup as you might expect from verse 13 it was called the cup of salvation and then once the cup of salvation was passed around they would sing Psalm 117 a psalm about the coming Messiah the hope for all the nations that all the nations are going to be blessed by the Messiah and then after Psalm 117 the last cup was passed around called the cup of the Messiah and traditionally the cup of Messiah was filled with wine and passed around the table but no one would drink from it because the cup of Messiah was not to be drunk until the Messiah would come and drink it himself and of course in the upper room when Jesus was eating the

[38 : 03] Passover with his disciples when he was in Jerusalem for the festival of Passover it was at the last supper but it was at that point that Jesus instituted the Lord's supper where you could say he puts the Passover meal to one side indicating the end of the Passover and then he takes bread when he had given thanks he broke it gave to the disciples saying this is my body which is given for you do this in remembrance of me and after they had eaten the bread Jesus takes the cup the cup of the Messiah saying this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood and it was after Jesus had instituted the Lord's supper for the first time he and the disciples they sang the last Egyptian

Hallel Psalm Psalm 118 that's why we sing it usually at the communion time that's a psalm of thanksgiving and you know when you come to a psalm like this one that we're looking at this evening Psalm 116 and you see the testimony of the Christian just interwoven with the institution of the Lord's supper it's all there and when you see this coming together with the confession I love the Lord the change from death to life the conversion the turning away from sin and then you have the commitment of taking this cup of salvation and calling upon the name of the Lord you know I can't help but applying it to our own form of communion because in our act of commitment and coming to sit at the Lord's table we are presenting ourselves as Paul says as living sacrifices and we're vowing to the Lord that we are committed to him we are saying we love him and we're committing ourselves and whether we have never sat at the

Lord's table or we have sat there for 40 years every time should be an act of commitment in which we are committing to our confession we are committing to our confession that we love the Lord and we're striving to love him with all our heart with all our mind with all our soul with all our strength and our neighbor as ourselves and you know is it any wonder to us then that the psalmist he concludes his psalm with such words of commitment in verse 16 praise the

Lord praise the Lord he says hallelujah hallelujah I love the Lord because he has heard my voice it's a beautiful psalm but every time we come to it and every time we sit at the Lord's table we are committing to our confession I love the Lord may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray O Lord our gracious God it is a marvel that thou dost love us at all but we bless thee and we praise thee that thy word affirms to us that that love has been shown and demonstrated and reaffirmed to us in the person of thy son Jesus and Lord enable us we pray as thy people to continue to confess that we love thee to live our lives that as lives that demonstrate that we love thee and to tell others that we love the

Lord and why we love him O Lord we are so weak but we give thanks to thee for the great reminder that we are loved with an everlasting love and that we are those who need to keep loving thee not because we love thee first but oh because thou didst love us first thou didst see us from all the ages of eternity and yet chose us in Christ from before the foundation of this world thy love is beyond our asking we cannot even fathom the depth the breadth or even the height of it but we thank thee Lord that it has been shown to us we thank thee Lord that we can walk in that love and know that love each and every day bless us Lord as thy people keep us oh Lord that thou wouldst truly keep us and that we may know that when we keep our eyes upon thee that we are being kept kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed on the day of Christ

[43 : 34] Jesus bind us together we pray go before us throughout the rest of this week remember those who could not be with us with us this evening be near to them where they are keep us Lord we ask for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake amen we shall conclude by singing the words of that psalm psalm 116 psalm 116 we're singing from the beginning page 395 in the Scottish psalter psalm 116 from the beginning down to the verse mark 6 I love the Lord because my voice and prayers heeded here I while I live will call on him who bowed to me as ear down to the verse mark 6 to God's praise name

I love the Lord because my voice and prayers he did hear I while I live will call on him through what may come past round The The bids of hell to hold on me, I grieve and trouble find.

Upon the name of God the Lord, then did I call and say, Deliver thou my soul, O Lord, I do thee hungry prayer.

God merciful and righteous is, yea, gracious is our Lord.

God saves the meek, I was brought low, He did me help afford.

[46 : 43] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.