**A Call to Worship**

***Psalm 66:1-12***

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Introduction: It is commonly acknowledged that this psalm was written in response to some special deliv-erance by God of Israel from its enemies. Though there is some difference of opinion as to the exact cir-cumstances, it seems best to connect this psalm with the events of Isaiah 36 & 37. Note with me Isaiah 36:1-10; 13-20, & 37:8-13. The great deliverance is described in Isaiah 37:33-38. The suggestion is that Hezekiah wrote this hymn of praise to celebrate the blessing of God’s deliverance. The sheer magnitude of God’s power demonstrated in delivering Judah from the Assyrians demands not only that praise be offered by the Jews, but that all the nations of the world should acknowledge the greatness & majesty of God & give Him the glory due His name. Calvin concludes, “The glory of God is unworthily suppressed, if when He stands by us in misfortune, our deliverance is not followed by solemn thanksgiving.” The psalm is divided neatly by the use of the word *“selah”* (meaning rest or pause, even meditate; perhaps simply a musical notation for those singing this psalm). The four divisions are therefore verses 1-4, 5-7, 8-15, & 16-20. Some see one further division (or simply 2 overall sections) in that verses 1-12 are plural (the choral section, the nation speaking) while verses 13-20 are singular (the solo section, an individual speaking). We shall take into consideration both ways of analyzing this psalm by noting the theme of worship revealed in: [1] the rejoicing in God (:1-4), [2] the reminding by God (:5-7), [3] the responding to God (:8-15), & [4] the receiving from God (:16-20). We will also utilize the two-part division by con-sidering this evening the choral section (:1-12) & then next Wednesday the solo section (:13-20).

 I. Worship is the **rejoicing** in God (:1-4)

 A. The command to worship (:1-2)

 1. A “joyful shout” (:1) [“Raise a joyful shout unto Elohim” (Keil)].

 a. The acclamation of a king, announcing His arrival – cf. Psalm 47:1.

 b. This is a *“joyful noise”* like unto that of Psalm 100:1.

 2. A joyous psalm (:2) [“Hymn forth” or even, “harp forth”].

 a. His honor – God alone is worthy of all honor.

 b. His praise – “Give glory as His praise” [Remember to Whom we are singing!].

 B. The contrasts in worship (:3-4) [*“terrible”*- awesome > that which causes a mixed feeling of

 reverence, fear, & wonder, caused by something majestic, sublime, sacred.]

 1. The forced submission (:3b).

 a. It is involuntary.

 b. “The unwilling homage paid by the conquered to their conquerors” (Kirkpatrick). – see

 Philippians 2:9. “They yield unwilling, constrained, feigned homage” (Lange).

 2. The future situation (:4).

 a. It is voluntary.

 b. It is describing the fervent exaltation in the Millennial Kingdom & on into eternity.

 II. Worship is the **reminding** by God (:5-7)

 *“Come & see…”* – “The preposition *‘toward’* implies supremacy over mankind. All men must fear

 Him (see Ps. 64:9); but it depends on themselves whether they will reverence Him as their God, or

 must dread Him as an enemy” (Kirkpatrick). See also Psalm 89:7.

 A. Israel’s deliverance by God (:6).

 1. Through the Red Sea (*“sea into dry land”*) – see Exodus 14.

 2. Through the River Jordan (*“through the flood on foot”*) – see Joshua 3:14-16.

 Summary: “The Psalmist brings these miracles of the past before his hearers, with such vividness

 that both speaker & hearer seem to be present & engaged in them as members of the chosen

 people” (Lange).

 B. The nations’ observance by God (:7).

 1. The “witnessing” by God > “He is the world’s watchman, sleeplessly on the watch lest any

 foe should injure Israel” (Kirkpatrick).

 a. Compare: Psalm 121:3-8.

b. Consider: “He is the ever-watchful spy of Israel, searching the hearts of the nations to

 frustrate their evil plans” (Lange).

2. The warning from God > the rebellious nations, who resist His will, need to humble

 themselves (cf. Psalm 2:10).

a*. “Exalt themselves”* – they are egotistical, boastful.

 b. “Only let them not imagine themselves secure in their arrogance! There is One more

 exalted, whose eye nothing escapes, & to whose irresistible might whatever is not con-

 formed to His gracious will succumbs” (Keil).

III. Worship is the **responding** to God (:8-15)

 A. Blessing God for past deliverances (:8-12).

 1. The trials (:10-12a).

 a. Smelting illustration: as silver is purified, so too, God allows suffering to remove dross

 (see also Ps. 17:3, 26:2, Pro. 17:3, & Jer. 9:7).

 b. Other illustrations:

 (1) *“Into the net”* – the enemy’s snare (power), capture or oppression.

 (2) *“Affliction upon our loins”* – causes one to stoop to pick up the load (affects legs).

 (3) *“Rule over our heads”* – “…the vanquished flung down upon the ground, & trampled

 remorselessly under the horse-hooves or crushed by the chariot wheels of their con-

 querors (cf. Isa. 51:23)” (Kirkpatrick).

 (4) *“Through fire & water”* – extreme perils of death; Israel nearly consumed by fire or

 over-whelmed by water – yet she is spared by God & brought through difficulty.

 Summary: “He disciplines & delivers; He tests His people to purify them; He afflicts in order

 to perfect” (Scroggie).

 2. The triumph (:8-9, 12b).

 a. When the nation was at the point of death & ruin, God preserves & sustains them.

 b. *“Wealthy place”* – speaks of abundance, even super-abundance of prosperity > Promised

 Land??

{Next week – B. Worshiping God by present dedications (:13-15) &

 IV. Worship is the **receiving** from God (:16-20)}

Conclusion: Can you offer to the Lord a “joyful shout” this evening? Is there within you a joyous hymn of praise in recognition of God’s honor & glory? You have the “option” to worship Him now as Lord & Savior voluntarily – or to be forced to bow the knee & confess with the tongue one day that Jesus is Lord (see Phil. 2:9). We are reminded of God’s “awesome” works toward the children of men. Might we be caused to reverence Him as our God, rather than to be in dread before Him as our Judge. Is yours a fervent exaltation or will you offer a forced submission when you stand before God? As a believer, can you recount your own “water crossings” – having experienced the blessing of God either by the escaping from a trial or by the enabling through the trial? “God has not promised to keep us *from* all trouble but to help us *in* it. He has not promised a smooth passage, but He has guaranteed a safe landing” (Scroggie). As we experience the trials & troubles of this life, we must recognize that all such affliction & suffering is for our good (cf. Rom. 8:28-29). The purpose of God in purifying our lives is that we might be con-formed more & more into His image. The end result in the life to come is *“a wealthy place”* – a super-abundance of prosperity. “God brings His people into trouble that their comforts afterwards may be the sweeter & that their affliction may thus yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness which will make the poorest place in the world a wealthy place” (Henry). Consider the story behind the hymn, “God Leads Us Along” by George Young. What is God doing in your heart & life this evening?