

# Challenge

October 2006

**PRAYER LETTER OF CHALLENGE LITERATURE FELLOWSHIP (AUST.) INC.**

## Psalm 116 – Thanks for the Lord's deliverance

It seems that the Psalmist was disturbed by the fact that someone had been telling lies about him and the deception almost cost him his life. I don't know about you but there is nothing worse when someone is spreading lies about you, which you know are untrue, but often you feel helpless to do anything about them. This particular Psalm is a very personal testimony of the Psalmist cry for help. In this Psalm the personal pronouns me, my and I are used at least thirty times to bring home firstly the extremely personal nature of this Psalm and secondly the very intimate concerns that the Psalmist heart has about what is going on and how God can deal with it. So there are four things that the Psalmist brings home to us to give us confidence that in difficult times the Lord will see us through regardless of how bad it may seem.

**First of all we see that God answers the cry of His children verses 1-4.** Here the Psalmist starts out by declaring his love for the Lord, which is always a great place to begin when in difficult times. Sometimes we can be tempted to think that the Lord doesn't love us when we are going through the deep and dark waters of trial and tribulation so it is good for the Psalmist to begin with the fact that he loves the Lord and that the Lord had heard his cry for help. The word supplication there in the opening verse is a word that really talked about a depth of burden and concern for what was going on. I love the way the Psalmist brings home the sense of rejoicing over how God had heard his deep and earnest cry for help. He says that He inclined His ear to me. This sort of usage by the Psalmist is quite common in the Psalms and it really is a word picture if you will of how a hunter is out in the forest hunting deer and suddenly he stands on a twig and its cracks and immediately the ear of the deer, as it were, moves towards where he thinks the sound has come from and inclines his ear towards that area so that he might hear further noise. This is what the Psalmist is saying that when he had cried out in earnest prayer the Lord inclined His ear so that He would hear and ultimately respond. Then the Psalmist brings home something that is really important in prayer because often we are tempted to pray only in times of great difficulties and once the Lord has answered then we decide we no longer need to pray. Probably this is why we see the Lord allows us to go through times of struggle and difficulty to remind us of how much we need Him and to constantly rely upon Him. The other thing that is really important in all of this is that the Psalmist has obviously experienced the joy of answered prayer and what it has done for him is to help him to develop an attitude of continuous prayer. The Apostle Paul put it this way in Thessalonians when he said "pray without ceasing". This is the idea of an attitude of praying whenever we are walking through life's day to day effects whether they are good or bad. In this continual prayer the Psalmist suddenly found himself with an overwhelming need to be delivered from what was a desperate situation. Verse three tells us that the pains of death surrounded me and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me. I found trouble and sorrow. I think that those sorts of words are self explanatory in that he was in a dire situation and as he called out to the Lord for His deliverance his prayer was heard by God. The depth of his prayer again is brought to us by the fact that he implored the Lord to deliver him from this situation.

**Secondly the Psalmist discovered that God is gracious and merciful in verses 5-11.** In these difficult times as Daniel and Joseph discovered in their situation that God deals with us ever so lovingly and in a way that often we don't understand until we have actually come through the situation. First of all he discovered that the Lord is merciful in not allowing the Psalmist to be overwhelmed by the pangs of death or the cry of the grave. Whilst these terms might be somewhat of an exaggeration to bring home the urgency of the dilemma it nonetheless shows that the Lord is able to keep us in our struggles. There in verse 6 the Lord preserves the simple says the Psalmist and then goes on the say that he was brought low and He saved me. I guess the problem that many of us face is that when we are going through one of these deep and dark times we feel that we are alone and alienated, and that is often what the enemy wants to do. No matter how bad or how dire the situation is I think we can take confidence from this Psalm that God is able to save us from the most difficult of situations. Can you imagine what it must have been like for Daniel as he was thrown down into the lions den with no hope of escape and to be greeted with several hungry lions only to willing to tear him apart. Daniel discovered that so often God does not deliver us out of the situation but rather brings us through the situation. Why is this? Well the whole idea is that God wants to be able to teach us many things about who He is and what we are and underline our desperate, continuous need of that intimate relationship with Him. The Psalmist discovered as he cried out to the Lord in genuine humility that the Lord was able to give him rest for his soul and that the Lord had dealt generously and graciously with him. This reminds us so much of Matthew 11:28-30 particularly the opening verse which says Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Sadly for many of us the Lord has to rewind the video tape quite a number of times before we learn the lesson that in dire situations or in any situation we need to come to Jesus and leave it at His feet and allow Him to do what He wants to do in terms of bringing a resolution to whatever situation we are in.

The thing that we need to discover from this is that although we can find ourselves in the most desperate of situations that God is able to comfort us even when we are going through an incredible roller coaster experience and that we need to learn that in all of that God remains faithful that as Joseph discovered even in prison or for Daniel in the lion's den that God was with them. We need to see that we are not alone and that God does far beyond what we could think or imagine both in us and through us as a result of the experience.

**Thirdly we realise that God holds His children precious verses 12-15.** The Psalmist expresses his gratitude to God in four ways. First of all he brought a Thanks offering to the Lord in the temple. One thing that amazes me sometimes is the fact that when we see God do wonderful things that we are often very reluctant to come back and thank the Lord for what *(Please turn over)*

He has done. We need to have an attitude of gratitude when it comes to the whole thing of seeing God answer prayer. Then secondly part of the sacrifice the priest would pour out a portion of the wine on the altar symbolising the worshipper's life being poured out to serve God. So it is important for us to yield our lives afresh under the providential sovereign working of God's hand. Thirdly the priest kept back part of the offering for a feast held after the sacrifice and there the worshipper shared his food in joy with his family and friends. The Psalmist would publicly call on the Lord and thank Him for His mercies. I don't know if you have ever thought of this but often the greatest time of witness that we can have as Christians is when we are going through dire situations. Then that witness can continue when we make public what the Lord has done and thank Him in public for what He has done so that He gets all the glory, honour and praise. Then we need to see that the Psalmist began to keep the promises he had made to the Lord during his struggles. These were not some means of bribing God or manipulating His will but it was really about being able to honour the Lord in the commitments that were made. Again it was the idea of making sure that these vows were made public and that He was honoured and glorified as a result. Again it is all about walking humbly and honestly before the Lord and always making sure that He is the one that is honoured and glorified. Then we need to also see that the death of God's people is precious to God. Let me say here that the death of unsaved people is not precious to God. God is deeply grieved when He sees an unbeliever go into eternity because He knows only to well what is awaiting that person. I think it really brings home to us why Jesus made far more mention of hell than he did of heaven because of His deep burden and concern to make sure that people had every opportunity to respond to the unconditional love of God.

**Lastly, but not least, we need to see in our fourth point that God is faithful to His covenant that is to His agreement in verses 16 -19.** We need to see here that the Psalmist cries out to the Lord, I am your servant and it can be stated as I am a son of the covenant. In becoming a son of the covenant the Psalmist declares how the Lord has delivered him from bondage. You know there are many folk who could be reading this prayer letter right now who have found themselves in all sorts of bonds. For example even though you might find yourself a Christian you are dogged by addiction of some sort whether it be pornography, alcohol or some other addiction. What you need to realise is that we worship a God who is able to supernaturally deliver us from whatever has us in bondage. When we experience this supernatural deliverance then we will be glad to offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, to call upon the name of the Lord and to pay our vows to the Lord. In the midst of all of this we the Lord's people can give praise and thanks to the God of heaven, to the King of Kings, to the Lord of Lords who is able to deliver us from our sin, to deliver us from the bondage of sin and death, to deliver us from the power and penalty of sin and the only thing we can do when we experience that is the praise the Lord.

— Carl Carmody, Editor of Challenge

## Praise

1. Praise the Lord for the ongoing support and encouragement we get from those who faithfully give to the work of Challenge. We have had a number of churches who have recently taken on supporting the work of Challenge and also one church which has specifically taken the sponsoring our upcoming Malawian edition of Challenge for which we praise God.
2. We need to praise God for ongoing partners in ministry with the work of Peace Makers Fellowship International and for the support we get from Partners International who fund a 15,000 print run of the paper every two months.
3. Praise God for the way in which He is opening up other opportunities for the work of Challenge both in South America and Africa as well as possibilities in North America.
4. Praise God for the visit of Carl Carmody to the United States on a promotion trip to raise support for the work of Challenge particularly overseas. He was able to visit a number of key churches and we are rejoicing in how God has opened doors in this realm and thank Him for the way He cares for us and watches over us day by day.

## Prayer

1. Pray for the various editions of the Challenge newspaper (Australia, Southern and Central Africa, New Zealand and South America) that are being distributed this month. Pray that God will direct each copy and use it to draw people to Himself.
2. Pray for the Challenge team as the ministry continues to grow rapidly. Please pray with us that God will bring the right people into the ministry where needed.
3. Please pray with us as we go through this time of growth that the Challenge team and families would bind together strongly in the Lord.
4. Please pray for Pastor Paul Dondoh who heads up the work in Kenya. Paul is in charge of the distribution of the Challenge newspaper and oversees the planting of new churches. Pray that Paul and his family will be encouraged in their ministry and for their health and safety.

## Challenge Literature Fellowship

PO Box 978, Cloverdale 6985

Phone (08) 9453 3311 Fax (08) 9453 3006

Webpage: www.cif.org.au Email: challenge@cif.org.au