

# Jesus: the Source of True Rest

## Psalms 116 and 117

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I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. <sup>2</sup> Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. <sup>3</sup> The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. <sup>4</sup> Then I called on the name of the LORD: "LORD, save me!" <sup>5</sup> The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. <sup>6</sup> The LORD protects the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me. <sup>7</sup> Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has been good to you. <sup>8</sup> For you, LORD, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, <sup>9</sup> that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living. <sup>10</sup> I trusted in the LORD when I said, "I am greatly afflicted"; <sup>11</sup> in my alarm I said, "Everyone is a liar." <sup>12</sup> What shall I return to the LORD for all his goodness to me? <sup>13</sup> I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. <sup>14</sup> I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people. <sup>15</sup> Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful servants. <sup>16</sup> Truly I am your servant, LORD; I serve you just as my mother did; you have freed me from my chains. <sup>17</sup> I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD. <sup>18</sup> I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, <sup>19</sup> in the courts of the house of the LORD— in your midst, Jerusalem. Praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. <sup>2</sup> For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD.

How do you rest? What do you need to do, or what needs to be happening around you for you to *truly* relax? Resting or recharging – whatever you want to call it – looks different for each of us. I rest and recharge by reading, doing dishes or laundry (not folding), or my personal favorite, playing golf. Many of you likely wonder how some, or all of those could be restful; but I'd probably wonder the same about the ways you rest. But what I hope we can all agree on is this: rest is good. Our Sovereign God Himself rested on the 7<sup>th</sup> day after creating in the previous 6 days. But the big question is this: do you rest *most* – I mean resting in your mind, body and soul – in the Lord, in His Word and in His promises? Today we will look at how, in Psalm 116, There is a Source of True Rest and in Psalm 117 we'll see that an Eternal Rest Awaits.

### True Rest for True Believers

You and I live in a world where the pursuit of rest or peace are so sought after, that people spend billions of dollars each year to *hopefully* attain it.

- Advertisements we see daily offer the newest & greatest gadgets and devices. *Artificial* and temporary feelings of rest and peace are offered thru

food, vitamins, supplements, medications and new exercise methods – almost everything being sold claims to offer some level of rest.

Yes, a *level* of rest and peace can be enjoyed with any and all of these things; but no product ever made, no product being made, and no product that will ever be made will deliver the kind of rest and peace Almighty God both offers and provides thru Jesus Christ!

- Jesus offers eternal life to each soul; Jesus offers a touch of His very holiness; Jesus guarantees the eternal glorification of your mind, body and soul. In His goodness and kindness He gives you and I small tastes now of the rest He *will* provide in full in the life to come.
- But you and I often believe the lie that “rest” offered by people through stuff is good enough. We settle and embrace temporary things, instead of faithfully and with difficulty, pressing on toward the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
- But if there is one Supreme God over all things – and we firmly believe there is and if He was not created – and we firmly believe that and if that Supreme God is perfectly holy and speaks through His Word, you and I had better listen AND obey *Him*!

But even as the Psalmist here experienced, the eternal God, the God who speaks, the God who created all things, the God who rightly requires the worship of all He has created, is, gloriously gracious. Look at verses 5-7: **The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. <sup>6</sup> The LORD protects the simple; when I was brought low, he saved me. <sup>7</sup> Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.**

- Look at verse 7 again. **Return to your rest, my soul.** The return of the soul to its rest assumes that at some point that soul left the rest once enjoyed. Here’s where the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk15) is so helpful. The Psalmist, you, me and all believers at some point, shunned and rejected the rest of the Father; we so often choose destructive paths. But then that true child of God, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, convicts the soul of sins committed, lifts the soul to its feet, returning the soul in humility to the Father, confessing sins.
- The Prodigal Son didn’t deserve the grace of the father! In that culture the father should’ve rejected the son because the son treated his father as though he were dead! But *the* Heavenly Father responds to the humble and repentant child like the father in the parable – with welcome, a share of his majesty and a feast for the child who has come home.
- Charles Spurgeon once wrote: *What a mercy it is that even if [y]our soul has left its rest for a while [it] can tell itself ‘it is thy rest still!’ The Psalmist’s... troubles had ruffled his spirit, but now with a sense of answered prayer upon him he quiets his soul.* In this we are reminded of the great promise Jesus made moments before he returned to the Father’s right hand: That He (Jesus) will never leave or forsake those who have placed their true saving faith in Him.
- But all this occurs *not* by the will, power or authority of Psalmist or any believer! No. The rest once enjoyed, the rest that can be returned to is all

promised and accomplished by God Almighty, who is gracious, righteous, compassionate and protecting. He is the source of true rest, true peace and true eternal life!

### **Eternal Rest Awaits**

Psalm 46 agrees with the truths of today's passages when it says: **Come, behold the works of the LORD. <sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease... he breaks the bow and shatters the spear... <sup>10</sup> "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" <sup>11</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.** The confession and praise of the One becomes the confession and praise of all. *Why???*

- Because Almighty God, thru Jesus, allies Himself with the individual believer. And as we see here, what God does for the one, He does for all; He acts both individually and corporately.

Psalm 117:1 says **Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol or laud him, all peoples.** Together all peoples everywhere, regardless of language, abilities, socio-economic status and culture, literally the whole world is told to praise, honor, boast in and glorify the one and only true living God.

- And in verse 2 we're told why: **For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.** In other words, you and I are to praise God ourselves, while promoting Christ through our words and works. We are to do this because Almighty God is overflowing with steadfast love and perfect faithfulness to His faithful children.
- The wonders, miracles, and promises of God are not to be hidden! No! In God's providence He ordains they occur so that fallen human beings everywhere can forever enjoy Him.
- That is just *part* of the good news of the gospel. It promises eternal forgiveness through Jesus Christ, yes, but it also *guarantees* endless joys in God's presence. *If there were no benefits to the forgiveness Jesus offers why should you seek it?*
- It is perfectly normal to want something for the benefits it provides. The enjoyments we experience in this life point to the reality that eternal joys exist. But eternal joys can only exist by an eternal Being. That Being is the God of Scripture, who speaks to you and I through those same Scriptures. But as we read in Hebrews 1, He speaks most loudly and clearly through His eternal Son, Jesus Christ.

Our focus in these passages must be Jesus, for He is the only one who has truly and completely fulfilled them. In fact, Jesus predicted His fulfilling of these very Psalms the night before His crucifixion. You may be asking yourselves *where is Psalm 116 or 117 quoted anywhere in the four gospels?!?! Honestly, I hope you are asking that because I'd rather you question my words and claims than take all I say as fact. Here's why I have made that claim:*

- Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during what yearly festival meal? Answer: *Passover.*

- What ceremonial elements were part of that meal? Food -certainly; a retelling of Yahweh freeing His enslaved covenant people as recorded in book of Exodus – absolutely! But as part of the liturgy of the meal, singing was included too. And what was sung? The Hallel Psalms. Which Psalms make up the Hallel Psalms? Psalms 113-118. Typically, the first three were sung early in the meal and the final three just before the meal ended. So, just before leaving the upper room, Jesus and His disciples, likely sang Psalms 116-117 together.
- Therefore, before arriving at Gethsemane Jesus sang (3-4): **The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I implore you, deliver my soul!"** Not only that but: **(8-9) For you, LORD, have delivered me from death... that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living."** But He didn't stop there because in verses 13-14 He would have sung: **I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people."** *Let that sink in for a moment!*
- That same Jesus Christ tells the world to follow Him by faith; faith in the fact the Jesus is God; faith in the fact that Jesus was tempted in every way you and I are, yet did not sin; faith in the fact that Jesus defeated death for Himself and all who follow Him when He rose from the grave.

You and I must prove our faith thru our actions. Though many a sin and failure will occur along the way, the truly faithful will press on. And should you do that, you too will find peace and rest thru Jesus Christ alone. Lengthy seasons of stress, pain, or worse may be experienced, but Jesus's promise to never leave nor forsake you will hold true. The peace and rest will be *incomplete* in this life, but full and unending in the life to come. These are the promises of the loving and covenant-keeping God we serve. How could we not echo the conclusion of Psalm 117: **His merciful kindness is great toward us, and the truth of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!**