

"Come and See the Works of God"

Responding to God with the Right Heart

Psalm 66

There is no occasion given for this psalm nor is one clearly obvious from the context. All we know is that it is a psalm given "To the chief Musician, A Song of Psalm."

This psalm belongs to the second book of Psalms. The second book of Psalms (Psalms 42-72) is referred to as the "Elohim Psalms," or the "Elohistic Psalter," because of its use of the Hebrew word "Elohim" for "God." In this section of the psalms, the word "Elohim" is used more than 200 times while that of "Yahweh" (LORD) is found only around 30 times. In the first book of Psalms (Psalm 1-41), it's basically reversed: "Yahweh" (LORD) appears around 275 times while "Elohim" (God) appears around 50 times. This pattern is very obvious in the psalm under review in this message, as well as the next two.

"Elohim" emphasizes God's power, majesty, and sovereign rule over all of creation while "Yahweh" (LORD) emphasizes God's personal, covenant relationship with His children (Ex. 3:14-15). The use of "Elohim" in this psalm fits with that emphasis of God's power, majesty, and sovereign rule.

In the phrase from verse 5, "Come and see the works of God," is a call to recognize who God is and what He has done, and that recognition will affect the attitude we have toward Him, either positively or negatively. As we study this, the thought of how we are to respond to God and His word with the right heart should be our focus.

With that in mind, we must recognize our attitude should be right:

I. IN OUR PRAISE – VS. 1-4

A universal call to joyful, wholehearted praise. Worship is both joyful and reverent.

A. The call to joy (vs. 1)

1. "Make a joyful noise" (רִיעַ) – a loud shout of triumph, often used in battle or coronation scenes. It's the same word used when the Ark enters the camp (1 Sam. 4:5), and as the walls of Jericho fell (Josh. 6:20).
2. "All ye lands" same phrase (כָּל־הָאָרֶץ) as in verse 4, where it's translated "all the earth."

"The deliverance was so great that they wished all to rejoice with them (compare Luke 15:6, 9); and the intervention of God in the case of his people, furnished lessons about his character which gave occasion to all men to rejoice." (Barnes)

Luke 15:6 [parable of the lost sheep]

⁶ And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

Luke 15:9 [parable of the lost coin]

⁹ And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost.

B. The call to singing (vs. 2)

The parallelism here is clear: our singing "forth the honor of His name" is to make our praise of Him glorious.

C. The call to speak (vs. 3-4)

1. "Say unto God, How terrible *art thou* in thy works!" – we saw this the word "terrible" in Psalm 65:5 and it carries the same idea here. This isn't a negative term, as such, but one

meaning “awe-inspiring,” or “fear inspiring.”

2. God’s power is so great that even His enemies submit (vs. 3).
3. All the earth worship Him (vs. 4), which ultimately comes to pass during the Millennial reign of Christ and worship of Him.

It also references every person as they stand before God in judgment.

Philippians 2:10-11

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; ¹¹ And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

II. IN OUR PERCEPTION OF HIS POWER – VS. 5-7

A. “Come and see” and remember (vs. 5-6)

1. “Come and see” (לְכוּ וּרְאוּ) – imperatives meaning, “Go, look closely, examine for yourself.”
2. These verses recount God’s deliverance at the Red Sea (“He turned the sea into dry *land*”) and the crossing of the Jordan into the Promised Land – “they went through the flood on foot” (the word for “flood” - נָהָר - is most often translated “river”).

This emphasizes God’s power to change situations as He sees fit.

Revelation 15:3

³ And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.

- Our praise becomes more important to us when we remember God's works. Israel was told to remember the Exodus; believers remember the cross.

B. "Come and see" and recognize (vs. 7)

"He ruleth" points to a continuous, active rule. Our God reigns over all, presently, continually, and forever.

III. IN OUR PROVING AND PURIFYING – VS. 8-12

These verses speak to Israel's testimony of affliction, discipline, and ultimate deliverance.

A. The call to bless (vs. 8-9)

1. The text moves from addressing the world in the first 7 verses, to addressing Israel in these verses.
2. "Which holdeth our soul in life" (vs. 9a) – this is showing that God is in control of our very health, and will guard and keep that life as long as He has a purpose for us.
3. "And suffereth not our feet to be moved" – trials were coming or were already there for the children of Israel, and God is assuring them here that He will keep them through those trials.

B. The purposes of testing (vs. 10-12)

These verbs describe God's refining process: He tests, then He refines, then He delivers.

1. "Thou...hast proved us" – tested for genuineness

The word for "proved" (בָּחַן) means to examine

metal to determine its purity. It's speaking of God allowing things to happen in our lives that are meant to increase our faith and trust in Him.

Psalm 139:23

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

2. "Thou hast tried us" – purified like silver

"Tried" (צָרָה) means to smelt and refine by intense heat. The purpose is purification, not destruction.

James 1:2-4

² My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³ Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. ⁴ But let patience have *her* perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

3. "Thou broughtest us into the net" – allowed confinement

The "net" (מִצְוֵה) is a snare, an ambush, or a trap. It's a figurative picture of God allowing seasons in our lives where we feel "caught," but it's for our growth, not our misery.

4. "Thou laidst affliction upon our loins" – heavy burden that causes us to bend low under the load.

"Afflictions often lie heavy upon the saints, are very close upon them, and press them sore, even, as they sometimes think, beyond measure; though the Lord supports them, and will not suffer them to sink under them." (Gill)

5. "Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads" – this is a picture of oppression, as slaves under

the rule of a wicked master.

6. "We went through the fire and water" – intense trials

Isaiah 43:1-2

¹ But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; thou *art* mine. ² When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

7. "Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy *place*" – abundance, wide space.

The phrase "wealthy *place*" (רִיחָה) is literally understood as "a place of overflowing," speaking of abundance and satisfaction.

- Trials are not signs of God's absence but His refining presence. God leads us through the fire and water but brings us out into abundance, even if ultimately that abundance is heaven.

IV. IN OUR PROMISED DEVOTION – vs. 13-15

The text shifts again, this time from speaking about Israel to the psalmist speaking in the first person.

A. The personal responsibility (vs. 13-14)

These verses speak of the vows the psalmist made in time of distress that he was now fulfilling as he promised. As we saw in our study of Psalm 61, the vow taken by a servant of God in the Old Testament under the Mosaic Law was voluntary yet legally binding. Once spoken, they had to be fulfilled, often accompanied by an offering of thanksgiving (Num. 30; Deut. 23:21-23).

In the New Testament, the system of vow-keeping attached to the Law has been fulfilled in Christ. He perfectly kept the Father's will (Heb 10:7-10), so believers are no longer bound to make legal or ritual vows. The emphasis now is not on pledging something to God but on presenting ourselves to Him

B. The personal offering (vs. 15)

The psalmist is speaking for himself here – he was only accountable for himself. Some think he was vowing and fulfilling the vows of a nation but that simply doesn't fit the plain sense seen here.

This principle is still the same today. We are only accountable for ourselves before God and no one else, which is why we need to understand that how we live our lives and what we do should be done to please the Lord.

Romans 14:12

¹² So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

1 Thessalonians 4:1

¹ Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

V. IN OUR PERSONAL PRAYER – VS. 16-20

A. A call to hear (vs. 16)

1. "Come *and* hear" parallels "Come and see" in verse 5.
 2. This is a testimony of answered prayer.
- The application for us is that when we testify of what God has done for us it strengthens faith –

ours and others.

B. A prayer offered (vs. 17)

1. "I cried unto him with my mouth" – the sense here is that this wasn't a silent prayer, but one done audibly and with urgency and persistency.
2. "And he was extolled with my tongue" – this is the proclamation of praise after the answer to the prayer of the first line.

The psalmist is essentially saying, "The same mouth that cried for help now exalts Him openly."

3. The parallelism here adds intensity and progression, not mere repetition – "I called out in desperation" and then "I lifted Him up in celebration."

C. A heart examined (vs. 18)

1. "If I regard iniquity in my heart"
 - a) The word for "regard" (רָאָה) as used here means to look favorably upon, to cherish, or hold onto sin.
 - b) This isn't speaking of struggling with sin but clinging to it without conviction or repentance.
 - c) The word for "iniquity" (אָנִי), as we have studied on several occasions in the psalms, often carries connotations of willful wickedness or perversity; sin that's deliberately planned or cultivated; or moral corruption that one is actively maintaining.
 - d) The psalmist isn't saying "if I ever sinned" (which would make answered prayer impossible), but

rather "if I were knowingly clinging to wickedness, cherishing evil plans, or maintaining an unrepentant stance toward serious sin."

"If, having seen it to be there, I continue to gaze upon it without aversion; if I cherish it, have a side glance of love towards it, excuse it, and palliate it... (C. H. Spurgeon)

2. "The Lord will not hear *me*"

- a) God is not obligated to hear the prayers of a person who refuses to repent but once sin is dealt with, He delights to hear our prayer.

James 4:8

⁸ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, ye sinners; and purify *your* hearts, ye double minded.

- b) The principle seems to be that effective prayer requires a heart that is genuinely oriented toward God, not one that is at the same time holding onto deliberate, unrepentant rebellion.
- c) It's about the direction and desire of the heart.
- d) This is why confession and repentance are so vital to our prayer life – they realign our hearts toward God rather than toward iniquity.

1 John 1:8-10

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

D. A God who hears (vs. 19-20)

- 1. "But verily God hath heard *me*" – this is one of

those “but God” statements in the Bible that are so valuable.

2. There is no context to indicate these verses were dealing with any particular issue in the psalmist’s life and they should be taken as a general teaching on prayer.

Conclusion:

Those who truly “come and see the works of God” will not remain unchanged. As we saw in this study, His power moves us to praise Him; His providence shapes our perception; His refining deepens our faith; His deliverance motivates our devotion; and His answered prayer stirs us to testify and praise Him.

From the call to “Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands” to “Blessed be God,” this psalm shows the right heart responding to a great God.