

Doxology of Jews and Gentiles

Psalm 117

By

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Psalm 117 is a call to praise the Creator of the heavens and the earth. The psalmist issues a call for all nations to enter into praise of the LORD. God wants all people—both Jews and Gentiles—to praise Him. This psalm takes on special significance since this is one of the psalms that Jesus and His disciples sang during His last Passover meal. Psalm 117 is the fifth psalm in the Egyptian Hallel Psalms (113-118). This psalm can be called the “Psalm of the Good News.” This psalm is good news in that it sets forth the concept that God loves the world. God’s love is not limited to just one nation of people, but rather His love is extended to all peoples. As we read this moving discussion of praise, we should bow in gratitude for His great love. This missionary psalm unravels the motive behind our reason for telling the Good News of God’s way of salvation by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ upon Calvary. Listen to the psalmist as he extols God:

Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. ²For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD.^a (Psalm 117:1-2)

Psalm 117 should call to our attention the words of Jesus to Nicodemus:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son. (John 3:16-18)

MESSIANIC CHARACTER OF PSALM 117

As we peruse, or read carefully, this psalm, we quickly discover that life apart from God and from His love is incomprehensible. For us to praise God is to acknowledge that the authentic life cannot be lived in self-gratification, but rather a life lived in submission to the

^a Hebrew *Hallelu Yah*

God of all creation. This psalm is also messianic in its entirety. This is the psalm that Paul cites to illustrate that both Jew and Gentile come under the umbrella of God's salvation (Romans 15:11). Prior to naming Psalm 117, Paul calls for unity among God's people. In order to bolster his plea for harmony, he draws from the Book of 2 Samuel, the Book of Deuteronomy, the Book of Psalms, and the Book of Isaiah. Since this in-depth study focuses upon Psalm 117, we should consider Paul's remarks within the context of his plea for unanimity among both Jews and Gentiles. Listen to Paul as he refers to the Old Testament writings:

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. ⁸ For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews^d on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs ⁹ so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: **"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name."**^e ¹⁰ Again, it says, **"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."**^f ¹¹ And again, **"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples."**^g ¹² And again, Isaiah says, **"The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him."**^h ¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:7-13)

For Paul, this psalm reaches out its hand to the world with a call for harmony. What is significant about this psalm is that Paul cites this poetic work to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit, through the psalmist, calls attention to the work of Christ. The Holy Spirit issues a call to the Gentiles to come and share with the Jews the true Passover, which is Christ. Today, Christians join the memorial feast known as the Lord's Supper. As believers, we celebrate a *fulfilled* Passover. The words of Paul ring with a clarion sound as he pens the following words: "For Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

A MISSIONARY PSALM

This psalm is a profound missionary psalm. As stated above, this psalm begins with a call to the nations to praise Him: "Praise the LORD, all you nations [גוֹיִם, *gô-yim*]" (Psalm 117:1a). The Hebrew word גוֹיִם (*gô-yim*) is often translated as Gentiles, even though this Hebrew word may also refer to Israel. But the psalmist also employs another word that is much broader in its scope: "extol him, all you peoples כּוֹל-הָאֲדָמָה, *kôl-hā-ʾum-mîm*]" (117:1b). This Hebrew word is much more diverse and is found in national and ethnic groupings. John expresses the meaning of this word in his letters to the seven churches of Asia:

^d Greek *circumcision*

^e 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49

^f Deut. 32:43

^g Psalm 117:1

^h Isaiah 11:10

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people (*λαῶν, laōn*) and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:9)

God's people must never forget that they are called to be a missionary people. Christians frequently forget what Christianity is all about. We, as believers, are to share the Good News with a lost and dying world. Just a perusal of the Book of Acts reveals the missionary efforts of the early church. Are we participating in missionary activities? We do not have to go overseas, but our missionary activities may be carried out in our daily walk with God. All God's people should proclaim the Gospel that was revealed after the fall. Even in the Garden of Eden, God reveals the Gospel to Adam and Eve. We should examine the words of Moses as he discloses God's comments to the Serpent: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Genesis 3:15). God revealed to Abraham the Gospel: "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" (Genesis 12:3). Has the community of God forgotten its mission? Have we forgotten our mission and calling?

THE ANSWER TO UNITY AMONG GOD'S PEOPLE

This is the psalm that breaks down the party spirit. This is the psalm that brings together the weak and the strong. This is the psalm that eliminates racial prejudice. Yes, this is the psalm that reaches out. Are we reaching out to others? Are we guilty of the same mindset of many Jews? Do we want others to hear about the Good News of salvation made available through the Atonement of Christ upon the Cross? Are we so in love with our own ways of expressing our faith that we no longer have time for those whose views differ from ours? If so, then we should read the prelude, or introductory statement, (Romans 14:1—15:8) to Paul's citation of Psalm 117 in Romans 15:9. It is not an uncommon characteristic for Christians to be suspicious of other believers who hold to interpretations that are not in harmony with their so-called status quo.

Sometimes we are so resistant to someone else becoming a part of our own circle that we neglect to fulfill our own responsibilities in our missionary endeavors. Paul dealt with this same mindset in the first church counsel concerning the acceptance of the Gentiles into the Christian community (Acts 15:12). How do we, too, respond to individuals of different ethnic backgrounds? How do we reply to individuals who do not understand everything in Holy Scripture as we comprehend? Prior to Paul's citation of Romans 15:9, Paul discusses, as stated above, differences among believers and encourages acceptance in spite of conflicting views.

Paul cites Old Testament Scriptures¹ to demonstrate how Christians should react toward those whose views do not always coincide—strong versus weak or weak versus strong. Why did Paul wish for the believers to settle their differences by making allowances for each other?

¹See 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49; Deuteronomy 32:43; Isaiah 66:10; Psalm 117:1; Isaiah 11:10. For further study concerning the relevance of the Old Testament in our understanding of the New Testament, see Dallas Burdette, "Relevance of the Old Testament" in *Old Texts through New Eyes: A Reexamination of Misunderstood Scriptures* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2009), 1-25.

He did not want believers to act in such a way that the Gentiles would turn away from Christ. Paul is interested in reaching out to all those for whom Christ died. We cannot mull over the words of Paul without recalling the words of Jesus in His priestly prayer to the Father:

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. **May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.** (John 17:20-21)

JESUS AND THE PASSOVER

As we reflect upon Psalm 117, we should never forget that Jesus and His disciples sang six psalms during the Passover. Psalm 117 reflects the words of Jesus over the cup saying: “This is my blood of the covenant, which is **poured out for many** for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). “Poured out for many” is indicative of Christ’s statement of evangelism:

Therefore go (πορευθέντες, *poreuthentes*, “going”) and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (28:19-20)

The psalmist calls awareness to the Gentile nations. Moses, too, calls attention to the nations: “Rejoice, O nations, with his people” (Deuteronomy 32:43). It is significant that Paul cites 2 Samuel 22:50, Psalm 18:49, Deuteronomy 32:43, Psalm 117:1, and Isaiah 11:10 to confirm what God had earlier promised would come to pass through His Christ. Once more, listen to Paul as he invites awareness to these prophetic writings from the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets:

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.⁸ For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews^d on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs⁹ so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: **“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name.”**^{e 10} Again, it says, **“Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people.”**^{f 11} And again, **“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples.”**^{g 12} And again, Isaiah says, **“The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.”**^{h 13} May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:7-13)

We cannot read this section of Romans, without thinking about the final instructions of Jesus as He explains the things written about Him in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

^d Greek *circumcision*

^e 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49

^f Deut. 32:43

^g Psalm 117:1

^h Isaiah 11:10

Luke, in his letter to Theophilus, calls attention to the words of Jesus as He seeks to assist His disciples in their understanding of what had been written beforehand:

He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: **The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,**⁴⁷ **and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.**⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:44-49)

Paul was conscious of his calling to the Gentiles. He understood Psalm 117; he comprehended the implications of Deuteronomy 32:43; he had a handle on the ultimate meaning of Isaiah 11:10; and finally, but not least in his citations, he realized the allusions of 2 Samuel 22:50 and Psalm 18:49. Again, in Paul’s Roman Epistle, following his citations of the Old Testament Scriptures, he writes:

I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.¹⁵ I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God.¹⁸ I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done—¹⁹ by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.²⁰ It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else’s foundation.²¹ Rather, as it is written: **“Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand.”**^a (Romans 15:14-21)

PSALM 117 CALLS FOR PRAISE

Is it any wonder that the psalmist cries: “Praise (הלל, *hā-lāl*) the LORD, all you nations; extol [שבַּח, *šā-bāḥ*] him, all you peoples” (Psalm 117:1). This piece of writing is a doxology calling upon Jews and Gentiles to praise Yahweh. All people are called upon to enter into His praise and to magnify His name. This poetic psalm almost takes our breath in its brevity of exuberant praise. The vocation and goal of every individual is praise. This psalm is not limited to Israel or to Judah or to a special class of people, but rather this psalm is an invitation to all nations to praise Him. Praise is what God seeks from every individual. Everyone in God’s family is called upon to praise Him. Are we praising God in our daily walk? Is God upon our lips? Is God upon our hearts? Is God in our minds? Are we praising God for His great love and His unchangeable faithfulness?

^a Isaiah 52:15

There must be a purpose for the Holy Spirit including this short psalm in the Book of Psalms. This psalm, as stated above, is an open invitation to the Gentiles to **come to God**. This psalm is an open invitation for Gentiles to **praise God**. God yearns for the hearts of men and women of all races—Russians, Chinese, Cubans, Vietnamese, African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Caucasian Americans, Mexican American, and so on. This call is to all people: “Praise the Lord.” But what does it mean to praise the Lord? The word *praise* is from the Hebrew word לָלַל, *hā·lāl*, “to praise, celebrate, glory, sing [praise], boast”). Psalm 117 is just one of one hundred and fifty psalms. W. E. Vine (1873-1949), English biblical scholar and theologian, says,

The Hebrew name for the Book of Psalms is simply the equivalent for the word “praises” and is a bit more appropriate than “Psalms,” which comes from the Greek and has do with the accompaniment of singing with a stringed instrument of some sort.²

PRAISE FOR DELIVERANCE

The Jews praised God for deliverance from Egyptian bondage under Moses, so, today, Christians sing this psalm of praise in gratitude for deliverance from the kingdom of darkness. Again, Psalm 146:7 reads: “Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; **make music** (ψάλατε, *psalate*) to our God on the harp.” Once more, Psalm 149:3 reads: “Let them praise his name with dancing and **make music** (ψαλάτωσαν, *psalatōsan*, “to pluck, pull, twitch”³) to him with tambourine and harp.” As we examine this redemption that God has made available “through” Jesus Christ, is it any wonder that Paul breaks out in praise in the beginning of his Epistle to the Ephesians?

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us **in him** before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons **through Jesus Christ**, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us **in the One he loves**. ⁷ **In him** we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹ And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed **in Christ**, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. ¹¹ **In him** we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope **in Christ**, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ And you also were included **in Christ** when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked **in him** with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 3:3-14)

²W. E. Vine, “To Praise,” in *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nelson: Nashville, 1985), 184.

³From ψάλλω (*yallw*): third person, plural, aorist, active imperative.

Is it any wonder that Paul tells the Ephesians to “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. **Sing** (ᾄδοντες, *adontes*) and **make music** (ψάλλοντες, *psallontes*) in your heart to the Lord,²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:19-20)? *psallontes* is from the Greek verb ψάλλω (*psallō*), which always suggests a musical accompaniment, that is, specifically of the harp. The adverbial phrase “in your heart” (τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν, *tē kardia hymōn*) means “**with all your heart**.”⁴ The Revised Standard Version is much clearer in its translation than is the King James Version.

Cause for Praise: Jesus and Calvary

Psalm 117:1 is a call to praise, but 117:2 is a reason for praise. God not only calls people of all nations to praise Him, but He also gives the reason why the nations should praise Him. Read verse two again: “For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD.” What is the reason for praise? It is the greatness of God’s love. As we seek to gain a greater understanding of Psalm 117, perhaps, the following translations will shed additional insight into the very heart of the reasons for praise:

PSALM 117

PSALM 117

King James Version

The New Revised Standard Version

O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people. ²For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD *endureth* for ever. Praise ye the LORD.⁵

Praise the LORD, all you nations! Extol him, all you peoples! ²For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!⁶

The NIV translates the Hebrew word רַחֲמֵי (*hē·sēd*, “loving-kindness, steadfast love, grace, mercy, faithfulness, goodness, devotion”) as “great is his love,” but the KJV translates this word as “merciful kindness” and the NRSV translates this Hebrew word as “steadfast love.” For the psalmist, the “merciful kindness” of God is joined together with the Hebrew word אֱמֶת (*’ē·mēt*, “truth”). God reveals Himself not only in mercy but also in truth. In other words, His mercy is bounded by His truth. Mercy is that which flows to all nations. As Christians, we can find comfort in these words—steadfast love and truth. We can rest in God’s truth concerning salvation by grace through faith. **Psalm 117 speaks not only of the past**

⁴*The Revised Standard Version*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.) 1973, 1977.

⁵*The King James Version*, (Cambridge: Cambridge) 1769.

⁶*The New Revised Standard Version*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers) 1989.

deliverance from Egyptian bondage, but this psalm also speaks of future salvation “through” Jesus Christ.

When we study Jesus and Calvary—the just for the unjust—we can only stand in awe and praise. At Calvary, we see Jesus taking humanity’s sinfulness in order that humanity might take His sinlessness. Yes, at Calvary, Jesus took the ruins of mankind so that mankind might take His righteousness through faith in Him. Calvary is God’s way of bringing mercy and truth together. It was at Calvary that righteousness and peace kissed each other. No wonder the psalmist says, “Praise the Lord.” God took deity and humanity and brought into the world something new—God incarnate. God in His infinite wisdom fused the two—God and man—into one. **The eternal, uncreated, self-existing One was now a man born to die for the sins of the world.**

God’s love triumphs through His faithfulness. As we consider the great commission, we should never forget that this psalm is a missionary psalm. As stated earlier, Paul cites this psalm in Romans 15:11 as testimony about God’s purpose “in” and “through” Jesus: “And again, ‘Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples.’” Because of God’s loving-kindness and faithfulness, then the Gentiles were to “sing praises to him.” Paul does not stop with this call for praise, but he continues to press home the fact that all of God’s blessings center around one person, namely, Jesus: “And again, Isaiah says, ‘**The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him**’” (15:12).

Jesus is the One through whom God reconciled both His merciful kindness and His everlasting truth. God could only solve the problem at Calvary. At Calvary, God’s justice and mercy are brought together in a way that does not contradict God’s holy nature. Since God is holy, how could He solve the sin problem? Paul reveals that this difficulty of sin could only be solved through the Atonement of Jesus. Listen to Paul as he discusses sin and God’s justice:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² This **righteousness from God** comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are **justified freely** by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ **God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.** (Romans 3:21-26)

The words of Paul in 3:21-26 should generate exhilaration and enthusiasm from the world of humanity. Is not God’s method of salvation—“justifies those who have faith in Jesus”—a call for praise? God has made salvation simple—acceptance of Jesus as His method of redemption. No wonder Paul flashed Psalm 117 like neon lights upon his readers in Rome. Are we conscious that God did all this for our salvation? God in no way compromised His holiness, His justice, nor His righteousness when He reached down to rescue us from the jaws of death and offered us a free salvation by faith in His Son Jesus. Jesus has discharged all charges against anyone who puts his or her trust in Him. Jesus has given everyone perfect standing before God so that all may be fully acceptable in His sight. According to Paul,

everyone is justified freely by His grace (Romans 3:24). God does not charge the justified with anything. Isn't that a call for praise?

As observed above, the psalmist employs two words for "praise" in Psalm 117: "Praise (הלל, *hā·lāl*) the LORD, all you nations; extol [שבח, *šā·bāḥ*] him, all you peoples." The second word translated "extol" means to "sing aloud." In other words, the psalmist is saying that the nations should praise God with a voice that is loud enough for everyone to hear. Are we aloof in our witnessing about the love of God? Are we standoffish when we assemble with other believers to praise God for His gift of eternal salvation? Are we afraid to shout a loud "amen" when we agree with what is being said or performed? This psalm refuses to be overlooked. This psalm brings us in as joint-heirs with Christ to join our voices with those who praise His name.

CONCLUSION

Sir James Young Simpson

As we think about the blessings of God through Jesus Christ, we cannot help but rejoice that we have been ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven, and given a place in God's kingdom. The story is told about Sir James Young Simpson (1811-1870), the man who discovered chloroform, who was once interviewed by a newspaper reporter who asked: "Sir, what do you consider your greatest discovery?" Whereupon, he replied: 'My greatest discovery was when I discovered I was a sinner in the sight of God.' Again, the reporter asked him: 'And would you please tell me your second greatest discovery.' To this Sir James Simpson responded: 'By all means, my second greatest discovery was when I discovered that Jesus died for a sinner like me.'"⁷ Do we feel this way?

Henry Moorhouse

Another story is told of an English preacher, Henry Moorhouse (1840-1880) who visited America and preached at Moody's church. Prior to his visit to America, Moorhouse told Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899), American evangelist and publisher, that he was thinking about going to America. Moody then told him that if he should ever come to Chicago to be sure to come to his church and preach. Moody was only being polite because he had never heard Moorhouse preach and did not know what he would say. Sometime after Moody had gone back to America, he received a telegram from Moorhouse that he had arrived in New York and would be in Chicago Sunday. He requested an opportunity to preach. Moody was hesitant, but, nevertheless, he told the leaders of the church to let him preach once. But if the people enjoyed him, let him preach again.

Moody had to be out of town that Sunday. When Moody returned a week later, he inquired of his wife as to the reception of Moorhouse. "Well," responded his wife, "he is a better preacher than you are." Then she continued: "He's telling sinners that God loves them."

⁷I am grateful to John Phillips, *Exploring the Psalms: Volume Two, Psalms 89-150* (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1988), 248, for this story.

Whereupon Moody replied: “God doesn’t love sinners.” His wife responded: “Well, if you don’t think so, go and hear him.” “What?” said Moody, “Do you mean to tell me he is still here, that he is still preaching?” “Yes, he has been preaching all week, and he has only had one verse for a text. It is John 3:16.”

Moody went to hear Moorhouse, and Moorhouse began his sermon by saying, “I have been hunting for a text all day, and I have not been able to find a better one than John 3:16. So I think I will just talk about it once more.” Following the message, Moody testified that for the first time he had a clear understanding of the gospel of grace and the greatness of God’s love.⁸

Karl Barth

Another story that is well worth repeating is a story that I remember hearing in the early seventies. This is the story about a renowned Swiss theologian, Karl Barth (1886-1968). During one of his visits to America, someone asked him during a discussion period: “Dr. Barth, what is the greatest thought that has ever gone through your mind?” He paused for a moment and said: “Jesus loves me! This I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

Is it any wonder that the psalmist called for praise? Is it any wonder that Paul cited Psalm 117 as a means of maintaining unity among the people of God? Can we remain silent in the face of God’s merciful kindness and truth? When we read the words of Jesus concerning God sending His Son to save the world, how can we refuse to break out in praise? Pay attention once more to Psalm 117 and John 3:16-17:

PSALM 117:1-2

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

JOHN 3:16-17

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

⁸I am beholden to James Montgomery Boice, An Expository Commentary, *Psalms: 107-150*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 951-952, for this story.