

## **Come and Hear!**

What is your response to good news?

What happens when you receive good news? You post it on Facebook. You call your friends. You talk to your family. Good news excites you, and it should. Such news you want to spread, not hide.

What is your response to the *best* news? Not engagement, a baby announcement, or acceptance into a college program, but something much higher, something eternal. The best news in the world is that God's people—sinners, miserable in their woe and darkness—are saved from their sin in Jesus Christ. The gospel is the best news in all the world.

What is your response to *that* news? This news ought to excite us more than any other earthly event or accomplishment. But we are sinners. Often this news receives very little response. This gospel good news does not always grip the soul as it should.

Because we know our sin and failure, we go to the light of God's word and see how the psalmist in Psalm 66:16 responds to this good news: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." His inspired response is instructive for us.

The psalmist declares *what* God has done for his soul. What God did for his soul is outlined in verses 9–12. This man was tried like silver in the furnace of God's affliction (v. 10). This was the proving of God that prepared him for heaven. The psalmist felt like a trapped bird or animal, for God had brought him into a net and laid heavy, nearly crushing afflictions upon him (v. 11). God caused his enemies to ride over his head, as the trampling of a horse and chariot; he traveled through fire and water (v. 12). Yet in all these afflictions, God held his soul in life, and did not allow his feet to be moved (v. 12). Not only did God hold him in life, but God brought him through the trials into a wealthy place, that is, heaven, the place of relief (v. 12).

This was God's marvelous deliverance of the psalmist's *soul*. This was not an abstract, disconnected-to-life truth that he declared, but a very personal, real truth. This is what God did for him spiritually, in the very core of his being.

Is not the psalmist's experience yours? Have you felt the fires of God's affliction-furnace? Have you experienced the heat of his furnace in the loss of a good friendship – the betrayal of a life-long friend? Have tears streamed down your face as you stood in the receiving line at a

funeral home, with a family member lying in a casket only feet away? Have you been persecuted, facing the mockery and ridicule of the world? When these fiery trials descended upon you, perhaps you felt like an animal in a trap, unable to break free. Perhaps the pressure of these burdens was a weight almost unbearable to carry.

Yet, this is the good news: no matter what fire you pass through, God holds your feet so that they do not move. He holds your soul in life, and he will bring you through these hardships to a place of relief – heavenly glory. Though you suffer in this life, in Jesus Christ you have salvation from sin. Though you undergo manifold trials here below, God loves you in Christ, and he will bring you home to be with him. This is good news. This is the best news.

What will you do with this news?

In response to this good news, the psalmist says, “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.” He beckons over, as if with the wave of a hand, those who are standing around him. He tells them to come near to him, for he must tell them the matter that is weighing upon his soul. He must communicate to them the joy of his heart. The psalmist will declare with his mouth what God has done for his soul.

This, then, is to be your response to God’s work for you and in you: declare it to others! Beckon to others around you to come near and hear what you have to say.

The ones whom you beckon are those who fear God. The text calls you to declare or witness *to* fellow Christians what God has done for your soul – those you meet and talk to at school, in church, in Bible society. When we say the word *witnessing*, we usually think of our missionaries in foreign lands, or our duty toward unbelievers in the world. But you must witness of your salvation also to those who fear God. This requires, young people, that you fellowship with and keep good, Christian friends. How will you live in obedience to Psalm 66:16 if you commune with the young people of the world?

The text tells you to declare to others of like faith what God has done for you. Declaring has to do with knowledge – being able to recount or express truth in a logical way. If you are to tell others about what God has done for you, then you must be able to communicate that. If you are zealous for the truth, but your zeal has no content, your witness is almost useless. How do you grow in the knowledge of God’s work and salvation? Diligent preparation for catechism is a

must. Faithful church attendance is fundamental. Christian schools, and the instruction given in them, is absolutely key. God uses these means to build you up in the knowledge necessary to witness effectively to others of like faith. Do you value these means?

But declaring also involves zeal. This declaration of what God has done for your soul is not made with a long face, nor is it said in a whisper. But communicating to others what God has done for your soul is a truth that expresses itself on the face – excitement! It is a truth that the voice proclaims, loudly and with conviction! You must be as a pot of boiling water on the stove, ready to spill over! If you know the truth, but do not proclaim it with zeal, your witness will be ineffective.

Is this your zealous declaration after the worship service as you stand in the narthex? Is this mine? We have just heard the gospel of the kingdom preached... but do we talk about sports, hunting, and work instead? Is this our heartfelt witness at Young People's Society? We have the grand opportunity to discuss God's word...but do we sit without a word to say, eager to get home for lunch more than anything? You and I must work at this witness. We are witnessing, but we must always be growing in it.

You must know that Satan, the world, and your sinful flesh will seek to oppose you at every point, so that you do not carry out this witness to others of like faith. The obstacles are at least three.

One obstacle is embarrassment. Are you embarrassed to declare what God has done for your soul? This is certainly a problem that people of all ages experience, but it is more acute in the teenage years. As a student *in high school*, do you want to share with others what God has done for you? It is easy to have doctrinal debate – but doctrinal debate is not what Psalm 66:16 has in mind. Are you ready, without embarrassment, to declare to others what God has done for your soul?

Another hindrance to this activity of declaring has to do with the ones to whom you witness. “Why must I witness to others in the church? They already know for themselves what God has done. Witnessing to unbelievers? That I can understand. But witnessing to believers? Why must I do that?” Nevertheless, Psalm 66:16 is clear: you ought to find it your delight to tell others what God has done for your soul!

Furthermore, social media makes it increasingly difficult to talk about important matters face to face. Let us not allow social media to take away from our responsibility to witness, face to face, what God has done for us. Do not let your witness hide behind screens. Make this declaration personal, as the psalmist's witness was personal.

But, to make this all concrete, one more question is necessary: what occasions lend themselves to such a witness?

This declaration can be made at times of trial. When you visit a loved one or a fellow church member in the hospital, this is a time for spiritual reflection and conversation about God's goodness. Visit the widows and widowers in your congregation, and drop by the local rest home where the elderly saints live; you will have good opportunity to hear the testimony of God's people—how God has been faithful to them in all the periods of their life. Use visitation at the funeral home – whether you stand in the receiving line, or are the one visiting – to talk about God's faithfulness and grace.

This witness of what God has done for your soul can be made among your friends. You might choose to set aside Sunday nights, when there is opportunity, to discuss the sermon, or to sing psalms. In the summer months when church societies have stopped for a time, consider starting a Bible study with your friends, taking one night each week to discuss the word and declare to others what God has done for your soul.

Be a witness in your writing. Write in *Beacon Lights*. Write for the Young Calvinists blog. Write for your church newsletter.

God will bless that kind of witness.

What is your response to the best news?