

Delivered from Death

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[0 : 00] 1.16, I'm going to read it out loud for us. I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.

Because He inclined His ear to me, therefore I will call on Him as long as I live. The snares of death encompassed me, the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me.

I suffered distress and anguish. Then I called on the name of the Lord. O Lord, I pray, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord and righteous.

Our God is merciful. The Lord preserves the simple. When I was brought low, He saved me.

Return, O my soul, to your rest.

For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

[1 : 01] I believed. Even when I spoke, I am greatly afflicted. I said in my alarm, all mankind are liars. What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits to me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

O Lord, I am your servant. I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have lost my bonds. I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord.

I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem. So praise the Lord. I don't know if any of you guys have had a close shave with death.

Yeah? Tell us about it. One time I almost choked on steak. But like I literally was not breathing. But we had PMT over for dinner that night.

[2 : 10] So she actually did a time look on me. Praise God. Not a very great story, but it was really scary. It must have been scary. What was going through your mind?

What was going through your mind after you were saved? Thank God Angela was here. Yeah. What a not coincidence, right?

Yeah. Yeah, I like ran up to the fridge to get water because that's what my 12-year-old self thought would be the best thing for me. And Angela was like, come here.

And so she was like doing the high look and it didn't work the first time. I was like, I'm going to die.

Oh my gosh, I'm going to see Jesus. Goodbye world. But then it came out. Wow. Yeah. That's great. Yeah, it's a great story.

I think you guys probably heard of our story when we spun out of the highway because of black ice. That's probably the closest we ever came to it. It's like a... And then afterward, it's just that relief.

[3 : 13] Like you think you might die and then you don't. And it's just that relief, overwhelming sense of relief. And then not much else matters at that point. Like I don't care that my car's totaled.

My family's okay. You know, like it's like a... It's like... So the psalmist, like that kind of context, it's because the psalmist has just had a very close shave with death.

Hey John. We're in Psalm 116. Your shirt still looks new. How's that possible? We're not special occasions.

You don't wear it enough. You wear it enough too much. I sleep in my mind. And so the psalmist has had a close shave with death.

And he's experiencing this sense of relief. And he's remembering how God delivered him in verses 12, verses 1 to 11. And then in verses 12 to 19, which is kind of the second half, he's speaking about rendering to God the vows he made when he was in trouble.

[4 : 20] So remembering God's deliverance and then rendering his vows to the Lord. So in the first part, verses 1 to 11, it's about remembering God's deliverance. And it begins this way in verse 1. I

love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.

And we see this over and over again through our scripture. God doesn't hear us because we love and serve him. We love and serve him because he hears us, because he loves us, because he has shown his mercy.

We love him because he first loved us. And so the key to greater love for God always is remembering God's deliverance. So if we don't love God, if we don't feel zeal for him, if we feel lukewarm in our affections, if we feel ourselves getting bigger and bigger in our lives and we're having less of God in our lives, we need to remember God's deliverance.

And this section has a roughly chiasmic structure. That's a mirroring symmetrical structure. And so you can see that clearly in verses 2 to 9.

So verse 2 says, I will call on him as long as I live. And that mirrors verse 9. It says, I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. And then verses 3 to 4, which recall how the psalmist cried out to the Lord, deliver my soul from the suffering and threat of death.

[5 : 36] That mirrors verses 7 to 8, which say, you have delivered my soul from death. So just similar concepts, ideas, and mirroring. And not all of us have experienced close shave with death, but all of us as Christians have experienced God's rescue from the spiritual death that the Bible describes, right, over and over again.

Ephesians 2.5 says that we were all once dead in our trespasses, but made alive together with Christ. So we're people who, by definition, have passed from death to life. And it was more than just a close shave, right?

We were actually dead in our trespasses and sins. But Christ delivered us while we were rotten to the core, spiritually speaking, corpses. Christ delivered us from death by dying on the cross for our sins in our place so that we might be redeemed.

We might be counted as righteous. And the logic of Psalm 116 is that those who have been delivered by God from death should live for God in life.

And we owe Him our lives. We live because of Him so we should live for Him. And the spiritual life we experience here and now because of Jesus Christ like the eternal resurrection life that we will have in the future are to be lived in worship of God.

[6 : 56] Our life is to be life of worship. And what God has done for us is all the more amazing when we remember who God is and who we are. And that's what verse 5 and 6 are getting at.

Verse 5 is an affirmation of who God is. And verse 6 is a statement of our relative unworthiness before God. Verse 5 says, Gracious is the Lord and righteous. Our God is merciful.

In contrast, verse 6 says, We are simple. We were brought low. But because God is gracious and merciful, He saved us. And this is in stark contrast to our human friends and allies.

He says in verses 10 to 11, the psalmist says, I believed, even when I spoke, I am greatly afflicted. So he's saying, even when I was crying out to God, I am greatly afflicted. He believed in the Lord.

And he's saying, I said in my alarm, all mankind are liars. And so, this is the first part of that. Verse 10 is cited in Paul's letter to 2 Corinthians 4, verses 13 to 14, where he says that in spite of the affliction that we experience as Christians, suffering that we experience in life, we believe, he says, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence.

[8 : 14] So even in the midst of great affliction, like the psalmist is going through, even when our experience in our present life is just suffering and tribulation, we can still persist in faith in God's ultimate deliverance.

So when the psalmist was in desperate need, no man came to his aid. Their promise of friendship and loyalty proved empty. So he declared, all mankind are liars. But God, he is true.

God, he is faithful. Gracious is the Lord and righteous and God is merciful. It's similar to kind of what Paul writes about toward the end of his life in 2 Timothy 4, verses 16 to 18.

He says, at my first defense, this is his trial in Rome. At my first defense, no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me.

So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. So this is a really wonderful promise.

[9 : 18] Our best friends might betray us, right? Our fathers and mothers might reject us. Our spouses might leave us, but God is faithful and true.

All mankind are liars, but the Lord, he is gracious and true. And so we can cry out like the psalmist, I believe, even when I spoke, I am greatly afflicted.

And because of God's unchanging character, that's why we can have unwavering faith, even in the face of death, both physical death and spiritual death. Even when we experience tragedy, tragedies, defeats in our lives, we can have faith.

I believe, even when I spoke, I am greatly afflicted. And after remembering God's deliverance, in verses 12 to 19, the psalmist speaks of rendering his vows to the Lord in worship.

And he begins with the rhetorical question, what shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me? I love that it's phrased as a rhetorical question because it kind of conveys that sense of there's nothing I can do.

[10:20] Like, there's nothing I can do to repay, to render enough to God for what he has done for me, for all the benefits that I have enjoyed. What shall we render to the Lord? Yet even though we can't repay, we have to respond somehow because we can't help ourselves.

So the psalmist answers the question himself in verses 13 to 19. And that too is structured symmetrically like the first section. So verse 13, he speaks of lifting up the cup of salvation and calling upon the name of the Lord.

And then that matches verse 17, which speaks of offering the sacrifice of thanksgiving and calling upon the name of the Lord. So this is a picture of worship at the temple.

Lifting up the cup is a libation offering, wine offering. Offering the sacrifice is probably an animal sacrifice, thanksgiving. And then verses 14 and 18 are exactly the same.

I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people. So the first section dealt with what God has done. And this section is dealing with how we should respond. We have to pay our vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people.

[11:26] A vow is a voluntary but a binding agreement. We enter into it voluntarily but once we've made it it's binding. And so a believer in this situation, the psalmist, has said to the Lord, Lord, if you deliver me from this threat, I vow to do such and such for your glory.

And so by entrusting himself to God's deliverance, the psalmist has put certain obligations upon himself as a worshiper of God. And this is explained further in verse 15 to 16. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

That's verse 15. This is sometimes misunderstood by people. It doesn't mean that God is pleased by or eager for the deaths of his saints. Come on, more people.

Come die for me. You know, it's like that's not what this is talking about. The word precious is used most often throughout scripture to refer to precious stones. And the word means rare, costly, weighty.

So it's the exact opposite of what pagans in the ancient world frequently said. And what they said was, whom the gods love die young. Because they want these people to be with them because they love them.

[12:38] So they make them die young. So that's what the pagans said. But this is the exact opposite of that. The psalmist is saying that the death of one of his people is not something that God brings about flippantly. It's rather something that's weighty to him.

It's serious to him. It's significant to him and costly to him. We are valuable to him is what he's saying. And that's why he saved us.

Verse 16, O Lord, I am your servant. I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have lost my bonds. So in the bonds referred to here is probably the same snare of death mentioned in verse 3.

So God loosed him from the bonds of death. And by crying out to him for salvation, by crying out to God that he would free us from the bondage of death, we have put ourselves under a certain obligation.

We become his servants. Or rather, because we are his servants, God responds to free us because we are his people. And according to Exodus 21, verse 4, the children of slaves belong to the master.

[13:44] And so this is referring to that concept. As heirs of the servants of God, the slaves of God, we too belong to God. We are the chosen people, his elect.

We are his servants. And for that reason, because of our relationship to him, we're valuable to him. And so God intervenes to free us from death and so that we might be free to serve him.

What Paul talks about in Romans 6, but thanks be to God that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed and having been set free from sin have become slaves of righteousness.

So we are slaves of God, right, according to this passage. We were bought with a price. And as the property of God, we are to practice absolute obedience, total submission, and exclusive preoccupation with his purposes and priorities.

Sometimes we're uncomfortable with that kind of language, but that's the reality, right? So as Christians, brothers and sisters, we have to ask ourselves, right, are you preoccupied with pleasing your master?

[14 : 55] Is that what consumes you? Or are we merely pleasing ourselves with our lives? Because nothing else loosed our bonds.

It was the Lord, God who loosed our bonds. God loosed our bonds. God purchased us with the blood of Christ and so we belong to him. And those who have been delivered by God from death should live for God in life.

That's really the main point of this psalm. Let's respond to that with the song.