

# Psalm 116v1-19 - Easter 2025

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we all love a good story, don't we? And Psalm 116 is a great story. We might call it a resurrection story.

! A personal testimony of how one man overcame death and lived. Look at verse 1.

! I love the Lord, he says. For he heard my voice and he heard my cry for mercy. Verse 19.

In the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, Jerusalem, praise the Lord. This is a story that is worth retelling. Now what makes this story great is that this story can be your story. The writer is saying, look I've written this, I've recorded this, I am sharing my experience because this story can be your story too. What happened to me can happen to you.

So what is his story? Well, there's three stories in one. There's a true story, a better story, and a personal story.

[ 1 : 38 ] We're going to look at the psalm in three different ways. A true story, a better story, a personal story. You might like to think of an Easter egg. Hope you all got Easter eggs this morning.

You get the cardboard on the outside. Then you get to the gold tinfoil. And you open up the tinfoil and then you get the best part.

The sweet chocolate egg. So in three stages, the cardboard, the tinfoil, the sweet chocolate egg. So we have a true story, a better story, a personal story.

And as we progress, so it gets even sweeter and better. So first, let's look at the true story. A testimony of what God had done for this person.

He tells us, first of all, that I was confronted by death. Verse 3. The cords of death entangled me.

[ 2 : 41 ] The anguish of the grave came over me. It was as if death's tentacles had wrapped around him like a giant octopus. It was like a boa constrictor that was squeezing the very life out of him.

Death was staring him in the face. The rest of verse 3, he says, I was overcome by distress and sorrow.

What could I do? I was in a losing battle. Death was pulling me down into the grave. I was on my way out. Verse 4.

Then I called on the name of the Lord. Lord, save me. I turned to the only one who could rescue me and help me.

So he tells us he was confronted by death. And he says, I was delivered from death. As I called out to the Lord, I discovered something amazing.

[ 3 : 46 ] Verse 5. That the Lord is gracious and righteous. Our God is full of compassion.

It's really true. You may have heard of other things, but this is true. When there was nothing I could do, the Lord saved me.

Verse 8. For you, Lord, have delivered me from death. My eyes from tears. My feet from stumbling. That I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I thought I would never see my friends and family again. But now I'm back in the land of the living.

I can now breathe again. Everything is okay. I was confronted by death. I was delivered in death.

[ 4 : 50 ] And he tells us that I am now confident in death. You see, what the Lord had done for me changed my life. Verse 15. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants.

I was delivered from that near-death experience. And that has helped me to see that when my time does come, it will not be the end.

My death will be precious in God's sight. For I will be with God. It's a remarkable true story, isn't it? Confronted by death. Delivered by death. And now confident in death. This, we could say, is a resurrection story. Now maybe you've had a similar experience in your life.

Death has looked you in the face, but miraculously you survived. Like the time when Kirstie and I were on our honeymoon.

[ 6 : 02 ] And we took a boat off Nicaragua. And a storm came. And the waves were literally piling into the boat. We had to strap our luggage to the side.

And we cried out, we're going to drown on our honeymoon. But we were saved. We got to our port and we lived.

But what happens when life doesn't have such a good ending? A loved one is given a few months to live.

Every drug and treatment has been tried. And nothing seems to work. A friend has an accident. Tubes and machines are what keeping them alive.

And it all seems hopeless. And like the writer here in Psalm 116, we cry out to the Lord, perhaps for the first time in our lives, Lord, save us.

[ 7 : 11 ] But deliverance doesn't come. Why does the Lord not listen to my voice? Why does the Lord not turn his ear to me?

Oh, it's alright for this man. It all worked out well for him. Of course he loves the Lord. Of course he praises the Lord.

It's all good for him. But it's not the way it worked out in my life. Is there any way that I can experience what he experienced?

Well, this true story points to a better story.

So we've moved from the cardboard into the gold tinfoil. A better story. You see, this true account tells us that God is a saving God.

[ 8 : 19 ] That's what he delights in doing. He delivers. Look back with me, please, to Psalm 107. Just go back a couple of pages.

Psalm 107. Psalm 107 begins a new section in the Psalms, which is all about how God delivers and saves and how people praise God for what he did.

So look at verse 1. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story. And what follows in Psalm 107 are stories of rescue and deliverance.

Let's look at a few of them. Verse 4. Some wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle. Verse 6.

[ 9 : 23 ] They cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. Or verse 10.

Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness, prisoners suffering in iron chains. Verse 13. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.

He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness. Or verse 17. Some became fools through their rebellious ways.

Verse 19. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He sent out his word and healed them.

He rescued them from the grave. Back to Psalm 116. Wonderful stories of deliverance, of God intervening and saving.

[ 10 : 34 ] And Psalm 116 is just another story of the way in which God delivers. But here's the twist.

These stories are not guaranteed promises to us that every time you and I face an illness or a danger, God is going to deliver us.

It's not that kind of promise. No, these stories are gathered together to point us to one who saves in a miraculous way.

God himself. God himself. It is the story, a better story, of how God will deliver and save all who trust his son, Jesus Christ.

You see, in many ways, Psalm 116 is the story of Jesus. It's the testimony of Jesus.

[ 11 : 43 ] You see, as Jesus went to the cross, he could say, verse 3, The cords of death entangled me. The anguish of the grave overcame me.

I was overcome by distress and sorrow. But Jesus went further than this man's experience, didn't he?

Because from the cross, Jesus cried out in his distress, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And there was no deliverance.

There was no answer. Just silence. No rescue from the grave. Jesus died. Jesus experienced death.

He was buried in the tomb. But Jesus was not abandoned to the grave. Three days later, Jesus rose again.

[12:46] So Jesus can truly say, verse 8, For you, Lord, have delivered me from death itself, my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living.

You see, Jesus Christ is the only one to have died and been raised again, never ever to face death again.

He crushed death. He destroyed the grave. And by his resurrection, he defeated our greatest fear and our darkest enemy. He broke those cords of death.

And he freed us from their chains. You see, the story of Jesus is better and greater.

Verse 15. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants. Well, Jesus was the ultimate servant, wasn't he?

[14:05] He was the true and faithful servant who obeyed his father, who came into this world, who did no wrong, who was innocent of any crime.

But yet he died on that cross, taking the punishment for all of our sin, all the things we have done wrong.

The innocent Jesus took it all. And he rose again, triumphing over the grave, so that we might have forgiveness of all of our sins and that we might have life.

As Paul writes to the church in Corinth, death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting? Thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[15:12] You see, that's what makes the death of Jesus, verse 15, being precious in the sight of the Lord. It's precious because through Jesus, deliverance from death has now been made possible, not just for one, but for all who will trust in him.

He gives you and me the victory over death. He wins the battle. He defeats our greatest enemy. And we share in that victory.

The story of Jesus is a better and greater story for us all. So how can this story, this better story, be my experience?

Well, here we come to the chocolate, the sweetest and best. You see, if Jesus' victory over death is to be my victory, if I am to experience a resurrection, then I must turn to him.

And here's how we can do it, because I want us all to know in this room, whatever our experience of life, whatever our background, that this can be my personal story.

[16:50] So here's how it can be our story. First, admit to our need in death.

Admit to our need in death. One day, death will confront us all. It could be a long-term illness or a sudden accident.

Whatever age we are, we will feel, verse 3, the cords of death wrapping around us. There will be distress and sorrow, because we know that in that moment there is nothing we can do to put it off. And so we need to admit our absolute helplessness in the face of death. And the way to express our need is not just to know that we have a need, but to express it.

And how do we do that? Well, look at verse 4. Then I called on the name of the Lord. Lord, save me.

[18:09] Just three simple words. Lord, save me. So if you are here and you are fearing death, if you are worried about the grave, simply cry out with these three words, even now, in your own heart and mind, Lord, save me.

And be confident that he will hear your cry for mercy, because, verse 5, the Lord is gracious and righteous, and our God is full of compassion.

salvation. He delights in saving. And that salvation will mean two things.

It will mean a spiritual resurrection now and a physical resurrection later. A spiritual resurrection now and a physical resurrection later.

Go with me, please. You can keep your finger in Psalm 116 and go to Ephesians, which is on page 1173.

[19:32] Page 1173. As we call out to the Lord, we can experience right now a spiritual resurrection.

Ephesians, chapter 2. It's on page 1173. And we're going to read chapter 2, verse 1.

Now notice the resurrection language. As for you, he says, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.

All we had to look forward to was separation from God. But, verse 4, but because of his great love for us, God, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions.

It is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

[ 20 : 58 ] Jesus. You see, as we cry out to him, spiritually, we are raised to new life. Jesus has paid for all of our sin and has raised us to live a new way.

A way that will live forever. A spiritual resurrection now and an eternal physical resurrection to come. Because one day, the risen Lord Jesus will come again and he will raise from the grave all those who have trusted in him and we will live in his eternal kingdom forever and forever and there will be no more death and there will be no more tears and no more accidents or sickness and no more separations.

Let's go back to Psalm 116. So first we need to admit our need in death.

second that we would trust in the deliverer from death. Look at verse 8. For you Lord have delivered me from death.

It's the Lord it's no one else who can give us life so we are to trust in him and calling on the Lord is how we exercise that trust. So verse 10 I trusted in the Lord when I said I am greatly afflicted.

[ 22 : 45 ] In my alarm I said everyone is a liar I cannot trust what anybody else says but I can trust the Lord. A child in a swimming pool may recognize that the woman in the yellow top and the red shorts is a lifeguard but it's not until they are in trouble when they can't touch the bottom and they're beginning to sink that they experience the lifeguard.

In their need they cry out in trust and so it is with us in our troubled suffering times when we find ourselves unable to do anything we cry out in trust death maybe comes close to us or a loved one is taken from us and in those moments verse 10 in our affliction we cry out and the Lord hears and the Lord knows and the Lord comes close I do not know why God allows us to go through hard times at times why we experience such affliction but maybe it's because it causes us to cry out in trust go with me please to 2nd

Corinthians it's on page 1159 1159 2nd Corinthians chapter 1 here is another story an experience of the apostle Paul who's talking about an affliction a near death experience that he had we pick it up in chapter 1 the middle of verse 8 he says we were under great pressure far beyond our ability to endure so that we despaired of life itself indeed we felt we had received a sentence of death but this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on

God who raises the dead he has delivered us from such deadly peril and he will deliver us again on him we have set our hope!

and he will continue to deliver us you see we don't choose the difficult times in life but it is through our troubles through our afflictions that we grow in our trust as we cry out to God time and time again and he meets us in our need he will keep us trusting until Christ comes again let's go back finally to Psalm 116 so we admit we trust and lastly we rest in the victory over death verse 12 what shall I return to the

[ 26 : 57 ] Lord for all his goodness to me what could I do for God who's done all of this well the answer is nothing there's nothing we can do to repay God for the goodness he has done in our life and the salvation he has given it is Jesus who has secured the victory for us so we now rest!

in him verse 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord verse 17 I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the Lord it's giving us a picture here of a feast as they bring their thanks to God it's a victory!

celebration the party has begun death has been defeated so verse 13 I lift up the cup of salvation literally I receive from him salvation God will fill my cup he will secure my life with him forever and forever he is the one who will ensure that we make it home to be with him and when that day comes when Jesus raises us from the grave then verse 15 will be true for precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful servants our death will be precious to the Lord because the victory of Jesus will have achieved its goal precious to the Lord because the victory of Jesus will have achieved its goal we will be safely at home with the Lord one writer put it like this it means that the death of every servant everyone who trusts in Christ is a demonstration to all creation that Christ's death for our sins and his resurrection from the grave was gloriously successful and it will be a very

precious thing to the Lord when you walk into his eternal kingdom because Jesus' death has guaranteed your glorious resurrection so verse seven return to your rest my soul for the Lord has been good to you we do not need to fear we do not need to worry our future is secure with him and he is with us in life today comforting encouraging and giving us strength for the journey so here we have a true story the experience of one man's deliverance in a time of trouble we have here a better story the victory of Jesus over death and his destruction of the grave and do we have a personal story is this your story that we can experience the resurrection as we rest in the victory of Jesus Christ is risen hallelujah let's pray what shall

[ 31 : 25 ] I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me I will rest in the victory of Jesus Christ thank you Lord God for the true story of Jesus thank you that his story gives us a new story a new way to live with hope and glory to come peace and comfort today thank you so much and it's in Jesus name we all pray amen