

Deliverance from Lifelong Bondage

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[0 : 00] And we want to fix our thoughts around Hebrews 2, verse 15.

You may just read verse 14. Inasmuch as the children have partaken of the flesh and blood, he himself, that is Christ, likewise shared in the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Particularly the words, and release those who through the fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Deliverance from lifelong bondage. Now, before we get into this, I want us just to, I just want to make a remark, it's a preacher's remark about the preacher's quandary.

And the party with us will, excuse me for the reference, it will be as discreet as possible, but sometimes you're made a way that you're going to have a visitor at the service, and you've prepared, and you know what you're going to do.

[1 : 36] For example, I was mentioned prayer last week about the services for today, and I settled on this verse early in the week, and for the evening, the remainder of the passage on Christ, our sympathetic high priest.

And there's a temptation to move away when you know someone's coming that you wouldn't normally have. There's a temptation to move away and to do something different.

But experience has taught me, and that a long time ago now, that's a lucid, to do that. Stay with, unless you're absolutely constrained by the Lord himself to move.

So we're looking at this subject, deliverance from lifelong bondage. And release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

And we can see in the passage from verse 14 itself, that Jesus, by his own death on Calvary's cross, has conquered or cast out Satan.

[2 : 54] That's what is said in that verse. That through death he might destroy him, that is Satan, who has the power of death. That is the devil. And he did it to the end, that he might deliver people from lifelong bondage.

Christ's death on the cross dealt the death blow to Satan. And in so doing, Christ has wrought deliverance for his brethren, for his people.

He has, in a sense, set the captives free. And that's why we were singing in Psalm 107 about the gloom and doom. It wasn't just about that.

It was about deliverance from that. And being set free by the Lord himself. And we understand the verses of the psalm we were singing.

In the context of Christ delivering us from that bondage. He sets the prisoners free. He has come and achieved this great work of deliverance in order that his people will experience for themselves that liberation, that setting free that he has accomplished.

[4 : 18] That they'll never again fear in the face of the worst, the last enemy, death itself.

He, by his death, destroyed him who has the power of death, that is the devil. And released those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Let's think then about the enslavement and the fear that the writer of Hebrews talks about. This experience. This gloom and doom stuff.

This fear of death. This sense of being bound to it. Let's look at it in the context of what Christ has done. In effecting a lasting rescue.

And bringing in security for all those who come to him and trust him and rest on him. And in a sense, he brings into our experience the knowledge and the joy of the forgiveness of sin.

[5 : 30] We have joy and peace in believing, the apostle says. And we have the spirit as the spirit of light and love. Let's begin then by considering the nature of the enslavement.

He talks about it here. As those who were all their lifetime subject to bondage. So, although it's last in the verse, we're taking it first.

We want to look at the nature of the enslavement. It's a bondage. Here, in the English version. In the original, it's slavery.

Bond service. And there is a reminder in this, of course, to us. Something that we come back to again and again. That our natural state as we come into the world.

Our native state. Is that we're enslaved to sin. And logically, we're enslaved to what Satan himself loves. Sin.

[6 : 34] It's not that people go around thinking, I'm a slave to Satan. It's not that people go around saying that they believe this consciously.

Not at all. Many people don't believe it at all. Not for a moment. But the Bible tells us that's the reality. We are, in that sense, enslaved.

It's true, of course, if you know anything about Satanism. You'll know. It's true that there are people who consciously give themselves over to him. That's a subject we don't want to dwell on.

But it's common enough in the UK now. But the point we're making here is simple. That by reason of being born in sin, in a fallen state, we are slaves to sin.

In that sense, we are chained. Speaking metaphorically. And without necessarily realizing it, we are in the service of the enemy.

[7 : 38] And it is a miserable state. It's a state of, as it's called here, bondage or slavery. Of course, people live their lives.

They endeavor to enjoy life. To try to derive as much pleasure out of life as they can. They seek ways to fulfill themselves in life.

Satisfying their desires. But you see, so very often, the fact is that God is not in the frame. It's without reference to God.

It's without reference to his will for them. And in fact, people in that way are unwilling to submit themselves to what God says in his word in the Bible.

They are unable to serve him effectively. Because they are in this spiritual state. They are enslaved. They are in bondage. It's interesting, you see, that Jesus, when he was talking to the Pharisees and the scribes, who were actually the experts in what the Hebrew Bible said at the time.

[8 : 50] They were the folk that the people looked to. And he said to them, Whatever it is we are enslaved to, that is our master.

We are mastered by it. And you remember he said to them, You cannot serve God and mammon. That's the classic statement given here.

Sometimes you hear journalists using it when they are having a swipe at some denomination or other. One thinks of a certain denomination that is wealthy in the world.

And if there is a wee bit of a problem, Sure enough, a journalist will be taking a swipe. Here is a denomination where God and mammon go hand in hand.

Not true. It can't be. It can't happen. Jesus said, You can't serve God and mammon.

[9 : 48] Possessions, many and so on. We are enslaved this way or that way. And Jesus taught that very thing.

He wanted the people for whom he came in the first place to recognize that. You can't love both God and mammon. You can only be a servant of one or the other.

Notice the word, a servant. Serving. Committed to. A bond slave to. Serving. And so, like the prisoner in the dungeon.

Speaking in terms of a spiritual state here. But like the prisoner in the dungeon, we are allowed only to do what the tyrant permits.

We are locked up. We are chained. The prisoner or the sinner is in that position. And frequently or occasionally or constantly, depending on our degree of light and sensitivity, frequently, occasionally or constantly beset with a distressing fear of death.

[11 : 01] See what he says. He came to release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to slavery.

They were aware of it, more or less. The reality would break in now and again. And for some, it's almost a constant. Those who have been brought up on the Bible and its teaching particularly had

that problem.

And doubtless there are those of us who know that maybe firsthand. Or we know of others who are like that. And so, it's good to remind ourselves of the biblical teaching here and the reality as God sees it and God says it is.

And in that way, you see, we're ready to acknowledge that we need to be rescued and delivered from the enslavement of the enemy.

We need to be brought out of the bondage of sin and the service of the enemy. That brings us secondly then to the reality of this fear of death.

[12:19] Now, surprisingly, those who are referred to by the writer to the Hebrews were themselves delivered from that fear of death. They were delivered from this real gnawing and distressing fear of death.

But they were needing to be reminded, you see, of what happened in their experience. Some of you who know the background very well here remember that the letter, needless to say, written to the Hebrews, was primarily written to Jewish Christians, to Jewish believers in Jesus.

And they had come out of a context that was difficult to leave. I remember one old Jewish man saying to me years ago, and he was a bright spark too, we have a good story and we're sticking to it.

That's very much their mentality. You may be right, of course, you would always add that, you may be right. But we have a good story and we're sticking to it.

But the same man told me another story, which showed his own halting view of things. He talked about a Jewish man going into a church at a funeral, and he saw something hanging, a chain hanging out of his pocket, and he pulled it, and there was a cross on it.

[13:48] And he just said, in answer to his Jewish friend, well, you never know. And the thing is here, these folk were in that position that they were tempted to go back.

They were tempted to see if they could have a halfway house. If they could hold on to their Jewish culture and their religious things, and Jesus as well.

And the writer's whole wonderful and deep letter is all about, that's not all. You can't think like that. No halting on the matter. Remember, you were delivered from that fear of death, and that anxiety over the bondage you were in.

You don't want to go back there. And you see, there is a reminder to us here of the reality of this fear of death. Now, I admit freely, nobody likes to admit this.

[14:55] It's not something we talk about over a coffee. But it's a reality we have to face. There exists in every human heart a fear of death.

Because it's linked with a fear of judgment. Did you notice how many times in the songs we sung here today, the reference to judgment? It's a reality from God's standpoint, and it's a fear we have about the future.

It's interesting that in Acts 17, when the Apostle Paul talked to the philosophers of different schools at the Areopagus in Athens, they were interested in hearing every new thing.

that they mocked when they heard about Jesus and the resurrection, but they hadn't a word to say when he talked about judgment.

God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man he has appointed, whereof he has given witness to that, and yet he raised him from the dead.

[16:13] And they scoffed when they heard about the resurrection, but not judgment to come. Because it's there, and it's connected with our fear of death.

We have it. We observe it from history, sometimes in literature, the great writers, the poets, and so on.

We know it from experience. And that fear of death is in us, because it is connected with facing God in judgment at last.

And there's that encounter, we would escape if we could, but it can't be done. Now, here again, we have to add something in.

That's not to say that people are going every moment of their lives, or even every day of their lives, with this. What we're saying is this fear rises up again and again.

[17:20] Even in those who have tried to squeeze it out, or who put on the bravado attitude, and they're afraid of nothing at all.

Yet even there, and we've seen it, it rises up. Try as a person will to eradicate it. The fear of death is there.

And Paul, in speaking in his letter to the Romans, speaks very frankly about that. Romans 1, you remember, where the knowledge of God is in man by reason of being created in the image of God. And man suppresses that. He tries to keep it down. But it rises up. And the apostle speaks like this, of those people who refuse to confess that God is, and he is to be sought.

It says, who knowing the righteous judgment of God. They know it. They have that sense of it.

[18:37] They take pleasure, not in him, but in serving their own ways. They do things that are worthy of death.

Even although they know the righteous judgment of God. it's worth going and looking at that second part of Romans 1, from which I'm quoting, you see there how Paul can appeal quite, quite naturally to the reality.

And it's important, therefore, for us, who have been brought up, most of us anyway, under the teaching of the Bible.

We've, some of us, perhaps, have listened to preaching that has been pretty heavy and emphasized hellfire and eternal ruin and so on. my own mother was under the ministry of George Mackay when, Fern, when she was young and as were her sisters and brother and I had stories about his preaching that would raise the hair on their neck.

Preaching that terrified them. Well, strictly speaking, it's not about terrifying us. It's about making us aware of the reality and of how to deal with the reality.

[20:09] It's not as, as, as, if we should be driven simply, merely by the fear of hell but by, by the truth that there is in the Lord Jesus Christ a wonderful provision for us so that we might be delivered from the fear of death and its consequences.

those of us who were brought up on the Bible's teaching, perhaps we absorbed the shorter catechism and could recite it easily, we know all this stuff.

We know it. We know that the Bible's teaching is not just about physical death but the eternal consequences ultimately for body and soul.

And, if we're like that here today, it's important for us to, to recognize not only the reality of this fear of death but that there is deliverance from it.

We may have grown older and old with this knowledge and we're little better for it but we're here in this world and there's hope for us in Jesus.

[21:32] There's deliverance and he can give us his joy and peace in believing so that rather than be tormented with the knowledge we have of the reality to come that gives us that knowing fear of death we are brought out of that fear through the deliverance Jesus effects and we want to finish on that third point Jesus delivers from this fear that's what said here and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage or slavery caught up in that world like the prisoner in the dungeon unable to turn this way or that dominated by this fear and when we think about Jesus delivering us from this fear it is pretty obvious that we are to accept that apart from him there is no deliverance there is no real true satisfying deliverance we must be convinced in our hearts and settled in our hearts that he is our divine savior he delivers us we were thinking about this in the first

Thessalonians some time ago he delivers us from the wrath to him and it is what he has done by assuming our nature by becoming man and dying the days of a sinner he bears our sin away through his death it's our conviction that this is the way of deliverance for us and without him we have every right to fear the worst and so it follows you see that there is a way for us clearly whereby we are delivered from our fear and the wonder of wonders is that Christ died our death for us sometimes at communions you get preachers reminding us of these profound things and one of the outstanding comments on what

Christ did in dying in our room instead on the cross is Rabbi Duncan's he took damnation livingly he took damnation livingly he bears when we look back at it he bore our wrath our judgment our hell he has dealt with it and in that way he sets all who receive him free no condemnation now I fear said the hymn writer Jesus is all and he is mine but you see that's the way it's got to be and he is mine we receive him we receive him willingly gladly we see of course by his grace but we see that he has died for me the sinner who has been in bondage and entered under the fear of death this I can live for him here free from the fear of death and bondage

Jesus you see has by his death destroyed death that's another subject and a big subject but the truth is he has destroyed death through his death and he has destroyed death and its eternal consequences for all who receive him and believe in him that's what this is about and that means that he by his death actually turns death into a blessing for his brethren for the Lord's people the commentator John Brown says they need no longer be afraid of it they may look forward to it with tranquility and even desire Martin Luther said an interesting thing he says he who fears death or is not willing to die is not enough a

Christian that's quite an insightful thing he who fears death or is not willing to die is not enough a Christian now you may think he's gone too far but Paul writing from prison in Philippi said I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ see it's far better but of course he said he said nevertheless I know it's expedient for you Philippians that I stayed but the fact of the matter is Paul had what Martin Luther is saying we ought to have we ought to have this willingness to die else we are not enough a Christian and yet the truth of the matter is

[27 : 59] Christian believers often lack this willingness if we're honest with ourselves we're content too content here we want to hold on we want a bit longer I'm not ready yet sometimes you say that almost without thinking if we're in conversation not yet but we must grasp we see that deliverance from the fear of death brings us into the position ought to bring us into the position that we do not fear it we do not see it as the king of terrors which it is but we don't see it that way anymore and like the apostle we are to say I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ when

Paul said writing to the Corinthians in that wonderful chapter on the resurrection body and so on when he said death where is your sting grave where is your victory he wasn't speaking there with words of noble sentiment Paul was speaking there about reality death has no sting for the Lord's people grave has no victory for the Lord's people thanks be unto God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ he knew you see and was convinced of the fact that through Jesus he himself and every Christian believer has a victory in Christ we are delivered and we are to see that in our own thinking we are really delivered we are settled that the fear of death and bondage have departed there was an

Englishman up in the county of Sillard and years ago he was I think he was the deputy head for a while in the high school and he was a very fine fellow Philip Rice was his name and he had done a bit of lay preaching he was a very competent guy and he had sat under the ministry of Martin Lloyd Jones in Westminster Chapel and in the providence of God Philip Rice became unwell seriously unwell with cancer and he got to the stage where there was no going back and he knew it and one of the things that marked Philip Rice out in my own memory and in the memory of the Christians in Sutherland was his absolute composure of mind about death itself and some of you will know the Reverend Ken Lartar I think he might have been around in Glasgow and he was in Brora Ken Lartar and he spoke on one occasion of Philip Rice towards the end of his life as he approached death in fact and he said this about Philip Rice he was utterly without fear for he knew and believed the word of Christ that nothing in the universe not even death could separate him from the love of God in Christ in Christ Jesus and that's not something for super Christians it's something that ought to grip us by faith in Jesus and that's the way we're to be we're to recognize what a deliverance we have in the

Lord Jesus Christ and be the better for it in our lives and so if we ask ourselves honestly do I fear death and we're we're inclining to say yes then we say or we listen to Luther saying you're not enough a Christian take the gentle rebuke of the apostle I have a desire to depart with Christ to be with Christ which is far better Lord grant me that kind of understanding grant that I may embrace in you the truth of your word that my Savior has come and has released me from the fear of death and from the bondage that the sinner is in I am delivered from it what great gain we have what deliverance we have and you see then when that cloud comes over us and we begin to fear and dread death we're to look away to Jesus and we're to grasp in our understanding that enslavement to sin and death and hell are gone in him we sing in the psalm and I fear we little think about it the psalmist said in that lovely psalm 116 deliver thou my soul oh Lord

[34 : 16] I do thee humbly pray remember how he he had deliverance and he was able to testify for thou my distressed soul delivered from death thou didst my love how he esf what heury he saw three where he saw come come down and see