

Deliverance From Life-long Bondage

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

! 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 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.

[1 : 23] 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. 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.

[2 : 31] 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.

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.

[3 : 58] 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 liberation, that setting free, that he has accomplished.

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.

[5 : 23] And, in a sense, he brings into our experience, the knowledge, and the joy, of the forgiveness of sin. 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, as 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. It's not that people go around, thinking, I'm a slave to Satan.

[6 : 40] 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.

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.

[7 : 57] 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, 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, do you remember, he said to them, you cannot serve God, and mammon. That was the, that's the classic statement, you even hear, sometimes hear journalists, using it, when they are having a swipe, at some, denomination, or other.

[9 : 21] 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, 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.

Possessions, many and so on. We are, we are enslaved, this we are that way. And, Jesus, taught, that very thing.

He wanted the, 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. And so, like the prisoner, in the dungeon, speaking, in terms of, a spiritual state here.

[10 : 28] But like the prisoner, in the dungeon, we are allowed, only to do, what, what the tyrant, permits. We are locked up, we are chained. The prisoner, or the sinner, is, is, is, in that position, and, frequently, or occasionally, or constantly, depending on our degree of light, and sensitivity, frequently, occasionally, or constantly, be set, with the distressing fear, of death.

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, who know that, maybe first hand, or we know of others, who were like that.

And so, it's, 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, we're ready, to acknowledge, that we need, to be rescued, and delivered, from the enslavement, of the enemy.

[12 : 02] We need to be brought out of, the bondage, of, of sin, and the service, of the enemy. That brings us, secondly then, to the reality, of this fear, of death.

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 that experience. Some of you, who know the background, very well, here, remember, that, that the letters, 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, he would always, add that, you may be right, but we have a good story, and we're sticking to it.

[13 : 26] But the same man, told me another story, which showed, his own, halting view of things, talked about, a Jewish man, going, into a church, at a funeral, and he saw, something hanging, a chain hanging, in his pocket, and he pulled it, and there was a cross on it, 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, 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, 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.

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.

[15 : 08] because it's, linked with, a fear of judgment. Did you notice, how many times, in the songs, we sang 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, and righteousness, by the man, he has appointed, whereof he has, given, witness to that, in that he raised, him from the dead.

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.

[16 : 39] We, 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 could, 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.

Even in those, who have, tried to, squeeze it out, or who, who, put on the bravado, attitude. And they're afraid, of nothing at all.

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

[17 : 44] The fear of death, is there. And Paul, in speaking, in, his, a letter to the Romans, speaks very frankly, about that Romans, one you remember, where, the knowledge of God, is, 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, they have that sense, of it, 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, when, I'm 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.

[19 : 11] And, it's important, therefore, for us, who have been, brought up, most of us anyway, under, the teaching, of the Bible.

We, some of us, perhaps, have listened, to a 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. 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, the shorter catechism, and, and could recite it easily, we, we know, all this stuff, we know it.

[20 : 49] We know that the Bible's teaching, is, 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, 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, where 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, saviour, 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 death, of a sinner, he, bears our sin away, through his death, it is, 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, 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, and stead, on the cross, is, Robbie Duncans, he took, damnation, lovingly, he took, damnation, lovingly, 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, under, 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,

[27 : 18] 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 stay, but the fact of the matter is, Paul had, what Martin Luther is saying, we ought to have, we ought to have this, this willingness, to die, else we are not enough, a Christian, and, yet the truth of the matter is, Christian believers, often, lack this, willingness, if we're honest with ourselves, we're, we're, we're, 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, without thinking, if we're in conversation, not yet, but we must grasp, you see, that deliverance, from the, 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 a, an Englishman, up in, the county of Sellarland, years ago, he was,

I think he was the deputy head, for a while in the high school, and he was a, a very fine fellow, Philip Rice was his name, and he had, 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 Sellarland, was his, 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, 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 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, 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,

[34 : 15] O Lord, I do thee, humbly pray, remember, how he, he, he had deliverance, and he was able, to testify, for thou, my distressed soul, delivered, from death, thou didst, my mind,