

A Song of Deliverance

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[0 : 0 0] Tremendous amount of experience on the psalm. There's a psalm for every kind of thing that we go through, whether it be times of joy, times of these rejoicing, or times of sorrow, times of mourning, times of lament, times when we're seeking the Lord, times when we're maybe waiting on the Lord.

There's just so much. That's one of the wonderful things, one of the many wonderful things about the psalms. You can just go, and they're almost like prayers, templated prayers that you can pray when you find yourself in all of these different experiences.

And this psalm here, Psalm 116, it's a psalm about salvation. It's almost a testimony, actually. I mentioned in the morning service, we're looking at the testimony of Lydia.

Well, this psalm here, that's basically what this is. It is a testimony. Someone who's delivered, delivered from an experience that he goes through.

And it's about salvation, essentially. And the deliverance that he's speaking about here in the psalm, it's a deliverance from death. That's the language that you see in it.

[1 : 1 1] It's to do with death. A deliverance from death. And the precise nature of the psalm is twofold. And you very often find this with the psalms.

First of all, there's the physical side. And there is the physical element of death here. And when you're reading the psalm itself, you see that he's talking about physical death.

So he's, for whatever reason, close to death. We don't know exactly why. You know, sometimes some of the psalms have titles that explain to you the context of what's going on.

We don't necessarily have that here. So we don't know exactly why he's experiencing what he's experiencing, why he's close to death. But he is. For whatever reason, death, physically speaking, is very close to him.

So we see the language there in the likes of verse 3, the sorrows of death. Very strong language. The sorrows of death compassed me. And then, of course, as you make your way through, the Lord answered.

[2 : 1 2] The Lord is merciful, he's gracious, and he delivers the psalms. So whatever it is that was physically wrong with him, he seems to get some degree of deliverance here.

So there's that physical side, the physical death and physical deliverance as well. But as with many of the psalms, the psalms of David, you have the spiritual side as well.

So yes, there's a physical element, but there's also a spiritual death being referred to here as well. And a spiritual deliverance mentioned.

And that's essentially a picture of conversion, isn't it? When you read this, that's exactly what it is. It's a picture of somebody being saved, someone giving thanks, basically, for what the Lord has done in that spiritual deliverance, not just the physical, but that salvation that comes from the Lord.

I just want to, for a few moments now, I just want to run through the psalm itself. And we're essentially going to hopefully cover the whole psalm. We'll see how we get on.

[3 : 16] And I want to begin with the first section there. And I've entitled it here, The Pains of Hell. That's where he begins. The Pains of Hell.

And in that initial section there, when you're looking at the verses, the psalmist, he's clearly in a lot of distress there. You know, when you read the language, it's heavy language.

It's heavy language, and he's very much in distress. You know, as I was mentioning there a few moments ago, going through some kind of, possibly a sickness, possibly some kind of physical illness or disease of some kind.

And when he's describing this in the psalm, he's personifying death. Death. And he says there, as we are familiar with it, the cords of death, or the pains of death, laying hold of them.

He's personifying these very things. And when we think about that from a spiritual perspective, what does that remind us of? You know, when you're reading those verses, well, I think spiritually, it reminds us of our going through the conviction of sin itself.

[4 : 20] Isn't it? That's what comes to mind when you're reading these verses. And I think it takes us back, right back to the beginning of our own Christian experience.

You know, everyone's experience is different, I know, but when you look back, and that time when you were perhaps aware of the pains of death, even perhaps even aware, as it were, of the pains of hell itself, surrounding us, in that spiritual sense, that sense of a lost eternity, that realisation that we were sinners, and that we were hell-bound.

You know, when we come to that realisation, it's this tremendous sense of conviction, and you very much sense this idea of the pains of hell. And the pains of hell, they come very close to the psalmist here.

He's aware of this. It's like he's aware of the reality of these things. And this dark cloud, it comes so close to him, so close to him, that he can almost, as it were, smell the blackness, the darkness, of what he's actually going through.

It came that close to him. And he's talking there about these pains, these pains of hell, laying hold. There's no turning away from it. It's like they're all around him, and he would love to find some way of escape, some way of getting rid of this, this sense of conviction, this sense of understanding what lies before in a lost eternity.

[5 : 56] But there's no getting away. No matter what he tries, he cannot escape these things. And the means by which the pains of hell take hold of us, it's different for different people.

Everyone's experience is different. And, you know, sometimes the Lord uses times of crisis in our lives to maybe open our eyes to the reality of these things, to open our eyes to the reality of our eternal well-being, whether it be family, crisis, health, crisis, whether it be maybe even such things as death itself, things that the Lord uses to lay before us.

Difficult providences to lay before us the reality of what actually lies beyond and to think about the things of eternity itself, to think about the bigger picture.

And when all that comes to you, you're filled with a sense of conviction and this sense of what lies before us if we don't come and if we don't put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It could be other things as well. It's not just things like a crisis. It could also just be the preaching of the word. A sermon that very much brings us to think about these things and confronts us with eternity, confronts us with the reality of where are we going?

[7 : 27] If death comes for me right now, where am I going? And maybe it's even just the reading of the word. Different things in which the Lord uses to actually bring these things to our attention.

And it could also be other things entirely as well. The Lord uses lots of different ways in which to bring these kind of convictions about. But at the same time as well, it's worth noting that not everybody goes through that.

Not everybody experiences necessarily these specific kinds of pains of hell. Some people, they look back on their life and they can never remember a time when they didn't believe in the Lord.

They can never remember a time when they didn't have faith in the Lord. And that's a tremendous blessing. It's great when that's the case. But for a lot of people, we can. We can go back. We can go back to these times where these pains of hell laid hold very firmly of us.

These thoughts of dying without Christ. These thoughts of being hell bound ourselves. And just as we have different experiences of how these pains of hell take hold of us, we can also respond in different ways as well.

[8 : 38] There's different ways in which we can respond to this kind of awareness of the pains of hell laying hold of us. And what does the psalmist do here? Well, he could have responded in any number of ways.

I just want to very briefly think about some of the ways in which he could have responded. Firstly, one way he could have responded was he could respond by just closing his eyes to these things.

And almost in a sort of a childlike way, ignoring them. And hoping that these things just go away. And that's sadly how a lot of people respond. When they become aware of the reality of a lost eternity, when they feel the pains of hell near to them, they just ignore these things and sort of cower in a corner and hope somehow, hope somehow that these things will just disappear.

And the idea is that, well, if I don't see it, it's not there. And hope that it'll disappear. It doesn't work like that. You can try that. Many people have tried that, but it doesn't work.

So that's one thing you could try. You could try just ignoring them. So you're aware of the pains of hell and you just try and ignore it and see if that's a way of dealing with it. Another way would be to try and fight these thoughts.

[9 : 52] So you can actually try and fight the very pains of hell. And that's almost like taking the aggressive approach. Taking the approach of attack, as it were, being the best form of defense.

And this is another one that a lot of people use. And you might actually be able to identify this yourself as well in your own life. And when you feel these convictions, these pains of hell, as it were, near you, and you attack, maybe attacking scripture, scrutinizing scripture, maybe trying to show the error of God's word.

And you're thinking the logic is, well, if I can show that the word of God itself to have no credibility, then logically that means that I don't need to worry about these convictions and these feelings of me going to a lost eternity.

And that's what people do. Attack the word of God. If I attack the word of God, I'll get rid of these feelings. Or, sometimes as well, what people do is they attack other Christians.

And maybe even attack the church itself. And finding faults in the Lord's people. And not just finding faults in the Lord's people, but actually maybe magnifying the faults of the Lord's people.

[11 : 05] And basically saying, well, look at these people. Look at these people. These people. These people are no better than me. These people are sinning. These people, they break God's law.

They don't show compassion. They're divided. They're no better than anybody else. And let's be honest, it's not hard to find faults in the Lord's people. We're all sinners.

But what some of these people do who are attacking the Lord's people, they're doing that because they're thinking to themselves, well, why should I struggle with this sense of the pains of hell around me, this awareness of a lost eternity, if the Lord's people themselves are worse than me?

Why should I struggle with these pains when Christians are living the way they are? And that's what people do. Attack Scripture, attack the Lord's people, all in a way to try and get rid of this feeling, to try and get rid of this sense of I'm going to a lost eternity.

So that's the aggressive approach. But another reaction to the pains of death and hell drawing around us is to try and cure these pains ourselves.

[12 : 18] And again, this is one that some people employ, so they become aware of these convictions, a sense of the pain of hell around them, and they try and cure these things themselves. And what they do there is they try and deal with the problem, and what is the root problem?

Well, the root problem is sin itself. That's the issue, isn't it? The issue is sin. And you might say, well, if I can just control my sin, if I can keep my sin in check, if I can do that, then, you know, these convictions, these pains of hell, these worries about a lost eternity, all of these things will go away and they will have no claim over me at all.

So, what you try and do is, you seek to live your life as righteously as you can, you seek to live your life as obediently as you can, you seek to maybe come to church, read your Bible, say your prayers, do all of these things, and you're doing this all in the hope that these feelings will go away, the pains of hell will just disappear away, that they'll all just go away.

And maybe, maybe when you do that, maybe that might begin to soothe these pains, for a short time anyway, and sometimes that's exactly what happens when you try and do that, it does soften the convictions for a time, but it'll never be lasting, it'll never be lasting, because we can't heal ourselves of these pains, that's just, again, that's dealing with the symptoms, it's not getting to the very root of the matter at all.

So, we can't ignore the pains of hell, we can't fight against the pains of hell, we can't cure these pains ourselves, so, what can we do, or more specifically, what does the psalmist do?

[14 : 15] When he's surrounded by the pains of hell, what does he do? He doesn't do any of those other things, and instead, what he does is, he cries out for deliverance, that takes us to our next point tonight, the next section of the psalm there, so we've seen the pains of hell, and now, secondly, we'll move on to this cry of deliverance, and the psalmist, here, he knows the situation, and he knows his utter inability to save himself, he's well aware of that, he's well aware of that, he knows the theology of it, and he's looking here to the only one who can save him, and he gives this simple prayer here, in verse 4, O Lord, I beseech thee, he says, deliver my soul, that's what he says, that's the answer, he can't ignore the convictions, he can't fight against the convictions, he can't cure himself of these pains, and the convictions that he's going through, and instead, what does he do?

He calls to the Lord with just a few simple words there, and he's asking for deliverance, simple prayer, O Lord, deliver my soul, what a simple prayer that is, you know, very often, we tend to complicate prayer, if we're honest, very often, we tend to complicate prayer, and actually, what you find in scripture, is that, very often, God answers the simple prayer, the simple, humble prayer of the Lord's people, and, our error is that, very often, we think, if we speak eloquently enough, that God will hear, if we speak long enough to God, that God will hear, or if we show God our deep theological understanding of his word, that then he'll hear, and that stops some people actually coming to the Lord and crying out for deliverance, because they think, well,

I can't speak without eloquence, I can't say a long prayer, I can't come with all this theology before the Lord in prayer, but the reality is that, the Lord is more pleased with a few words, from a humble heart, than with a great theological exposition, that seeks really only to elevate ourselves before God, or even maybe elevate ourselves before other people, if it's a public prayer of some kind, and we have to be careful about that, you know, when you look at so many of these prayers in scripture, there's a simplicity to them, there's an honesty to them, now I don't mean by that, that we ought not to take time in prayer, absolutely not, of course we should take time in prayer, and of course we should use language to the best of our ability to magnify the name of the

Lord, absolutely, I'm not saying we shouldn't be doing that at all, but my point is, what matters most is the heart of the prayer, the motive behind the prayer itself, that's what God is concerned with, and you see the simplicity here, it's just a cry, Lord deliver, deliver my soul, that's it, in the midst of the pains of hell, deliver me Lord, deliver my soul, and no doubt we can relate to that cry, I'm sure, I hope all of us can relate to that cry, you can certainly relate to it at the time of your conversion probably, you probably cried something similar like this, deliver me, and no doubt you've cried that as well, many times since, because even on the Christian pilgrimage journey that we're on, very often, we have to cry out to the Lord, because we find ourselves in difficulties, we find ourselves with maybe a renewed sense of conviction, going through trials, and going through hardships, and often we've come and we've cried to the Lord, deliver me Lord, deliver me from this situation that I find myself in, so that's what the psalmist does here, pains of hell first of all, then he cries out for deliverance, what's the third stage, what's the third stage to the psalm here, well, the third stage here is, the Lord hears, and the Lord answers, so this simple prayer here, it's heard by God, and if you rewind a wee bit, we're told in verse 2 there, that God, he inclines his ear, he inclines his ear, to actually hear the prayer of the psalmist here, we're probably more familiar with it in the metrical version, when he, you know, that beautiful language of him bowing down, bowing down his ear, now, what's going on there, when the Lord is bowing down his ear, is it that God is far away, and he's listening to the prayer of the psalmist, and he's struggling to hear the prayer of the psalmist, so he's having to bow his ear down, to see, well, what is it that the psalmist is saying, is that what's going on, no, it's not, that's not what's going on at all,

God doesn't struggle to hear his people, no, his ear is bowed down, not for his sake, not so that he can be enabled to hear, his ear is bowed down for our sake, so that we know that he's listening, so that we know that the ear of the Almighty is there, and that we can come, and that we can call on his name, and the reality of the matter is that the ear of the Lord was bowed down to the psalmist here, long before the psalmist even cried for deliverance, his ear was bowed down waiting, almost inviting, inviting the psalmist to cry out, and to seek the deliverance of the Lord here, and I think there's something else in this picture here of the Lord bowing down his ear to us like this, and I think that gives us a picture of the Lord coming down to us, rather than him drawing us up to himself, that seems like, that maybe seems like an insignificant detail, but that's a really important detail, it's crucial, and theologically it's a crucial detail, because salvation is only possible because of that very reason, it's not that the

[20 : 52] Lord takes us up to himself, no, it's that the Lord actually comes down himself for us, that's the first step, and you see that actually unfolding right throughout the pages of the Old Testament into the New Testament, and I suppose the prime example of it is the words that we have in Philippians 2, where we read this, we read, he made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, it's the Son of God, and coming in the likeness of men, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross itself, amazing picture there, the one who bows his ear down to us, he's not one who's far off, he's not one who doesn't understand, he's one who understands, and the second person of the

Trinity, the Son of God, he understands the very pains of hell, he knows what the pains of hell feel like, and he knows the pains of hell to a degree, and to an extremity, that far exceeds anything that we could ever know, and anything that we could ever understand ourselves, you know, it's one thing, to be surrounded by the pains of hell, you know, the psalmist here, ourselves, we might be surrounded, we might feel, as it were, the pains of hell from a distance, but our Lord, he actually enters into it, in fact, the pains of hell enter into him, it's a wonderful picture that you see unfolding at the cross of Christ himself, and when you think about the sufferings of the Lord, you see that, you don't just see someone who holds the cup of God's wrath and just sort of looks into it, you know, the cup that contains the fullness of the pains of hell, he doesn't just look into it, he doesn't just come near it, he doesn't just taste of it, he drinks it, and he drinks it down to the very last drop itself, and he's actively going towards that, again, you know, for ourselves, when we think about the pains of hell in this conviction sense, these are things that lay hold of us, that's the wording of the psalm, we don't go and lay hold of them, they lay hold of us, but when it comes to this cup of wrath, the fullness of the true pains of hell itself, that cup doesn't come for Christ, he goes towards it, that's what the whole gospel is, not him running away, and this cup catching up with him, no, he goes towards it, he lays hold of that, he takes hold of that cup, and he takes every last drop of it, we might have glimpsed it from a distance, he has taken it, and he has swallowed that himself, in order that sinners like us might never need to taste the fullness of the pains of hell ever, at all, so, there is more in this picture of bowing the Lord's ear down, there is more to it than just him hearing our prayers, he has come down to us, not just to hear our prayers, he has come down to us to purchase a salvation for us, to purchase a salvation, and now he doesn't just hear, he answers, and he delivers, he is saved because of what

Christ has done, because of him taking the very cup of the wrath of God himself, and we read that there in the psalm, we read about this deliverance, we read about this preservation in verse 6 there, he preserves us, he gives us rest, people are craving that just now, rest, in a time of pandemic, and warfare, and rumours of war, anxiety, stress, all these things, major problem for people, the world is crying out for rest, it's exactly what we have here, that's exactly what we have in the gospel message itself, a spiritual rest, he hears, and he answers, it would be terrible if all he did was hear, wouldn't it, that's all it was, no, he hears, and he answers, he hears the cry, and he answers, and he grants that rest, and he grants that salvation, so, we've seen the cry for deliver, the pain of hell first, then the cry of deliverance, then the Lord hearing, and answering, and now, just lastly, we see the psalmist's response there, so if you look in verse 12 there, you have those famous words there, what shall I render to the

Lord for all his benefits towards me, so in other words, what can I do, what can I do for all that the Lord has done for me, what can I do for him, what's a payment, and the reality is that you can't repay the Lord, can you, it's impossible, absolutely impossible, what he's done for his people, it's actually beyond our ability to put a value on it, and the Lord doesn't want us to repay what he's done for us, because it's been a gracious gift, it's a free gift that's given to us, but having said that, if we love the Lord, then surely our desire is to be obedient to him, and you see that here, the psalmist is speaking there in verse 9 of walking before the Lord in the land of the living, he's been delivered himself, and now he wants to walk before the Lord, he wants to walk before the Lord in obedience, in righteousness, in holiness, that's the desire of the psalmist, not as a way of repayment as such for what God has done, but as a result of it, and the

Lord has done that for us, surely, surely that's what we want to do for him, and you notice there as well, he doesn't want to do this privately, it's not like he's been saved and he wants to keep it to himself, I won't tell anyone else what the Lord has done for me, I'll keep all this to myself, that's not his spirit, that's not what he's saying there, he wants to show to others, and you see that in verse 14, he's saying that I'll pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, the psalmist's desire is to make his love for the Lord, and his allegiance towards the Lord, to make that known, not just in private, not just to keep it to himself, not to hide his light under the bushel, but to make it known, and to make it known here by taking a cup of salvation, by calling upon the name of the Lord, God.

[27 : 48] And that's what you've done yourselves here just a few days ago, last Lord's Day, you sat at the Lord's Table, and sometimes we think of the Lord's Table as a great privilege, and it is, it's a wonderful privilege, but it's more than a privilege, isn't it?

It is a command, it is something we're commanded to do, commanded to come, commanded to take that cup of salvation, commanded to profess our faith in the Lord, and when we think about what the Lord has done for us, when we think about the way in which the pains of hell surrounded us, the way in which we cried out for deliverance, the way in which he heard, he answered, he gave us rest, he gave us peace, when we reflect on all that, surely the least we can do is to be obedient to him, and to take this cup, and to profess our faith in the Lord himself, and my prayer is that, that every one of us would know that experience, that every one of us would know that experience of crying out to the Lord, and knowing that his ears bowed down, listening, and hearing, and knowing that answer, finding the Lord to be gracious and merciful, finding that deliverance that he will grant, if you call to him, if you call out for that deliverance, he will grant it, and that you would know, that salvation, that salvation we thought a little bit about earlier on today as well, and that as a result of all that, you will be emboldened to take the cup, to take the cup of salvation, and to proclaim your faith in the

Lord, for all that the Lord has done for us, that we might publicly take our stand on the side of the Lord himself, may we lay hold of this psalm, the words of this psalm, and may you be able to pray it as your own prayer, here, tonight.

Amen. We'll bow our heads in a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we give thanks for even just a short time this evening to gather together to come under your word, and to think there about that psalm, that psalm that is indeed so full of the Christian's experience, and so many of us, we can lay hold of that psalm, and we can see our own lives in it, and we can pray it as our own prayer, and remember how we were surrounded by those pangs of death, those pains of death, those pains of hell, and how we perhaps tried to sort these things ourselves by ignoring them, or by fighting them off, or by seeking to cure ourselves, but knowing that every other way is never effective, it never deals with the root of the problem, and then finding that all we can do is to fall on our knees and to seek that deliverance that comes from you, may that be true of every one of us here, may we seek that deliverance, may we cry out to you, and may we be met with that answer that comes from above, that answer that comes from a

God who is gracious, a God who is merciful, a God who is full of love, and may we respond in obedience to you, as we seek to walk the paths of righteousness, not privately, but to do so even before others, and to show others our love in the Lord Jesus Christ himself, so continue with us, cleanse us from sin, we ask it all for Jesus sake, Amen.

[31 : 38] Well, we'll close our time of worship now by singing in that psalm that we were just reading there, so we'll sing in Psalm 116, Psalm 116, and we'll sing, we'll sing verse 1-8, 1-8, I love the Lord because my voice, and prayer she did hear, I while I live will call on him who bowed to me his ear, so Psalm 116, verse 1-8 there, to the praise of God.

I I love the Lord because my voice and prayer she did hear, I why I live with God on him
God on stand chief the core science all and stop and amb what him a 227, baby Joel 129,
I love my Oh

Father, my soul, O Lord, I give thee humbly lay.

God, mercy, full and righteous, give thee justice, our Lord.

God, since the week I was brought home, he did me help at heart.

[34 : 35] O thou, my soul, do thou return, and to thy quiet rest.

For Lord, we loathe Lord to thee, his bounty at bestest.

For my distresses, O trompe, delivered was by thee.

Thou haste my mourning eyes from tears, my pain from falling deep.

Now, may the grace of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit continue with you all now and forevermore.

[35 : 59] Amen.