



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | [believerschapeldallas.org](http://believerschapeldallas.org)

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Psalm 116: 1-19

Spring 2024

"Back From the Brink"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth. Well, we are in another psalm this week, Psalm 116. I'm going to read the entire Psalm, 1 through verse 19. Psalm 116,

**116** I love the LORD, because He hears

My voice *and* my supplications.

<sup>2</sup> Because He has inclined His ear to me,

Therefore I shall call *upon Him* as long as I live.

<sup>3</sup> The cords of death encompassed me

And the terrors of Sheol came upon me;

I found distress and sorrow.

<sup>4</sup> Then I called upon the name of the LORD:

"O LORD, I beseech You, save my life!"

<sup>5</sup> Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;

Yes, our God is compassionate.

<sup>6</sup> The LORD preserves the simple;

I was brought low, and He saved me.

<sup>7</sup> Return to your rest, O my soul,

For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

<sup>8</sup> For You have rescued my soul from death,

My eyes from tears,

My feet from stumbling.

<sup>9</sup> I shall walk before the LORD

In the land of the living.

<sup>10</sup> I believed when I said,

"I am greatly afflicted."

<sup>11</sup> I said in my alarm,

"All men are liars."

<sup>12</sup> What shall I render to the LORD

For all His benefits toward me?

<sup>13</sup> I shall lift up the cup of salvation

And call upon the name of the LORD.

<sup>14</sup> I shall pay my vows to the LORD,

Oh *may it be* in the presence of all His people.

<sup>15</sup> Precious in the sight of the LORD

Is the death of His godly ones.

<sup>16</sup> O LORD, surely I am Your servant,

I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid,

You have loosed my bonds.

<sup>17</sup> To You I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving,

And call upon the name of the LORD.

<sup>18</sup> I shall pay my vows to the LORD,

Oh *may it be* in the presence of all His people,

<sup>19</sup> In the courts of the LORD's house,

In the midst of you, O Jerusalem.

Praise the LORD!

Psalm 116: 1-19

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow in a word of prayer.

LORD, what a privilege it is to be here on a beautiful Sunday morning; we go to Your people, with the saints, and worshipping You as we are, singing hymns of praise to You and reading the Scriptures; which nourishes us, feeds our soul and prepares us for life—and prepares us for the week, prepares us for this day. And so LORD, we pray that You would guide us and bless us.

We pray for the ministry of the Holy Spirit this morning, that He would open our hearts to receive the ministry that's given—to understand what this psalmist said in this great song of praise and thanksgiving that he offered to You for his deliverance from death.

We thank You for the fact that this picture of You as a gracious, righteous, compassionate God who saved him out of the straits of death, that You are that God for us. You're, "the same yesterday, and today, and forever"; that's said of Your Son. (Heb 13:8). It's true of You; it's true of our Triune God. You are the same, and we can rely upon You. So teach us the lessons of this Psalm: That You're faithful, and that we are to look to You, and we are to be a living example of that grace before men.

And so teach us LORD, build us up in the faith, bless us spiritually, but bless us materially, physically, as well. We're physical beings; we have needs. —You know them and we pray that You would bless.

And LORD, this is a great week, this is an important week in this church, and really, for others outside of this church—it's Vacation Bible School this week. And by Your grace it has had quite a ministry over the past number of years, and I pray LORD, that You would bless this year's school as well. I pray for each and every teacher and helper, that You would bless them. Help them to know that they are doing Your work and that that work extends to the youngest of people—and You can open hearts at a very young age, for it was in the womb that John the Baptist moved when Mary entered the room.

LORD, bless these children as they gather here, and bless their teachers and the helpers, and may it be a wonderful week in which You're glorified and they are edified—and perhaps some, maybe many, are saved.

LORD we thank You for salvation. We thank You for the nourishment You give us as Your saints: The Word of God—it's our authority, it's our guide. And bless us now as we will consider the text that we have looked at. Bless us now as we sing our hymn, that it would prepare us for that time of study and worship together. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

*(Message)* In 1709, when John Wesley was five, the house caught on fire. Everyone escaped—except young John. He was stranded on the second floor when he appeared in a window—and he called out to those in the yard. They got to him and pulled him out, just as the roof fell into the room where he stood. Later in life Wesley described the incident and said that he was, “a brand plucked from the burning.”

So was the psalmist who wrote Psalm 116. He wasn't rescued from fire but from a sickness that threatened his life. He wrote, "The cords of death encompassed me." (vs3a). But God delivered him, and brought him back from the brink; and he wrote Psalm 116 as a prayer of thanksgiving.

The genuineness of his thankfulness is expressed in the first words of the Psalm; "I love the LORD." I don't think a psalm can begin better than that; it's personal and genuine. Derek Kidner commented on this Psalm as a whole. He described it in terms of spontaneity. 'The psalm reads with great spontaneity.' And that spontaneity is evidenced here at the beginning with what was an irrepressible expression of affection—of the psalmist's affection for the Lord God, who saved him. He couldn't contain himself; "I love the LORD." And because he did, he wanted to praise the LORD for all that the LORD had done for him.

The Psalm can be divided into two parts. In the first part, verses 1-8, the psalmist described the mortal danger that he was in—and from which God delivered him. In the

second half, verses 9-19, he gives his response to that deliverance: "I shall walk before the LORD." (vs9a).

This should be the pattern of the Christian life: We profess our faith and our love for the LORD, for we are thankful to Him for saving us—for a great salvation, unto eternal life! And so with that understanding, the understanding of His sovereign grace, we are to then live for Him: Resolve to do that as the psalmist did, resolve to live our lives publicly for Him. And that very act of public witness is emphasized in this Psalm.

Love for the LORD is the evidence of salvation, as is a response to His love to us. I don't think I can emphasize that enough, and I hope I am able to do that in this exposition of this Psalm, but this love that the psalmist has for the LORD is a response to God's initial love for him, and His great salvation.

That's just 1 John chapter 4, verse 19; "We love," John wrote, "because He first loved us." Our love is always a response to God's initiating love, His redemptive love—and we need to understand that.

The psalmist understood it. He began speaking of the LORD's personal interest in him;

"I love the LORD, because He hears  
My voice *and* my supplications." (vs1).

In other words, He is a personal God who cares for His people, hears their cries for help, and responds—always.

How different the LORD is, how different Yahweh is from the idols of Psalm 115 that so enamored the people of the ancient world—and unfortunately so enamored the people of Israel. God's people can be enamored of, 'the idols of the age'. And what are they?

Well, the psalmist described them;  
"They have mouths, but they cannot speak;  
They have eyes, but they cannot see;  
They have ears, but they cannot hear." (Psa 115: 5-6)

The LORD *hears*. In fact, the psalmist wrote in verse 2, "He has inclined His ear to me". And that's the LORD's disposition toward His people; He is already, and always, "inclined" toward them—to us. The pagans had to bring their gifts to the altars of their gods in order to bribe them into giving them help. And sometimes it was their most valuable gift, their own children whom they laid on the altar of Moloch. The LORD abominated that—He abominated it because it was heinous, the murder of children.

But also, we don't need to bribe Him. He is always *inclined* toward us. And that was the assurance the psalmist had; so he went to Him; in his time of need, he called upon Him; "Therefore I shall call *upon Him* as long as I live." (vs2b). That's his resolve. After experiencing this great deliverance he's saying, 'From now on I'm responding to Him; I'm calling upon Him.' And he made a steadfast determination to look to the LORD in prayer for help daily, for the rest of his life. Because the LORD, the LORD alone, is sovereign, almighty, and can fix things—can heal, and bless, and more, save to the uttermost.

So, he resolved to be a man of prayer—and that's what every child of God is to be, and to do. That's how we live in complete dependence on the LORD who *hears* us and is *inclined* toward us always.

How can we not love such a God as that? Well, the psalmist certainly did, and now the psalmist states his great trial, and how it is that the LORD demonstrated to him His great love for him in the deliverance that He gave him. Verse 3,

"The cords of death encompassed me  
And the terrors of Sheol came upon me;  
I found distress and sorrow."

'Terrors of death' is literally '*straits* of death.' A *strait* is a narrow place. We hear about places like the *Strait of Hormuz*, this narrow channel that goes into the Persian Gulf, or the *Strait of Gibraltar* that is the passage from the Atlantic into the Mediterranean Sea. It's a very narrow place; and that's what a strait is. In this context,

it *constricts*. It's as though Sheol, the grave, was tightening its grip on the psalmist—squeezing him. Death was closing in, and he saw no escape.

So the psalmist's situation was desperate. His life hung in the balance—he expected death. It may have been what Derek Kidner called, “a desperate illness, or a wounding and disillusioning experience.” Verse 11 may suggest that second alternative; “All men are liars.” So maybe he was laid low by gossip, by verbal attack on his character. Or maybe both, a physical illness and this attack upon his person and character. Job suffered both. (So maybe this is a psalm of Job.)

Some have suggested King Hezekiah is the author. He was mortally ill when the prophet Isaiah told him to, ‘Set his house in order, for he would die.’ In response “Hezekiah turned his face to the wall” and he prayed. He beseeched the LORD earnestly, and he, “wept bitterly,” the text says. (2Ki 20: 1-2).

Now there were things going on that I think caused that grief and that bitter weeping. It was the time that the Assyrians had attacked Judah and Jerusalem; in fact they were destroying the city of Lachish and killing its citizens in the most gruesome of ways. So this was a time of national crisis, and I think that was Hezekiah's concern—the nation needed the leadership of a righteous king.

The LORD heard his prayer, and saw his tears, and sent Isaiah back to Hezekiah to tell him that He would, ‘add 15 years to his life.’ (2Ki 20:6). He was rescued from “The cords of death”. (vs3a). So maybe he is the one who wrote it; maybe this was written by King Hezekiah.

But whoever wrote the Psalm also prayed for the LORD to save his life. Verse 4,  
"Then I called upon the name of the LORD:  
O LORD, I beseech You, save my life!"

There is a model for us in that: ‘We don't have to pray long, flowery prayers for the LORD to hear us and to answer.’

Sometimes we just don't have the words to express our need, and express our request. We just don't know how to pray. Psalm 6, (*verse 3*), is an example of that, I think—all David could pray was, "O LORD—how long?" That was one of John Calvin's favorite prayers. He would pray it in Latin, "How long, O LORD?" And he did that because he suffered great bodily ailments: Gallstones, kidney stones, pleurisy, a constant migraine headache—things that just weighed one down. And sometimes all that he could do was say, "How long?"

And that happens to the people of God. When Peter took his eyes off the Lord while waking on the Sea of Galilee and sank, all he could do, all he had time to do, was to cry out, "Lord, save me!" (Mat 14:30).

Well, that's the psalmist's prayer; "O LORD, I beseech You, save my life!" (*vs4b*). The LORD *heard*—and the LORD did, (now that's not stated explicitly, but it's obvious, implicitly at least, from the psalmist's next statement, which is one of enthusiastic praise for the LORD's mercy). Verse 5,

"Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;

Yes, our God is compassionate."

Now that is the psalmist's evaluation of the LORD; his understanding of the LORD's character: 'Grace and compassion; but between those two virtues is God's righteousness.' It's been stated that: "Righteousness without grace and mercy would be *hard*; and the two without righteousness would be *soft*."

The LORD is always righteous. And because He is, He will always be gracious and compassionate. His character is consistent: He is righteous; He is gracious; He is compassionate. He answers prayers for salvation; He keeps His promises, (He cannot lie); He is righteous. And because He is, He saved this dying man.

So all the praise goes to the LORD. The psalmist took no praise at all for himself. In verse 6a he called himself "*simple*";

"The LORD preserves the simple."



*The simple* have no merit; so this is a statement of humility to say that his rescue from "the cords of death" was all of the LORD, and due to no work or virtue of his own. All praise and glory goes to the LORD.

And then in verse 7, the psalmist talks to himself, or 'preaches' to himself. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones would say, "Christians should always be preaching to themselves." We are all preachers; and in that regard, we have the toughest audience of all—we have to preach to ourselves and our stubbornness. And here he gives his soul a sermon—he tells it to, 'Get things in order!'

"Return to your rest, O my soul", he said. (vs7a). In other words, 'Stop worrying!' He tells himself to stop being anxious about his life and situation. And it's what Paul told the Philippians; "Be anxious for nothing." (Phl 4:6).

Why did Paul say that? I've answered this, I think, many times, (whenever I come upon that statement, "Be anxious for nothing"): 'Because we're anxious!'

I think we live in a particularly anxious time, a time that's worrisome with all that's going on in the world and all that's going on here. We look at the stock market; it goes up and down—and other things to cause us to worry.

The ancient words of the apostle and of the psalmist are as real today and as important today as ever: "Be anxious for nothing." And the reason for that is, "...the LORD has dealt bountifully with you" the psalmist says. (vs7b). He's saying that to himself; he's talking to his soul. He's saying, 'Think of all that God has done!' He's telling himself to, 'Reckon it to be true'. And so don't doubt the LORD; look what He's done for you; be at peace for the LORD is good. And we need to do that to ourselves sometimes: 'The LORD's in control, so don't be so worrisome and anxious.'

In verse 8 his conversation turns to the LORD. So from his soul to the LORD, where he acknowledges the bountiful way that the LORD has dealt with him, he describes it in three deliverances;

"For you have rescued my soul from death,  
My eyes from tears,  
My feet from stumbling."

By relieving him of death, the death that threatened him, the LORD delivered him from the inner struggle that he had—that of sorrow and despair. Physical weakness contributes to spiritual weakness and doubts. Maybe the psalmist had doubted the goodness of God on his sickbed. If so, he rebuked himself; he *preached* to himself in verse 7, "Return to your rest, O my soul,"

Then in verse 9, he again resolved to live in obedience to the LORD. Having been rescued from the land of the dead, he would,

“...walk before the LORD

In the land of the living.”

Now that's the right response to the LORD's mercy: To be grateful, thankful, and resolve to live for Him. And not just live for Him, personally, (that's fundamentally what we must do within our hearts), but to live for Him publicly—to be a witness to His grace. That's the real purpose of life, not just to eat and drink and exist, (that's not why we're here), but to live a life openly before God and among His people as a living genuine witness to God's goodness. —To live to His glory and glorify Him in our life.

It's really what John talks about throughout 1 John, when he speaks of walking, “in the Light.” This is walking “in the Light”, (1Jn 1:7): Living in obedience and living to God's glory—being a public witness to Him.

And his rescue from death gave him a new opportunity to do that—to really live in the best way one can live. And in the remainder of the Psalm he resolves to do that—to express his gratitude in thanksgiving and express it publicly. Verse 16 gives further meaning to what it means to walk before the LORD. He wrote,

"O LORD, surely I am Your servant,

I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid,

You have loosed my bonds.”

James Boice connected that verse to the Lord's teaching on discipleship in Luke chapter 9, verse 23; "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take

up his cross...and follow Me." That's a servant—that's a servant of the LORD and a life of 'walking before the LORD in the land of the living.' (vs10). We live for His glory.

Now that's not something we do naturally. Naturally, we're selfish. Naturally, we live for ourself, but this is what God produces in us. We live supernaturally if we are a child of God—if we're a saint. And this is what God produces in us.

But this is the right response from a person who has been rescued. And when we understand just how bountifully the LORD has dealt with us and how He has loosed our bonds, freed us from danger or guilt, we gladly respond and gratefully serve.

It's important to know that we are 'debtors to mercy alone'. That is the idea behind this resolution of the psalmist. He knew that to be true of him and that gives genuine motivation in life, genuine motivation to be a servant of the LORD.

It's the life of faith. We know God **is**—that He does exist and He is involved in our lives, personally, always, and in the existence of this world. Everyone exists in Him; and He sustains this world. He created it all, He sustains it all. Paul speaks of that in Colossians chapter 1, (verse 17), where he describes Christ as the One who 'holds everything together'; believer, non-believer, the material world—everything.

And the psalmist knew that to be true of him. That gives genuine motivation, for everything I have is from God. It motivates one to live a life of faith—and it motivates us to do that. We know God exists, that He is, and we're dependent on Him.

The psalmist spoke of his faith and unwavering confidence in that fact, the goodness of God, in what he says next. Reflecting back on his experience he stated in verse 10 that, 'he had never lost his faith, even in the darkest hour.' He was trusting in the LORD at all times, that He is the one that sustains us, even when things were most bleak.

Verse 10,

"I believed when I said,

I am greatly afflicted."

That tells us about ourselves—and that tells us about everyone: Even the strongest saint is made of flesh and subject to pain, even panic, and may express that, probably will. He cried out in pain—but it was no sign his faith was dead or weak. What it was, was a sign of how helpless we all really are and how dependent we are on the LORD in times of difficulty—and really, in all times. Whether the times are difficult or the times are good, we are dependent upon Him.

But the crises of life make that all the more obvious to us. Sometimes that's why they come, to teach us who we are, and who we need—and that's the LORD. We cannot depend on ourselves, we cannot depend on others. When he looked to others for help in his time of distress, they failed him. "All men are liars," he said. (vs11b)

Only the LORD is able and reliable. Only He can save and deliver. And through his distress he, the psalmist, learned that, and learned to lean on Him only. And the LORD saved him.

The final verses of the Psalm that conclude his thanksgiving and response to God's deliverance, (verse 12 – 19), begin with a question. Verse 12,

"What shall I render to the LORD

For all His benefits toward me?"

His answer is,

"I shall lift up the cup of salvation

And call upon the name of the LORD." (vs13).

(Which means to proclaim it.)

Abraham comes into the land of Canaan, and at the beginning of his entrance there, in Genesis, 'What does he do?' He builds an altar, and he calls upon the name of the LORD at Shechem. And you read that he, "called upon the name of the LORD", it's proclaiming the name of God. (Gen12:6-8). So that's what he did.

And so here we read in verse 12,

"What shall I render to the LORD

For all his benefits toward me?"

And his answer is, (verse 13),

"I shall lift up the cup of salvation

And call upon the name of the LORD."

(Which means, '*Proclaim His name!*' )

Franz Delitzsch, one of the old commentators, suggested that "the cup of salvation" was a literal cup that was raised up and drunk in the midst of a worship service in thanksgiving for the abundant salvation that he, the worshiper, experienced. Perhaps. But this word, *cup*, is very common in Scripture, and it's not always used literally, but often figuratively. It's a way of speaking, sometimes, of 'God's gifts to man.'

You see that well, very prominently, famously, in Psalm 23, verse 5, where God makes David's "cup overflow." I don't think David was talking about a literal cup. He's saying, 'He gives blessings that are abundant, like a cup of wine that's just running over.'

Salvation is God's greatest blessing. And the psalmist was resolved to proclaim it publicly, and declare that, 'The LORD is a God who saves.' That's abundant blessing. That's how he would serve the LORD, "in the land of the living." (vs9b).

And then he makes this statement of comfort in verse 15.

"Precious in the sight of the LORD

Is the death of His godly ones."

'At death they are under God's special providence.' —I think that's what this verse means. The LORD saves, but He doesn't always rescue from sickness. Sometimes it is fatal. Still, He hasn't failed or forgotten us in those moments. The death of God's saints is no insignificant thing to Him. He values us. He doesn't allow us to be taken away from Him. He watches over us in that last hour, and He brings us home. It's a statement of the greatest *encouragement*.

Delitzsch mentioned that during the reign of the Roman emperor Decius, who persecuted Christians, the Bishop of Antioch met his death singing these words. He was one of those martyrs who went to his death joyfully. You have other examples of that: Those young students during the Reformation who went into France to preach the

Gospel. They went to Lyon, they were arrested—and burned at the stake. They died singing hymns to the LORD, and *encouraging* one another.

The bishop was one of those who died joyfully. And for him, and for every believer, death is reason for joy—because it's *gain*, not loss. It's the end of pain, the end of loss, the end of sorrow. Death is Revelation chapter 7: Heaven, where they “hunger and thirst no more”, (vs16), where God is, “their shepherd.” (vs17). He “guides” His sheep. (ibid.). Christ is presented there as that shepherd, guiding His sheep from “springs of water to springs of water.” It's a metaphor, an image of constant refreshment and joy; and that's underscored by that last statement in the chapter, “...and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (vs17).

And the LORD is especially present with us in that hour of death, to ‘guide us across the river,’ so to speak, and ‘into the celestial city’. So again, for those who love the LORD, death is gain. Don't be anxious about it. It's hard not to be, I know, but that's the assurance we have.—Death is gain.

But life is what is being celebrated here—and life gives opportunity to serve. By delivering the psalmist from “the cords of death”, he was given special opportunity to do that by giving thanks to God publicly. And so in the last verses, he vowed to “offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving.” (vs17a).

In the context of this Psalm and the Old Testament, this is a literal sacrifice and to pay his vows to the LORD in the presence of the people, the nation: “In the courts of the LORD's house,” he says in verse 19. So he resolved to go to the Temple in Jerusalem where he could openly worship the LORD to show the people his gratitude. That was right and good in itself, and as Derek Kidner wrote, “It would kindle others, and blaze all the longer and better for it.”

But for the psalmist, (maybe it was King Hezekiah), it was done altogether from a thankful heart for the mercy given to him. It was the natural response of gratitude and a desire to praise God. And that's how the Psalm ends, just as Psalm 115 ended. “Praise the LORD!”, which in the Hebrew text is “Hallelujah!”.

And that is basically the lesson of the Psalm. We are to be a people that "Praise the LORD!" His people love Him, and are thankful for all the mercies that He has given to us.

The famous 17th century English commentator and Puritan, Matthew Henry, wrote in his diary after being robbed, "Let me be thankful. First, because I was never robbed before. Second, because although he took my purse, he didn't take my life. Third, because although he took all I possessed, it wasn't much. *[Laughter]* Fourth, because it was I who was robbed, and not I who robbed." That's the way to look at things: He could see God's mercies in everything. May God allow us to see His mercies to us.

John Wesley was saved from the fire, 'plucked like a brand from the burning' at age five. His mother, Susanna, saw the providence of God in it, and saw it as a sign that her son was saved in order to save others. And so she vowed to the LORD to be particularly careful for his soul—more so than she had ever been.

And it would seem, time proved her right. John lived to become one of the most energetic and effective evangelists of the church, who played a central role, along with Whitfield and others, in the Great Awakening in England. But in fact, John Wesley was plucked from the burning and brought back from the brink of disaster every day of his life—and that is just as true of each and every one of us.

This world is so full of pitfalls and land mines, temptations and dangers, that if we survive to the end of the day, we have the Lord God to thank—and should! I said this a few weeks ago, (I'm repeating myself somewhat), but if you can sleep in your own bed tonight and not in a hospital, thank God. If you're without pain today, thank God. If you have a job, if you have a family, if you have friends, thank God. If you can see, if you can hear, if you can walk, thank God. He is sovereign, and righteous, and good. "Every good and perfect gift comes down from Him", James said. (Chapter 1, verse 17.)

So if you have health, if you have a sound mind, it's all because He has favored you with that. It is so normal for us to have health, to get from point A to point B without an accident, to have a sound mind, that we fail to realize it's all a gift of God.

And if He let us go, everything would fall apart. In this fallen, ruined world we live in, anything good and beneficial is due only to His constant care and protection.

John Calvin explained that in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* where he commented on the providence of God, and how it delivers us from all kinds of peril that we rarely even think of. I've mentioned this on more than one occasion. In fact, it's really the basis for the things I've just said, but I've mentioned it because after reading it some years ago it impressed me greatly. I think he's right, God not only nourishes and maintains the world He created, He protects us with in it, and rescues us, His people, constantly. We need that.

On the hidden dangers that surround us, Calvin wrote, "We don't need to go beyond ourselves, since our body is the receptacle of a thousand diseases. But outside of ourselves, our lives are enveloped with death. Whenever the weather changes, whether it freezes or thaws, or becomes hot or cold, neither is without danger. Go through the city streets, you are subject to as many dangers as there are tiles on the roofs.

"You try to set yourself off in a walled garden", he said, "there's sometimes a snake hidden there. Try to find safety staying in the house, there's continual danger there. Danger of fire...possibility of the roof collapsing in on you. There are dangers of robberies and violence inside or out. Always the danger of famine or drought, dangers everywhere." He ends by stating that, "Each person lives as if he had a sword perpetually hanging over his neck."

And if you realize that as true, that's a terrifying thing. Why would you even attempt to go out, knowing that's the reality. But the reality is superseded by the fact that God's in control. He knows it all; He's in control of everything. And in His providence He promises to protect us and guide us and say, 'Go out, and don't be afraid. I'm in control. You live and move and exist in Me.'

God's in complete control. That's true. And that's what gives us the courage to leave our house each day—the personal providence of God. So we should be thankful and helpful. This is what is involved in *walking before the LORD in the land of the living*.



There are many saints in hospitals who deal with chronic pain. It can wear a person down. There are persons who suffer quietly, but in their heart they say with the psalmist, "I am greatly afflicted." They need our prayers for sustaining grace. We can all find ourselves in that situation in a moment. We're all weak; we are dust. The Father knows that. He doesn't bring anything into our lives that is more than we can bear and that is not for our good. But when in pain, or in the throes of trials, that can be hard to understand, and hard to believe. But even that, (and I say this with caution, but I say it because it is true), even that is from God—and for a good purpose. That's Psalm 119, verse 71: 'Affliction caused the psalmist to learn God's Word.'

Paul had his "thorn in the flesh." (2 Cor 12:7). He learned grace from it; he learned that there is strength in weakness, and that the LORD is sufficient and faithful. And 'there's great reward', Paul said that in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 17, (and I think Mike referred to this in his lesson this morning), it's, "producing for us an eternal weight of glory, far beyond all comparison." That's reason to be thankful in the midst of affliction.

We pray for healing and relief—but ultimately we trust the LORD for what is best for our lives. —And we pray that if He doesn't give healing that He will give us sustaining grace, knowing that glory awaits us.

That's the end of it all, the glory of God and the glory that we will enter in to. The psalmist vowed, "Therefore, I shall call upon Him as long as I live." (vs2b). That was his resolve. And the LORD is always ready to hear and answer. And always we have Hebrews chapter 4, verses 14-16, of "a great high priest" who is sympathetic with us and hears our prayers.

But again, all of this: The gain of death, the reward for affliction, the hope of heaven, all of that is for those who can say with the psalmist, "I love the LORD."

Is that you?

If this is you, and if then, we can say, "I love the LORD", then we above all people are the ones who can thank Him, (and should be thankful), and then live obediently to

Him and serve Him—for He has saved us from a fate worse than sickness and death. He has saved us from eternal death, from damnation itself. Praise the LORD for what He's done.

But if you can't thank Him for that, then know that your sins have separated you from God, and your condition is fatal. Your only hope is Christ, who died for sinners so that all who believe in Him would be saved. Trust in Christ the Savior...then you can say with the psalmist, 'I love the LORD. Gracious is the LORD and righteous. Praise the LORD! Hallelujah!'

*(Closing prayer)* Father, each one of us who put our faith in Your Son can say, "We love You." We love the Triune God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the Author and Completer of our salvation. But we'll never be able to say it quite like we will when we enter into heaven, for then we understand far more fully all that we owe You. We thank You for all of that. All that we have; the salvation we have, and the protection You give us at every moment, the deliverance we have.

So now we say;

LORD, we pray that You would bless us and keep us, make Your face to shine on us and be gracious to us, and lift up Your countenance on each of us, and give us peace. In Christ's name, Amen.

*(End of Audio)*