

“God Delivers Us”

Based on Psalm 86:12-14 (NIV)

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, God delivered the people of Israel time and time again.

In fact, we have been learning that this is an essential part of God’s nature by studying the “Attributes of God” described in Psalm 86. Here’s a review of where we have been on that journey of discovery.

1. Week One: God Listens and Answers When We Call (vv. 1-3, 6-7)
2. Week Two: God Gladdens Our Soul (v. 4)
3. Week Three: God Is Good and Forgiving (v. 5)
4. Two weeks ago, we experienced reminders that “God Is Powerful” through preaching by Greg Scalise (vv. 8-10)
5. Pastor Doug shared with us a glimpse into God’s core character and value last week in “God Teaches Us Truth” (v. 11)
6. This week, we are reminded that, because God hears our call, desires our joy, is good and forgiving, is powerful, and wants us to walk in the truth, “God Delivers Us.” (Psalm 86, vv. 12-14)

12 I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart;

I will glorify your name forever.

*13 For great is your love toward me;
you have delivered me from the depths,
from the realm of the dead.*

*14 Arrogant foes are attacking me, O God;
ruthless people are trying to kill me—
they have no regard for you. (Psalm 86:12-14, NIV)*

Can you remember a time in your life when you desperately desired deliverance?

Perhaps it was from an unhealthy pattern or relationship, an abusive situation, a strange and difficult environment, a situation of deep need, or circumstances brought about by your own decisions or the choices of closest to you. If so, you are not alone. I am sure that time was a test of your trust in God, where thoughts of praising God could easily have been the furthest thing from your mind.

The stories of Daniel and Esther are dramatic examples of the lengths to which God would go to spare God’s people and the deep faith God calls forth in people.

With patience and unconditional love, God called the people to higher standards than they could ever hope to achieve on their own.

In Daniel’s case, he became a leading ruler in the nation and stood up for his faith in the Lord, on pain of death. Esther did the same, ascending to her royal position despite being a Hebrew, an outsider. You will hear their stories this week during daily devotions by Pastor David tomorrow and Shelby on Tuesday. Their death-defying acts before kings, magistrates, satraps, prefects, and princes serve to underscore the value of trusting in God in all situations, even and especially when lives are on the line.

But there’s more at stake than deliverance from death. Sometimes God delivers us from the error of our ways which carried the sentence of death.

In 1981, the year I was born, John Davis was 105 years old. Nicknamed “Uncle John,” he had been in prison for nearly 6 decades, since 1922, all through the roaring 20s, the Great Depression, World War II, the 50’s, 60s, and 70s, decades during which America and the world were transformed. John’s crime? Burglary. He had broken into a house and took a watch and five dollars. Burglary was a capital crime for black persons in Dillon County, South Carolina in the 1920s. So Davis was sentenced to life in prison.

After escaping twice, he settled down, found faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and in 1940 became the head cook at the Central Correctional Institution. Free to leave, he had nowhere to go. In his own words, “Getting out here would be like digging my own grave. I got no living kin left, and who is going to take care of me, and pay for my medicine and my food and my clothes?”

Among other remarks, he said on the occasion of his 105th birthday, “Since then [meaning his escapes] I’ve met enough people to know right from wrong, and I’ve learned the best thing to do is to live right and pray right and treat other people right so I can die right.” (*1000 Illustrations* by G. Curtis Jones)

Davis, who desperately needed deliverance from his difficult situation, had learned the importance of right living; his circumstances and situation in life, his capital sentence, and his encounter with Christ all intersected to bring about a change of heart and a new direction where *serving others rather than himself became the central focus*.

Sometimes in life, we find ourselves in situations similar to Daniel or Esther, being challenged for our faith or called to stand up for what we hold to be true. Sometimes we find ourselves in situations like John Davis, having a second chance at life, a chance to make something where there was nothing, no hope, no possibility, start fresh and make a new thing. And sometimes, despite having personal courage, a royal position as a beloved child of God, and a change of heart, we still find ourselves in overwhelming circumstances.

Such was the case for David, who wrote Psalm 69. I’ll begin reading the words he shared in verse 1.

1 *Save me, O God,
for the waters have come up to my neck.*

2 *I sink in the miry depths,
where there is no foothold.*

*I have come into the deep waters;
the floods engulf me.*

3 *I am worn out calling for help;
my throat is parched.*

*My eyes fail,
looking for my God.*

4 *Those who hate me without reason
outnumber the hairs of my head;
many are my enemies without cause,
those who seek to destroy me.*

*I am forced to restore
what I did not steal.*

5 *You, God, know my folly;
my guilt is not hidden from you.*

6 *Lord, the Lord Almighty,
may those who hope in you
not be disgraced because of me;*

*God of Israel,
may those who seek you
not be put to shame because of me.*

7 *For I endure scorn for your sake,
and shame covers my face.*

8 *I am a foreigner to my own family,
a stranger to my own mother’s children;*

9 *for zeal for your house consumes me,
and the insults of those who insult you fall
on me.*

10 *When I weep and fast,
I must endure scorn;*

11 *when I put on sackcloth,
people make sport of me.*

12 *Those who sit at the gate mock me,*

and I am the song of the drunkards.

*13 But I pray to you, Lord,
in the time of your favor;
in your great love, O God,
answer me with your sure salvation.*

*14 Rescue me from the mire,
do not let me sink;
deliver me from those who hate me,
from the deep waters.*

*15 Do not let the floodwaters engulf me
or the depths swallow me up
or the pit close its mouth over me.*

*16 Answer me, Lord, out of the goodness of
your love;*

in your great mercy turn to me.

*17 Do not hide your face from your servant;
answer me quickly, for I am in trouble.*

*18 Come near and rescue me;
deliver me because of my foes.*

*19 You know how I am scorned, disgraced
and shamed;
all my enemies are before you.*

*20 Scorn has broken my heart
and has left me helpless;
I looked for sympathy, but there was none,
for comforters, but I found none.*

*21 They put gall in my food
and gave me vinegar for my thirst.*

Do you hear the lament in David's cries to the Lord? See the language of **saving** in verse 13 with God's **sure salvation**, in David's request for God to **rescue** him in verse 14 and again in David's plea for God to **deliver him from the deep waters**.

Here we see echoes of the experience of Jesus Christ on the cross, who when he was thirsty, those who were nearby brought him wine mixed with bitter gall on the branch of a hyssop. Jesus, the embodiment of God's love for humanity, was the very means of God's deliverance for all. When we think of Joseph and Israel in Egypt, David and Goliath, Esther and King Xerxes, Daniel and King Darius, the Assyrian Exile, the Babylonian Exile, the suffering of the prophets, the patience of Job; when we call these stories to mind, we remember so many stories of God's faithful deliverance. Past, present, and future, God is in the business of deliverance.

One of the ways we often feel comfortable expressing our need for deliverance is through poetry and song. One such example is the opening song in the Dreamworks animation movie, "Prince of Egypt." One of my children reminded me of the song this week as I was preparing for today. I hope you get to watch it in its entirety, this poignant prayer called, "Deliver Us." [video]

In my family, we've had a lot of deliveries this past year: furniture, letters, plants, flowers, musical instruments. Just this past week, I received an email from the U.S. Postal Service that our mail forwarding will end on July 6, marking 12 months since we began it last year. If we want future forwarding of mail deliveries to our new address, we have a window of opportunity to sign up for that.

Thankfully, God's grace is always available on request, no matter our residence or place in life. We can be at the end of a long and broken road, and God will deliver, not our mail, but our lives back on track. We might find ourselves in new territory medically, searching for answers, seeking for healing; we can rest in the knowledge that God will deliver us body, mind, and soul into wholeness. There's nowhere God's grace can't reach us, no change of address too far or too long overdue. I am grateful for the hard work and dedication of the U.S. Postal service to keep track of me a year after we moved; I am even more grateful for the grace of God that finds me out and never forgets.

God's love is like the fire department, the Navy Seals, the U.S. Post Office, and Pastor Doug all rolled into one: it rescues us, fights for us, remembers us, cares deeply for our well-being.

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Perhaps you're in a situation today of needing deliverance. It may be that a track record of brokenness and shattered expectations has left you hurting and hungry, hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Take confidence in the love of God that finds us, saves us, delivers us, and no matter how remote we may feel or how far we have gone, has excellent reception, and hears us when we call. Let us pray.

Loving God, thank you that you know us completely, that you love us and want what is best for us. Silence voices of fear, doubt, shame, and despair; deliver us this day we pray, and remember us in your love. Amen.

This song is the plaintive plea of parents, prophets, and psalmists: "Remember Me." [Musical Meditation]