

# Life and Death of a Prisoner

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**Bible Text:** Psalm 79:11  
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Turn with me this morning, our text is found in Psalm 79:11.

11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die;

Let us pray.

*Dear heavenly Father, how glorious thou art. I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast brought us here today to worship thee in spirit and in truth. We pray, O Lord, that you would be in the midst of us knowing, Lord, that you have said where two or more are gathered in thy name, you would be here with us. O Lord, may you search our hearts this hour, may you give us a soberness in thy word and yet a joy in thy word, a joy to know, Lord, that all things are in thy sovereign hand, but a soberness to know it, a soberness and a reality to what we have in thee and what we are in thee and who thou art. O Lord, may you bless this hour and the hour to come. We pray for those who are not with us today that, Lord, you would unite us in the bond of thy Spirit and in the love of thee. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

Psalm 79:11 says, "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die." This morning I'm going to treat this passage not in an historical sense. Asaph wrote this under the persecution of the church and those that were around them and as always the case for the child of God and the persecutions that come in this life whether they be on the physical realm or whether they be spiritual in nature in our soul, the Lord's design in them is to cause us to cry out to him and for every child of God who has been brought to see that and, as I said last week, have been brought to be under a heavy burden, the Lord brings and births this sigh out of the soul of the child of God. And every word in this passage today suits the child of God well. He knows what it is to be brought to sigh, to be brought to an exasperation, so to speak, over life, over sin.

The word "prisoner" that's used here is twofold for the child of God, for our flesh is a prisoner to sin, our flesh is a prisoner to the world, our flesh is a prisoner to man and fears and the things that put us in bondage, but as the Apostle Paul said, he was a prisoner for Christ's sake. The people of God are prisoners of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in

bonds. We are bound by his love. We are prisoners and servants of the Most High Lord and as this passage says, "in the greatness of his power." When the greatness of his power comes, we see that. When the greatness of his power comes, we see the preservation that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a lot of instruction in the life of Lazarus. When Lazarus lay there and the Lord bid him, he said, "Lazarus, come forth!" and Lazarus had the grave clothes on and Lazarus was dead and the Lord's voice, the power that was in the Lord's voice, the quickening power that the Lord has, he called him from death to life and he said, "Lazarus, come forth!" but there was a second command that we don't talk much about. The second command, the Lord said, "Loose him and let him go," for that was the powers of darkness, that was the powers of death, those are the powers that attain us in this life all the way to the end. We are all our lives subject to fear. We are all our lives subject to the attacks of Satan. We are all our lives subject to the pulling of the world and the Lord must speak those words to us not only to come forth but of everything that has us in bondage that keeps us locked up in a prison, that keeps our soul heavy. The Lord must speak it with power to our soul to loose him and let him go because in the Lord's enabling, in the Lord's power, is where we have that rest, and in the Lord's overcoming of all of our enemies is where we have that communion here in this life too, of how the Lord has overcome all of our enemies.

I think when I read this, what Asaph was led to write under the power of the Holy Ghost, it is deeply experimental to me. It's a deeply experiential thing to me. It's an experience in the soul because I know daily there are sighs that go out from me. I know daily there are sighs over sin. The thoughts that come in my mind, the thoughts or the things that I act upon, the anger, the unbelief, the many things that come in this life to plague the child of God, but in the child of God, not the hypocrite, in the child of God there is produced a sigh and a groan in the soul. And as Asaph writes here in the cry, it's, "Lord, let this sigh come before thee. Let it come, O Lord." And how does it come? It comes according to the greatness of his power. "Preserve thou those that are appointed to die."

So today I want to treat both sections. First I want to talk about the sighing of the prisoner that comes before the Lord. David wrote in Psalm 142:7, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name." He asked the Lord to bring his soul out of prison. There is no other way your soul will be brought out of prison but freedom that's in Christ, to be set free in the Lord Jesus Christ. To hear those words, "Come forth," to hear those words of power, "Loose him and let him go."

"Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me." You see the relationship, the union that David had in his Lord that he knew that the Lord would deal bountifully with him; that he prayed and he cried out according to the Lord's faithfulness. Not according to his own, not according to some kind of work or some kind of duty or some kind of false pretense that we're enjoined in this life or we're told that this is the key to life or that there is a victory or an overcoming in some other way, but only in the Lord.

And the Psalmist, Asaph, and the Psalmist, David in this case, were brought to see that the Lord deals with them in their soul. It's one thing to talk about sin, it's another to feel the weight of it. It's another one to feel heavy-laden. It's another one to feel burdened. And as we're shut up in bondage and as the things in this life which mostly is sin, as many as they are, bring us into this bondage. The only thing that can set us free is the manifested presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing him and understanding him in the soul.

We're going to go a few places today but for now we're going to start over in Psalm 102. David in Psalm 102 says this, at least I think it's David. It's not spelled out for us in Psalm 102, but look at these three verses beginning in 19. "For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; To hear the groaning of the prisoner." You see, maybe you don't like that term, maybe you don't like the term "prisoner" but the people of God, Paul called himself a prisoner, David called himself a prisoner. It's a name given to the child of God. As I said at the beginning, because of the bondage that we are in on one side, but the freedom that we have on the other side. Freedom in being a prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ. Freedom to live in the life of faith. Freedom to go against the world and the ideology of the world. Freedom to stand in the faith of the Son of God under persecution, under the many assaults that we have in this life, even in the face of the devil and all of his wiles and all of the things that he throws at us. Even in the very fears that we go and have everyday, we have freedom in Christ to stand in Christ and that freedom and backed and found through his power, through the power of our Lord.

Paul said in 2 Timothy 1:8-9, he said, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord." Do you hear what he said? "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner." There is no shame in standing in the power of the Lord. Man and their peer pressure, man and their ways of this world, man and the way that man is and contriving another way of salvation or another way of freedom, will always try to come with a yoke for the child of God. Paul said, "I'm not ashamed. I'm not ashamed to be called a prisoner." And he told them not to be ashamed.

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." According to the power of God. It's the power of God that brings all of these things into our lives, that brings the affliction, that brings the sighing, that brings the groan from the soul.

I've said many times hopefully as faithful as the Lord is faithful to say many times from this pulpit, it is truly all of him. The life in the soul of the child of God is because of him. The life that we have even to sigh unto him is because of him. He is the author, the beginning and the finisher of our faith. He is the Alpha and Omega of our life and that, my dear ones, includes everything in life and death, which we'll talk about.

"Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the

world began." Paul always pointed to the union that he had in Christ and the power that he had to walk in this life and the power that he had enjoined the church was always birthed and found in Christ. The Lord is our strength. It's the same for David, the same for Isaiah, the same for all of the children of God.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:17, "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

For the child of God to be brought in our text to have the sighing come before the Lord, it tells us that the child of God will be broken. He shall be broken and there is that passage in Isaiah that calls the Lord Jesus Christ the breaker because he subdues our flesh. He breaks the bonds of the world that it has on us. He breaks that flesh that rises up. He mortifies it and puts it down.

As the sighing comes before the Lord, there is a humility of Christ given. There is a humbleness of spirit. David said in Psalm 34:18, "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." For the child of God, as you draw nigh to those in this life, a mark, an evidence of being a child of God is brokenness. It is the opposite of pride. It is a brokenness and a dependency upon Christ for all things.

Later in Psalm 51:17, he said, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." The sacrifice. What does the Lord accept? Is it pride? Is it telling the Lord what we have done? Is it telling the Lord or commanding the Lord to do for us? Is it saying to the Lord that we're dependent upon ourselves? That we have a choice and a will that is equal to his? I hope that's not the case in your life, that the Lord has authored this sigh in your soul. I hope he has shown you that you are a two-fold prisoner, a prisoner in one part of you that is a slave to sin, it is, but the greater part in you, we have two warring nations in us, both of them are prisoners but only one of them has victory.

It's an amazing thing how the Bible uses the word in a two-fold way. The world looks at that word with disdain because they look at our jails and they see what kinds of people are in jail and they look down on them in society and they say, "Oh, you're the scourge of the earth. You should be locked in here." But when we come to this term in the word of God, it is a term that suits the child of God. It suits him because he knows the bondage and the hardness of life that's there every day because of sin, but he also knows and is shown over and over in the faithfulness of the Lord what it is to serve the living Lord, what it is to know the living Lord, to know him as my Lord who has performed all things for me; to know him as my Lord who is the keeper of my soul; who is the one who unburdens my soul; who is the one who sets me free because freedom is only in him.

I'm not going to lie to you, I had a birthday this week. I turned 47 years old and that's one thing that's never changed since the time I was born until now, there is a part of me that tries to do things on his own, that tries to set himself free from many things that befall me in this life, that come toward me in my way. When the Lord's face is hid from us, when his presence is not known and I always, always think of Song of Solomon when I say

those words, when I think of how the Lord put his hand in the hole of the heart to bring the bride to him and as she came he wasn't found for it was a time of hiding. It was a time to show the church their need of him and she ran out in the street and she was so desperate and that desperation caused her to cry out and that's the way we are. That's the way the church is. That's the way he designed us.

So when we read this word this morning, the sighing of the prisoner that comes before thee, it's the Lord who brings it before him. He brings us there to be dependent upon his faithfulness because he never never forsakes his children. And you say, "Well, he might hide himself." Yes, for the good of our soul, that we are dependent upon him; that we do know in our heart and our mind that we can do nothing without him because every day we're going to be tried upon them.

It is truly a blessing for the Lord to reveal the liberty that we have in him and that liberty comes, believe it or not, through this sighing. It's a letting off of the soul where the Lord then meets us in his appointed time to meet that need, which brings us to the second part of the text, "according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die." Joseph Irons was one that said one of the most profitable things he preached among his people was death. You might curl up at that, you might be troubled by that, but in death there is a soberness. There is a sober reality of what's next. There is a sober reality to everyone sitting in this room.

I was met with that reality this week. I was told one of my friends and acquaintances was sent home from the hospital this week with two days to live and that there when you hear things like that, yeah, it's not happening to me, it's not me that's happening to, it's not a family member, but when the Lord meets you and speaks to you about death, we are all appointed to die and then the judgment. We will be known as we are known. There is a soberness to the end, and I say soberness because there's also a joy for the child of God.

But as that arrested me this week and I had deep deep thoughts about that death, so much in this life we don't think about the end. I know what Irons meant when he said that because we're so busy and cumbered like Martha, we're so busy worrying about the people we love, ourselves in this life, that we give no thought to the life to come.

We're told in the word to make our calling and election sure but we can't look into the heavens to know that our name is written in heaven. What does that mean? Has the Lord put evidence in your life, in your soul, that he has called you? That he is your life? That the union you have in him is life?

I talked to the friend of mine who was dying and as he told me how things were going in the house, we had already passed the two days that she was given to live, which that's another story, isn't it? Man can say everything they want about the time that they appoint to die but life and death is in the hands of the Lord. But I asked him how she was doing and as he told me all the physical things, I asked him how her soul was and he looked at me and he said, "Oh well, you know, she's a fighter. She's fighting." I said, "Yeah, but is there any sense that the end is come?" "Oh no. No, no. She's fighting to the end." So I

asked him, "How is your soul?" "Well, I'm fighting too. I'm not giving up. I'm not giving up."

You talk to people in this life as much as you care for them, as much as they are friends of yours or family of yours, you talk to people about the sober reality about what comes after death, if there is a sober reality to it, and to many people there isn't. There is a nonacceptance of it. And I read in the word of God and I read how faithful the Lord is to his people and even in our text today, "according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die." You see, the child of God is brought to know that this life is going to end and during this life he's brought to see that this life isn't really life at all; that down here on earth we are strangers and pilgrims but our souls and our life that is hidden with Christ is eternal. And that life that we have, death in this life will not stop it.

And as I thought this week and I went down many paths in my mind and you know how death is, death is a fearful thing. Not only do you start thinking about your own death but those that are around you and we're going to read a passage in a moment that tells us why we think about those things all the time, but it's sobering. I can see why the Lord appointed it. I can see why in the Lord's goodness he weans the child of God from the things in this life because the things in this life, dear ones, the things on earth, pertain to the earthy.

It is appointed to all men to die but for the child of God, his eternal life and the life of praise going on but a life so much greater than it is here for there will be unbroken communion. That warfare I told you, the two-fold prisoner, that will be gone. That fight that we have with ourselves every day will be swallowed up in victory. Where is the victory for death in the grave? And I tell you as sure as I stand here, there isn't one. There is no victory for death or the grave where the child of God is concerned. They can't win. The Lord has put them under his feet.

So I want to look at that this morning. I want to look at a few passages beginning in Hebrews 2. Please to with me to Hebrews 2 real quick. This is the one I was telling you about. I've used it many times. I've preached from it. Beginning in verse 14, it tells us a little bit about why death has such a hold of us in this life.

Verse 14 says, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood." We know that. That's how we are made. We are flesh and blood, and the reason for that, we have taken place in the fall also. So all our life we're going to be subject to this. We have a fallen nature but he also himself, this is what Christ has done, this is the victory, "he also himself likewise took part of the same." He was born to die, to lay down his life for his children. And what for? Well, let's read on, "that through death," through his death, "he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." And because through his death, our death will be the same. There will be no hold on the child of God. There will be no torment of the wicked one anymore and those fears and those things, the power of death that Satan has to torment the child of God will be swallowed up in his victory.

"That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them." This is our preservation. Lord, preserve us, the ones who are appointed to die, and the Lord says, "I have. I have preserved you in me. I have taken part of death and resurrection that you will have death and resurrection of life." We must die to the things of this world and we must die, it is appointed to die but in many ways, many ways, life really begins there, eternal life, life without sin. I can say that a million times and never understand it. I can never get to the depth of what it would be like to live a life without sin.

"And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." That's that nature of ours that's all our lifetime subject to bondage. It sins and sins and sins and the child of God gets so weary of it, he gets so heavy-laden with it, and if the fountain wasn't open for uncleanness and the fountain wasn't there for the Lord to bid us to wash in his blood by the washing and renewing of our minds and our souls each day, the application of his blood that takes away the power of sin to condemn, the power of sin to lay claim to victory, it's gone. It's gone in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Turn with me over to Romans 5. Paul lays this out beautifully. I think we'll just start in verse 12. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Yes, the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come." We are all fallen in Adam. I think the more I read the word of God, the more I see, the more the Lord reveals to me the deeper and the depth of that fall. I guess when the Lord first revealed himself to me, he revealed there was a fall but I didn't understand how far that fall really plunged us until the Lord started exercising my soul to show me how far short I fall to his glory every day. It truly is a great gulf fixed, sin from salvation, and the only one that can bridge that gap is the Lord Jesus Christ and as I said many times, he is faithful to do that.

"But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." It's interesting how that says the offence of many, many be dead. This world is filled with dead people and I don't mean in the grave, I mean walking. This world is filled with it and nobody knows. They don't know that they're dead. They'll go to their grave not believing that they're dead. They'll go to their grave believing that they're alive but the child of God knows that he must be in death oft and he knows he must die to himself and he knows he must experience death spiritually and physically to experience life, resurrection life with the Lord Jesus Christ.

"And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's

offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." And there is no other way. I hope you see it. I hope the Holy Spirit speaks so powerfully to you right now and says, "That's right. That's what that says. There is no way I can reign, I can live outside of Christ. I can't."

"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so," I love this, "by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." We know that "all men" is every one of them in Christ. Not one of us will be left without this robe of the righteousness of Christ.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one," do you like that? Does that suit your soul, that it's not your obedience that will ever satisfy the perfect holy Father? Does that suit you today to know that it's not your obedience that the Father accepts? It suits mine.

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners," that's the fall, "so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." That's the righteous justification of the Lord Jesus Christ that we have in him.

"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Now that says a lot to me that that righteousness that's imputed to us is also experienced in this life. It reigns unto eternal life. It brings us to eternal life and beyond. The Lord is so faithful to provide for us here as he is to provide for us in the life to come.

But you know, our text today says something. Let me read it real quick. It says, "according to the greatness of thy power." I thought about that. I know I've taken y'all here a lot lately but we go back to Ephesians 1 today because I want to make a couple of comments about this great power. I like to speak of the Lord's power because I know that that is the first cause of any power that I have. I know that it is the first cause of the church. The church is a powerless church without the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, "How can it be powerless?"

Well, it isn't because of Christ and 19 asks us that question, "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." What is it? What is the exceeding greatness of his power? Then he answers it in the same, "to believe." How is it you and I can believe? Why is it you and I believe? Maybe you don't. Maybe you have many doubts. I understand that. I understand the doubts that come in this life as the darts of the devil and the wicked one comes but Paul says this exceeding greatness of his power comes in faith, it comes as the gift of faith, and it's the same power that raised Christ from the dead.

Look, "according to the working of his mighty power. Which he wrought in Christ." And I know we talk about resurrection life a lot and that's because that's the life we have. I



don't want to talk about any other life. I don't want to talk about things we have to do or must do because those are swallowed up in him. It's what he's done. I hope and pray that all my life, however long that is, whatever appointment the Lord has given me in this life, that he always comes with an unction of that truth upon my lips, upon my mouth, upon my heart, upon my soul, to know that it is, "according to the working of his mighty power that he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. Far above." You see, this is what faith does. This is the resurrection life. It takes the child of God and seats him with his Lord which is, "Far above all principality, and power, and might." It's greater than your power. It's greater than my power. It's greater than the world's power. It's greater than the wicked one's power. "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

Does that comfort you this morning as we talk about something so sobering as death? As we talk about something so sobering and then the devil comes and he says, "Oh yeah, talk about that because I'll seize upon that. I'll come to everybody in the room, I'll come to you up there and I'll tell you how much fear there is in it. I'll tell you how much power I have in it." And we sit and we shudder and we shake and we've got to hear what the Lord said, "Loose him and let him go. Come forth. Come to me and I will give you rest."

The appointment to die that is throughout all of this world is truly a teaching moment for the child of God. He experiences the reality of this life in it, a soberness, a stop moment, a moment to stop in all of the hustle and bustle of this world, the Lord stops you right then and he speaks those words. It's appointed for all men to die.

And I've found in my life that those conversations about death are the most sobering conversations. I was asked by one – let me see, how do I put this? I was asked by one after that time, a little bit later in the week, if the sin of this person who was dying of this disease, the sin of living with one not being married would keep them out of heaven. You know, that's always the case with man and his theology, he doesn't understand the depth of grace. He doesn't understand the depth of the Lord saving to the uttermost and I can't point to any man's sin and say, "That sin will keep you from the kingdom of heaven." I'll stand up here and tell you I don't truly understand what blaspheming the Holy Ghost is. I know that's the sin the Lord said will keep you from the kingdom of God, will keep you from heaven, but there are so many sins we partake in in this life and whatever that sin is that the Lord has laid on your heart at this hour, whatever that heinous, horrible sin, secret sin, David called it, Christ saves to the uttermost. His blood is more powerful than any sin. Any wretched thing you've done, any wretched thing I've done.

And it's amazing to me, I've heard many say that to me, "Well, yeah, but if you don't confess your sin." They always put salvation on man. You've got to say this to God to forgive you of that sin. You don't understand soul work. You don't understand the depth of the Spirit in the soul of the child of God who is uttering and praying. Will we repent? Absolutely in the day of the Lord's power. Will we sorrow over sin? Absolutely in the day of the Lord's power. It is a reality of life to be revealed this and to know the depth of

the salvation of grace that is greater than our sin. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

I'd like to end today in 1 Peter. Please go with me over to 1 Peter 1 beginning in verse 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Resurrection life. Our hope is in what Christ has done.

"To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." May the Lord preach this to your soul this morning.

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." That's what the trials and the tribulations and the afflictions are for, for the glory of the appearing of Christ in our soul. All honor and glory and praise belongs to him.

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

I know that when we hear a passage like this, 79:11, "Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die," I know it can be sobering. I know it can be searching but may the Lord come with healing in his wings, a soberness to the reality the hypocrite does not have this reality, but the child of God does. It's appointed by the Lord to draw him close to his side to teach him that this life down here is not life, but resurrection life is the life of the child of God. May he bring us today to see that salvation is truly of him and may he bring us to rest in what he's done.

*Dear heavenly Father, come with power to the souls of thy people for the glory of thee. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*