

When Death Is Precious

Sunday, March 22nd, 1987

Psalm 116:15

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”

I would like very much for you to open your Bible to Psalm 116. If you have a Bible handy or close by, pick it up and open it to Psalm 116. I’m going to preach mainly from verse 15 which says; *“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”* That is the main text that I will be using.

I want to go back and review some of the things that David said prior to this important text, *“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”* This is one of those Psalms that ought to be required reading. We need to read it very often.

David didn’t find these words in a church prayer book. He didn’t find these words in a church creed or catechism or even a confession of faith or a constitution. He didn’t find these words in a book of systematic theology. These words in this Psalm came from his heart.

Someone said, “The man after God’s own heart, had a heart that was after God.” He loved God and believed God and rested in God; he communed with God. These words that you will find in Psalm 116 are the very outpouring of his heart, his experience and his feelings for his Lord.

Look at verse 1: David says, *“I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice and my supplication.”* This man loved the Lord. This Lord was not the God of his imagination but it was the eternal, living God that David loved. He said, *“I love the Lord,”* the Lord God who reigns and rules.

Someone asked him one time in Psalm 115 and in Psalm 135, *“David; where is your God?”* He said, *“My God is in the heavens and He hath done whatsoever He pleased. Whatsoever the Lord pleased that did He in heaven, earth, in the seas and in all deep places.”*

David is saying, *“That is my Lord and I love Him. I love the sovereign, omnipotent, almighty God Who, “Doeth all things after the council of His own will, who worketh all things after the council of His own will. Who doeth His good pleasure in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and giveth it to whomsoever He will. None can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou?”* “I love the Lord who reigns and rules. I love the Lord Jesus who redeems. I love the Holy Spirit who

regenerates; I just love the Lord.” You will notice, that he doesn’t say; “I love my God.” He said, *“I love the Lord”* and *“the Lord is my shepherd.”*

Look at verse 2 of Psalm 116: Does that encourage you to listen a little further; I hope so? He says in verse 2, *“I will call upon the Lord as long as I live.”* What he is saying is, “I love the Lord and I will continue to love Him.” He is saying, “I believe the Lord and I will continue to believe Him. I have called upon the Lord and I will continue to believe Him. I’ve called upon the Lord and I will continue to call upon the Lord.”

You see; his union with Christ was not a union with an organization. His religion was not a religious system; he loved the person and he called upon a person. Our Lord said to the disciples one time as a whole multitude of people had been listening to Him. They had departed from Him and were angry. They said, *“This is a hard saying you are giving; who can hear it?”*

When they left Him, He turned to His disciples and He said to them, *“Will you also go away?”* Peter said, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life and we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

These men’s hearts were knit to a Person. This was not a way or an organization or a system; it was a Person. This is what David is saying, *“I love the Lord; I will call upon Him as long as I live.”*

You see; I believe that this is the trouble with today’s organized religion, this day of high pressure evangelism. Men and women are busy joining positions and leaving positions. Men and women are busy making professions and then denying the profession. Men and women are being brought into programs. They then tire of the programs and leave the programs. Salvation is not in a position, profession or a program; it is in a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, the living God.

When a person comes to know Him and is vitally united in a living union with Him, you will continue in the faith. When Paul says; *“Christ is in you, which is the hope of glory and my little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,”* that is the key.

He never leaves that person and that person never leaves Him; *“I travail until Christ be formed in you.”* When Christ is formed in you, you will continue in that faith. Now, he says; *“I will call upon the Lord as long as I live.”*

Look at verse 3: I want you to listen to this. I don't mean to be contrary, rude or disagreeable but somebody needs to sound the clear, truthful and plain note in this day. There are so many deceivers that are going about profiting by man's natural religious inclination.

David was a man who said that he loved the Lord and that he was a man after God's own heart. He was the king of Israel, the sweet Psalmist of Israel. He said, *"I will call upon the Lord as long as I live."* He says in verse 3; *"I have found trouble and sorrow."* He calls them the *"sorrows of death and the pains of hell."*

David says, "I, who love the Lord; I who call upon the Lord; I who am the sweet Psalmist of Israel, who wrote most of the Psalms, have found trouble and sorrow. I am a man after God's own heart, the one who was anointed by God's own prophet to be king of Israel; *I have found trouble and sorrow."*

My friends; no one who knows anything about God, about the Bible or about the Lord Jesus Christ and the Gospel will promise a believer an easy road unless he is a fool. I can't promise you as a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and you who know the Lord that from now on you will have health, happiness and prosperity. This is just not so!

An easy road was not so in Old Testament days and it wasn't so in New Testament days. It is not even so today. Our Lord plainly said, *"In the world you shall have tribulation. They will cast you out of the synagogue; men will hate you. My brethren, marvel not if the world hate you it hated me; it hated Me before it hated you. There will come a day, when men shall kill you and will think that they are doing God a favor. All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* Our faith must be tried. Peter said, *"Don't count it strange when you go through fiery trials."* True faith must be tried by fire.

For all generations and in all the world and ages, God's people have suffered. I can take you to Australia, Mexico and to Africa. These are places where I have been and preached. I have found people who love Christ who are devoted to the Word of God and who know the Gospel.

Many of these people live in poverty and want. They have dead babies and have scarcely enough to live on. There are godly preachers and godly men who love Christ. *"All things work together for good to those who love God who are called according to His purpose."*

David said, *“I found trouble and sorrow.”* Don’t be surprised and don’t be amazed when you find a child of God troubled. *“Tribulation worketh patience, patience worketh experience, experience, hope and hope maketh not ashamed.”*

You see; these so called divine healers of which I am acquainted are health and wealth preachers. These are the people who stand on TV and tell you that if you will send them money and make them rich, then God will make you rich (that doesn’t sound like a bad deal). These men rise up and prosper at the expense of poor people and often poor sick people.

They fade away. Have you ever wondered where these fellows have gone to? Where are some of these fellows that did all of the healings back when I was growing up in my early years? There are new ones all the time; they rise up, get rich at the expense of poor people, and they retire in comfort. These men fade away and die of cancer and heart trouble just like everyone else.

I got amused the other day while watching TV. Someone was demonstrating how to stay slim and trim, how to work away all of the ugly fat. They wanted you to have a 24 inch waistline. I noticed that all of the models, men and women, were all 21 or 22 years old. I had a 24 inch waistline when I was 21 years old. I’m 60 years old now.

I notice that all of these divine healers are in the prime of life; they are all young men and young wives with young children. Very seldom do you find many of them that are old, decayed and on the way to the grave talking about health, wealth and perfect strength.

David says, *“I found trouble.”* You know that these fellows who rise up, they are hucksters and flesh merchants. They make merchandise out of people and fade away into retirement in Florida somewhere. Another one comes along and takes their place and pulls the same con-game successfully. This is astounding! P. T. Barnum said, *“There is a sucker born every minute and someone to take his money.”*

God’s people know happiness but it is in Christ. God’s people know joy but it is in Christ. God’s people know success but it is in Christ. God’s people know trials and troubles, suffering and sorrow in this world. This is all ordered by the Lord for *“His glory and for their good.”*

How would I ever minister to you or sympathize with you if I knew nothing about heartache myself? What if I never wept or felt the hand of God heavy upon me? How in the world would I ever sympathize with you in your trials and in your suffering?

In verse 4, David goes on and says; *“I called upon the name of the Lord; O Lord deliver my soul.”* You see; David knew troubles and sorrows like all the rest of us. He also experienced deliverance from these trials.

He says in verse 8, *“Thou hast delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears and my feet from falling.”* Isn’t this just like the Lord? All of this is spiritual here. *“He delivered my soul from death.”* My body is going to die but not my soul; it will never die. *“He that believeth on Me shall never die,”* Christ said. *“You delivered my eyes from tears;”* my sins are gone; there is no charge or condemnation. *“You have delivered my feet from falling. He is able to keep you from falling and present you faultless before His presence with exceeding joy.”*

If you can’t trust the Lord in the midst of your trials, then your faith is not worth a plug-nickel. Anybody can rejoice in the sunshine; anybody can rejoice and wave their hands and cut up when everything is going their way. The truth is that the believer rejoices in the shadow and believes in the trial. He continues in faith and perseveres during the tribulation. You will be delivered.

“Sorrow, endureth for the night.” There is a night, but *“joy cometh in the morning.”* If you can wait on the Lord, He will strengthen your heart. *“Wait I say, on the Lord.”* David said, *“I called and the Lord delivered me. He delivered me in His own time. Let patience have her perfect work.”* God will deliver you stronger in faith than ever before. You need that trial and I do too.

Look at verse 10: *“I believed, therefore have I spoken.”* David speaks here of the foundation of faith. He believed; whom did He believe? He said, *“I believe the Word of God.”* Like Abraham, David believed God.

I hear people say, “I know what I believe.” Aren’t you wording that wrong? Didn’t Paul say, *“I know whom I have believed? Abraham believed God and therefore, it was imputed to him for righteousness.”* David says here, *“I believe God, therefore, have I spoken.”*

You see; this is what all of God’s servants say. Here is Paul out on the deck of that ship and the ship is about to go down; everyone is panicking and wanting to jump overboard. He says to these experienced seaman; “Now men, don’t leave the ship.”

“There stood by me this night the angel of the Lord, whose I am and whom I serve.” He said unto me, *“Paul; God has given you all on the ship if they stay on the ship.”* Now he says, *“Sirs; I believe God that it shall be exactly as He says.”* That is what I believe.

That is what David is saying here, *“I believe God; it shall be exactly as He said.”* That is what I believe.

One day, in the early morning, our Lord Jesus Christ came down to the seashore. Peter and the apostles had been out fishing. They were experienced fisherman, but had caught nothing; they had fished all night and caught nothing. The Lord said to them, *“Children; have you any meat?”* They said, *“We have toiled all night and caught nothing.”* He said, *“Back the boat up off the shore and cast your net on the right side of the ship.”*

Peter looked at Him while they were cleaning their nets and said, *“Lord; we’ve toiled all night and have caught nothing.”* He didn’t stop there; he said, *“Nevertheless; at Thy Word I will let down my net.”* That is what I am talking about; *“I believe God.”*

You know, it says in Romans 4; *“Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. This was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him for righteousness but for ours also, to whom it shall be imputed if we believe.”* Can you? I believe God.

Then he says this in Psalm 116 verse 13: *“I will take the cup of salvation and I will call upon the name of the Lord.”* Most people won’t come to the Lord. That is right! He said, *“Let another come in his own name; Him you will receive.”* That is par for the course and that is natural man’s religion.

“Let a man come in his own name;” the more ridiculous he is the more followers he has. Jim Jones is a testimony to that fact. The more ridiculous a man is the more followers he has. *“I come in My Father’s name and you will not receive Me. You will not come to me that you might have life.”*

David said, *“I will; I will come; I will take the free gift of life; I will call upon the name of the Lord. By His grace “He has made me willing in the day of His power. I will pay my vows; I will be true to my Lord in the presence of all His people.”*

I will be identified with Him and His people. I will not be ashamed; I will be identified. I will be identified with the Christ; I will be identified with the Gospel; I will be identified with His glory and His grace. I will be identified and I will pay my vows. He is not talking about money there; he is talking about being in the midst of His people and being identified with those who know him publicly.

Look at verse 15: Here is what I have been leading up to. *“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”* It is very easy to see the people to whom this Scripture belongs. It is very easy to see the people; they are the people who love the Lord.

David said, *“I love the Lord.”* They are the people who call upon Him as long as they live. They die in faith. They are the people who believe God. They are the people who receive Christ and call upon His name. They are the people who are identified with Him openly. They are His saints. Their death is precious.

Why is the death of the saint precious? Why is it precious to the saint? Death itself is not precious; you know that and I know that. Death is often accompanied by much pain. Death is often accompanied by a decay of the faculties, a withering of the flesh. Death is often accompanied by great tears and sorrow that lingers. Death is often accompanied by much difficulty, especially for those that have left.

Paul says, *“Death is gain; for me to die is gain.”* How can something so difficult, painful and fearful be gain? He said, *“I will lose an old body and gain a new body. I will lose sin and gain perfect Holiness. I will lose mortality and gain immortality; never to die again. I will lose weakness and gain strength. I will lose ignorance and gain perfect knowledge. I will lose shame and gain eternal glory.”* *“Then, I shall know as I have been known.”*

I like what Richard Baxter said on his death bed. Someone came into the room where that great old saint Richard Baxter was dying. A man walked right up to the bed and said, *“Brother Baxter, how are you?”* The old man looked at him and after being so weak and dying, said; *“I’m almost well, thank you.”*

To die is gain for the believer. To die is to be present with the Lord. I want you to think with me a minute. Paul said, *“To be present with the Lord is far better.”* He said in Romans 8:18, *“I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* This present time is not worthy and it is nothing compared to that time!

If you can; you take the time in your life when you were the very happiest. Can you remember? If you can, that is nothing compared to the happiness and joy that you will have in His presence.

You take the time in your life when you were the strongest, at the peak of your prime, the healthiest. Got it? That is nothing compared to the immortality and the strength of His image.

Take the time in your life when you were the most peaceful, at complete rest and not troubled by anything, complete rest. Let me tell you something; that was nothing. *“That is not even worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

Take the time in your life when you were the most satisfied and contented. You said, “I wish this could go on forever.” This is nothing and less than nothing compared with the contentment and the joy and the peace in Christ when we stand in His presence and are made like Him. That is what Paul is saying when he says; *“It is not worthy to be compared.”*

Why is the death of the believer precious in the sight of the Lord? That is what this is saying, *“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the believer.”* I can give you several reasons:

First of all: They are precious to Him. Anything that happens to someone that is precious to you is precious also. The people of God are precious to Him. He said, *“I have drawn you with an everlasting love. I loved you when you didn’t love Me.”* Whatever happens to you is important to me and is precious.

It is not only because they are precious to Him but because they are His sheep. He chose them and He redeemed them by His blood. He came into the world and died for them. He imputed to them a perfect righteousness.

That is why Christ came to this world; He came to redeem His sheep. He said, *“I am the good Shepherd. I lay down My life for the sheep. Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them I must bring. They shall hear My voice and they shall be one fold.”* They are His sheep! He loves His sheep and He knows His sheep.

Another reason our death is precious in His sight is because sin is obnoxious to God. One day God is going to put an end to all sin. When we die, that puts an end to sin in us. His purpose is to have a people without sin. He gave His Son on the cross to accomplish that purpose. When He takes us out of this world, He takes us away from all sin.

I will tell you this and listen to me, *“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.”* God sees things not as man sees them. God sees things as they really are. We only see what is around us but God sees that which is around Him. This is His home, this is His body, these are His people, and this is His habitation.

I haven't seen His home and His habitation. Paul did; he came back and said; "*I heard things that were not lawful to utter.*" God sees it as it is.

That worm down there in the dirt has never known anything but dirt. I stand up here infinitely better than it is. I might say, "Oh little worm, if you only knew how it is to be clean and to eat clean food." He doesn't understand that. He would object a great deal if I took him out of the dirt. If I could take that worm and turn him into a man he would be glad to be out of the dirt.

Here I am a worm in the dust. He says, "Oh little worm, if you only knew what it was like here." I hate to leave my dirt and my habitation. Once He takes me there I won't want to come back. Our home eternally is with Him. Our real life is to never grow old and to never die. Our joy is look upon His face. Leave my family? That is my family, the body of Christ.

Death is not a penalty it is a promotion. Death is not the end; it is the beginning and it is not to die but to live.