



DEVELOPING THE FUTURE

Sermon

Part 3 – We're Thankful He Delivers Us

2015 Thank Offering for the World Evangelism Fund

"Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord." Psalm 22:30b, NLT

Psalm 107:20-22

- ²⁰He sent out his word and healed them;
snatching them from the door of death.
²¹Let them praise the LORD for his great love
and for the wonderful things he has done for them.
²²Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving
and sing joyfully about his glorious acts.

Recently, I was on a computer attempting to order a product when I came to a verification page...it was a little odd: "Prove that you are a human and not a bot!"

"A bot," I thought? "What's a bot?" Bot is what techno-geeks call "web robots" – a software application that runs automated tasks over the internet that are simple and repetitive. They do this at a much higher rate than would be possible for one human. There are spider bots, gaming bots, auction bots, and even chat-bots. Sometimes bots even act human.

The simple instructions were, "Drag the musical note from the box above to the empty box below." There wasn't a musical note in the box above....just letters, numbers and other symbols. I tried everything. And then I failed to prove my humanity.

If this web page just knew me, it would know that I'm a human. I prove it all the time. On a regular basis I come into the house and ask my wife to bandage something up and she will ask, "Did this happen because you were being careful?" And I respond, "Well, I wasn't trying to get the blood out of my finger. I am human!"

My experience isn't unique. As humans, we all need a little help from our God. We need the Lord to be our deliverer.

Deliverance. It's a concept often discussed in the Bible, from the Exodus of the Israelites in the Old Testament to "deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13, NASB) in the New Testament. We can see it in the rescue of Jonah out of the big fish and the rescue of Peter from prison. But how does deliverance fit into our lives today? And when it comes, will we be thankful for it?

Today we're going to explore three aspects of deliverance and our response to God's work in our lives.

1. One way God delivers is by saving His people.

First, we're going to dive into a story of some rather ungrateful Israelites.

Think about the story of Moses. When Pharaoh ordered the male children of the Israelites to be killed, Moses's mother placed him in a basket and put it in the river. Pharaoh's own daughter saved Moses and brought him to live in the royal household. What a story of God's deliverance.

God had big plans for Moses. Each step of the way, God protected and provided. When Moses returned to Egypt and told Pharaoh to let the Israelites go, how easy would it have been for

Pharaoh to kill Moses right there? But God had plans for Moses to lead his people out of slavery.

Through Moses and Aaron, God delivered His message to Pharaoh: Let my people go! Despite God's dramatic rescue, the Israelites were not thankful. They groaned about the manna God provided. Yet, God continued to give them food. At Marah, they complained that the water was bitter, but God made the water good to drink. Though God continued to deliver them from the harsh conditions of the dry land, they said that it was better back in Egypt where they were slaves. So God decreed that they would wander in the desert and could not cross into the Promised Land.

Is there an area of your life where you're not thankful for what God has done for you? Is your lack of faith blocking you from entering your own "Promised Land"? Examine your heart today and let the Lord lead you to His best for you.

2. Another way the Lord delivers is saving us from ourselves.

And if there were ever two people who needed to be saved from themselves, it was Charles and Pernella Bull. These thieves claimed they weren't stealing—they thought everything was free.

Our story starts with a woman from St. Paul, Minnesota who "was tucking her children into bed when she heard a noise somewhere in her house. Going downstairs to investigate, she spotted a man and a woman running full-tilt out the back door... The woman chased after the intruders and found them loading bags of her stuff onto their bicycles... They were thwarted hilariously when a neighbor blocked them in with his car and called the police. The thieves, Charles and Pernella Bull, had attempted to make off with a laptop, a desktop computer, a toolbox, the woman's purse and a few other odds and ends... When questioned, Mrs. Bull said that a friend had told her that the address was listed as a 'free house' on Craigslist," a free website for advertising and selling items, "which meant that the owners were moving out in a hurry, so anyone was free to just show up and take whatever they wanted... Mrs. Bull said she had called out to ask if anyone was there when she walked into the house (you know, the house with all the lights on and a purse sitting on the counter), but when no one answered, she figured it was vacant and starting loading up the bicycles. The police weren't able to find the alleged 'free house' listing on Craigslist, most likely because at no point in the course of human history had it ever existed, so the Bulls were arrested."¹

Wow. I'm thankful that these people aren't out on the streets anymore.

In Psalm 107 the Psalmist is thankful for deliverance. He talks about those who wandered in the wilderness, lost and homeless. And in a powerful passage, he writes, "Some sat in darkness and deepest gloom, imprisoned in iron chains of misery" (v. 10).

¹ [cracked.com](http://www.cracked.com/article_19771_the-6-most-hilariously-stupid-criminal-excuses-all-time.html), "The 6 Most Hilariously Stupid Criminal Excuses of All Time, April 14, 2012, http://www.cracked.com/article_19771_the-6-most-hilariously-stupid-criminal-excuses-all-time.html.

Unless otherwise noted, all scriptures are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Let me tell you about another story of being chained in misery. There once was a large bird, held captive in a neglected petting zoo in a cage too short for its tall, majestic frame. It had to bend over to fit into the cage. One day, a man who saw the sad conditions at the petting zoo called the local group who rescued animals. They got the animal out, but as hard as they tried to help the eagle, it never again stood full height. Its neck was always bent, as if it was still sitting in that short cage. It never knew the freedom of looking high into the air, as it was meant to.

Do you feel like you're still imprisoned, even though you've been set free? Are you shackled by "iron chains of misery" today? What holds you down in your spiritual walk? Is it bitterness over a broken relationship? Discouragement from a serious illness? Disappointment over a financial setback?

The Psalmist has some encouraging words for you about how God can deliver us from ourselves:

- ¹³"Lord, help!" they cried in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.
¹⁴He led them from the darkness and deepest gloom;
he snapped their chains.
¹⁵Let them praise the LORD for his great love
and for the wonderful things he has done for them.
¹⁶For he broke down their prison gates of bronze;
he cut apart their bars of iron. (Psalm 107)

The Psalmist isn't writing about real chains and bars of iron. He's writing about the way we have imprisoned ourselves. Today, I invite you to let God open those prison doors you have created for yourself.

The Psalmist also shows us the gratitude we can discover when the Lord breaks those chains for us: "Let them praise the LORD for his great love and for the wonderful things he has done for them" (v. 15). This is a thanksgiving Psalm that gives us a roadmap for how we are to praise God, both while we are in the midst of the storm and after He has delivered us.

3. And lastly, the most important area of deliverance that we're going to talk about is how Jesus delivers us from sin. Jesus shows us the way to salvation in both His life and death.

When tax collector Zacchaeus repented, Jesus said, "'Salvation has come to this home today... For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.'" (Luke 19:9a and 19:10).

When talking to the religious leader Nicodemus about salvation, Jesus pointed the way to himself, saying, "'everyone who believes in him will have eternal life'" (John 3:15b).

Paul writes in Romans, "When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners" (Romans 5:6).

Dying despised on a cross, Jesus delivered us from our sins through His blood. And He shows us the way to the Father through His death and resurrection. Amen!

What is your response of gratitude to the One who has saved us? Do you share the Good News out of a thankful heart? One way you can help is by giving to the World Evangelism Fund. Through the World Evangelism Fund, you can support the Church of the Nazarene's efforts to reach others for Christ across the globe. You might be thinking, "I want to help, but I can't afford it today." There are still ways to give. Many people leave money to the World Evangelism Fund in their will or trust, with the help of the Nazarene Foundation.

In the Great Commission, Jesus instructs us to make disciples of all nations. Let's go!

Conclusion

Praise and thank God today for all the ways that He delivers us. If you don't know His saving grace, or if you feel downtrodden by the chains of your own making, I pray that you will open your heart to Him. He's drawn a roadmap for us. Now all we have to do is follow it.