

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many. (NIV84)

Theme: From the Lord comes Deliverance

1. From earthly troubles
2. From spiritual troubles'

Out of all the great things God has done, what is the greatest? Out of all the things God gives to you, what is the best? If you were to use one phrase to describe God what would that phrase be? Paul describes God as the one **who raises the dead**. He is our deliverer. When talking about all the great things God has done for us, one stands out above the rest—how Christ delivered us. So today we say with David in Psalm three—**From the Lord comes deliverance**. For he has delivered us from both earth and spiritual troubles.

Paul wrote this letter some time during the second half of AD 57. By this time he had already suffered much for the sake of the gospel. In chapter 11 Paul gives a short rundown of what he had suffered for the sake of the gospel. **Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea.** The Corinthians were concerned mostly about what happened to Paul and Timothy in Asia. That the Roman Province called Asia—not Asia as we know it today. It is the part of the world that we know consider Western Turkey. Today we refer to it as Asia Minor. Ephesus was it's leading city. And Ephesus is where Paul stayed for three years.

We don't know exactly what happened to Paul in Asia. But whatever it was, it wasn't pleasant. **We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death.** Perhaps it was the riot caused by Demetrius, the silversmith, who was angry that Paul was persuading the people away from idols—making a huge dent in his business; as recorded in Acts 19. Perhaps it was something else. Whatever it was, Paul and Timothy thought they were going to die. They didn't think there was any hope. They doubted that they would live through it. They were uncertain about their future.

From time to time, we might feel the same way. How many days have come and gone that have found us uncertain of the future? We find ourselves in circumstances that leave us excessively burdened, questioning how we will survive. Maybe it was a health issue that you or a loved one faced. The doctors gave only a month or two to live. You are staring death straight in the face. Perhaps you struggle to make ends meet. You lost your job, got your pay or hours cut at work. Because of the economy budgets change, and your not quite sure what the future holds. Maybe it's family strife, issues with friends, or disagreements with neighbors. We all have burdens we face—things that make us uncertain about the future. And many of them lead us to wonder how we can go on. How can we go on when our family has disowned us, when we lost our friends? How can we go on when we can't afford anything? How can I live my life when I've been told that my life is going to end in a matter of moments? And so we despair. We are afraid of the future.

But then the Lord's deliverance comes. It came for Paul and Timothy. Whatever affliction Paul faced in Asia, God led him through it. He would move on to spread the gospel in other places. Paul would live for about 10 years after he wrote this letter. All those things Paul suffered through for the sake of the gospel—the beatings, stoning, floggings, shipwrecks, and so on, God led him through. God delivered him from all of it. **He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us.** Paul knew that their only reason he survived all of these things was because of God's deliverance. And that gave

him hope for the future. Because God delivered him in the past from earthly troubles, Paul was assured that he would continue to do so in the future.

The same stands for us. God has a history of delivering his people. The Israelites from the Egyptians, David from Goliath and Saul, Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the Assyrians—God has delivered his people. He has continued to do so. Whether his people were facing death, persecution, or financial woes, God has delivered his people. And he will continue to do so. He will continue to bless his people. He will continue to baffle doctors, to provide jobs, to reunite families. He has and he always will deliver his people from earthly peril.

And so when we suffer through earthly troubles, we don't have to worry. We don't have to be afraid of what the future holds. For God has delivered us in the past. And he will deliver us in the future. Plus, no matter what it perils we face, it will always turn out for our good. As Paul points out in Romans 8, **And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.** We may not always see the good. But we trust that whatever happens to us, God is going to use it to benefit his children.

How could being persecuted turn out for our good? How can facing death end up for our benefit? Paul explains, **This happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God.** When we suffer we tend not to focus on ourselves. When life let's us down, when the world seems against us, when we are staring death in the face we tend not to look at ourselves. When we suffer, we realize we are helpless. We can't do it ourselves, but God can. He turn to the one who has delivered us in the past. And the one who promises to deliver us in the future. So our sufferings and afflictions are actually good things—they turn out to our benefit. For they lead us to turn away from ourselves and the things of this world and turn instead to Christ. And then we see how God delivers us.

As great as it is that God delivers us from our earthly perils, it pales in comparison to Christ's greatest work—his act of delivering us from spiritual peril.

Paul and Timothy faced death. Even if you haven't been in their shoes, you still face death. Eternal death. For we are all sinners. We were born that way—as enemies of God. It was inherited from our sinful parents. From the time we were conceived we were sinners, deserving of death. For **the wages of sin is death.** We all deserve God's wrath and punishment. We should go to hell to suffer with the devil for who we are what we have done and what we have failed to do.

And there is nothing we can do about it. For we are spiritually dead. **As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins.** A dead man is able to do nothing. He can't move, think, or talk. We are dead spiritually—unable to do anything pleasing to God. We can't save ourselves. We can't contribute to our eternal life in anyway. So we face eternal death with the devil forever.

But then the Lord comes with deliverance. He came as a poor lowly baby—born of a virgin. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He didn't inherit sin from his parents. He would grow up to live a perfect life. Not once did he go against God's commands. Then he gave up his perfect life on the cross. He took all our sins upon himself, becoming a sinner in our place. And he gave us his perfect life. When God looks at us he no longer sees his enemies, but his children.

For he made us his children at our baptisms. We were born into sin. We were born as God's enemies. But at our baptisms we are made new creatures. Our sin was washed away. We were clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness. His life and death became ours. In our baptisms were born again as children of God. God delivered us from spiritual death.

God delivered Paul and Timothy from death when they were in Asia. It is something he did for Paul time and time again. But eventually he didn't. Solid Church tradition tells us that Paul died in AD 68 as part of a widespread persecution of Christians led by the Roman Emperor. Yes, eventually Paul died. But it's not as if God let Paul down. He still delivered him.

Paul knew he would. That is why he put his trust in God. For he is the one **who raises the dead.** Paul knew that even if he were to die, he would still live. The Lord would still deliver him. He would be raised

from the dead. Because Christ rose from the dead, Paul knew that he would rise as well. He knew that God delivers from eternal peril. He would save him from eternal death.

So as they faced death, he was confident. For God had delivered them in the past, and he would continue to deliver them. Three times in verse 10 Paul mentions the deliverance of God. **He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us.** The thought that Paul expresses in the Greek is much more than that God will simply continue to deliver us. He is saying that God will deliver us to a great extent—he will deliver us in a higher way. That is, he has saved us from physical death and he will do so—but he will save us even more so, to a higher extent—he will save us from eternal death. The same stands for us. God has delivered us from earthly peril time and time again. But he may not always do so. Eventually we will all die. But God hasn't forgotten about us. He will still deliver us. For through his death and resurrection we will be raised from the dead and live with him forever. He has saved us from eternal death.

God delivered Paul in response to the prayers of his people. The Corinthians prayed that God would deliver Paul and Timothy. **As you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.** In response to the prayers of his people, God had mercy on Paul and Timothy. He graciously saved them from death. He gave them eternal life when they didn't deserve it.

He does the same for us. He answers our prayers, just as he answered theirs. So he tells us in Psalm 50, **Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.** We pray to God because he promises to hear us. We pray to him for deliverance because he promises to deliver us. From whatever may threaten us—money issues, health problems, death—God will deliver us. For he has already delivered us from the ultimate peril—eternal death. So we pray to him and pray often that he would continue to deliver us. And we know that he will.

As a result of the deliverance that God gave Paul and Timothy many people gave thanks to God. We do the same. For he is the one who raises the dead. He has and he always will deliver us. We thank God

for everything he gives us. We praise his name for all that he has done for us. Especially for delivering us. For he has delivered us time and time again from earthly perils. But more importantly he has delivered us from spiritual perils. So we live a life of thanksgiving both now and forever. For the Lord is our deliverer, and in him alone is our salvation. Amen.