

⁵ **Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is compassionate.**
Psalm 116:5 (NAS).¹

This chapter deals with the most visceral of the human experience – death. All men have a *natural* fear of death. The believer, however, has a different story to tell for the LORD has made provision for the believer. And this is so consistent with the LORD's character. If it is true that we as believers live our lives *in God's Grace*, it follows quite naturally that we would face death *in God's Grace*.

Remember our **trinity of God's Good Disposition** towards the child of God?

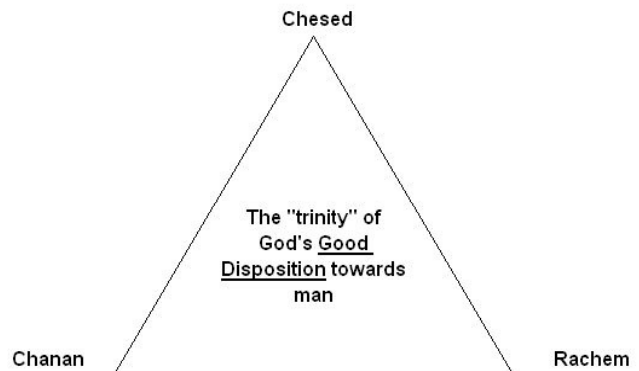
Let's review:

the mercy – graciousness (*chanan*) – *to be gracious toward, to show pity for a loathsome person.* This word has the connotation of showing favor towards someone. See [Prov 14:21](#), [Isa 26:10](#).

the lovingkindness – mercifulness (*chesed*) – *goodness, mercy, with a strong emphasis of helping* – of God. It appears 127 times in the Psalms. This “action” word is used by Joseph when he asks the cupbearer to show kindness ([Gen 40:14](#)) when he is restored to the Pharaoh's presence. *Chesed* has a strong flavor of faithfulness, reliability to be merciful. NIV translated *chesed* as unfailing love – a good rendition although “mercy” is another good translation.

the tender mercies (*rachem*) – although it is hard to really separate any favorite of these Three qualities of God's Good Disposition, *rachem* certainly brings God's love home to me. It is a reference to the mother's tender thoughts toward her unborn child! A striking and complex use of this word was no doubt at least on the mind of Christ while He was on the cross: “**I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.**” Psalm 22:10. The word “womb” is our word *rachem*. This was not merely a reference to the fact that Jesus Christ was cast upon God (dedicated to God's service, much as we dedicate our babies to the LORD) but has a complex array of flavors of God's tender thoughts toward His Only Begotten – as was Mary's tender thoughts towards her unborn Son.”²

Here two of these characteristics of God are mentioned: *Chanan* and *Rachem*. Both are most illustrative of His Good Disposition toward the believer who might be



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² Taken from my [introduction to the Psalms](#).

facing death. Holman³ add another descriptive term to Chanan – that bending the knee in order to help a lowly person in the deepest of trouble. I think the best descriptive narrative of this might be the good Samaritan⁴ who although despised by the Jew bent *his* knee in order to help. The other quality mention in connection with the LORD's Good Disposition toward the believer who is facing death is Racheem – illustrated by the mother's love for her unborn child. We cannot attach a better descriptive phrase to our Heavenly Father when it comes to our most traumatic of experiences. He cares for us in Life – He cares for us in Death.

Death has been defeated

This is the message in Psalm 116 – it is further addressed in Hebrews:

14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.
Hebrews 2:14-15 (NAS)

Death is our enemy – it would rob us of our eternal fellowship with the Lord. However, our Heavenly Father thought of everything when He expressed the Plan of Redemption, including the power that death has over all men. And Satan knows that Death has been defeated by Jesus Christ – that's why he will do anything to keep the sinner from the Gospel and the sinner's answer to the call of grace. We have been delivered from this slavery – as had the psalmist:

8 For You have rescued my soul from death, My eyes from tears, My feet from stumbling. 9 I shall walk before the LORD In the land of the living.
Psalms 116:8-9 (NAS)

Notice the transition as the believer faces the power of Death. First there is the sorrow – yes all believers must be transparent with themselves and the Lord in their sorrow – but there is sweet deliverance from this sorrow. This weeping is not a passing upsurge of emotion. No. It is a deep sobbing. The same word was used in Jeremiah 13:17 where he sobbed because of the captivity of Judah⁵ – literally the tears flowed freely as he wept while the Lord's flock was carried away captive. The psalmist was completely transparent about his facing death:

The cords and sorrows of death were around me, and the terrors of Sheol

³ Holman Old Testament Commentary, volume 12, page 220.

⁴ [Luke 10:30-37](#).

⁵ But if you will not listen to it, My soul will sob in secret for such pride; And my eyes will bitterly weep And flow down with tears, Because the flock of the LORD has been taken captive. Jeremiah 13:17 (NAS)

(the place of the dead) had laid hold of me; I suffered anguish and grief (trouble and sorrow). Psalms 116:3 (AMP)

My point here is that the psalmist was honest with himself. This is a very bleak predicament that he faced - complete entanglement by this facing of Death but we must hurry on to say that his weeping would be turned into a rescue – a rescue that will result in his walking *before the LORD in the land of the living*.

Paul faced death but he also found that God's grace was sufficient when he cried out "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"⁶

The Heart of God revealed in this matter of the dying Saint.

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. Psalms 116:15 (KJV)

Some commentators would have this passage stop just short of the actual experience of dying but such is NOT the case. While it is true that the psalmist was rescued not only from the dispar of dying – he does take the experience right through this dark veil. The LORD takes tender care of the dying – *in their death*. This is the heart of the LORD toward His Saints – those who have been set apart to glorify Him. A word study of "precious" might be in order. Precious is associated in the Old Testament with stones (gemstones and foundation stones) and life. In [Psalm 49:8](#) the redemption of a man's soul is too costly (precious) for anyone to afford. In [Psalm 72:14](#) we have from this messianic passage that the blood of the needy is considered precious - precious – of high value – so much so that the King's Son shed His own precious blood for them. In [Proverbs 3:15](#), Wisdom is more precious than rubies. Do we get the picture? The heart of the LORD considers your and my eventual death as His Saints to be precious *in His sight*. In His sight? The implication here is that He does NOT take His eyes off from us – ever.

The believer's response to the LORD's tender care for us.

Is devotion to Him! What else can we do – we must trust in Him for He says He cares for us ([1 Peter 5:7](#)).

¹² **What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?** ¹³ **I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.** Psalms 116:12-13 (KJV)

The psalmist' devotion is clear – true couched in the language of a dedicated Jew but the devotion is universal for the believer who has faced death squarely and has been delivered from it's grip. All we can do is turn our lives over to the LORD in thanksgiving for all His benefits toward us.

⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:55 (KJV)