

A DIVINE CHALLENGE!

NO. 322

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AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.**

*“Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me.”
Exodus 8:1.*

ON two or three former occasions I have endeavored to insist upon the fact that God always puts a distinction between Israel and Egypt. He constantly speaks of the Israelites as “My people”—of the Egyptians, he speaks to Pharaoh as being “your people.” There is a continual and eternal distinction observed in the Word of God between the chosen seed of promise and the world—the children of the Wicked One. The great object of God’s interference with Egypt was not the blessing of Egypt at large, but the gathering out of His Israel from the midst of the Egyptians.

Beloved, I have the conviction that this is just what God is doing with the world now. Perhaps, for many a year to come, God will gather out His elect from the nations of the earth as He gathered His Israel from the midst of the Egyptians. You and I may not live to see that universal reign, of which we so joyously sang this morning. But the wheat will be gathered sheaf by sheaf, if not ear by ear. The tares will be left to ripen here, perhaps, until the great and terrible day the Lord comes.

At any rate, looking at the signs of the times we do not see any considerable progress made in the evangelization of the world. Egypt is Egypt still—the world is the world still—and as worldly as it ever was and God’s purpose seems to be, through the ministry which He now exercises, to bring His chosen ones out. In fact, the Word which Jehovah is now speaking to the entire world with the solemn authority of an imperial mandate is this—“Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me.”

It will be necessary in addressing you this evening to recall to your minds the position which the Israelites held in Egypt. It is a type of the position of all the Lord’s people before the Most High God, who with a high hand and an outstretched arm brings them out of their bondage. The people of the Lord are slaves. Though their names are in His book, yet they are slaves, engaged like Israel of old in labors that savor more of earthly than of heavenly things—brick-makers, building houses not for themselves, for they find no city to dwell in. But toiling and laboring here as unwilling servants, thinking, perhaps, they shall receive goodly wages, but they receive no wages, except the whip upon their shoulders.

Every man in his unrenewed state is a slave. Even God’s people are slaves as well as others, till they hear the trumpet of jubilee and at the Word and by the power of God are brought forth out of the place of their slavery. We are slaves—slaves to a power which we never can overcome by our own unassisted strength. If all the inhabitants of Goshen—the Israelites, I mean—had concerted measures to rebel against Pharaoh and had said, “We will be free”—in but a few hours, the tremendous power of that great monarch of Egypt would have crushed out the last spark of hope. With his terrible army, his horses and his chariots, the rabblement of Israel would soon have been given to the dogs. They had no hope in the world of ever delivering themselves by their own power.

Nor more have we, Beloved. By nature we are slaves to him who is infinitely our superior, namely, to Satan and all his hosts of sin. We may seek sometimes to snap the fetter when a hectic flush of health comes over the cheek. But oh, we may make the fetters grind into our flesh, we cannot snap them. We may even sometimes think that we are free and talk of liberty—but our walk is a walk within a prison and our apparent liberty is but a deeper delusion of slavery. Men may bid us be free, but they cannot make us so. They may use the best means they can by education, by training, by persuasion, but these fetters are not to be filed by any instruments so weak.

God’s ministers may continually exhort us to snap our fetters. But alas, it is not in *our* power to do what, nevertheless, is *their* duty to command us to do. We are such slaves, that unless a mightier than ourselves and a mightier than Satan shall come out to our assistance, we must continue in the land of bondage—in the house of our sin and of our

trouble. Nor, again, can we ever hope to redeem ourselves with money. If the children of Israel had given up all they had, they were so poor they could not have ransomed their own bodies.

The poor brick-makers could not buy themselves from their masters. The least thought of such a thing would have brought down the whip with ten-fold fury upon their poor bleeding shoulders. And so you and I may think we can buy our freedom by our good works, but the result of all our offers of purchase-money will be to make us feel the whip the more. You may go and toil and think you have gathered together something that can be acceptable in the sight of your taskmaster—but when you have done all—he will tell you that you are an unprofitable servant, command you to yet sterner labors, make you feel yet viler durance in your prison, for you cannot by such means escape.

Really, apart from God, the view of humanity which is given in the Scriptures is the most deplorable picture that even despondency itself could paint. Ah, men talk about some remnants of good that are left in humanity, some sparkling of Divine fire and the like, but the Bible does not say so. It expresses, in its solemn words, the meaning of that hymn, which begins—

*“How helpless guilty nature lies,
Unconscious of her load;
The heart unblest can never rise,
To happiness and God.”*

The slavery of Israel in Egypt was hopeless slavery. They could not get free unless God interfered and worked miracles in their behalf. And the slavery of the sinner to his sin is equally hopeless—he could never be free—unless a mind that is infinitely greater than he can ever command shall come to his assistance and help. What a blessed circumstance it is, then, for those poor chosen children of God who are still in bondage, that the Lord has power to say and then power to carry out what He has said—“Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me.”

Having thus introduced my subject, by showing you the helpless condition of God’s people by nature and the utter impossibility of their ever getting free by themselves, let me observe that today God is saying—saying in His own decree—saying by Providence—and saying through the lips of His faithful ministers, that emancipating sentence which of old made Pharaoh relax his grasp and caused the land of Egypt to loose its captive ones—“Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me.”

I shall dwell upon this emancipating sentence tonight, as God shall give me strength, in this way. I shall first notice the fullness of the sentence, then the rightness of the sentence. Next, the repetition of it. And finally, the Omnipotence which is concealed in it.

I. First, then, THE FULLNESS OF THE SENTENCE. “Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me.” I don’t doubt but what there are some of God’s people here tonight who have not any idea they are His people. Perhaps they are slaves to drunkenness, bondslaves to every evil passion, yet, being bought by the blood of Christ, their names are in His book. And they must and they shall be saved. They think, perhaps, that they never, never can be. It may even happen that they have not any desire to be. But Israel shall come out of Egypt even though Israel may love the flesh-pots, the garlic and the cucumber.

Israel shall be delivered by might and by power, even though Israel himself may blindly imagine that he is at peace and at ease in the enemy’s land—that is to say, God will have His own people. Though they are content in their sin, though they have no will towards Him, yet He will come and make them discontented with their sins. He will turn their wills—change the bias of their hearts and they who once despised God, shall, with free consent, against their natural inclination, be led captives at the wheels of His Sovereign Grace.

God not only saves those who are willing to be saved, but those who are unwilling to be saved he can make willing in the day of His power. There have been many instances of that in this House of Prayer. Men have come in here merely from curiosity—to laugh, to make jests and fun—but God has had His time and when that time has come—“Thus says the Lord, let My people go free”—they have gone free. They have been saved. Their fetters which they were unconsciously wearing before, have begun to grate upon their soul, to eat their flesh and then they have sought mercy. And their fetters have fallen off, they have gone free.

Well, then, though I have run away from what I was going to say, I come again to this point—the fullness of the Divine sentence, “Let My people go free.” If you notice, it does not say “Let them have partial liberty. Let them have two or three days’ rest from their toil.” No. But, “Let them go free,” free altogether. God’s demand is not that His people

should have some little liberty, some little rest in their sin—no, but that they should go right out of Egypt and that they should go through the wilderness to Canaan. The demand was not made to Pharaoh, “Make their tasks less heavy. Make the whip less cruel, put kinder taskmasters over them.” No, but, “Let them go free.”

Christ did not come into the world merely to make our sin more tolerable, but to deliver us from it. He did not come to make Hell less hot, or sin less damnable, or our lusts less mighty. But he came to put all these things far away from His people and work out a full and complete deliverance. Perhaps Pharaoh might have said at length, “Well, they shall have kind masters. Their tasks shall be shortened. They shall have the straw given them, with which to make their bricks.” Yes, but Devil, this will not do! You may consent to it, but God never will. Christ does not come to make people less sinful, but to make them leave off sin altogether—not to make them less miserable, but to put their miseries away and give them joy and peace in believing in Him. The deliverance must be complete, or else there shall be no deliverance at all.

Again—you will mark, it says, “Let My people go.” It says nothing about their coming back again. Once gone, they are gone forever. Pharaoh thought he would let them go two or three days journey, yet they never went back to Egypt again. They went through the wilderness forty years to the Promised Land and no Egyptian could ever drive them back. Egypt went forth with all its chivalry to overtake them, but they perished in the sea—and Israel went through as on dry land and was blessed of God. That sentence which said of me, “Let My child go free,” gave me eternal liberty. Not liberty for yesterday and today and tomorrow, but liberty forever and forever.

You know when the Negro slaves run away from the Southern States and get to the North they are free, but still the man-hunter will soon be on their track and they may be taken back again to their masters. Yes, but you and I are like the slave when he gets to Canada. When he sets his foot on British soil and breathes the English air, that moment he is free. Once ferried over the stream that parts the land of slaves from the land of freedom, he stands on soil that cannot be stained by the slave’s foot. He breathes an air that never was received into lungs that were in bondage yet. He is free.

And so is it with us. We go not into slave states where the devil has got a fugitive law to hunt us up again, but into states where we are wholly free. There is not a fetter left. We have not a chain upon our wrist with half of it filed away, but we are free—the free men of God—and Satan has no claim, no right, no, no power, ever to enslave us again. “Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me.” It is a large demand because it is a demand that requires entire liberty and that liberty perpetual, too.

But, methinks, I hear one say, “Well, I have not yet entered into the fullness of that sentence.” No, Brother, nor have I yet—into the *fullness* of it—though I have into some of the *sweetness* of it. You must know that this emancipation is often gradual in our own experience, though it is effectual and instantaneous in God’s mind.

Time was—and let me speak to you to whom I can speak, whose experience will agree with what I utter—time was when you were born slaves to hardness of heart. You despised God—religion was a toil to you—in fact you never exercised your mind or will with it. Well, there came a time when the Lord said, “Let My people go free,” and you began to think. Your heart began to melt. You groaned under the burden of sin, you began to cry to God. You were delivered, then, from the hardness of your heart and were free. But still sin tormented you. Your guilt went with you every day like your own shadow. And like a grim chamberlain, with fingers bloody red, it drew your curtains tight and put its finger upon your eyelid, as if to crush darkness into your very heart. But the day came when, standing at the foot of the Cross you saw your sins atoned for, “numbered on the scapegoat’s head of old.” You felt the burden roll from your back, you were free—free from your past sins and you could rejoice in that most glorious liberty.

But, then, after a season, you went out into the world and you felt that, “when you would do good, evil was present with you.” How to will you found, but how to do you found not. Well, you have had partial deliverance from that, as one evil passion has been overcome and a virtue has been learned. You have achieved a triumph over one bad habit and a victory over another evil temper. The sentence has been going on, “Thus says the Lord, let My people go.”

And remember the day is coming when you shall lay dying. Yes, but you shall then begin to live. There shall be heard a voice speaking by your death pillow saying, “Loose him and let him go.” You will understand what that means and in a moment, loosed from every fetter, like Lazarus when the napkin was taken from his head and the grave clothes from his feet, you start up perfectly free. There shall not be a shadow of bondage about you. You shall fly to Heaven and walk its free and happy streets and never more shall you say, “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

I say, therefore, we don't know in all its fullness the meaning of this passage experimentally. Still it is all ours and we ought to receive it all by faith, as being our precious blessing. God has said to sin, to Satan, to death, to Hell, to doubts, to fears, to evil habits and even to the grave itself—"Let My people go, that they may serve Me."

II. So much, then, for the fullness of the demand, I shall now notice, in the second place, the RIGHTNESS OF IT. The Lord had a perfect right to say to Pharaoh, "Let My people go free." Tyrannical despot! What right had he to enslave a free nation? They came down there by the invitation of his predecessor. Did not Pharaoh invite Jacob and his family to come down to the land of Goshen? It was never in the stipulation that they should be made slaves. It was a violation of a national compact for Pharaoh to exact toil from free-born Israelites. Had they been brave and strong enough, they ought to have resisted the encroachments of his tyranny.

They were not Pharaoh's people. Pharaoh never chose them. He had never brought them where they were. He had not fought with them and overcome them. They were not captives in war, nor did they dwell in a territory which was the spoil of fair conflict. They were guests—honored guests—invited to come and to dwell in a land which they themselves enriched and blessed by their representative Joseph. It was not right, then, that they should be in bondage—there was no right on Pharaoh's part. The right lay exclusively with God.

You notice the lightness of the demand concentrated in that little word "My"—"Let *My* people go free. Let your *own* people kiss your feet if they will—make *them* dig canals and build pyramids if you like, for I interfere not with them. But *My* people—let them go free. You have no right to their unpaid toil. They have no right to endure this cruel servitude. "Let *My* people go free."

Do you see the parallel in our case? The Word of God is His own heavenly mandate. The Voice of justice and pity and mercy, cries to death and trol and sin, "Let My people go free—Satan, keep your own if you will, but let My people go free, for they are Mine. This people have I created for Myself—they shall show forth My praise. Let My people go free, for I have bought them with My precious blood. You have not bought them, nor have you made them—you have no right to them. Let My people go free." All this is our comfort for poor sinners and we hope that some of them, though they don't know it, are God's people.

You must not imagine when you hear a man swear, or when he is going on in sin—you must not write his name down in the black book and say, "I am quite sure that man will go to the devil." No. It may be that God ordains to save that man and one of these days you will meet him lifting up his voice in prayer, outstripping you, perhaps, in the heavenly race and serving his Master better than you have done. Jesus Christ takes many to His bosom whose company we would have shunned when they were in their evil state.

Sovereign mercy can dash into the prize ring and make captives. Free Grace can go into the gutter and bring up a jewel. Divine love can rake a dunghill and find a diamond. There is no spot where God's Grace cannot and will not go. This, we pray, is our great hope when we have a congregation before us—not a hope that they will be willing, that they will be attentive in themselves, that they will give heed to what we say, but our hope is this—"Doubtless God has much people in this city," and God having brought some of these within the sound of His Word, we have a hope that many are His chosen ones and God will have them.

I trust we never entertain a doubt but that God will have His own and that Christ will say as we preached to you this morning, "Not a hoof shall be left behind." "They shall be Mine," says the Lord—"they are Mine now and they shall be Mine in the day when I make up My jewels." Lost though God's elect are, they *never* belonged to Satan. They were lost, but that does not say they belong to the finder. A thing may be lost, but it is mine still when I have lost it, that is to say, I have a right to it and any man finding it and appropriating it, has no right to do so.

If I leave a piece of land having a right to it and another shall take possession for a time, yet if I hold the title deeds, I will have him ousted and take my property. The Lord has got the title deeds of some of you, though the devil has got possession of you. Satan rules you with a rod of iron and makes you his captives and willing servants. But my Master is a match for your master. There has been a great duel fought between life and death for you and life has won the victory and Free Grace claims the prize. And that prize Free Grace will give and your poor guilty soul shall yet be set as a signet on Jehovah's hand and shall yet glitter as a jewel in Jehovah's crown.

Oh, how I delight to talk about this Omnipotence of grace—of that grace that does not tarry for the sons of men, that does not stop but rides on in triumph and leads captivity itself captive. Oh, what a joy it is to think that we have not

to wait on man—that it does not rest with man whether he should belong to Christ or not. If Christ has bought that man—if the Father has ordained him to be Christ’s—then Christ’s that man shall be. Rampart yourselves about with prejudices, but Christ shall scale your ramparts. Pile up your walls, bring up the big stones of your iniquity—but Christ shall take your citadel and make you a captive. Plunge into the mire if you will, but that strong arm can bring you out and wash you clean.

I see you curl your lips and say, “I shall never be a Methodist. I shall never make a profession of religion.” I don’t know, Sir. Many have said the same as you are saying and yet they have been brought down and if Christ will, He can bring you down, too, Sir. There is not strength enough in sin to overcome His Grace. When He puts forth His arm, down you fall. Let Him but once strike and you may stand and rebel, but the victory is His. You may will to be damned, but if He wills to save you, His will is more than a match for your will. And you will come crouching down to His feet, saying, “Lord, I will that You save me.”

Then, methinks He will say this, “How is it you were not willing then! How is this that you are willing *now*?” “O Lord, You have made me willing and unto You be all the glory forever and forever.” So then, we need not say more. I think about the rightness of this sentence of God. They are His people, they are His blood-bought people. He created them for Himself and it is neither more nor less than right that God should say, “Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me.”

III. Let me now call your attention to THE REPETITION OF THIS SENTENCE. I have just read carefully through these first chapters of Exodus and I am not quiet sure how many times this phrase occurs, but some five or six times I know it is repeated. The first time, Moses said, “Thus says Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel, let My people go, that they may feast before Me in the wilderness.” The second time, he says, “Let My people go, that they may serve Me.” Some five or six times Moses went unto Pharaoh. The first time he said it, Pharaoh laughed in his face. “You are idle,” he said, “you are idle. You don’t like your brick-making. You want to go and serve your God to get an idle holiday. Go to your tasks, the taskmasters had need make the toil a little more rigorous. What business have you with religion? Go on with your bricks.”

Now, that is how the worldling taunts you, when for the first time that sentence comes into his head. “Your religion,” he says, “your religion? Go to your shop, take down your shutters on a Sunday and see whether you can’t earn an honest living. Go on with your bricks. What business have you to talk about feasting before God in the wilderness? It is all romance.” And, you know, we hear worldlings say to us poor Christians that we don’t know what real life is. Of course we don’t—“real life”—well, when putrid carrion is the representation of real life, we may be pretty content with our ignorance!

Vain show! Vain disquietude! Vain question! Such was the Psalmist’s picture. That is the real life of the world, but we want a better life than that—a life more true and real, too, though the world despises it. Brick-making, brick-making, brick-making—that is Pharaoh’s joy and so it is with the sinner before he is renewed—money-making, dirt-making, heaping together to himself bricks that he may build for himself a fortune. Oh, don’t these fellows turn round and look with supreme contempt on us poor fellows—that we should think that eternity is better than time? That God is better than the devil? That holiness is better than sin? That the pleasures of Heaven are better than the poor pomps and vanities of this world?

Such simpletons as these will look down and say, “Poor fellow he does not know better.” They, indeed, are the rational men, the intellectual men—they are, in fact, the king Pharaoh. Pharaoh gives a laugh, a hoarse laugh, “Let My people go free?” Yes, but there will come a blow in your face that will make you laugh after another fashion by-and-by. You with others shall join in weeping and crying and tears and you with all your chivalry shall sink into the waters and shall you go down and the Red Sea shall swallow you up.

Moses goes to Pharaoh yet again and says, “Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me.” And at one time the haughty monarch says, he will let some go, at another time he will let them all go, but they are to leave their cattle behind. He will hold on to something. If he cannot have the whole he will have a part. It is wonderful how content the devil is if he can but nibble at a man’s heart. It does not matter about swallowing it whole—only let him nibble and he will be content. Let him but bite at the ends and be satisfied, for he is wise enough to know that if a serpent has but an inch of bare flesh to sting, he will poison the whole.

When Satan cannot get a great sin in he will let a little one in, like the thief who goes and finds shutters all coated with iron and bolted inside. At last he sees a little window in a chamber. He cannot get in, so he puts a little boy in, that he may go round and open the back door. So the devil has always his little sins to carry about with him to go and open back doors for him. And we let one in and say, "O, it is only a little one." Yes, but how that little one becomes the ruin of the entire man! Let us take care that the devil does not get a foothold, for if he gets but a foothold, he will get his whole body in and we shall be overcome.

Observe now, as Pharaoh would not give up the people, the sentence had to be repeated again and again and again, until at last God would bear it no longer, but brought down on him one tremendous blow. He smote the first-born of Egypt, the chief of all their strength and then He led forth His people like sheep by the hands of Moses and Aaron. In like manner, Friends and Brethren, this sentence of God has to be repeated many times in your experience, and mine. "Thus, says the Lord, let My people go free," and if you are not quite free, don't despair—God will repeat that sentence till at the last you shall be brought forth with silver and gold and there shall not be a feeble thought in all your soul.

You shall go forth with gladness—and with joy you shall enter into Canaan at last—up yonder where His Throne is glittering now in glorious light that angel eyes cannot bear. It is no wonder then, if it is to be repeated in our experience, that the Church of Christ must keep on repeating it in the world as God's message. Go, missionary, to India and say to Juggernaut and Kalee and Brahma and Vishnu, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go free." Go, you servants of the Lord, to China. Speak to the followers of Confucius and say, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go free." Go to the gates of the harlot city, even Rome and say, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me."

Think not though you die that your message will die with you. It is for Moses to say, "Thus says the Lord," and if he is driven from Pharaoh's sight the, "Thus says the Lord" still stands, though His servant fall. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, the whole Church must keep on throughout every age, crying, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go." We must continue to send our missionaries to lands like Madagascar, where the people of God are speared by hundreds and they must say to the haughty queen, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go." We must still send our Livingstones and our Moffats through all the wastes of Africa—

*"Through her fertile plains,
Where superstition reigns,
And binds the man in chains."*

And they must continue to say, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go."

Our Brethren must continue in the theatres and in the streets—in the highway and in the byway—saying, not in so many words, but still in fact, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me." And it will be a happy time for the Church when every minister feels that he is sent of God—and when he speaks as Moses did. Conscious of Divine authority, he looks sin and evil and error in the face and says, "Thus says the Lord, let My people go." When we are galled to enter a protest against an error, we shall sometimes be disappointed, because people don't see with us. Very well, very well, but when we have entered the protest we have done all. It was not meant to convince the Egyptians, but it was meant to constrain them—"Thus says the Lord, let My people go."

When there is a pretended Church of Christ, wherein error is preached, the Christian minister is bound faithfully to point out the error, confident that God's people will hear the warning voice and come out of Babylon. And as for the rest, they must remain where they are, for the mandate is to those whom it concerns—those in whom the Lord has an interest, the people who are His "portion" to go.

IV. Now, my last point, which must, as time and strength alike fail me, be brief—is this—THE OMNIPOTENCE OF THE COMMAND—"Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me."

"They shall never go," says Pharaoh. And his counselors say, "Yes, so be it, O king, they shall never depart out of this land." "By my father I swear," says the king of Egypt, "they shall be my slaves forever." "Back, back, you sons of the Hebrew shepherds, to your bricks and to your clay. Dare not to stand before Pharaoh's son and dictate to him. I swear by my father's bones again, you shall never go free."

Behold the rivers of Egypt run with blood! There is no fish in Egypt to be found through all the land and the Egyptians loathe to drink the waters of the river which they once worshipped, for it is full of blood. Now, come these two troublesome men in once more before Pharaoh—"Thus says the Lord God of the Hebrews let My people go, that

they may serve Me.” The king pauses a minute—his haughty soul relents. “You may serve God in the land,” says he, “but you shall not go out of the land. You may have a three days rest and serve your God.”

“No,” says Moses, “we cannot serve God in the land of your abominations and we should be an abomination to you as well as you to us. We must go.” Then the king tells them to be gone. They may go. He holds a counsel of wise men and they determine while they have breath left, they will never lose their claim upon those slaves who have so long served them and built such mighty cities. Yes, Pharaoh, but God is mightier than you. Open wide your gates you hundred-gated Thebes and send out your myriads of armed men swarming like locusts on a summer’s day. Come up, you mighty hosts of Zoar and you troop of populous No. Come up like swarms of frogs from old Nile. Come up against them and they shall break you—you shall be as potter’s vessels before them—for His redeemed must and shall go free!

And now I stand tonight to many among yourselves in the position of Amram’s son of old and it is my business and that of all God’s minister’s, to cry to Satan, to sin, to Rome, to Mohammedanism, to idolatry, to every evil—“Thus says the Lord, let My people go, that they may serve Me.” We hear the hoarse laughter. We hearken to the cry of the kings of the earth as they stand up and the rulers take counsel together. Do you see the priests with their treacherous devices—the sons of Belial now plotting in the dark to destroy us? Yes, but you may go on to be broken in pieces. You may go onward like the sea, but the Rock stands fast and shall break you into spray and send you back and you shall know that there is a God who is greater than you all.

Just as all Israel came forth despite of the determination of Pharaoh, so shall all God’s elect be saved, despite the power of Satan, of evil men, of false priests and false prophets. “Thus says the Lord, let My people go,” and go they must and shall.

And now, my dear Hearers, have you ever heard the voice of God speaking in your hearts, “Let My people go”? There are some here tonight that have never been made free—no, what is worse than that—they *think* they are free while they are the slaves to sin. You think you are free, but this is the worst part of your slavery. You dream that you are saved while you are standing over the mouth of Hell—and this is the worst part of your danger—that you think you are saved. Ah poor souls, poor souls! Your gilded slaveries going to the ale-house and the tavern, to the seat of the scornful, drinking down sin as the ox drinks down water, the thought starts within me—“there will be an end to all that and what will they do when the end shall come?”

When your hairs grow gray and your bodies become feeble. When you are drawing near the grave, what will your worldly pleasures do for you then? There was a young man died not long ago of extreme old age. I am not contradicting myself—that young man died of extreme old age some time ago at the age of twenty-six. He had sinned himself into the grave and into Hell by a course of debauchery and sin. Perhaps you are not such a fast sinner as that, but you are taking in the poison by slower degrees. But what will you do when the poison begins to work—when sin begins to pull out the core of your spirit, when the froth has been swept from your cup and you begin to taste its dregs.

Yes, when you are dying you will want to set that cup down, but there will be an evil hand that will thrust it to your mouth and say, “No, no, you have drunk the sweets and now you must drink the bitters.” Though there is damnation in every drop, yet to the dregs must you drink that cup which you have begun to drink now. Oh, for God’s sake, dash it to the ground—have done with it. “Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts.” There is hope yet. There is mercy yet. Sin is a Pharaoh, but God is Jehovah. Your sins are hard—you cannot overcome them of yourself—but God can. He can overcome them for you.

There is hope yet. Let that hope arouse you to action. Say to your soul tonight, “I am not in Hell, though I might have been. I am still on praying ground and pleading terms and now, God helping me, I will begin to think.” And when you begin to think you will begin to be blessed. There are more souls lost by thoughtlessness than anything else. If you want to go to Heaven there are a great many things to think of. If you want to go to Hell it is the easiest thing in the world. You can go and swear and drink as you like. It is only a little trifling matter of neglect to destroy your soul. “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”

Well, then, if you begin to think, let me propose to you just this. The way of salvation is mapped out before your eyes tonight. He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. To believe is to trust. Trust Him who hangs upon the tree and you are saved. Just as you are—guilty, helpless, weak and ruined—give up your soul to Christ. Ah, while I am thus advising you, I think I hear the voice behind me saying, “My servant, you are speaking according to My will and pleasure, for I, too, am saying in the heart of your hearers, ‘Go free.’ I, too, am saying to their enemies, ‘Thus says the Lord, let My people go.’”

Be it so, good Lord, and may my voice be but as Your voice. Rise, you slaves of Satan and be free. Break your bonds asunder and be delivered. Jesus comes to rescue you. His arm is strong and His heart is tender. Trust Him and be free. Oh, may God grant you grace that you may be free now and find Him, whom to find is to find everlasting life! Amen.

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