

“TAKE AWAY THE FROGS”

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A SERMON

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON

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*“Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said,
Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me,
and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD.”
Exodus 8:8*

When it pleases God by His judgments to humble men, He is never at a loss for means—He can use lions or lice, famines or flies. In the armory of God there are weapons of every kind, from the stars in their courses down to caterpillars in their hosts. The dust of the earth, out of which man is formed, will at God’s command forget its kinship and overwhelm a caravan, while the waters will forsake their channels, invade the tops of the mountains and drown a rebellious race.

When the Lord contends against proud men, He has but to lift His finger and countless legions throng around Him, all loyal to their Lord and valiant for His name. Know you not that the beasts of the field are His servants and the stones of the street obey His bidding? Every wave worships Him and every wind knows its Lord. If you would war against Him, it would be well for you to know what His forces are—consider the battle—do no more.

In the case before us JEHOVAH has to deal with Pharaoh and He humbles him by frogs. Strange! Singular! One would have thought that such despicable means would never have been used. The Lord began with the proud monarch by turning the waters into blood, but it may be that Pharaoh said in his heart, “What a great man I am! If JEHOVAH comes forth against me, He must needs work a terrible miracle in order to conquer.” He goes his way to his house unhumbled.

This time the Lord will deal with him in another style. I grant you that the conflict was still sublime in the truest sense, but in Pharaoh’s estimation the croaking frogs which came up from all the banks of the Nile were a mean sort of adversaries. From every reservoir and marsh, they marched up in countless hordes, entering into his chamber and coming upon his bed and his kneading trough. He could neither sleep nor eat, nor walk abroad, without encountering the loathsome reptiles. The Lord seemed by this to say, “Who are you that I should do great things to conquer you? I will even vanquish you by frogs.”

There was a suitableness in God’s choosing the frogs to humble Egypt’s king, because frogs were worshipped by that nation as emblems of the Deity. Images of a certain frog-headed goddess were placed in the catacombs and frogs themselves were preserved with sacred honors. These be thy gods, O Egypt! You shall have enough of them! Pharaoh himself shall pay a new reverence to these reptiles. As the true God is everywhere present around us—in our bedchambers and in our streets, so shall Pharaoh find every place filled with what he chooses to call divine. Is it not a just way of dealing with Him?

The Lord has sure ways of reaching the hearts of proud men, and if He does not use frogs today, He can use other means, for He has servants everywhere prepared for each emergency. He knows how to reach the rich and make them sit by the wayside, like Belisarius, begging for an obolus. The strong and healthy man, He can soon place among the invalids and make him cry like a sick girl, “Give me to drink, Titinius.”

Your children are about you today—your joy and pride—but He can make you childless in an hour. His arrows can pierce through a sevenfold harness of steel—no man is so encompassed as to be beyond the reach of the Almighty. Let me speak of Pharaoh by way of observation and I will begin by remarking that—

I. IN SORE TROUBLE, THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD ARE GREATLY VALUED.

“Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron.” The frogs had taught him good manners and he longs to see the ministers of the Lord. How is this? *The man was somewhat brought to his senses*—and when this happens, men begin to value those whom they aforesaid despised. Listen to this story.

There came a man of God to Bethel, where king Jeroboam was setting up the golden calves, and he began to cry against the altar. Then Jeroboam stretched forth his hand and cried, “Lay hold upon him.” In a moment the rebel’s right arm withered, and hung by his side, useless. Then he turned to the man of God, whom he was about to arrest, and said, “Intreat the LORD for me.” Thus have persecutors been forced to crouch at the feet of those whom they would have destroyed.

Another story will set forth the same truth. King Saul had been forsaken of God and the Philistines pressed hard upon him. In his extremity he resorted to a woman who professed to deal with the spirits of the dead. With whom would he speak? He cries, “Bring me up Samuel.” Samuel was the man who had most sternly rebuked him. One would have thought that Samuel was the last person he would wish to see, but in his need he asks for no one else but Samuel.

When ungodly men get into straits, how they wish they could consult with one who has gone home, against whom they pointed many a jest. They never say, “Bring me up the jolly fellow who filled and quaffed the bowl with me.” In their tribulation they think not of such. They never cry, “Bring me up the wanton with whom I sported in sin, that I may again enjoy her company.”

Nay, in their distress they desire other advisers—they would rather cry, “Bring me up my holy mother! Oh, for a sight of her dear, loving face as I saw it on her dying bed, when she urged me to follow her to heaven. Bring me up that old friend whom I ridiculed when I turned aside from the ways of God! Oh, for an hour with the man of God, whom once I scorned!” Do you not see that it is the old tale repeated—Pharaoh, when his troubles are multiplied, calls for Moses and Aaron!

This is also to be accounted for by the fact that *God puts a mysterious honor upon His faithful servants*. The painters place halos about the heads of the Bible saints—there were no such crowns of light upon them literally, and yet within the legend there slumbers a great truth. He who leads an upright, holy, gracious life has a power about him which impresses the beholder—his presence in an ungodly company has an influence on wicked men like that of Zephon, of whom Milton sings in *Paradise Lost*. To the great fallen angel his presence was a rebuke.

God hedges the good with a dignity which men feel even when they are not conscious of it. It was so in the case before us. Moses was made to be as a god unto Pharaoh. Pharaoh had said, “Get you unto your burdens,” addressing Moses and Aaron as if they were slaves. But now he sends for them and entreats their prayers on his behalf.

This was like the case of Joseph. His brethren hated him and sold him for a slave—but how different the scene when they bowed before him and trembled as he said, “I am Joseph!” The archers had shot at him and wounded him, but still his bow abode in strength.

Remember, too, Jeremiah, whom Zedekiah, the king, treated with great indignity till the Babylonians had surrounded the city—and then he sent to him and said, “Enquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us.” Our Lord describes an instance more remarkable still. It belongs to the next world, but the same principles rule in all worlds. A poor saint was laid at a rich man’s door, full of sores. He begged for the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table, “moreover, the dogs came, and licked his sores.” The rich man, clothed with purple and fine linen, took small note of this saint of God.

But what a change happened on a day when the beggar died and was carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom—and the rich man also died and was buried! In hell the rich man lifted up his eyes, and Lazarus had honor before him, for he begged that Lazarus might be sent to cool his burning tongue with the tip of his finger dipped in water. They had changed places, for God had crowned His poor servant with glory and honor. The halo was around the head of Lazarus most assuredly.

A light shone upon the face of Moses and a glory settled upon the brow of Jesus. “Such honor have all the saints” in a spiritual sense—and the proudest of men shall be made to know it.

Once more, let me note that this honor is doubtless set on saints that they may be of service to ungodly men. God intends, by their means, to bless the penitent. When it was wheat harvest and a thunderstorm came because Israel desired a king, you remember that, while peal on peal the dread artillery of God was heard, the people trembled and besought Samuel the prophet to pray for them, and he said, “God forbid that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you.” Holy Samuel’s prayer was heard for them.

Much later an earthquake shook the foundations of a prison and loosed the bands of the prisoners. Then the jailer woke up in his fright and feared that his prisoners had escaped, and that he should have to die for it—but there stood Paul, the man whom he had thrust into the inner prison, and whose feet he had made fast in the stocks, and the jailer, trembling before him, cried out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The answer was given. He was directed to believe and to be baptized—and the jailer and his house were saved.

If God’s servants are treated with scorn and harshness, they need not fear, for they are put just where they are that unconverted men may be blessed by their agency. Like Moses to Pharaoh, saints will yet have to say, “Glory over me; I will pray for thee, or teach thee, so that I may but lead you to the Savior.”

It is clear that in times of trouble godly men and women are at a premium. Secondly, with ungodly men—

II. IN TIMES OF SORE TRIAL PRAYER ALSO BEGINS TO BE VALUABLE.

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, “Intreat the LORD.” Pharaoh begs an interest in the prayers of good men—this is a fine change since the day wherein he said, “Who is JEHOVAH that I should obey his voice?”

When men are sick and near to die, they send for us to pray with them. That old philosopher, Bion, showed much wisdom in his biting sarcasm. He was on shipboard and found that among the passengers there were certain foul-mouthed desperadoes. While they were venting all manner of abominations, a storm came on, and they began to pray. Then Bion cried out to them, “Hold your tongues, for if the gods only know that *you* are here, they will sink the vessel. Be quiet, lest your prayers should be our ruin.” One’s thoughts have taken somewhat of that form when we have seen men fulfilling the old adage—

“When the devil was sick, the devil a saint would be.”

Such prayers are too often an insult to the holiness of God.

Why is it that reprobates take to praying when they are in deep trouble? Frequently *superstition moves them*. They regard a prayer as a spell or magical charm. So in their folly they send for a minister and cry, “Intreat the LORD for me.” Among many Londoners, so dense is this superstition that after a poor soul is dead, I have heard relatives say, “We sent for the minister and *he came and prayed to him*.” Mark that word, “prayed *to him*”. Does not this discover the ignorance and superstition of the people? They do not know the design and object of prayer. This superstition needs to be spoken of with great truthfulness and fidelity.

In certain instances, the man’s hope in prayer is the result of *a condemning faith*. There is a justifying faith and a condemning faith. “What?” say you. “Does faith ever *condemn* men?” Yes, when men have faith enough to know that there is a God who sends judgments upon them, that nothing can remove those judgments but the hand that sent them, and that prayer moves that hand.

There are persons who yet never pray themselves, but eagerly cry to friends, “Intreat the LORD for me.” That is a measure of faith which goes to increase a man’s condemnation, since he ought to know that if what he believes is true, then the proper thing is to pray himself. It would have been a wonderfully good sign if Pharaoh had said, “Join with me, O Moses and Aaron, while I pray unto JEHOVAH that He may take the frogs from me.” But no, he had only a condemning faith which contented itself with other men’s prayers.

In many instances this desire for prayer is *one of the movements of the Spirit upon the heart of man*. When a poor, afflicted man, in the depth of poverty, struck with consumption or laid aside by some other deadly disease, desires that a minister would come and pray with him, we will never treat such a wish with neglect. While it is our duty to expose the superstition which often lurks beneath the wish, we also hope that some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel may dwell in it. It is, perhaps, the prodigal saying, “I will arise, and go unto my Father, and I will inquire the way home.” I hope it is so.

Take warning, you that do not pray—you will yet need to pray. There will come a time to the most of you when you will not be able to bear yourselves without crying unto God. May God, in His infinite mercy lead you to begin at once. For when it can be said of you, “Behold, he prayeth,” it will be the best of news. Beginning to pray is the turning point of life. Why not at once set a high price upon that which in times of trouble you will seek for with tears?

Our third observation is this—

III. IN SORE TROUBLE THE PRAYER IS OFTEN A WRONG ONE.

The petitions which men offer when they are in distress are often wrong prayers. Pharaoh said, “Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me.”

A fatal flaw is manifest in that prayer. It contains no *confession of sin*. He says not, “I have rebelled against the Lord. Entreat that I may find forgiveness!” Nothing of the kind—he loves sin as much as ever. A prayer without penitence is a prayer without acceptance. If no tear has fallen upon it, it is withered. You must come to God as a sinner through a Savior, but by no other way. He that comes to God like the Pharisee, with, “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are,” never draws near to God at all. But he that cries, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” has come to God by the way which God has Himself appointed. There must be a confession of sin before God or our prayer is faulty.

Pharaoh’s prayer *dealt only with the punishment*. “Take away the frogs. Take away the frogs. Take away the frogs.” That is his one cry. So we hear the sick exclaim, “Oh, sir, pray that I may get well.” The drunkard begs that he may be helped out of his poverty. The impenitent sinner cries, “Pray that my child may not be taken from me.”

It is not wrong to pray, “Take away the frogs.” We should all have prayed so if we had been surrounded by such pests. The evil is that this was the whole of his prayer. He said not, “Take away my sins,” but “Take away the frogs.” He did not cry, “Lord, take away my heart of stone,” but only, “Take away the frogs.”

Perhaps I am addressing those who are in poverty, sickness, or distress, and all they are crying about is, “Lord, take away the frogs. Deliver me from my poverty, my trouble, my hunger, my disgrace, my punishment.” Now, if you have brought yourself into evil by a vicious life, your prayer must not be, “Take away the disease and the poverty,” but “Take away the sin.”

The drunkard’s prayer must not be, “Lord, take away the result of my intoxication,” but “Remove from me the poisoned cup.” Lay the axe at the root and cry, “Lord, take the sin away.” Alas! most of the prayers of men in trouble are only like Pharaoh’s selfish prayer, “Take away the frogs.” The Lord did hear his petition, but nothing came of it. The frogs were gone, but flies came immediately after, and all sorts of plagues followed in rapid succession—and his heart was hardened still.

When ungodly men are under a sense of divine wrath they turn not to God aright—their *prayer is devoid of spiritual requests*. When Cain had murdered his brother, did he express a regret? No. He only murmured, “My punishment is greater than I can bear.” Esau sold his birthright. Did he repent of the sin of having been a profane person, and seek pardon carefully? Not he, but he sought carefully with tears to get back his birthright, and he found no place for repentance in his father Isaac. The blessing had gone to Jacob and on Jacob it must remain.

Another telling case is that of Simon Magus. When Peter told him that he was in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, he replied, “Pray ye to the Lord for me that none of these things which you have spoken come upon me”—that was all he cared about. He expressed no desire to be delivered from his evil way, but only to be screened from the consequences of it. Every knave cries out

against punishment—but he is attaining to honesty who entreats to be freed from his pilfering habits. Our last remark is that—

IV. THE SINNER IN HIS SORE TROUBLES IS VERY APT TO MAKE GREAT PROMISES.

Pharaoh cried, “Take away the frogs and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD.” In this way one of you talked when you were down with fever, or when you were likely to lose your situation through your folly. You said, “Please God, I escape this once, I will be a very different man.”

Such promises are *generally boastful*. Notice here the proud language of Pharaoh. “I will let the people go.” He does not long talk in this fashion, but now he is a great king and he gives his royal word, “I will let the people go.”

Some folks are very big when they promise God, “I will do this and I will do that.” But you cannot, my friend. You reply that you are going to have a new heart and a right spirit. Are you looking to create them yourself? You talk as if you were. I think you said that you were going to “turn over a new leaf,” but a new leaf in a bad book may be worse than the old leaf.

But you are going to be entirely new, are you? Are you to do all this yourself? You are greatly mistaken—true conversion does not begin by talking of what “I” will do. It begins in casting ourselves upon the Lord and begging Him to work all our works in us.

But this man’s promises were *all a lie*. I daresay that, for the moment, he meant them—but he did not keep his word, for he did not let the people go. “When Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.”

Has not that been the case with many others? You promised “faithfully,” as you said. You pledged yourself that it would be so, but it is not so. Stand you still awhile and hear a message from the Lord—“Thou hast not lied unto men, but thou hast lied unto God.” Let that sentence pierce the innermost bowels of your conscience. “Thou hast lied unto God.” Remember Ananias and Sapphira, and what followed upon their falsehood, and be astonished that it has not followed upon yours, for you made the promise before witnesses in the presence of the Lord Himself.

Mark well that, in all this, Pharaoh *increased his guilt*. His vows heaped up his transgressions. He forgot his promises, but God did not. They were laid by in store against him, and the blows of God upon him fell heavier and heavier, until at last JEHOVAH drowned him and his chosen captains in the Red Sea.

Oh, sirs, if God comes to deal with you in this fashion, what will become of you? Your promises are filed in heaven to be witnesses against you. God reaches out these promises of yours at this hour and holds them up before your eyes. And what does your conscience say? If you had promised a kind friend and broken your word, it would have been base enough, but you have been ungrateful to your God, in whose hands your breath is, and whose are all your ways. Let a sense of guilt overwhelm you, and in the name of Jesus Christ, ask mercy of your God.

I will tell you how God deals with His own children and then leave you to infer how He will deal with you if you are not His children. A certain man, to all appearance, feared God, ay, and did so with a sincere heart. He was once an earnest Christian, a member of the church, and a worker in the service, faithful to his light, and fervent in spirit—but he grew cold.

He had a farm and it occupied nearly all his time. He was filled with an intense desire to grow rich and therefore he devoted his attention to his business till he grew colder and colder in divine things—and the means of grace on the weekdays were forsaken. Work for God was dropped, communion with God ceased, and the religious professor became to all appearance an utter worldling.

But yet he was a child of God and this is how his Father restored him. He took from him the wife of his youth, to whom his heart was knit. But this made him more worldly than before, because his wife had been a great help to him in the farm, and now she was gone he must stick to it more than ever. Nothing came of the first chastisement except increased sin.

He had only one son, for whom he was saving up his money and working his business—and he saw that son cut down with consumption, like his mother. This also made him still more worldly. It ought to have brought him to his knees, but it did not. He carried on the practice of prayer, but with little heart. He said, “Now, my dear son, who was such a comfort to me, has gone, I can hardly get out on Sundays at all. I *must* look after the cows and attend to the stock.” So he sank deeper in the mire.

Then the Lord began to deal with him in another way. He had a bad season and lost money farming, careful as he was. Next year was worse, and the cattle plague emptied his stalls. He was brought down to poverty. He could scarcely keep the farm, for the rent ran back. Still he did not yield. He had tender moments now and then, but he was usually hard, for he felt that God was dealing severely with him. He felt angry against God and stuck to his business more than ever, while the things of God were forgotten.

Then the Lord took His erring child more closely in hand than before, and sent him an incurable disease in his body. The worldly farmer lay upon a sick bed fretting about his business—he did not turn to the Lord even then. Last of all, his house took fire, and as the barn and the ricks and the house were all ablaze, and all that he had was going, they carried him out into the open air upon the bed from which he could not stir, and he was heard to say, “Blessed be the Lord! Blessed be the Lord! I am cured at last.”

But dear friends, nothing would cure him till everything was gone from him. Was not that a pity? He was saved so as by fire. He would be “as the horse and the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,” and therefore he had to suffer for it. I pray you do not copy him. People of God, do not make rods for your own backs in that way. Do not drive your heavenly Father to hard measures.

But oh, you ungodly, *if He will deal thus with His children, how will He deal with you who are not His children?* If He means to bless you, He will not let you go unpunished, but He will smite you with heavy strokes. I remember one who used to bless God for a broken leg—he said that he never ran in the ways of God until he was lame.

I believe that some parents never loved the heavenly Father till their dear infant child was taken away. The shepherd tried to get the mother sheep into the fold, but she would not come, so he took up her lamb and carried it away in his arms, and then the mother followed him. He has done that to some of you. You would never have come to Christ if dear little Johnny had not gone home to Jesus. You lost one and another for that same purpose—have you not had strokes enough?

You have been smitten till your “whole head is sick and your whole heart faint.” Will you not turn unto your God without more ado? His blows are sent in mercy. It is better far that you should have a hell here than hell hereafter. It were better for you to live a lifelong agony than to be cast into hell forever.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. He died for sinners—died for aggravating, guilty, willful sinners, and if they look to Him, they shall at once be forgiven. I cannot give the look of faith for you, or I would gladly do so, but I beseech you to look and live! May God the Holy Ghost lead you to do so, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON

EXODUS 3:1-14; ROMANS 9:1-25

This chapter tells of the appearance of God to Moses in the wilderness. Has He removed from us, brethren? He used to be seen by godly souls by mount and stream and sea—and even bushes were alive and blazing with the indwelt Godhead. Oh, that He would reveal Himself to us tonight! I am going to read this chapter with this longing in my heart. I pray that the same longing may be in the heart of every child of God—“Show me Your face: show me Your face, my God, tonight.”

Exodus Chapter 3, Verse 1. *Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.*

There is nothing dishonorable about common trade and matters of business at all. Here is a shepherd who keeps his flock—and God keeps him and reveals Himself to him. When God wants a man to lead His people, He seeks for him not among idlers, but busy, active men, and God was pleased to show Himself more to Moses as a shepherd, than He had ever shown Himself to him as a prince in Egypt. I find no glowing deity in the halls of Pharaoh, but I find the consuming fire manifested in the lone wastes of the desert of Sinai.

2. *And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.*

Well might it say, “Behold.” I have seen a bush set alight by a match. It blazed in a moment, but it was gone in another moment. It burned up fiercely and hastily. But God was pleased to make a poor consumable bush to be the unharmed place of His abiding. He dwells today in the human person of the Savior. The Godhead is in Christ.

He dwells today in the church, which might well enough be consumed by His presence—but it is not consumed. He can come and dwell in my heart and in yours tonight, and yet we shall bear the presence of deity to the hour of our death. He has a way of so throwing Himself into our feebleness that it becomes strong, and that which might otherwise have been destroyed, is even preserved by His presence. The bush burned with fire and was not consumed.

3-4. *And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.*

Oh, that personal call, that voice from God to the heart! How much we need it. Do you not remember when first the Lord called some of you? Then He says to you tonight, “I have called you by My name. You are Mine.” Own that sweet impeachment, confess that you are His, and say to Him, “For suffering or for service, here am I ready, aye ready, even as Moses was. Here am I.”

5. *And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.*

Stand as a servant stands in the presence of his master in the East. He is not expected to wear in the court of his master the shoes which have trodden in the mire of the world. Now, put off your cares, put off your carnal thoughts, put off yourself, put off your sin. When God is near, solemnity and deep reverence become us. “The place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”

6. *Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.*

You need not hide your face if God shall appear to you, though I am sure you will do it. You may come boldly. It is your Father’s face. It is the face of one who is reconciled to you in Christ. Therefore open your eyes and look—and may the Lord show Himself to you!

7. *And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;*

Now, you troubled ones, are not these verses real music to you? God has seen your afflictions—there are God’s eyes. God has heard your cry—there are God’s ears. “I know their sorrows.” There is God’s mighty understanding. He is thinking about you. He knows all that which tries you tonight.

10. *“Come now therefore,”—*

This was a very extraordinary thing to follow after all that. God has seen the affliction of His people. What then? He says, “I am come down to deliver them”? What then? Why, the next thing is that He is going to use this trembling man who stands awe-struck with his shoes from off his foot in the presence of the still burning bush. “Come now, therefore,”—

10. *And I will send you unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.*

You have been praying for a blessing. God is going to give it through you. You have been looking east and west and north and south for some deliverer that shall win souls and stir up the church. God calls *you* to do it. He invites you to undertake this gigantic service, and I think that I see the color come into your face, and then fly away again. You are ready to faint at the thought of such a charge laid upon you.

11. *And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?*

Now, catch this—

12. *And he said, Certainly I will be with thee;*

What more does Moses want? He said, “Who am I?” This showed his weakness. God said, “Never mind who you are. Certainly I will be with you.” Here was strength enough for him.

12. *And this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.*

And he did. You know how Sinai trembled while God made it His throne, and how Moses must have been strengthened when he did exceeding fear and quake before God when he recollected that this same God had appeared to him when he was alone in the desert, and had promised that they should worship Him there.

14. *God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM:*

That is His name—The Infinite, Eternal, and Unchangeable God.

14. *And he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*

Oh, what a glorious commission—to receive it direct from the self-existent God, who is the same forever and ever, and only has immortality. Speak to us tonight, you great I AM, JAH, JEHOVAH, God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. Speak to this company in this house of prayer tonight, because of Jesus, Joshua, Jehoshua, JEHOVAH, Jesus. I have tried to show you how that name of Jesus has the name “JEHOVAH” hidden away in it. Because of Him, draw near to us, O Lord.

ROMANS 9:1-25

The Jews thought that God must certainly save them. They thought they had a birth claim. Were they not the children of Abraham? Surely they had some right to it. This chapter battles the question of right. No man has any right to the grace of God. The terms are inconsistent. There can be no right to that which is free favor. We are all condemned criminals, and if pardoned, it must be as the result of pure mercy, absolute mercy, for desert there is none in any one of us.

Verses 1-2. *I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost. That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.*

He never thought about his unbelief, brethren, without the deepest imaginable regret. How far is this from the spirit of those who look upon the ungodly without tears—settle it down as a matter that cannot be altered and take it as a question of hard fate—but are never troubled about it. Not so the apostle. He had great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart.

3. *For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:*

He had just that self-sacrificing spirit of Moses, that he would lose anything and everything if they might but be saved. And this is the spirit which ought to actuate every church of Christ. The church that is always caring for her own maintenance is no church. The church that would be willing to be destroyed if it could save the sons of men—which feels as if, whatever her shame or sorrow, it would be nothing if she could but save sinners—that church is like the Lord, of whom we read, “He saved others: himself he

could not save.” Oh! blessed heartbreak over sinful men, which makes men willing to lose everything if they might but bless and win men to Christ! “My kinsmen,” says he, “according to the flesh.”

4-5. *Who are Israelites; to whom pertains the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.*

What dignity has God put upon ancient Israel! How favored far beyond any of us in these particular! They had the light, when the rest of the world was in darkness. Theirs was the law and theirs the covenant promises. Above all, of them it was that Christ came. Our Savior was a Jew. Forever must that race be had in respectful honor and we must pray for their salvation.

6-7. *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel. Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called.*

Now, the apostle is getting to his point. You Jews claim to have the mercy of God because you are of the seed of Abraham, but there is nothing in that, says he, for God made a distinct choice of Isaac to the rejection of Ishmael, as he did afterwards of Jacob, and then Esau was left out.

8. *That is, thy flesh which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.*

Now Isaac was not the child of Abraham’s flesh. He was born according to promise, when his mother was past age and his father well stricken in years. His was the birth according to the promise and that is the way the line of grace runs—not according to the flesh, but according to the promise. If, then, all my hope of heaven lies upon my being a child of godly parents, it is an Israelite hope, and good for nothing. If my hope of heaven lies upon my having been born according to the promise of God—born of His grace and of His power—in that line the covenant stands. God has determined that it shall be so.

9-13. *For this is the word of promise. At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*

So, then, there is no claim of birth, for he that had the claim of birth, even Esau, is passed by. There is, indeed, no claim at all, for God gives freely according to His own will, blessing the sons of men.

14. *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.*

There is no unrighteousness in anything that He does. And in the winding up of all affairs, it shall be seen that God was righteous as well as gracious.

15-16. *For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

That is where it must begin. When men are condemned, what can they appeal to, but the mercy of God? Where is the hope of men, but in the sovereignty of the Most High?

17-24. *For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had before prepared unto glory. Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.*

There was the sting of it. They could not endure that God should in His divine sovereignty save Gentiles as well as Jews. But He has done so and He has sent the Gospel to us, while they, having refused it, are left in the darkness which they chose.

25. *As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people: and her beloved, which was not beloved.*

Oh! what a splendid verse is this! Let some here who have been far from God until now, and never had a gracious thought, nevertheless, hear what He has done and will do again. “I will call them my people that were not my people, and her beloved which was not beloved.”

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.