

ISRAEL'S CRY AND GOD'S ANSWER

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A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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*“And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died:
 and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried,
 and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.*

*And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.
 And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them...*

*Now therefore behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come unto me:
 and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.*

*Come now, therefore and I will send thee unto Pharaoh,
 that thou may bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.”*
Exodus 2:23-25; 3:9-10

GOD had chosen the children of Israel, and He had determined to make of them a great nation and a peculiar people, to whom He could communicate the law and the testimony, that they might keep the heavenly lamp burning until Christ should come. Jacob and his family had gone down into Egypt, and for a long time they and their descendants were very happy there. The land of Goshen was very fruitful and the Israelites were greatly favored by the Egyptian king.

The mass of them, therefore had little thought of ever leaving that country—they resolved that they would settle there permanently. In fact, though God would not have it so, they became Egyptians as much as they could. They were a part of the Egyptian nation and they began to forget their separate origin, and in all probability, if they had been left to themselves, they would have been melted and absorbed into the Egyptian race, and lost their identity as God's special people. They were content to be in Egypt and they were quite willing to be Egyptianized.

To a large degree, they began to adopt the superstitions, idolatries, and iniquities of Egypt. And these things clung to them, in later years, to such a terrible extent that we can easily imagine that their heart must have turned aside very much towards the sins of Egypt. Yet, all the while, God was resolved to bring them out of that evil connection. They must be a separated people—they could not be Egyptians, nor yet live permanently like Egyptians, for JEHOVAH had chosen them for Himself, and He meant to make an abiding difference between Israel and Egypt.

Now see the parallel. God still has a people whom He has chosen to be His own in a very peculiar sense, but they are at present mixed up with the world. They are in the world and they are, at least in appearance, of the world. They are as fond of sin, and as much slaves to sin, as others are. They even love the world and the things of it, and many of them are quite happy where they are, and have no wish whatever to become a part of the separated people, set apart unto the Lord.

They would rather remain still in the world, but God will bring His redeemed out from the rest of mankind. He that bought them with blood will deliver them by power. Christ did not offer His atonement in vain, but “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.” God will yet call every one of His sons and daughters out of Egypt, even as He called His Firstborn, and He will bring His chosen out of the midst of the people among whom they are sojourning until the time appointed for their emancipation.

The first thing to be done with the Israelites was to cause them to be anxious to come out of Egypt, for it is not God's way to make men His servants, except so far as they willingly yield themselves to Him. He never violates the human will, though He constantly and effectually influences it. JEHOVAH wants not slaves to grace His throne and therefore God would not have the people dragged out of Egypt, or driven out in fetters, against their own glad consent. He must bring them out in such a way that they would be willing to come out, so that they would march forth with joy and delight, being thoroughly weary and sick of all Egypt, and therefore rejoicing to get away from it.

How was this to be done? It was accomplished by a new king coming up, who knew not Joseph and his eminent services, and this Pharaoh began to be jealous of the people, fearing that, some day, when Egypt was at war, Israel might turn and side with the Egyptians' enemies. He looked upon the people, therefore, as being a great danger and determined, if he could, to thin their ranks.

Hence, he issued the barbarous edict to slay all the male children, and to break their spirit effectually, he put them to hard labor in making bricks and erecting vast structures, so that the treasure cities of Egypt and peradventure some of her huge pyramids were built by the unpaid labors of Israelite slaves. The whip fell often and heavily upon their backs, for they were put under brutal taskmasters, who beat them most shamefully. They had no rest, they had to toil on and on and on, and scarcely had bread enough to eat to keep body and soul together.

At last, the yoke of bondage became altogether intolerable and then, as we have it in the first part of our text, "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them."

I want to use this subject in showing to any here, who are in soul-trouble, and do not understand why they have such sorrows and distress, that God is seeking to make them sick of the world, sick of sin, and therefore He is putting them into a condition of spiritual bondage so that they may be willing to come out of Egypt. Yes, that they may, by-and-by, with the utmost joy and gladness, leave the land of their captivity.

I. The first thing I have to speak about is THE CRY OF MISERY. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning."

Notice, first, that they began to sigh, and to cry, *because their time of prosperity had passed*. The land of Goshen might still be very fruitful, but their taskmasters devoured their substance. The country might be fair to look upon, but they had no time to enjoy the prospect. They were worked well-nigh to death and they could no longer get any rest in Egypt. All their prosperity and happiness had departed.

Am I addressing any who were once very well content and satisfied to live as ordinary worldlings do? And has everything changed with you? Is there now no joy in what was once such a pleasure to you? Does it seem very dull and dreary if you go where you used to find so much merriment? Those haunts which were once the scene of your greatest delight—are they now avoided by you because you cannot endure them? Do you feel that, now, you would gladly give up all those things which once you doted on?

I am thankful to hear that it is so, for when God is about to give a man a drink of the cup of salvation, He often first puts his taste right by washing out his mouth with a draught of bitters to take away the flavor of the accursed sweets of sin. I always regard it as a good and hopeful sign when a man becomes tired of the world, altogether weary of its sins, and says, "I find no pleasure in them." This happens to some while they are still young and their passions are strong—while their substance is undiminished, while their health is vigorous—while their friends are numerous. In the very middle of the day, their sun of enjoyment seems to go down. There is the honey, but it is no longer sweet. There is the wine cup, but it has no further fascination for them. Their joy has departed just when one would have

thought that it would have been most abiding with them. Do I speak to any in this condition? If so, I think that I bring a message from the Lord to them.

But next, the Israelites had not only lost their former prosperity, but *they began to feel that they were in bondage*. An Israelite in Egypt was at first a gentleman—in fact, a nobleman—for was he not related to the great prime minister, Joseph, who was second only to Pharaoh himself? Every Jew walked through Goshen as an aristocrat, for he was intimately connected with almost the highest in the realm. But now all that was changed with them and they felt that they were slaves—they were in bitter bondage—they must act and move at the will of others. There were hard laws and regulations made for them and cruel taskmasters to put those laws in action. They must rise, not when they chose, but when they were bidden, and they might get to their beds only when they were allowed to do so at the slave-driver's will. And they felt that they could not bear it any longer.

This was God's way of bringing them out of bondage, by first making them feel that they were in slavery. Have I any here who realize that they also are in slavery? Am I addressing a man who feels that he is in bondage to evil habits, which he cannot break off, although he wishes that he could and counts himself degraded by the fact that to will is present with him, but how to perform that which he would, he finds not because he is a slave? His passions rule him, his companions control him, he dares not do what his conscience tells him is right, for there is a fear of somebody or other that makes him into a coward, and so into a slave.

I am always glad when the fetters begin to gall. They who are content to be in bondage will never be freed, but when they feel that they cannot, and that they will not any longer endure their captivity, then has the hour of freedom struck. It is an untold blessing when the grace of God makes a man feel that what was once a pleasure has now become a servitude, and what he formerly found to be liberty has now become utter slavery to him.

The Israelites went further than that. They now felt that *their burdens were too heavy to be borne*. They had worked and toiled very hard, yet they had lived through the work, but now they were made to serve with rigor and their bondage was too heavy to be endured. They could not bear it, and it is just so spiritually. As long as a man can carry his sins, he will continue to carry them. And as long as a man can be content with the pleasures of this world, rest assured that he will revel in them.

It is a blessed thing when sin becomes an awful load, so that it crushes a man until he seems to sink utterly hopeless beneath it. It is well with him, for now he will welcome the Deliverer. He will be glad of pardon from Him who alone can forgive sins. He will rejoice to accept the word of absolution from the lips of the great High Priest and therefore, although it is often a sore sorrow, it is also a very great mercy to be made to feel the intolerable load and burden of sin. If I am speaking to any who are in such a condition, and I hope that I am, I congratulate them on what is yet to come to them.

Oh! well do I remember when I was such a slave—when, as I rose in the morning, I resolved to live better than I had previously done, yet, long before noon, I had made a worse mess of the day than ever. Then I thought that, perhaps, by increasing my prayers, or reading more of the Scriptures, I might get ease from my burden. But I found that the more I prayed and the more I read, the heavier my burden became. If I tried to forget my sorrow and so to shake off my gloom, I found that it would not forget me, and I had to cry unto the Lord, with David, “Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.”

I remember all that painful time so vividly that I can speak to some of you like an experienced friend who is well-acquainted with the dark and stony road on which you are walking. I know all about your painful pathway of grief and I long to help you to get over it quickly, and to come to a better and happier place. But this trial is God's way of fetching you out of Egypt. He is making the house of bondage too hot for you. He does not mean to let you stop there, so He is permitting all this to come upon you that you may cry unto Him to deliver you. He will bring you forth and you shall march out with joy and gladness, thankful and happy to do what now seems like a hardship and like self-denial to you.

These Israelites also felt one more thing, namely, their powerlessness to escape out of Pharaoh's hand and *they thought that there was nobody to help them*. When the young man of forty came forward, who had been educated in Pharaoh's court, and was reckoned to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and when, like a true hero, he threw in his lot with the despised people and smote one of their adversaries, he thought, perhaps, that it would be the signal for a general revolt and that the banner of Israel would wave defiantly in the face of Pharaoh, and that the people would boldly march to liberty. But they were too enslaved—they had been too long ground down and oppressed to act like that—they had lost all spirit and they did not hope to ever be free. They were a nation of hopeless slaves.

Am I speaking to any here who have lost all heart and hope—who have come to this place of worship with a sort of feeble wish for salvation, but with no expectation of receiving it? Are you so shut up in the prison of sin that you cannot come forth? Are your chains clanking in your ears? Do you feel yourself to be in the low dark dungeon out of which you will never come alive? It is to you I have to say that I bless God that you are where you are. Self-despair is a blessed preparation for faith in Jesus. The end of the creature is the beginning of the Creator. Your extremity is God's opportunity. Now that you are helpless and hopeless, God will come to your rescue.

You notice that, in my text, there is a gradation, and such a gradation as some of us have felt in spiritual things. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage." "Ah! miserable wretch! Woe is me! Alas! Alas!" That is how they sighed when they were at their labor. That is how they sighed when they went home at night, or lay down among the pots by the kiln side. And that is how they sighed when they woke up in the morning. When a man-child was born, they sighed as they looked at him, for they knew that he must be killed. "The children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage."

And then, as their misery grew, a sigh was not enough. "And they cried." Ah! I cannot imitate the expressive language of their grief. There were tears many and often, and there was the voice of grief which made itself audible in piercing cries. "O God, how long shall this bondage last?" They sat them down and begged for death—and sought it as if they were seeking for hidden treasure, for the life of a slave in Egypt was intolerable to them. And often, the sigh and the cry were merged into a groan, for we read, "God heard their groaning."

Is that how it has been going on with you, my brother? You used to sigh a good deal, sometimes. People noticed that you were very absent-minded and that you seemed to have some sorrow upon your spirit which you could not express. Now you have gone further than that, for you have begun to cry and in prayer to God, you pour out your very soul. Perhaps—and that is the worst plight of all—you feel that you cannot pray. You do not seem to be able to offer what you regard as a real prayer. You can only weep—ay, and perhaps you cannot even weep, and so you sigh and groan because you cannot pray. You are troubled because you cannot be troubled enough. And that is the worst kind of trouble that there is in the world. There are none so brokenhearted as those that are brokenhearted because they are not brokenhearted.

I have reminded you that the Israelites groaned and that "God heard their groaning." Ah! from the very bottom of their heart came up their groaning. It was no mere heaving of a sigh. It was no mere utterance of a cry. But all day long it was groaning, groaning, groaning—each breath seemed to be yet another sorrowful groan.

I hope that many of you will find the Savior before you know much about this terrible groaning, but it was not so with me. I became so full of groans that I understood what Job meant when he said, "My soul chooses strangling, and death rather than my life." It would be better never to live than to live forever under conviction of sin, for the arrows of God drink up the very fountains of our life, and pour fire into the blood, and make us feel as if a thousand deaths were preferable to living under an awful sense of God's wrath.

Perhaps I am speaking to some who, even when they fall asleep, are startled by dreams concerning the day of judgment, the sound of the archangel's trumpet, and the setting up of the great white throne.

And when they wake and go out to their business, they make strange blunders—and all day long they are like men walking as in a dream.

Still, dear friends, if that is your experience, I am heartily glad of it, for it is to me a sign of better days coming. Looking down upon Egypt, the angels must have been glad when they heard the sighs and cries and groans of Israel. “Why,” you ask, “how is that?” Because the angels would say to themselves, “God’s greatest difficulty is overcome. He wanted to incline these people to come out of Egypt, but now they long to come out, so they will be willing to accept the leader whom God will send to them, and with music and dancing they will come forth when Moses brings them out of the iron furnace and the house of bondage.”

Those of us who were, only a little while ago, in the house of bondage, rejoice that we have been set free from it. And we are praying that you who are still within it and are beginning to feel what a horrible place it is, may not stop there long. May tomorrow’s sun not see you there, but may you escape at once from that terrible captivity!

That, then, is the first head—a cry of misery.

II. The second is a very blessed one, THE GOD OF PITY.

Let me read part of the text again, “They cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.”

Here, then, is the poor sinner’s hope—not at all in himself, but wholly in God. Note the gradations here with regard to God’s pity for these people. First, “*their cry came up unto God.*” When it rose up sharp, and shrill, and intense, it burst through the gates of heaven and “came up unto God.” Not that He does not really hear everything, but speaking after the manner of men, when it was a mere sigh, it did not reach Him. But when it got to be a cry and deepened into a groan, then it came up before Him and God Himself seemed to stop and say, “What is that? It is the cry of the seed of Abraham in Egypt.”

Oh, poor soul, when your cry comes up from the depths of your very soul, then God will stop and say, “What is that? It is the cry of a man in misery. It is the voice of a soul that is in bondage under sin.” “Their cry came up unto God.”

Notice, next, for it is a step further—“and God heard their groaning.” Do you know what that means? There are some people who seem to hear things, but the sounds pass through their ears and there the matter ends. But if you go to visit a sick woman and you sit down, and she tells you all about her ailments and about her poverty, she is cheered because you listen to her kindly and because you are willing to hear her even if you cannot help her, and it does help her even to tell her sad story.

Well now, God heard Israel’s crying and groaning. He heard them, not merely as men hear a sound and take no notice of it, but He seemed to stand still and listen to the sighs, and groans, and cries of His people. Sinner, tell God your misery even now and He will hear your story. He is willing to listen, even to that sad and wretched tale of yours about your multiplied transgressions, your hardness of heart, your rejections of Christ. Tell Him all, for He will hear it.

Tell him what it is you need—what large mercy—what great forgiveness. Just lay your whole case before Him. Do not hesitate for a single moment. He will hear it, He will be attentive to the voice of your cry. Oh, what comfort there is for you in this truth if you can but grasp it! Dear Christians, pray that some poor sinners may grasp it even now. Pray that they may lay hold upon the sweet thought that God is hearing the sighs and cries of the penitent souls in our midst.

God’s pity went further than that, for we read next, that having heard their groaning, “*God remembered his covenant.*” I wish I knew how to preach upon that twenty-fourth verse—“God remembered his covenant.” He looked on the children of Israel and He did not remember their declensions—their practically becoming Egyptians, their loving Egypt, and Egypt’s idols—but He remembered His friend, Abraham. He remembered Isaac. He remembered Jacob, whom He loved, and He remembered how He had promised to bless them and to make them a blessing. And not because of any merit in the Israelites themselves, but for the sake of those whom He had loved and honored, and for

the sake of the covenant which He had made with them, He said, "I will break the power of Pharaoh, and I will bless My people; I will bring them out of bondage, and set them at liberty."

Sinner, if God were to look on you to all eternity, He could not see anything in you but what He is bound to punish. But when He looks on His dear Son whom He loves, and remembers how He lived, and loved, and bled, and died, and made atonement for the guilty, and when He remembers His covenant with His Well-Beloved, He says, "I will bless these people whom I gave unto Him by an everlasting covenant. I promised that He would see of the travail of His soul and so He shall. I will break the power of sin and I will set these captives free, to the praise of the glory of My grace, they shall be accepted in the Beloved."

It is a great blessing that, although God cannot see any reason for mercy in us, He can see the best of all reasons for mercy in the covenant of His grace and in His dear Son with whom He made it. "God remembered his covenant." Do not forget it, dear friends, but think much upon the covenant ordered in all things and sure, and upon all the blessings that are to come to you through that covenant.

God did still more for His people. "*And God looked upon the children of Israel.*" He had given them His ear. He had given them His memory. Now He gives them His eyes. He stood still and He looked upon them, in pity and in love, and it is further said, "*And God had respect unto them.*" The margin renders it, "God *knew* them," which is the true meaning of the original.

He looked upon a man and He said, "That is one of My children." He looked upon another and He said, "Yes, Egyptian though he be in dress, he is one of my Israelites." He looked upon others and He said, "I know them. I know their sorrows, I know their sins, I know their weaknesses, and I will surely deliver them."

Oh, that these lips could utter language in which I might fitly tell you how God looks upon you, my dear brokenhearted fellow sinner—how He looks upon you, my poor troubled friend, who cannot break loose from sin, but feel like a bull in a net and cannot get free from it! I tell you that He is looking upon you in love and pity, and that He knows your condition and is ready to help you. I will close my discourse by telling you what He has done to help you and oh, may He give you grace to lay hold of it, that you may find liberty this very hour!

III. The last point is THE INSTRUMENT OF DELIVERANCE.

God's power was quite sufficient to bring the people of Israel out of bondage, but He chose to deliver them by means of human instrumentality. God works for men by men, so He raised up Moses, and it was through Moses that the children of Israel were delivered.

Now, for you, dear captive, God has raised up a Prophet like unto Moses. One who is infinitely greater than Moses has come to deliver you.

First, remember that *Jesus, the Savior of men, is a man like ourselves*. This ought to encourage you to come to Him. Full of grief and broken down under a sense of sin, you dare not approach to an absolute God—it would not be right that you should attempt to come to Him without a Mediator. But you may come to the one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, for He can fully sympathize with you. He is able to have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for He Himself, in the days of His flesh, was compassed with infirmity. Well did Dr. Watts sing,

*"Till God in human flesh I see,
My thoughts no comfort find;
The holy, just, and sacred Three
Are terrors to my mind.*

*But if Immanuel's face appears,
My hope, my joy begins;
His name forbids my slavish fear,
His grace removes my sins."*

Jesus Christ is a man—therefore come boldly to Him, even as Israel might come to Moses. But *Jesus is clothed with divine authority and power*, as Moses was, more than that, He is what Moses was not, and could not be—*Jesus is actually divine. Jesus is God*. Oh, come, poor trembling sinner, and trust your case in His hands, because nothing ever fails that He undertakes! He can break the power of the Pharaoh of your sins and set you free. Ay, even now, He can bring you forth out of Egypt with the silver and gold of His abounding grace. Only trust Him and follow Him, and be obedient to His commands, and all will be well with you.

This Moses, being a man, yet clothed with divine authority, *gave himself entirely up to the people*. He was such a lover of Israel that he lived entirely for the people, and once, you will remember, he even said, as he pleaded for them, “Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold! Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.”

Our Lord Jesus Christ, whom it is our joy to preach, was really made a curse for us. He actually stood in the sinner's stead and bore the penalty of the sinner's guilt. Therefore, oh, do trust Him! Perhaps I may be the means of leading some poor sinner to end his delaying, and now to commit his spirit into the hand of the faithful Creator and Redeemer who died for him. And dear friend, if you will but trust Jesus with yourself, you shall be saved at once. I hope you are willing to come out of Egypt. If you are, you may do so. Lo! Christ has broken all the power of sin and He is willing now to set you free if you will but trust Him and give yourself up, once for all, entirely to His power.

Lastly, *Moses did bring the people out, every one of them*. He left not a little babe in Egypt. Nay, not so much as a sheep or a goat remained there. He said, “There shall not a hoof be left behind.” All that belonged to Israel went marching out when Moses led the way. And God's elect and Christ's redeemed shall all come out of the Egypt of sin. Pharaoh's power—the devil's power—cannot hold the very least of them in captivity. Nay, not even a bone of one of God's children shall be left in the grasp of death and the devil. They shall die and their bones shall be put into the sepulcher, but not the least atom of one of God's own chosen ones shall be left in the power of death. They shall come again from the hand of the enemy.

Yet remember, O you sinners, that I do not urge you to trust Christ as though He cringed at your feet and could not have honor and glory if you did not welcome Him as your Savior. If you will not come to Him, if you will turn your backs upon Him, I shall only say of you, “Ye believe not, because ye are not of his sheep, as he said unto you.”

It is not for Christ's sake, but for your own sake that I plead with you. Oh, that you would come unto Him and trust Him! Weary of self, and weary of sin, and hopeless of self-salvation, come and lay yourselves at Jesus' feet, even at the feet of Him whom God has “exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” He has laid help upon One who is mighty, and exalted One chosen out of the people. Therefore, come and trust Him even now, and you shall be saved. May God grant repentance and faith to this whole congregation for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

ACTS 7:14-43

Verses 14-17. *Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls. So Jacob went down into Egypt, and died, he, and our fathers, and were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem. But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,*

Note those words, “the time of the promise,” and remember that every promise has its due time of fulfillment, and that there is a time of promise to all the Lord's chosen people, when He will surely bring them out of bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

18-20. *Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph. The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live. In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:*

In the darkest night of Israel's bondage in Egypt, her star of hope arose—“Moses was born and was exceeding fair,” or as the margin has it, “was fair to God”—with a beauty something more than human.

21-22. *And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son. And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.*

He was well qualified for the work to which God had called him, but how much more fully qualified is that great Prophet, like unto Moses, whom God has raised up, in these latter days, for the salvation of men, even Jesus Christ, His Son. He knows more than all the learning and wisdom of the Egyptians, He knows more than the cleverness of the devil, so He can deliver us from all his crafty wiles.

23-25. *And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel. And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian: for he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.*

Alas! it is just the same with Israel now. The Lord Jesus came to His own and according to one of His parables, the Father said of Him, “They will reverence my Son,” but they did nothing of the kind. They said, “This is the Heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours.” And alas! how many, nowadays, are imitating their evil example! They say, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” They refuse to yield themselves to the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

26-30. *And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday? Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons. And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.*

So that he was eighty years of age when he began his great lifework. Perhaps, as a rule, the larger part of our time is occupied in getting ready to work. Yet, if we are able to perform a work as good as that which Moses did, it will well repay us for a long season of preparation.

31-34. *When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold. Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground. I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them.*

All this must have been very pleasant to the ears of Moses. It was solemn, yet it was exceedingly sweet. But notice what comes next.

34. *And now, come, I will send thee into Egypt.*

Oh, dear! What a falling-off there seems to be in these words! God first says, “I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them.” And then He adds, “I will send *thee* into Egypt.” Yes, truly, from the grandeur of the divine working down to the insignificance of our instrumentality is a tremendous stoop. Yet the God who says, “I will save sinners by My grace; none but Myself can save them,” also says to me, “Go thou and preach the Gospel to them.” The same Lord who says, “I will change the heart of stone into a heart of flesh, and work a miracle of mercy in renewing those who are

dead in trespasses and sins," also says to you, "Speak to the persons sitting with you in the pew, and seek to point them to the Savior."

It is an wonderful stoop, but it is the condescension of almighty grace, and it brings great honor to the poor, trembling, unworthy person to whom the message is addressed. Moses thought himself very unfit for the task of delivering Israel and he would, if he had dared to do so, have refrained from that task. But God said to him, "Now come, I will send thee into Egypt."

Ah, brethren! how different a man did Moses then become! When he went out by himself, without any commission, he was impatient to get to his work and he slew an Egyptian—and so had to flee away out of the country. But when he was sent in God's name, when the Lord said to him, "Now come, I will send thee," then the work was accomplished. O my brethren, in your service for the Savior, always seek for power from on high! Ask to be sent of God and pray your Master to go with you—then will you succeed in the task which He entrusts to you.

35. *This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.*

Is not that a shadow of that grander truth, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner"?

36-37. *He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years. This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.*

Now you see that Moses was thus a type of Christ. God grant that we may not reject Christ, as the Israelites rejected Moses, but may we be willing that He should be to us our Judge and our Deliverer!

38-39. *This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: to whom our fathers would not obey, but thrust him from them, and in their hearts turned back again into Egypt,*

Though Moses had brought them out of Egypt, they were not obedient to him and they wanted to go back to the land of bondage. And ah! brethren, this is the great crime of the present day—the crime of mankind in general—that, after all Jesus has done, there is still within so many, the evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

40-41. *Saying unto Aaron, Make us gods to go before us: for as for this Moses, which brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.*

This again is another of the ways by which men attempt to make an idol god out of something which they can see and to rejoice in what they themselves do instead of trusting in what the Lord Jesus has done.

42-43. *Then God turned, and gave them up to worship the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to me slain beasts and sacrifices by the space of forty years in the wilderness? Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Remphan, figures which ye made to worship them: and I will carry you away beyond Babylon.*

There was still idolatry in their hearts and Moses was rejected by them. God grant that we may not be idolaters and so reject the Prophet, like unto Moses, whom the Lord has sent unto us! Amen!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—440, 561, 608

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. 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.