

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TO THE SADDEST OF THE SAD.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 3RD, 1888,

DELIVERED BY

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.”—Exodus vi. 9.

LITTLE words often contain great meanings. It is often the case with that monosyllable “*so*.” In the present instance we must lay stress upon it and read the text thus—“Moses spake *so* unto the children of Israel.” That is, he said what God told him to say. He did not invent his message. He did not think out the gospel that he had to carry to the people. He was simply a repeater of the divine message. As he received it, *so* he spake it. “Moses spake *so* unto the children of Israel.” If he had not done *so*, the responsibility must have rested upon himself, whether the nation was moved by his words or not; but when he was simply God’s ambassador, saying only what God would have him say, his responsibility was limited. If he delivered the Lord’s own word and it failed to win the heart of Israel, he could not be blamed. Although it was a great sadness of heart to him that the people did not, and even could not, receive the divine message, yet as far as he was concerned, his conscience was clear. It is ever so with the preacher of the gospel: if he declares the word of the Lord as he has received it, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, he is clear before God, whatever his hearers may do or may not do.

I often wonder what those preachers do who feel called to make up their message as they go on; for if they fail, their failure must be attributed in great measure to their want of ability to make up a moving tale. They have to spread their sails to the breeze of the age, and to pick up a gospel that comes floating down to them on the stream of time, altering every week in the year; and they must have an endless task to catch this new idea, or, as they put it, to keep abreast of the age. Unless, indeed, like chameleons, they have a natural aptitude to change colour, they must have a worrying time of it, and a horrible amount of shifting to get through. When they have done

their best to preach this gospel of their own, then they are accountable for having made that gospel. For every bit of its teaching they are accountable, because they were the manufacturers of it, and it came forth from their foundry, bearing their stamp. If they take this yoke upon them, and so refuse to learn of Christ, they will find no rest to their souls. To me the preaching of the Lord's own gospel is a joy and a privilege; for notwithstanding that concern for your souls loads me with the burden of the Lord, it is his burden, and not one which I have selected for myself. I often feel on a Sabbath night when I go home weary: "I know that I have preached what I believe to be God's gospel." I have not said anything—I have not intended to say anything—that was my own. I have not left out, at least, I have not intended to leave out, anything that was in the text, nor anything which I believe to be the teaching of the gospel of Christ. And then if you do not receive it, that is a sorrowful business, but it is no concern of mine so that I shall have to answer for it at the last great day. When a man-servant goes to the door with a message from his master, if you do not like what he tells you, do not be angry with him. What has he to do with it? Has he said what his master told him to say? If he has, then be angry with his master if you must be, or accept what his master says if you think fit; but let the poor man that brought the message be held clear if he has faithfully reported his master's words. I claim that, if I have preached my Master's gospel, whether men are saved or lost, whether they accept it or reject it, I must leave that with themselves, and not have their sin laid at my door. How heartily do I cry to God that the Word may not be a savour of death unto death, but a savour of life unto life; but oh, my hearers, if you perish after hearing the gospel of God, do not think that you can cast the blame on me.

Now, the message Moses brought was rejected, and he knew why it was rejected. He could see the reason. The people were in such bondage, they were so miserably ground down, they were so unhappy and hopeless, that what he spake seemed to them to be as idle words. There are hundreds of reasons why men reject the gospel. We will not go into them to-night. He that wants to beat a dog can always find a stick, and he that wishes to reject Christ can always find a reason for it; and, however unreasonable a reason may be, it will serve a sinner's turn, when that turn happens to be the making of some excuse for himself why he should not yield to the Saviour. Oh that men were less cunning in making apologies for refusing the Lord Jesus!

Amongst all the reasons, however, that I ever heard, that with which I have the most sympathy, is this one—that some cannot receive Christ because they are so full of anguish, and are so crushed in spirit that they cannot find strength enough of mind to entertain a hope that by any possibility salvation can come to them. It is to their sad case that I desire to speak. I think that I can speak to the case, if God help me, for I have felt the same. I do remember when I could not believe even Jesus himself by reason of sore anguish and straitness of spirit; and, therefore, as one who has worn the chains, I speak to those who are still in chains. I know the clanking of those fetters,

and what it is to feel the damp of the stone walls, and to fear that there is no coming out of prison, and to be so despairing that even when the emancipator turned the great key in the lock, and set the door wide open, yet still my heart had made for itself a direr cage, and I could not believe in the possibility of liberty, and therefore I sat bound in a dungeon of my own creation. Ah! there is no Bastille so awful as that which is built by despair, and kept under the custody of a crushed spirit. Many are the desponding ones whose eyes fail so that they cannot look up, or look out. To such I speak. May God speak through me by the Holy Spirit, the Comforter!

I. And first, will you notice that what Moses brought to these people was glad tidings. IT WAS A FREE AND FULL GOSPEL MESSAGE. To them it was the gospel of salvation from a cruel bondage, the gospel of hope, the gospel of glorious promise. It is a very admirable type and metaphorical description of what the gospel is to us. Moses' word to them was singularly clear, cheering, and comforting; but they could not receive it. "They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit and cruel bondage."

First, Moses spoke to them *about their God*. He said, "You have a God, and his name is Jehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." They looked up from their bricks, and they seemed to say, "God? What have we to do with him? Oh, that the straw were given us to make our bricks! We are up to our necks in this filthy Nile mud, making the bricks, and you come and talk to us about God. Go, and preach to Pharaoh and the taskmasters that rule us; but as for us poor creatures, slaves that we are, we do not understand you. What do you mean by JAH, Jehovah, our God? Bring us more garlic and onions, or lessen our daily tasks, or take away the sticks from our drivers, and then we will listen to you." And so they shook their heads, and said that such mysteries and theologies were not for them. And yet, dear sirs, if any of you are in such a case, it is for you. Jehovah, Israel's God, was indeed their only hope, and he is your only hope also. Alas, that they should be so unwise as to refuse to let the light shine upon them, for light it was! What a poor reason for refusing light because the night is so dark! Man's best hope lies in his God. O you whose lives are bitter with toil and want, there is something for you after all, much better than the hard saying, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink?" There is an inheritance above the grinding toil of every-day life. There is a portion much better than this killing care, which frets so many of you, and makes life a calamity to you. Do not, therefore, because of the heaviness of your lot, refuse to hear about God, your Maker, your Benefactor. In that direction lies your only real hope. Have this God for a father and a friend, and life will wear another aspect, and you will be another man.

Then Moses went on to tell them *about a covenant*. He said, "You have a God, and that God has said, 'I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.'" Covenant? Why, many of them would hardly know what it meant. "Covenant?" said they, "God make a covenant with us poor brickmakers, that have to slave

from morning to night without wage, and now are forced to make bricks without straw?" God and a covenant: these are strange words in ears that hear the curses of taskmasters and the crack of their whips. It sounded like mockery to them to talk of such high matters. I doubt not they muttered to themselves, "This Moses is a mad philosopher who has grand mouthfuls of words; but what are words to us? A bit of fish out of the Nile, or a cucumber from the irrigated fields would be a deal better than talking to us about a covenant." And yet, hearken. If any of you are in a sad condition, your best hopes may lie this way. What if God has entered into covenant with you that he will bless you for Jesus Christ's sake? There may be a mint of wealth for the sons of poverty in this everlasting covenant; and the best kind of wealth, too. There may be for you a promised emancipation which will break the fetters which now hold you, and set you free. I tell you that in the covenant of grace lies the charter of the poor and needy. At any rate, if you come under that covenant it cannot be worse with you than it is now. You seem now to be under a covenant of bondage and of sorrow, and any change will be for the better. If there be another covenant—a covenant of grace, and love, and peace, and everlasting faithfulness, it were worth while to hear about it, and to seek it out until you discover whether you have part and lot in it. I entreat you, look into this matter. Hearken diligently to the voice of the gospel. Hear, and your soul shall live.

So, when Moses had spoken of the covenant, he went on to speak yet more *about God's pity to them*. He reported that Jehovah had said, "I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered my covenant." I fancy that those words opened their eyes a little. They looked up and said to one another, "Is there, indeed, a God who has heard our groanings? Oh, but," they muttered, "look at the many years we have been groaning. Why, it is forty years since this man Moses first came out and saw our burdens. Where has he been these forty years? What is the use of pity that is so tardy in its movements?" And yet, dear sirs, if you are inclined to talk so, it may be that if God be slow he is sure; and if he be slow to you it is out of patience and long-suffering to others. He knows best when and how to save his people. Remember that when the tale of bricks was doubled then Moses came; and when you are getting to your very worst, and your night is darkening into a sort of hellish midnight, it may be that your darkness is coming to an end. Therefore, be not so bowed down as to let the brick-earth get into your ears and eyes and make you deaf and blind. But do listen if there be anything to be heard that is better than your daily moans and groans. Listen to the messenger of God who comes to tell of what God is about to do. He is a God full of compassion, and he has respect unto broken hearts and tearful eyes.

And then Moses went on further with his blessed gospel message to tell them *about the Lord's resolve to rescue them by a great redemption*. The Lord had said, "I am Jehovah, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage." Do you notice that all along the Lord uses strong words, and speaks like a great king? "I am Jehovah. I will. I will.

I will." When you go home just notice what a number of "I wills" there are in this declaration of the great God. When God says, "I will," he means it; depend upon it. He does not ask our leave, or wait for our help. "I will" is omnipotence putting itself into speech. Jehovah will accomplish what he promises. He told them, therefore, that he meant to come to their rescue. "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments." God means to save you. Poor, troubled, confessedly guilty sinner, believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God, and trust yourself with him, and the Lord will save you. He will deliver you from all the guilt of your past life, from the evil habits of your present life, and from the temptations of your future life. He will break the yoke of Satan from off your neck and make you to be no more the slave of sin, but you shall become the child of the living God.

Moses told them *about the Lord's ways of grace and the inheritance* which he had prepared for them. My message is after the same sort. Thus saith Jehovah to-night, in the preaching of the gospel to every one that will believe in Jesus, "I will save and I will deliver you; and I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord." These are great words, but they come from the mouth of the great God, who cannot lie. Wherefore believe them, and take heart of hope. God will take you, poor guilty ones, to be his children. He will promote you to be his willing servants. He will use you for his glory though now you dishonour his name. He will sanctify you and cleanse you, and he will bring you to heaven, even you who have lien among the pots and have been defiled in the brick-kilns of sin. He will never rest till he makes you sit upon his throne with him, where he is glorified, world without end. This I speak to you who are in bondage. Even as Jesus said of old, so say I in my measure as his messenger: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Believe you in Christ Jesus, and he who has come to save the lost will give you as clear and clean a deliverance from the power of sin as Jehovah gave Israel deliverance from the power of the Egyptian tyrant. He will bring you out of bondage and guide you through the wilderness till you come into the eternal rest, even to a goodlier land than Canaan, though it flowed with milk and honey.

II. We come now to note that IT WAS RECEIVED WITH UNBELIEF CAUSED BY ANGUISH OF HEART. The message was from the Lord, and it was full of hope for them, but they were too much broken down to receive it. We can quite understand what that meant. Let us look into the case. They could not now receive this gospel because *they had at first caught at it, and had been disappointed*. They were under a misapprehension, for they expected to be free at once, as soon as Moses went to Pharaoh; and as they did not get immediate relief, they fell back into sullen despair. When Moses came to them and

said that God had appeared to him at the bush, and had sent him to deliver them, they bowed their heads, and worshipped. Great things they looked for on the morrow, for they were at the end of their patience; but after that, when Moses went in unto Pharaoh, and the tyrant doubled their labour by denying them straw, then they could not believe in God or in his messenger. In the process of salvation it often happens—I have seen it many times—that after persons have come to hear the gospel, after they have, in some measure, become attentive to its invitations, they have for a season been much more miserable than they were before. Have you never noticed, in taking a medicine, how often you are made to feel more sick before you are made well? It is often so in the workings of the great remedy of divine grace: it discovers to us our disease that we may the more heartily accept the heavenly medicine. Yes, and in special cases there may be evils within the spiritual system which must be thrown out in the flesh, to be made visible, and so to become the subjects of repentance and abhorrence. The man who judges with shortness and straitness of judgment, demands a remedy that will cure his soul of all evils on the spot, and if it does not evidently and immediately do this, he cries, "Away with it." I find that the Hebrew word translated "anguish" here signifies shortness. Your marginal Bibles have "straitness." So they could not believe because of the shortness of their judgment: they measured God by inches. They limited the great and infinite God to minutes and days; and so, as they found themselves at first getting into a worse case than before, they said to Moses, deliberately, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." They did as good as say—You have done us no good; indeed you have increased our miseries; and we cannot believe in you or accept your message as really from God, seeing it has caused us a terrible increase of our sufferings.

Grace may truly and effectually come to a heart, and for a while cause no joy, no peace; but the reverse. I have known many a man coming to this Tabernacle, who has been prospering in business, and so on, and yet he has been going down to hell as fast as ever he could travel. Well, he has come and heard the gospel, and he has made a great many improvements in his conduct, and has become a regular and attentive hearer; and at that very time he has fallen into an affliction the like of which he had never experienced before; and he has consequently complained, "Why, I am worse instead of better. I find my heart grows more rebellious against God than ever it was before." I do not wonder that it should be so, for I have seen so many examples of it. The discipline of the household of God begins very early. But a present increase of sorrow has nothing to do with what the main result will be, except that it works towards it in a mysterious manner. Perhaps what you at first thought was genuine faith was not faith; and God is going to knock down the false before he builds up the true. If you had an old house, and any friend of yours were to say, "John, I will build you a new house. When shall I begin?" "Oh!" you might say, "begin next week to build the new house." At the end of the week he has pulled half your old house down. "Oh," say you, "this is what you call building me a new house, is it? You are causing

me great loss: I wish I had never consented to your proposal." He replies, "You are most unreasonable: how am I to build you a new house on this spot without taking the old one down?" And so it often happens that the grace of God does seem in its first work to make a man even worse than he was before, because it discovers to him sins which he did not know to be there, evils which had been concealed, dangers never dreamed of. Thus the work of grace even makes his bondage seem to be heavier than ever it was; and yet this is all done in wisdom, in love, and in fulfilment of the promise which God has given. Yet I am never very much astonished when I find people ready almost to turn away from the hearing of the gospel; because, after having at first heard it with pleasure, they find that, for the time being, it involves them in even greater sorrow than before. How earnestly would I persuade them to overcome their very natural tendency to a hasty judgment! Press on, dear friend. Be of good courage. Pharaoh will not long be able to make you keep up that enormous number of bricks. Within a very few days he will be glad to get rid of you. Wait hopefully; for the God who begins in darkness will end in light, and before long you will come to understand those ways of mercy, which are now past finding out. Not many weeks after the sobbing and sighing at the brickyards, Moses and the children of Israel sang this song unto the Lord: "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." The work of deliverance began very grimly, but it ended very gloriously.

The inability of Israel to believe the message of Moses arose also from the fact that *they were earthbound by heavy oppression*: the mere struggle to exist exhausted all their energy, and destroyed all their hope. The extreme hardness of their lot made them despondent and sullen. They had to work from morning to night. The Egyptian fellahs of the present age have known what it is to work very, very hard, and to let their earnings go into the coffers of their precious princes. It seems always to have been so with wretched Egypt: it is ever the house of bondage. But these Israelites, being not even Egyptians, but strangers in Egypt, were worked without any pity or mercy. It was a daily question with them whether life was worth living under such cruel conditions. I do not wonder that a great many are unable to receive the gospel in this city of ours, because their struggle for existence is awful. I am afraid that it gets more and more intense, though even now it passes all bounds. If any of you can do anything to help the toil-worn workers, I pray you, do it. The poor workwoman, who sits so many hours with the candle and needle, and does not earn enough, when she has worked all those hours, to more than just pay the rent and keep body and soul together, do you wonder that she thinks that this gospel of ours cannot be for her, and does not care to listen to it? I know that it would be her comfort, but her soul refuseth to be comforted, she is so crushed. The dock labourer, who comes home five days out of the six having earned nothing, and hears his little children crying for bread—is it any wonder that he cannot hear about heavenly things? Why, it is with our white population very much as it was with the negro

population of Jamaica. When there was work to be had, and they could get enough to eat and more, our churches were crowded with them. They were the best of hearers and the speediest of converts; they were soon gathered into immense churches. But when everything went badly with them, and they had to work very hard barely to live, there were groups of backsliders, and multitudes who did not feel that they could go to the house of God at all. They said that they had no garments to wear, and no money to spare; and do you wonder at it? Their poverty was so grinding, and their toil so severe, that the services they had once delighted in they had no heart for. It is all very easy to say that it ought not to be so; but it is so; and it is so with multitudes in London. And yet, dear friend—if such a one has come in here to-night—I pray you do not throw away the next world because you have so little of this. This is sheer folly. If I have little here, I would make sure of the more hereafter. If you have such a struggle for existence here, you should seek that higher, nobler, better life, which would give you, even in penury and want, a joy and a comfort to which you are a stranger now. May the Holy Ghost come upon you, and raise you out of this present evil world into newness of life in Christ Jesus! I do not find that God's people get into a condition of utter desolation: they are, at their very worst, kept from total desertion; for the Lord hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." They do have to work hard, and they may come very near to want, but my observation satisfies me that they are happy still; that they are joyful still; and they are uplifted by the inner life above the down-dragging depression of external trials. I would to God that I could say a word that might comfort any child of poverty who should happen to be here to-night, and I pray the Lord himself to be their comforter and helper.

But, worst of all, there are some who seem as if they could not lay hold on Christ because *their sense of sin has become so intolerable, and the wretchedness which follows upon conviction has become so fearful, that they have grown almost to be contentedly despairing.* I hardly know any condition of mind that is worse than chronic despair, when at last that which seemed alarming enough to drive to madness settles down into a lifeless, sullen moroseness. These Israelites had at last sunk so low that they said, "Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians." But your lot is terrible. "We know it is," they said, "but we shall never get out of it." But your bondage is horrible. "Yes, but you may make it worse by interfering. You will only aggravate our taskmasters, and bring upon us that last straw which breaks the back. Let us alone. We are doomed to suffer: we are predestined to be bondsmen. Let us go on as quietly as we may in our slavery. It may be that like poor fishes in the cave, we may lose our eyes yet, and then we shall not know that it is dark, for we shall have lost the capacity for light." Oh, it is a dreadful thing when a heart gets to that—when a man desires that Christ would depart from him, and let him alone to perish. Do not some men virtually say, "I know I am lost. Let me enjoy myself as well as I can; I cannot—I cannot enjoy sin; but don't vex my conscience. Do not worry me with your talk here, for I shall suffer enough hereafter. Do not tantalize me about saving faith,

for I shall never believe. Do not begin talking to me about repentance. I shall never have a soft and tender heart; I know I never shall." A man who has begun to be numbed with cold, cries to his comrades, "Leave me to sleep myself to death"; and thus do despairing ones ask to be left in their misery. Dear soul, we cannot, we dare not, thus desert you. I will tell you what you shall do, dear soul; do give me a hearing. In the name of God, believe that there is hope yet—that even now Christ Jesus invites men, and especially such as you, to put their trust in him. O you who are burdened with sin, he calls you to let him be your Saviour. If there is a man in the world he died for, you are the man. If I see a physician hurrying down the street in his brougham, and anybody says to me, "Where is that doctor going?" if I knew every house in the street, I should pick out the case of a man that I knew to be in the worst condition, and most near to death's door. "Sir," I should say, "the doctor is going there. That dying person needs him most, and I believe that he is hurrying to his bedside." If there is one man here that is worse than any other, more sad, more sick, more sorry, more despairing than another, my Lord Jesus Christ, who is here, has come to meet with such a one. O troubled heart, Jesus has come to seek and to save *you!* I am sure it is so. Hope thou! Hope thou! Hope thou! Thou art not beyond hope of salvation.

See, O soul, thou'rt yet alive,
 Not in torment; not in hell.
 Still doth his good Spirit strive,
 With the chief of sinners dwell.

Lift up thy eyes, for thou art not yet where the rich man was after his death and burial. Do not yet despair. May be, there awaits thee yet a happy life of joy in God. The sun may yet bring thee brighter days, days of peace, and rest, and usefulness. Did you never hear the story of John Newton, on the coast of Africa? He had got himself into such a state by his sins, his drunkenness, his vice, that at last he was left on the coast of Africa, and virtually became a slave. Did John Newton dream, when he wandered up and down with a hungry belly, full of fever, and at death's door, that the day would come when he would be the companion and dear friend of Cowper, and when the church of St. Mary Woolnoth, over there in the city, would be crowded every time he stood up to preach of free grace and dying love? He did not think it, but it was so predestined. Something equally gracious may be ordained for you. Blasphemer, you may preach the gospel yet. O thou Magdalene, full of filthiness, thou wilt yet wash his feet with thy tears, and wipe them with the hairs of thy head. Thou black villain, thou mayest yet stand among that white-robed host, of whom the angel asked, "Who are these, and whence came they?" You, even you, will sing more sweet and loud than any of them unto him that loved you and washed you from your sins in his precious blood. God make it so, and unto his name shall be praise for ever and ever!

III. I have many more things to say, but I might weary you with them rather than bless you. The message was at first not received

by Israel by reason of their anguish of soul, but IT WAS TRUE FOR ALL THAT, AND THE LORD MADE IT SO. What did the Lord do when he found that these people did not hearken to Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage? What did the Lord do? He was not going to give them up because of their wretched condition. He had said, "I will bring them out," and he meant to do it.

The first thing the Lord did to prove his persevering grace was to *commission Moses again*. (Ex. vi. 1; vii. 2.) So the Lord God, in everlasting mercy, says to his minister, "You have to preach the gospel again to them. Again proclaim my grace." It seems a terrible thing to have to pour our souls into deaf ears. Yet I shall not give it up, for I have done it with some here for nearly thirty-three years, and I may as well go on. Why should I lose so much labour? I will try again, like Peter, who, after toiling all night and taking nothing, yet let down the net at the Lord's bidding. One of these days those dead ears will be made to live. God in mercy says, "Go on with it. As long as there is breath in your body, tell them to believe in my Son, and they shall live. Tell them till you die that 'He that with his mouth confesseth, and with his heart believeth that God hath raised Christ from the dead shall be saved.'"

But the Lord did more than that for Israel. As these people had not listened to Moses, he called Moses and Aaron to him, and *he renewed their charge*. He laid it upon them—gave them again their marching orders: "He gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt." A monstrous thing it did look. They would not even hear Moses; but the Lord will have his servants stand to their work. Moses and Aaron have to do it, however impossible it may appear. There is to be no backing out of it. They must know of a surety that Israel is to be delivered by their means. It is a grand point when the Lord lays the conversion of men on the hearts of his ministers, and makes them feel that they must win souls. Moses was bound to bring out Israel. "But there is Pharaoh." Pharaoh is included in the divine charge. They have to beat Pharaoh into submission. "But these children of Israel will not obey." The Lord put them in the charge: did you not observe the words, "He gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh"? Moses and Aaron, you have to bring Israel out, Pharaoh is to let them go, and Israel is to go willingly. God has issued his royal decree, and be you sure it will stand. I believe that God is saying to his church, "You have to do it. You have to gather out mine elect out of every nation under heaven." To the church in London, he says, "Bring this people out of the bondage of sin." That terrible London with all its poverty, its drunkenness, its infidelity, and licentiousness: you are to save it in the name of the Lord Jesus. Its darkness is dense; you are to shine till it is enlightened. You have to save London. So do not back out of it. "Oh," says one man, who lives down some street near this place, "Sir, I can hardly live in the street. It teems with ill-living women." You have to save them. Passing a little shop as I did the other day, I saw written up in the window, "If any poor girl that wishes to lead a better life will only step inside she will find a

friend." That is one of our dear members.* I felt so pleased as I saw it. I should like to see such a notice in a great many windows. I would like to see you live among the wicked, and put up in your windows, "If anybody wants a friend, there is one inside. Come in." You are called to save them! They must not be lost. Somebody says, "What are you talking about, Mr. Spurgeon? We cannot save them." I am talking as God said, when he told Moses and Aaron that he gave them a charge to bring his people out of Egypt. They could not do it: but yet they did it. Anyone can do what he can do, but it is only God's servant that can do what he cannot do. We, my brethren, are called to perform the impossible; we are to be familiar with miracles. Look at Ezekiel. There is a valley full of dry bones. Ezekiel is to go and say to them, "Thus saith the Lord, Ye dry bones, live." What a preposterous thing! An able divine of good repute once said that, to preach the gospel to dead sinners, was as preposterous as to wave a pocket-handkerchief over a grave. Ah, just so! Therefore, I would not have *him* do it. If the Lord has not sent him to do it he would do no good if he were to attempt to preach to the sinner dead in sin; but it is a different thing when it is my case, for I feel that I am sent to do it, and therefore I am not vexed at being thought to be acting absurdly. If God had sent me to wave a pocket-handkerchief over the dead in Nunhead cemetery, that they might live, I would go and wave that pocket-handkerchief, and they would live. To the eye of reason there is no use in preaching to men dead in sin. I freely admit *that*; but if it is a commission from God, then it is not ours to raise questions, but to do as we are bidden. God has commissioned his servants to preach the gospel to every creature. Whatever those creatures may be, we are to say to them, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This is our message and our mission, and we are just to tell the truth, and leave God to apply it to the heart. Oh that he may give us grace to tell out the gospel, and to keep on doing it till he has brought his own elect out of the bondage of sin and Satan, and saved them with an everlasting salvation!

Once more. As I told you in the reading, I greatly admire this chapter. I cannot help admiring the next thing that God did when he told his servant what to do. *The Lord began to count the heads of those whom he would redeem out of bondage.* You see the rest of the chapter is occupied with the children of Reuben, and the children of Simeon, and the children of Levi. God seemed to say, "Pharaoh, let my people go!" "I will not," said the despot. Straightway the Lord goes right down into the brick-town where the poor slaves are at work, and he makes out a list of all of them, to show that he means to set free. So many there of Simeon. So many here of Reuben. So many here of Levi. The Lord is counting them. Moreover he numbers their cattle, for he declares, "There shall not a hoof be left behind." Men say, "It is of no use counting your chickens before they are hatched"; but when it comes to God's counting those whom he means

* Since this sermon was preached, brother Bilborough has gone to his reward.

to deliver, it is another matter; for he knows what will be done, because he determines to do it, and he is almighty. He knows what is to come of the gospel, and he knows whom he means to bless. And so let Satan rage, and let adversaries do what they will, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his"; and to prove this, he goes on writing down their names, and taking an account of them. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels." Now, my hearers, if you do not come to Christ, it will be your own loss, and not his. If you refuse him, it will be because you are not Christ's sheep, as he said to you. He has a people, and he will save *them*, whether you, my hearer, believe in Jesus or wilfully refuse to do so. Out of the mass of mankind a company shall come to him, and shall glorify his name, as it is written, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise." Oh, that you had such a mind in you that you would accept his gospel! Will you do so even now? Trust Christ, and you are saved. Look unto him, and be ye saved.

The Lord bless you, for his name's sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Exodus iv. 31 to vi. 14.

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