

THE GREAT EMANCIPATOR

"Thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me." Exodus 4:22-23.

God had a people in Egypt. They were His own, the people of His choice. Although they had been grievously oppressed, and had sunk into ignominious slavery, His interest in their welfare had in no degree lessened.

While Moses was looking after the sheep in Midian, God appeared to him and called him to be the deliverer of His people. It was by means of a burning bush, which was not consumed by the flames, that God revealed Himself to Moses. In that conversation out of the bush God revealed to Moses that He was not indifferent to the plight in which the Israelites found themselves in Egypt. He also told Moses that He was about to deliver the people from their bondage. Moses must have been thrilled as he listened to these words, but he was more than surprised when God proceeded to say, "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt."

Moses began to remonstrate to God, to make excuses, but all to no avail, for he was God's chosen instrument to effect the deliverance of Israel. Our text consists of the first message which Moses was commissioned to give to Pharaoh.

The Lord's purpose in sending Moses down into Egypt was that He might bring the people out from among the nations and make them separate unto Himself, that He might give them an inheritance, even the land which flowed with milk and honey, and that they might dwell there as witnesses of His Covenant and keep His testimony. What God was doing toward His people Israel He is doing toward His own chosen ones throughout the world today. From one point of view the object of the gospel is to gather out from among the nations all people whom He hath redeemed unto Himself to be His peculiar heritage. The work of rescuing perishing sinners out of the present evil world is as worthy of God as the work of delivering Israel out of Egypt. The same hand of Jehovah, glorious in power, which released the sons of Jacob from thralldom of Pharaoh, is now stretched out to ransom us from the dominion of Satan. In the process of bringing out these people of God from among the masses God uses instrumentality. He may employ an instrument that is apparently as little adapted for the work as Moses felt Himself to be. Yet the work is done, and to God belongs the honor of accomplishment. As for those of us whom He uses we are more than content to yield the honor to Him.

I. Life -- Do You Possess It?

God instructed Moses to say to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn." In these words God declared that the Israelites stood in a peculiar relationship to Himself; they were His sons. They were so by Covenant. In the time of Abraham, God had chosen the Hebrews to be His own people, and given them the sign of circumcision as an outward proof of their relationship to Him. So in this declaration to Pharaoh, God remembers His Covenant with Abraham and informs Pharaoh of it.

Let it be observed that God did not make a general statement to the effect that all men are His sons; for instance, He did not say that the Egyptians were such. What He did say was that the children of Israel were His sons. He could do so because at that time only Israel was in Covenant relationship with Him. So God reminded Pharaoh that the people whom he was treating so cruelly were sons of the Lord God. It is even so today. There are those whom God delights to call His children. There are still those who stand in Covenant relationship to Him.

In writing to his Galatian converts Paul said, "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Galatians 6:26. In writing to certain believers John said,

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God." I John 3:2. Now, it is of vital importance to observe that these are not general statements applicable to all men, but limited declarations which apply only to a certain company of people; namely, those who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

Thus the New Testament writers failed to give any recognition whatsoever to the popular modern doctrine known as "The Universal Fatherhood of God." Indeed, they taught the very opposite. The Lord Jesus Himself refuted this doctrine when He said to certain religious leaders: "Ye are of your father the devil." John 8:44. He clearly recognized from a spiritual standpoint mankind was divided into two families. Paul also refuted the doctrine of Universal Fatherhood by speaking of "children of light" and "children of darkness." He reminded his converts that before their conversion they were "children of wrath even as others." Ephesians 2:3. The Apostle John refutes it, for he speaks of "children of God" and "children of the devil." I John 3:10.

The New Testament makes it very clear that just as only a part of mankind were the children of God in the time of Moses, only a part of mankind are children of God today. Furthermore, the New Testament makes it clear that no person can claim to be a child of God as a result of natural birth, or of religious upbringing. Then it may be asked: "How can a person become a child of God?" John says: "To as many as received him, to them gave he authority to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John 1:12. Thus before any one can become the son of God he must accept the Lord Jesus as Saviour. Yes, God has many children in the world today; they are those who have received Jesus as their Saviour.

Have you received Christ as your Saviour? If not, then won't you do so at this moment and become a child of God? If you will, you will be the possessor of real life.

II. Liberty -- Do You Enjoy It?

The message which Moses was commissioned to deliver to Pharaoh also contained a divine command, for it goes on to say, "Let my son go." Here God demands the liberation of His people.

The Israelites had been deprived of their liberty, and were in bondage. At that time they were in a very sordid condition. They were abandoned slaves, brought down to the lowest condition. They were so spiritless that they submitted to any exaction of the tyrant. They had lost the very thought of liberty. What a sad plight! They were children of God, but they were in bondage. However, in this message God demands their emancipation.

What a lesson for us! We may be the children of God and yet be in bondage. Many Christians are in that sad condition today. But God desires His children to be free.

Glancing at the scene in Egypt, we observe that Israel, as the people of God, have life, but they have no liberty. And yet God desires that they should be free, so He demands, "Let my son go." God wants His own to have liberty.

Fellow Christians, as a child of God you have life. Praise God for it! But I want to tell you that God wants you to have liberty also. Are you enjoying it? Or is your state like that of Israel in Egypt, and like that of Lazarus when he came out of the tomb in response to the Lord's call, "Lazarus come forth." He came out of the tomb with life but no liberty, for we read, "For he that was dead came forth bound head and foot with graveclothes." God wants us to be a free people -- free from worldliness, the fear of man, the power of sin in our daily lives, and all that binds. God wants us to be free, and we may be so for "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." We shall experience this liberty only when we surrender all to our blessed Lord. May we know what it is to be so captivated by our Lord that we shall be free!

III. Service -- Do You Render It?

In demanding the emancipation of His people God had a special desire and a definite purpose. The complete message is recorded in our text which reads, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me."

It is interesting to note that because Israel was God's son, His firstborn, Pharaoh was to refrain from oppressing His son, and if he did not his own firstborn would be smitten. As men treat God's children so will God treat them. He notes and He will reward, kindnesses done to His children, and He will avenge their wrongs. God's children may safely leave the avenging of their wrongs to their heavenly Father, whose work it is to avenge them.

Thus God desired His people to be free in order that they might serve Him. They could not serve Him and serve the Egyptians at the same time. Our Saviour once said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Before Israel could serve God they had to be liberated from the bondage of Egypt. God desired His people to be free in order that they might serve Him. His children should serve Him because He is their Father and because of the freedom which He has wrought for us.

Let us note the order in this text: Life -- Liberty -- Service. We may have life without liberty. This is sadly true of many contemporary Christians. If that is our condition, then we are not enjoying God's best. We may have life and liberty also but without service. If that is our condition, we are not enjoying God's best either. God desires His people to be free that they may serve Him. Only the liberated Christians can render effective service for God. The Christian who is not liberated from the power of sin, or who is entangled in the things of this world, cannot render acceptable service to God. The divine order is LIFE -- Do you possess it? LIBERTY -- Are you enjoying it? SERVICE -- Are you rendering it?