

Deliverance

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It has ever been the desire of God that men should respond to Him in intelligent and affectionate service. Relevant to this Mark 7 contains a beautiful epitome of the ministry of Christ — "He does all things well; He makes the deaf to hear, and the speechless to speak" (v. 37). Precious service — opening ears to the tenderness and compassionate love of His communications to men, the very words of the Father of Compassions (John 14: 24), and unloosing tongues in responsive thanksgiving and praise. The verb "does" being the perfect tense would carry its own importance. The character of this most blessed ministry is perpetuated in the activities of the Holy Spirit of Truth. His speaking of the glories and preciousness of Christ is music to our ears, resulting in the formation of substance in the soul finding an outlet in praise and worship. Surely the heart of God Himself rejoices as He hears His own responding in the very words of Christ — "Abba Father" (Romans 8: 15).

In the early chapters of Exodus God sends a five-times repeated message to Pharaoh — "Let my people go." The first occasion reveals the highest motive governing His command — speaking of Israel as "son" He adds "that he may serve me." In Ex. 5 God expresses His desire "that they may hold a feast to Me in the wilderness." Set free from Egypt's bondage they are found in wilderness circumstances where every need is met in the abounding goodness and mercy of God, and in the midst of them an order of service established by God Himself in relation to which their affections should have expanded in response to His care and protection. Alas! the sad story of their failure to appreciate His goodness is so plainly stated in Acts 7 (quoting Amos 5). Verses 42 and 43 of this chapter have been referred to by one now with Christ "as the saddest verses in the long history of Israel."

In the Galatian epistle Paul speaks of "bondage" some six times, but in chapter 1 he tells us of the death of Christ as the way God has taken for our complete deliverance from every feature of "the present evil world." We exult in this, rightly so; but may we remind ourselves that our deliverance cost the blessed Lord all that the cross involved, and further the end in view is the glory of God the Father. Brethren, let us ponder carefully and prayerfully Galatians 1: 4, 5. If the mighty transaction which secured our deliverance from bondage is to render glory to God the Father in every age, then surely the present age should have its own blessed part in a response of praise and worship.

The gospels abound in incidents of the many who experienced liberation from bondage under the gracious touch of Christ. We refer briefly to a few of these, differing from each other as to the particular form of bondage which had held them, but all coming under the powerful command of One having supreme power over every circumstance, setting them free from the thralldom of sin, of condemnation, of Satan's power and of death. They were, in the authority of *His* word to "go" in liberty. No special service is in view in every case, but each incident furnishes for our consideration a moral condition which is absolutely vital if we, *as set free*, are to happily serve the Lord.

The woman in the end of Luke 7 was held in the bondage of sins, sins which were apparent to men (v. 39), but their full extent known only to God (v. 47). Her deep sense of need and of her sinful state was manifest in her contrition and her attitude at the feet of Christ. But her heart's affections were drawn to *Himself* — He filled her vision — all else mattered not! "Her sins, which are many, *are* forgiven" (again the perfect tense). She hears the words of salvation accompanied by the command of authority and love — "thy faith hath saved thee, *go in peace*". Abiding, unchanging peace, for the imperative command of love implies a pathway trodden in the constant appreciation and joy of the

peace which love provides at such cost to itself (see Colossians 1: 20). "She loved much" — it was not that her love was meritorious, but it was that which she had seen in Jesus Himself, which, by grace, melted her heart and produced the love she had to Him — "she thinks only of Him; He has taken possession of her heart so as to shut out all other influences" (J.N.D.). Beloved brethren, how precious to be thus set at liberty from every contrary influence, and in an atmosphere of perfect peace to contemplate the beauty of Christ, finding our joy in a service of responsive love.

The woman in John 8 stood under the condemnation of the law — justly so. Whatever the dual writing on the ground may indicate (the endorsement of law (Matthew 5: 17); the words of grace and mercy) the outstanding feature of these verses is the glory of Christ as over against all that was before. The hearts of the Pharisees, unaffected by the law they professed to quote, were all known to Him, as was the guilt of the sinner they had brought. As feeling all in His spirit He stoops to the ground; but He lifts Himself up in triumph over all. Who but He could say "Neither do I condemn thee"! Infinite grace, but perfection of holiness alike are seen in Christ. "Go and sin no more." The shadow of condemnation is lifted — but where is she to go. The following verses may not be strictly applicable to the incident in mind, but the moral teaching is of utmost importance. "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." The path of freedom is a path lit up with the glory of Christ, and in such a pathway we find liberty in the service of God.

In Mark 5 we see a man in bondage to Satan. No human remedy avails. The authority of the Lord's word sets him free, free to obey the command — "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." The breaking of Satan's power has tremendous results — men were afraid (v. 15) for *God was there* (see Psalm 14: 5); circumstances were disrupted — but a soul was liberated and a tongue opened to proclaim the glories of Christ.

The account of the raising of Lazarus (John 11) contains much of importance but we can but briefly touch upon the chapter. It is perhaps of the deepest significance that the word translated "wept" in verse 35 is unique to that verse. How truly the blessed Lord felt the sorrow which death had brought into God's creation! Again His power and glory are witnessed as with "a *loud* voice" He commanded "Lazarus, come forth." Death *must* obey *that* voice! Again He said "Loose him and let him go." To where was he to go? We cannot here enlarge upon the thought, but John 12 gives the answer — "Lazarus was one of them that sat at table with Him." Loosed from death and corruption — set free to be happily in the company of Christ, in an atmosphere fragrant with the expression of devoted appreciation of himself.

Brethren, it has cost our beloved Lord much to effect these deliverances for His own. *Peace* was made by the blood of His cross! The light manifest in Him was unappreciated by men — "who loved darkness rather than light;" it was in His being lifted up that the prince of the world was cast out; and it was His precious death and rising again that broke death's power. Life and incorruption have been brought into evidence in His glad tidings. Blessed indeed if our hearts respond increasingly to His command of love to go in peace; in the light of His glory; in freedom from Satan and all his wiles, and in the power of a life which is beyond the grave. Thus may we have a part in His service; testimony to men on the one hand and pouring out our hearts' affection as we sit happily in His presence, in company with those thus liberated to praise and worship Him.