

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SONG FOR THE FREE—HOPE FOR THE BOUND.

A Sermon

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“He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.”—Psalm cvii. 14–16.

MY anxious, prayerful desire this morning is, that some who have been in the condition described in the text may come out of it into full redemption. They have been too long in prison; and now the silver trumpet sounds—liberty to the captives. Jesus has come into the world to break the gate of brass, and to cut the bars of iron in sunder. Oh, that my prayer might be heard for those who are in bondage! I trust that some of those who are now immured in the dungeon of despondency will say “Amen” to my prayer; and if they are praying inside, and we are praying outside, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself comes to open the prison doors, then there will be a Jubilee before long.

This passage, of course, literally alludes to prisoners held in du-rance by their fellow-men. What a sad world man has made this earth! With superfluity of naughtiness man has multiplied his Bas-tilles! As if there were not misery enough to the free, he invents cells and chains! One's blood boils when standing in those living graves in which tyrants have buried their victims out of sight and hearing! Could the most fierce of wild beasts display such cruelty to their kind as men have shown to men? By the horrors of such imprisonments one must estimate the joy of being set free. To God it is a glory that, in the order of his providence, he often provides a way of escape for

the oppressed. Cruel dynasties have been overthrown, tyrants have been hurled from their thrones, and then enlargement has come to those who were straitly shut up. Liberated ones should indeed “praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.”

But the various scenes in this Psalm were intended to describe spiritual conditions. The second verse is a key to the whole song: “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.” The deliverance here intended is one which is brought to us by redemption, and comes by the way of the great sacrifice upon Calvary. We are redeemed with the precious blood of him who surrendered his own liberty for our sakes, and consented to be bound and crucified that he might set us free. My grateful heart seems to hear him saying again, as he did in the garden of Gethsemane, “If ye seek me, let these go their way.” His consenting to be bound brought freedom to all those who put their trust in him.

I shall endeavour, as God shall help me, to speak of the text spiritually, and we will consider it under the heading of three questions: first. *Who are the favoured men of whom the text speaks?* Secondly, *How has this remarkable deliverance been wrought?* Thirdly, *What shall be done about it?* The text tells us how to act. “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!”

I. First, let us ask: WHO ARE THESE FAVOURED MEN?

These favoured persons were guilty men, as you will see by the context—“Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High.” Hear this, ye sinful ones, and take heart! God has wrought great wonders for a people whom it seemed impossible for him to notice. If they came into prison through rebellion, you would expect him to leave them there. Yet rebels are set free by an act of immeasurable grace. The Redeemer has received gifts for men, “yea, for the rebellious also.” These men were despisers of God’s word; was there a gospel of freedom for them? Yes. It is for them that Jehovah, in abounding grace, has wrought miracles of mercy.

The persons described by the Psalmist were guilty of overt acts: they were in actual rebellion against the commands of the Most High. Their rebellion was not a single hasty act; their entire lives were a continuance of their wicked revolt. From their childhood they went astray; in their youth they provoked the Lord; and in their manhood they disobeyed him more and more. They were in open opposition to

their Creator, Benefactor, and Lord. I have no doubt that I am speaking to many who must own that they have been actual and wilful transgressors against the Lord of love. They have turned unto him the back, and not the face: they have not been servants, but rebels.

The persons here spoken of were as evil in their hearts as in their lives, for they “contemned the counsel of the Most High.” Perhaps they intellectually rejected the teaching of Holy Scripture, and scorned to receive what the Lord revealed. They refused to yield their understandings to infallible teaching; but judged their own thoughts to be better than the thoughts of God. The counsel of the Most High, though marked by the sublimity of him from whom it came, appeared to them to be less high than their own soaring theories; and therefore they despised it. To some men any doctrine is more acceptable than that of Scripture. They gladly hear what doubters say, but they will not hear what God the Lord shall speak. His counsel of instruction, his counsel of command, his counsel of promise—his whole counsel they cast away from them, and they take counsel of their own conceit.

Now this actual and mental sin, when it is brought home to a man’s awakened conscience, fills him with dismay. Because he has transgressed with hand and heart, the convinced sinner is in sore dismay. O my hearer, are you in distress this day through your own fault? Do you wonder that you are in trouble? Did you expect to go in the way of evil, and yet to be happy? Did you never hear those words, “There is no peace, saith my God, unto the wicked”? Know you not that they are “like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt”? Now that you find yourself taken in the thorns of your own folly, are you at all surprised? The Scripture saith, “Hast thou not procured this unto thyself?” Are not these the wages of sin? Thank God you have not yet received more than the earnest-money of that terrible wage: but, depend upon it, sin is a hard paymaster. Sin and sorrow are wedded in the very nature of things, and there is no dividing them. They that sow iniquity shall reap the same. Turn as it may, the river of wickedness at last falls into the sea of wrath. He that sins must smart unless a Saviour can be found to be his Surety, and to smart for him.

So, then, these people who were set free were by nature guilty men, who could not have deserved the divine interposition. Hear this, ye consciously guilty, you that are condemning yourselves, and confessing your faults! This is good news for you, even for you. The

Lord sets free the men whose own hands have forged their manacles. This is free grace indeed! These marvels of delivering love were performed, not for the innocent in their misfortune, but for the guilty in their rebellion. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

Go a little further, and you will notice that *these persons were doomed men*, for they "sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death." It means that they were in the condemned cell, waiting for execution. No light could come to them, for their condemnation was clear; no escape could be hoped for, not a ray of hope came from any direction. In a short time they must be taken out to execution, so that the shadow of their death fell with its damp, dread, deadening influence upon their spirits. Do I address any such this morning? Ah, my friend, I can sympathize with you as you sit here, and feel that you are doomed! I, too, have felt that sentence of death within me. I knew myself to be "condemned already," because I had not believed on the Son of God. I recollect how those words "condemned already" rang in my ears, as I should think the bell of St. Sepulchre's used to sound in the ears of the condemned in Newgate, warning them that the time was come to go out upon the scaffold. When the shadow of eternal wrath falls upon the heart, nothing worse can be imagined; for the conscience bears sure witness that God is just when he judges, condemns, and punishes. When a man feels the shadow of death upon him, infidel arguments are silenced, self-conceited defences are banished, and the heart consents to the justice of the law which declares, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." My brethren, who remember being in this state of conscious condemnation, will join me in praying for those who are now in that condition, for they need our pity and love. O my hearers, condemned in your own consciences, take heart, and hope; for you are the sort of people whom Jehovah in his grace delights to set free! Those doomed ones were the men of whom our text sings, "He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death." It is your condemned condition which needs free mercy; and, behold, the Lord meets your need in his boundless grace! To the doomed the Lord God in Christ Jesus will give free pardon this morning. I speak with great confidence, for my trust is in the God of love. The Lord is going to hear prayer for you, sinners. You shall be brought from under the black cloud which now threatens you with overwhelming tempest; you shall come forth from the condemned cell, not to execution, but

to absolution. Blessed be the name of the Lord, he passeth by transgression, and doth it justly through ths atonement of his Son!

But next, *these persons were bound men*; for they “sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron.” Their afflictions were like iron, hard and cold, and such they could not break from. The iron entered into their souls; the rust fretted the flesh, and poisoned the blood. They were bound in a double sense: affliction within, and iron without. It is a terrible thing when a man feels that he is lost, and that he cannot get away from destruction. An evil habit has got him within its iron grasp, and will not relax its hold. Even though he would, he cannot loose himself from the thralldom of his sin. He has become a slave, and there is no escape for him. “O my God!” he cries, “what can I do?” The more he strains, the faster the iron seems to hold him. His attempts to be free from evil only prove to him how much enslaved he is. What an awful compound is described in the text—“affliction and iron”! The bondage is mental and physical too. The enslaved spirit and the depraved flesh act and react upon each other, and hold the poor struggling creature as in an iron net. He cannot break off his sins, he cannot rise to a better life. I know that some of you who are here at this time are in this case. You long to be delivered, but you are unable to cut the cords which hold you. You are greatly troubled day after day, and cannot rest; and yet you get no further. You are striving to find peace, but peace does not come; you are labouring after emancipation from evil habits; but the habits hold you still! Friend thus bound, to you I have to tell the glad news that Jesus Christ has come on purpose that he might proclaim the opening of the prisons to them that are bound. “He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.” God is able to liberate men from every bond of sin over which they mourn. Wouldst thou be free? He will open the door. There is no habit so inveterate, there is no passion so ferocious, but God can deliver you from it. If you will but trust in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, his grace is a hammer that can break your chains. Let Jesus say, “Loose him, and let him go,” and not even devils can detain you. Christ’s warrant runs over the whole universe; and, if he makes you free, you will be free indeed.

To advance another step, *these persons were weary men*; for we read of them, “he brought down their heart with labour.” This does not happen to all in the same degree, but to some of us this labour

was exceedingly grinding and exhausting. Our hearts were lofty, and needed bringing down; and the Lord used means to do it. With some, temporal circumstances go wrong: where everything used to prosper, everything appears to be under a blight. From abundance they descend to want. Perhaps the health also begins to give way, and from being strong and hearty men they become sickly and feeble. How often this tames proud spirits! If it be not outward sorrow, it is within that they labour till their heart is brought low. They cannot rest, and yet they try all earthly remedies for ease: they go to the theatre, they sport with gay companions, they laugh, they dance, they plunge into vice; but they cannot shake off the burden of their sin, it will not be removed. As the giraffe, when the lion has leaped upon him, bears his enemy upon his shoulders, and cannot dislodge him even though he rushes across the wilderness like the wind, so the sinner is being devoured by his sin while he madly labours to shake it off. While the unconverted seek to rest themselves, they do but increase their weariness. They labour, ay, labour as in the very fire; but it is labour in vain. In vain do they hasten to every religious service, and attend to every sacred ceremony. In vain do they try to mourn; how can they put feeling into a heart of stone? If they could, they would make their tears for ever flow, and their prayers for ever rise; but, to their horror, they accomplish nothing. The whip of the law sounds, and they must get to their tasks again; but the more they do, the more they are undone. Like one that, having fallen into a slough, sinks all the deeper into the mire through every struggle that he makes, so do they fall lower and lower by their efforts to rise. I understand those awful stragglings of yours, so desperate and yet so unavailing. God is bringing down your heart with labour; but have you not had enough of this? Do you not remember that love-word, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest”? Sweet promise; will you not believe it, and avail yourselves of it? Will you not come to Jesus, and take the rest which he gives? How I wish you would come this very day! I beseech the Holy Spirit to turn you to Jesus. The Lord has come forth with power to draw you, and to bring you away from your weariness unto the sweet rest which remains for the people of God. Poor doves, fly no further; return to your Noah! These of whom we speak at this time were as weary men as ever *you* can be, but Jesus gave them rest; why should he not give rest to *you*?

Though bad, and banned, and bound, and burdened, there is yet hope; for the Lord can set you free.

Again, *these persons were downcast men*—"they fell down, and there was none to help." "We cannot go on any longer," say they, "it is useless to exert ourselves. We cannot escape God's wrath, and yet we cannot bear it. We are at our wits' end. There is no use in our trying to be better. We must give it up in despair." "They fell down;" this shows that they were quite spent. The captive has been grinding at the mill till he cannot go another round; even the lash cannot make him take another step—he falls in faintness, as though life had gone. So have we known men forced to acknowledge that they are "without strength." This was always true, but they did not always feel it. Now they have come to this, that, if heaven could be had for one more effort, and hell escaped for one more good work, yet they could not do it. They fall down, and there they lie, a heap of helplessness, dead in trespasses and sins. Where is now the boasted power of their free-will? Now it is to you who have fallen down, even to you, that the word of this salvation is sent. The Lord Jesus delights to lift up those that lie at his feet. He is a great overturner: "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree." He that flies aloft on the eagle's wings of pride shall be brought low by the shafts of vengeance; but he that humbles himself to the dust shall be lifted up. He that has fallen down, and lies in the dust at the feet of Jesus, lies on the doorstep of eternal life. The Lord will give power to the weak, and increase strength to those who have no might. I rejoice when I hear any one of you own to his weakness, since the Lord Jesus will now show forth his power in you.

In fact, *these persons were helpless men*: "They fell down, and there was none to help." What a word that is—"None to help"! The proverb says, "God helps those that help themselves." There is a sort of truth in it; but I venture to cover it with a far greater truth: "God helps those that cannot help themselves." When there is none to help thee, then God will help thee. "There was none to help"—no priest, no minister, not even a praying wife, or a praying mother, could now do anything; the man felt that human helpers were of no avail. His bed was shorter than that he should stretch himself upon it, and his covering was narrower than that he should wrap himself up in it. Now he saw that there was no balm in Gilead, there was no physician there; and he looked to a higher place than Gilead for balm and medi-

cine. The balm for such a wound as his must come from heaven, for on earth there was “none to help.” This is a fitting epitaph to be placed over the grave of self-righteousness. This also is the death-knell of priestcraft, birthright membership, and sacramentarianism. The conscience sees that there is “none to help.” Is this your case? Then you are the men in whom God will work the marvels of his grace, and bring you out where you shall walk in light and peace.

There was only one good point about these people—*they did at last take to praying*: “Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble.” It was not much of a prayer to hear; it was too shrill to be musical; it was too painful to be pleasant. “They cried,” like one in sore anguish: they cried, like a child that has lost its mother; “they cried,” like some poor wounded animal in great pain. Do you tell me that you cry, but that your cry is a very poor one? I know it, and I am glad to hear you say so, for the less you think of your cry the more God will think of it. Do you value yourself according to your prayers? Then your prayers have no value in them. When you think that your prayers are only broken words, and hideous moans, and wretched desires, then you begin to form a right estimate of them, and thus you are on true ground, where the Lord of truth can meet you. “They cried.” Was it any credit to them to cry? Why, no, it was what they were forced to do! They would not have cried to the Lord even then if they could have done anything else. They cried when their hearts had been brought so low that they fell down. It is a good fall when a man falls on his knees. O my dear hearer, whatever else you do, or do not do, are you crying to God in secret for his grace? Then, as surely as the Lord liveth, you shall come out into liberty. A praying man shall never be sent to perdition. There is that about prayer which makes it a token for good, a pledge of blessings on the road, a door of hope in dark hours. Where is the man that cries? Where is the man that prays? That is the man of whom it shall be said, and of others like him, “The Lord brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.”

May the Lord bless the description which I have given, so that some of you may see yourselves as in a looking-glass, and be encouraged to hope that the Lord will save you as he has saved others like you! If you do see yourself in the text, take home the comfort of it, and make use of it. Do not look at it, and say, “This belongs to somebody else.” You bondaged brother, you self-despairing sinner, you

are the man for whom Christ went up to the cross! If you saw a letter directed to yourself, would you not open it? I should think so. The other day a poor woman had a little help sent to her, by a friend, in a letter. She was in great distress, and she went to that very friend begging for a few shillings. "Why," said the other, "I sent you money yesterday, by an order in a letter!" "Dear, dear!" said the poor woman, "that must be the letter which I put behind the looking-glass!" Just so; and there are lots of people who put God's letters behind the looking-glass, and fail to make use of the promise which is meant for them. Come, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, come and taste my Master's love, yea, take of it freely, and be filled with heavenly rest!

II. Secondly, may God's Spirit go with us while we answer the question: How HAS THIS DELIVERANCE BEEN WROUGHT? You that have been set free should tell how you were emancipated. Let me tell my story first. It was the gladdest news I ever heard when it was told me that Jesus died in my stead. I sat down in my misery, hopeless of salvation, ready to perish, till they told me that there was One who loved me, and for love of me was content to yield his life for my deliverance. Wonder of wonders, he had actually borne the death-penalty for me! They said that the Lord of glory had become man to save men, and that if I trusted him I might know assuredly that he had suffered in my stead, and so had blotted out my sins. I marvelled much as I heard this; but I felt that no one could have invented news so strange. It surpassed all fiction that the offended God should himself take my nature, and in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ should pay my debts, and suffer for my sins, and put those sins away. I heard the blessed tidings—there was some comfort even in hearing it—but I believed it, and clutched at it as for life. Then did I begin to live. I believe that truth today: all my hope lies there. If any of you wonder that I show fight for the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, you may cease to wonder. Would not any one of you stand up for his wife and children? This truth is more to me than wife and children, it is everything to me. I am a damned man to all eternity if Christ did not die for me. I will put it no more softly than that. If my Redeemer has not borne my sins in his own body on the tree, then I shall have to bear them in my own body in the place of endless misery. I have no shade of a hope anywhere but in the sacrifice of Jesus; I cannot, therefore, give up this truth: I had sooner give up my life. I heard that the Son of

God had suffered in my stead that I might go free: I believed it, and I said to myself, "Then I have no business to be sitting here in darkness and in the shadow of death." I shook myself from my lethargy, I arose, and went out of my prison; and as I moved to go out, a light shone round about me, and my fetters fell clanking to the ground. What glorious musical instruments they were! The very things that had galled me so long now brought me joy. I found that the iron gate, which I thought could never be unlocked, opened to me of its own accord. I could not believe that it was true, it seemed too wonderful; I thought I must be dreaming. I very soon knew of a surety that it was I myself. The cold night air blew down the street of my daily care, and I said, "Oh, yes, I am still on earth, and it is true, and I am free from despair, and delivered from the curse!" This is how I came out to liberty: I believed in Jesus my Redeemer. Today, my dear brothers and sisters here, hundreds of them, would each one tell the story in a different way, but it would come to the same thing.

Follow me while we go a little into Scriptural detail, and learn from David how the Lord sets free the captives.

First, our deliverance was wrought *by the Lord himself*. Listen: "HE brought them out of darkness." Write that "HE" in capital letters, Mr. Printer. Have you in the house any specially large letters? If so, set up that word in the most prominent type you have:—"HE brought them out of darkness." Read also the sixteenth verse:—"HE hath broken the gates of brass." Did the Lord send an angel to liberate us? No; HE came himself in the person of his dear Son. When the Lord Jesus Christ had paid our enormous debt, did he leave us to accept our quit-tance entirely of our own free will, apart from his grace? Ah, no! the Holy Spirit came, and made us willing in the day of his power! "HE," "HE," "HE" wrought all the work *for* us, and all our works *in* us. "HE brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death." "Oh that men would praise the Lord, for HE hath broken the gates of brass." It is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. There is no salvation worth the having which has not the hand of the Godhead in it. It needs Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to save a soul. None but the Trinity can deliver a captive soul from the chains of sin and death and hell. Jehovah himself saves us.

Next, *the Lord did it alone*—"He hath broken the gates of brass." Nobody else was there to aid in liberating the prisoner. When our Lord Jesus trod the winepress, he was alone. When the Spirit of God

came to work in us eternal life, he wrought alone. Instruments are condescendingly used to convey the word of life, but the life of the word is wholly of God. As to the divine Father, is it not true of “his own will begat he us by the word of truth”? He is the Author of our spiritual life, and he alone. None can share the work of our salvation with him, and none can divide the glory. Ho, you that are captives, are you looking for some man to help you? Remember, I pray you, that there is “none to help.” “Salvation is of the Lord.” Remember that verse, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else;” that is to say, there is none else in the work of salvation except God. O soul, if thou hast to do with Christ Jesus, thou must have him at the beginning, thou must have him in the middle, thou must have him in the end, and thou must have him to fill up every nook and corner from the first to the last. He *alone* hath done it.

Note, too, that what he did was done *by the Lord’s own goodness*; for the Psalmist says, “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!” His goodness took the form of mercy; as it is said in the first verse of this psalm, “O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever!” It must have been mercy, because those whom it blessed were as undeserving as they were miserable. They were guilty, guilty in action, and guilty in thought; they had rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High; yet he came, and set them free. You and I are always wanting to know before we give alms to beggars, “Are they deserving people?” God gives the alms of his grace only to the undeserving. We respond to those who have a claim upon us; God remembers those who have no claim whatever upon him. “Ah,” says one, “but the people did cry!” I know they did; but they did not even do that till he first of all brought down their heart with labour. Prayer is a gift from God as well as an appeal to God. Even prayer for mercy is not a cause, but a result. Grace is at the back of prayer, and at the base of prayer. These prisoners would not have prayed if God had not wrought upon them, and driven and drawn them to pray.

“No sinner can be
Beforehand with thee;
Thy grace is most sovereign,
Most rich, and most free.”

So it has been with others, and therefore have I hope that it will be so with you, my beloved hearers. In the greatness of his goodness I trust my Lord will come and save you. It is not *your* goodness, but *his* goodness, which is the cause of hope: not your merit, but his mercy is his motive for blessing you. How greatly do I rejoice to remember that the Lord delighteth in mercy! It is his joy to pardon sin, and pass by the transgressions of the remnant of his people.

Note, once again, that while we are describing this great deliverance, we cannot help seeing that *the Lord effected it most completely*. What did he do? Did he bring them out of darkness? That was to give them *light*. Yes; but a man that is chained is only a little better off for getting light, for then he can see his chains all the more. Notice what follows—“and out of the shadow of death”: so the Lord gave them *life* as well as light. That “shadow of death” is gone, it can no longer brood over their darkened spirits. Yes, but when a man has light and life, if he is still in bondage, his life may make him feel his bondage the more vividly, and his light may make him long the more for liberty. But it is added, “and he brake their bands in sunder,” which means *liberty*. The Lord gave light, life, and liberty—these three things. God does nothing by halves. He does not begin to save, and then say, “I have done enough for you. I must stop midway.” Dear heart, if the Lord comes to your prison, he will not merely light a lamp in your dungeon, though that were something: he will not merely revive your spirit, and give you more life, though that were something; but he will break your chains, and bring you out into the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free. He will finish his emancipating work. Do it, Lord; do it now! Help men to believe in Jesus at this moment!

There is one more point which I want you to notice very carefully. When the Lord does this, *he does this everlastingly*. He “brake their bands in sunder.” When a man was set free from prison in the old times when they used iron chains, the smith came, and took the chains off, and then they were hung up upon the walls. Have you never been in ancient prisons, and seen the fetters and manacles hanging up ready for use; ay, for use upon those who have already worn such jewellery before, if they should come that way again? This is not the case here; for he “brake their bands in sunder.” Note this right well, O child of God, you were once shut up as with gates of brass, and bars of iron, and the devil thinks that one of these days he will get you behind those gates again! But he never will, for the Lord “hath

broken the gates of brass.” All the powers of darkness cannot shut us up with broken gates! Satan thinks he will imprison us again; but the bars of iron are cut in sunder. The means of our captivity are no longer available. My mind carries me to a certain scene, and my eye almost beholds it. Behold Samson, the hero of Israel, shut in within the walls of Gaza. The Philistines boast, “Now will he be our captive.” He slept till midnight, and then he arose. He found that he was shut up within the city, and so he went to the gate. That gate was barred and locked; but what mattered it? Israel’s champion bowed his great shoulders down to the gate: he took hold of both the posts, gave a tremendous heave, and in an instant tore up the whole construction from the earth in which it had been firmly placed. “He lifted the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and went away with them, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of a hill that is before Hebron.” See in this thing a symbol of what our Lord Jesus Christ did when he arose from the dead. He carried I away all that which held us captive—posts, and bar, and all. “He led captivity captive.”

When our Lord had led us forth from our prison, he said to himself, “They shall never be shut up again, for now I will make sure work of it,” and therefore he brake the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. How then can any child of God be shut up within the Gaza of sin again? How shall we be condemned when the Lord hath put away our sin for ever? No, the liberty received is everlasting liberty: we shall not see bondage any more. Oh, dear souls, I do want you to lay hold on this! You doomed and guilty men, you downcast and wearied men, there is everlasting salvation for you; not that which will save you to-day, and will let you go back to your bondage tomorrow; but that which will make you the Lord’s free men for ever! If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, if thou believest in him to save thee, thou shalt be saved. It is not said half-saved, but *saved*. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” That cannot admit that we should go to hell. Jesus says, “I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” “He hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.” Lord, help some poor souls to sing this song to-day, and receive at this moment everlasting salvation!

III. I close with a practical question: WHAT IS TO BE DONE ABOUT THIS? If such people as we have described have been brought into lib-

erty, what is to be done about it? I do not want to tell you what to do, I would have you do it by instinct. Fain would I, like Miriam, take a timbrel, and go first, and bid all the sons and daughters of Israel follow me in this song: “Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. He hath brought out his captives, and set his people free.” It naturally suggests itself to the liberated spirit to magnify the Lord. So the Psalmist put it, “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!”

First, then, if the Lord has set any of you free—*record it*. See how David wrote it down. Write it in your diary; write it so that friends may read it. Say, “The Lord hath done great things for us.”

When you have recorded it, then *praise God*. Praise God with all your heart. Praise God every one of you. Praise God every day. When you have praised God yourselves, then entreat others to join with you. The oratorio of God’s praise needs a full choir. I remember, years ago, a bill connected with a religious service of a very pretentious character, and on this bill it promised that the Hallelujah Chorus should be sung before the sermon. The friend who led the singing for me at that time came in to me, and asked if I could spare him. “See here,” said he, “a person has come from the service which has been advertised to say that they have nobody to sing the Hallelujah Chorus. The minister wants me to go down and do it.” I answered, “Yes; by all means go. If you can sing the Hallelujah Chorus alone, don’t throw yourself away on me.” Then we smiled, and at last broke out into a laugh; it was too much for our gravity. Surely for a man to think that he can sufficiently praise God alone is much like attempting to sing the Hallelujah Chorus as a solo. The Psalmist therefore utters that great “Oh!” “Oh that men would praise the Lord!” I do not think he said “men,” for the word “men” is in italics: the translators are accountable for it. He means: Oh that angels, oh that cherubim and seraphim would praise the Lord! Oh that all creatures that have breath would praise the Lord for his goodness! Even that would not be enough, but let the mountains and the hills break forth before him into singing, and let all the trees of the wood clap their hands. Let the sea roar and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. With a great “Oh!” with a mighty sigh over the holy business, which was far too great for himself, David felt moved to call upon all others to praise the Lord.

I close with that; my brothers, my sisters, you that have been saved, praise God! Praise him with the blessings he has lavished on you. I described them in three ways. With your *light* praise him: the more you know, the more you see, the more you understand, turn it all into praise. Next, with your *life* praise him—with your physical life, with your mental life, with your spiritual life: with life of every sort even unto eternal life praise the Lord. *Liberty* has been given us; let our freedom praise him. Be like that man who was made straight, who went out of the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. God has made you free, feel free to praise him: and if men will not give you leave to praise, take French leave; yea, take heavenly leave, and praise God anywhere and everywhere. Hark! how they sing the songs of Bacchus and of Venus in the streets, and even wake us up in the night: why may not we sing God's praises in the same public fashion? We must praise him! We will praise him! We do praise him! We shall praise him for ever and ever!

Praise him with the heart he has changed, with the lips he has loosed, with the lives he has spared. A little while ago you could not speak a cheerful word, but now you can rejoice in God. Let those lips, from which he has taken the muzzle of dumb despair, be opened in his praise. Praise him with all the talents he has lent you. If you have any power of thought, if you have any fluency of speech, praise him. If you have any voice of song, praise him. If you have health and strength, praise him. Let every limb of your body praise him: those members which were servants of sin, let them be instruments of righteousness unto God. Praise him with your substance. Let your gold and silver, ay, and your bronze, praise him. Praise him with all that you have, and with all that you are, and with all that you hope to be. Lay your all upon the altar. Make a whole burnt-offering of it. Praise him with all the influence you have. If he has delivered you from the shadow of death, let your shadow, like that of Peter, become the instrument of God's healing power to others. Teach others to praise God. Influence them by your example. Fill your house with music from top to bottom; perfume every room with the fragrance of living devotion. Make your houses belfries, and be yourselves the bells for ever ringing out the loud praises of the Lamb of God. He bore your sins, bear you his praises. He died for you, therefore live for him. He has heard your prayers, let him hear your praises. Let us

together sing “Hallelujah to God and the Lamb.” Let us stand upon our feet, and with one voice and heart let us sing:

“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
Praise him all creatures here below,
Praise him above, ye heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”