

Printed Pamphlets

Deliverance and Service

Jonah 3–4

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The following papers were taken from pamphlets.

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Notes of a Lecture

Jonah 3, 4

I do not propose to look at the subject which the book of Jonah brings before us either in its historical or its dispensational, but in its moral aspect; and taking the history of the prophet as an illustration simply of a double kind of exercise, through which you will find souls pass some time or other: and, in fact, without such exercise, it would be impossible for us to know what are the resources to be found in God for every one when brought into the circumstances here detailed. Now you will find a simple illustration of the first exercise in ch. 2 -- that is, the way in which God dealt with the conscience of the prophet -- the exercise through which he passed -- before he knew what real deliverance from God was. This is a very common kind of exercise to find amongst those who really are the Lord's. I do not raise the question now for a moment as to the many who understand perfectly what it is to have the forgiveness of their sins. I allow that to be an established fact -- I raise no question about it. There are many who know this, but who, notwithstanding, do not know what it is to be delivered. They have not got *deliverance*, they have got *relief*. Now relief is a blessed thing to have; it is the first thing that meets one, in that sense. You have your conscience burdened with the sense of guilt, and relief is absolutely necessary to free you of that, to take the weight from off your conscience; but many who have got that are not in the position of *delivered* people. You will find that God allows a person to pass through exercise before deliverance is found. I will point that out to you in the NT; I am simply going to the Old Testament for the *illustration*. I do not expect to find the *doctrine* in the Old Testament, but in the New. My statement then is this: that persons in their consciences are subjected to all the painful throes and agonies of exercise, until they are brought to a condition of absolute *powerlessness* before God. Then deliverance waits that moment. Allow me to repeat it, deliverance from God waits the moment in which the soul is in the position of absolute powerlessness before God.

Now if you will turn with me for a moment to that well-known scripture, and often read, Rom. 7, I will point out to you the exercise there. I see three things distinctly in that chapter -- though there are many more. If I were asked, as far as I know it myself, to state what are the characteristics, the salient points of the exercise which is unfolded in Rom. 7, I should say they were these: First of all the fact is learned, namely, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (v. 18). That is the first thing; and, beloved friends, many a day passes over our heads, before we come to the acknowledgment of that in our souls before God. I know that all say, "There is nothing good in me," but when it comes to the practical abnegation of self, it is another thing. Many a one who is

holding it with his lips is denying it *practically*. But it is an immense thing when the soul has really reached that point, "I know that in me dwelleth no good thing" -- to have acknowledged that the death of Christ, which has purged my conscience from all the stains of guilt that attached to it, has not altered, in the smallest degree, the question of what I am by nature -- that my nature remains the same, that it is not changed, not ameliorated.

I know very well many a one has a secret lurking suspicion in his soul -- "Well, there is some little change that has passed over me; at any rate I am not so bad as I was." Many think so, and it is not that they are insincere about it, but there is sincerity mixed with ignorance. This is a thing that you cannot learn *doctrinally*. No person ever discovered what his nature was, doctrinally. It must be learned *practically*. *Forgiveness of sins* is known when your heart rests upon the testimony of God outside yourself altogether; knowledge of yourself is reached only by practical experience. A person who wants to get the forgiveness of his sins has the testimony of God that *comes to him*, and his faith resting upon that, he is entitled to know that his sins are all forgiven. But, beloved friends, when it comes to the question of finding out what sort of a person I am in nature, I must taste practically *what* that nature is. That is the first thing that is reached in Rom. 7.

The exercise I have referred to leads to the second, namely, to the discovery of a nature entirely distinct from the old nature. In Rom. 7:19 you find these words:

The good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Then in Rom. 7:22,

I delight in the law of God after the inward man.

There you find a nature, which is entirely distinct, totally apart, from the old nature which goes out after the things that belong to it; a new nature which "delights in the law of God."

Now the third thing is (and I ask your attention specially to it, because it is the point connected with which there is the greatest difficulty), that that new nature (creature of God though it is) has no power to hold down the old. That is the point where many are hindered. They think, "I have got a new nature, and I will keep down the old in the power of the new." This is a total mistake, as I shall presently show.

Going over the three points again: first, there is nothing good in us naturally; secondly, there is a creature of God in us that is distinct from the old nature; and thirdly, that new nature, that creature of God in us, has no power over the old. Well, when a person comes to that last point, then I say, deliverance is at hand. In v. 24 of the chapter, ("O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?") the exercise comes to its climax.

There is the three-fold discovery made, and the moment that the third point is reached, namely, that although I have a new nature within me, altogether apart from the flesh, yet I have no power over the old nature -- then a person says "I can do *nothing*." That is the moment of deliverance; because, the instant that the soul expresses itself before God in the acknowledgment of its total powerlessness in the condition in which it is, it has looked out of itself, and that is the simple secret of it. One may speak, and preach, and lecture, and if one is a pastor, one may watch and seek to help people, but no person has ever got out of that exercise until he has thoroughly gone through it from beginning to end, and, beloved friends, it would be positive injury to souls if he could do so. It could not be really effected, but there may be a sort of attempt made to get people out of it -- and if it were possible, it would be at the expense of true blessing to them. The only illustration that I can find to convey my meaning is that of a medical man who stands by watching the course of a fever -- he may help the constitution and so on, but the thing has to *run its course*, and there is utter powerlessness until it has. So it is with regard to Rom. 7. The question is, who will take me out of this terrible condition of absolute powerlessness? -- not simply where I do the thing that is wrong, but where I own I have no power to do what is right, than which nothing is more humiliating. Every one says, "I do what is wrong," but the thing is, when you can say, "I cannot do what is right." All who have gone through it know what that moment is -- it is a wonderful moment in the history of each of us; that moment when, having passed through that tremendous exercise, we have come to the acknowledgment of this fact, "Here I am, and though I have got a creature of God in me distinct from the evil nature which I derived from the first Adam, I have not got the power to do the thing which I know to be right." This is the moment when a person loses everything like self-respect; and no one is able to walk steadily as a Christian until that moment is reached in the history of the soul. I believe the reason why so many unstable people are found every day is, that they have never had thorough establishment through this process. It enhances the value of Christ to a person when he can say, "I was lying in the bottom of a deep quagmire, out of which I had no power to extricate myself. The more I floundered, the deeper I got; the more effort I made, the more helpless I became; until at last I lifted mine eyes to heaven and said, I cannot get out of this! Who will deliver me?" Then you "thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 25) which is the expression of a person who is delivered.

Beloved friends, let me ask you this simple question -- then I will point out why I read the chapters in Jonah -- Have you learned that? How many of us here tonight have learned this? How many of us know it deep down in our souls? How many of us are the manifestation of these facts before God -- that it was nothing in us, no good in us, and that we had not power in ourselves (with the new nature and all) over the old, but when we came practically to know and own this before God, and looked out of self, then He delivered us.

The simple reason of all the misery witnessed, beloved friends, in many true souls, is this, there is not *deliverance*, and that is also the secret of much of the half-heartedness and want of devotedness to Christ on every side of us. People are not *delivered*, there is no motive outside of self, no liberty. What a wonderful thing it is when I can say, "This is my deliverer, who took me out of the quagmire," and take up the words of the Psalmist, "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Psa. 119:32). Look at the alacrity of his heart, the liberty, the freedom he is enjoying!

The reason of the unevenness in Christian character, and

unsteadiness in Christian walk is in this simple fact, souls have never thoroughly stood outside the old man, and rested on Christ, and known Him as their deliverer. The Lord give our hearts to know what a wonderful thing it is to be taken by Him out of that condition, so that we can feel we have done with it -- that we do not expect to better our flesh, to improve it in any shape, but that we have got a clean deliverance out of it.

If you turn back to Jonah you will find the illustration of all these things in ch. 2, the figure of a man who was *delivered* from all the consequences of his sin. Taking Jonah as a type of a sinner, you will find in ch. 1 of his history *independence, indifference, distance, disobedience, death*, all those in connection with Jonah's history in ch. 1. Is not that the history of man? First, independence, then disobedience, then distance, then indifference, then death.

Jonah is cast out of the ship, and God in mercy intervenes and delivers him by that which is really a type of the salvation of the Lord Jesus Christ. God prepared a great fish which swallowed Jonah. Jonah owes his safety from the consequence of his sin to that fish, he is saved in the life of another. But mark, it is in that condition that he is exercised. It is as a *safe* man that he is exercised, not as one *unsafe*. If he had not been swallowed, he would simply have gone to the bottom and been lost -- but God comes in and saves him. In ch. 2, you will find how he is exercised. Let us look at it, because it is interesting to see the exercise he is passed through. In v. 4 Jonah says, "Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." Now that is all the *man himself*, "I will look toward thy holy temple." That does not bring him deliverance; he is not delivered because he says that, because that is the *man*, that is *Jonah, Jonah* looking towards God's holy temple.

If you will cast your eyes a little further down, you will see he says in v. 9, "But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving, I will pay that I have vowed." That is *Jonah* still; that is the man still going through this exercise as to himself, and he gets no deliverance for that. But when you come to the last part of this verse, you find this escapes his lips: "Salvation is of the Lord." He has given up *himself* now, and he is delivered. God spoke to the fish, and Jonah is vomited forth upon dry ground. "Salvation is of the Lord" is exactly the counterpart of, "Who will deliver me from the body of this death?" "Salvation is of the Lord," out of the lips of the prophet in the belly of the fish, corresponds exactly with the cry that comes up from many an exercised heart, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Deliverance, I repeat, waits on that cry; God spake to the fish, and it vomited Jonah upon dry ground.

Now I have referred to this history, because I have found it often helps us if we search out these *illustrations* in the Old Testament. Let no one think I am finding any *doctrine* in the history; that is in the NT, quite clear and distinct; but I do find in the history of the prophet, and in what he passes through in his outward circumstances, a remarkable illustration of the exercise that souls pass through inwardly in order to discover to them what sort of a nature that is out of which, in God's mercy, they have been delivered through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here lies the secret of the misery of so many. It is simply because they have never said, "Salvation is of the Lord," in their *soul*, I mean. They have never stood practically outside of every single thing that belongs to them, as pertaining to the flesh, and nakedly before God with the confession, "Lord, everything must come from you now; it is all closed up on my side, every avenue and every entrance and every egress is closed up on my side, but, Lord, there are doors on your side." "Salvation is of the Lord."

There is another consequence that follows besides deliverance. Look for a moment and you will find that the prophet is spoken to

by God. See the beginning of Jonah 3. The word of the Lord, after all that exercise, “came to Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose and went.” The man is free to go now. Will you look at another scripture in the Old Testament as a further illustration of this point? That is in Isa. 6. You will find that it was the same with Isaiah as it was with Jonah. It was no question of Isaiah being a prophet, or a servant of God, or being the one whom God wanted to send. There never was such a question as that raised by God with him. On the contrary, you will find in ch. 2 that he knows the message of God -- and yet he cannot run, he cannot go upon the business that God sends him. Why? Because he has not learned himself, beloved friends! That is the reason why -- and I say it boldly, that of all persons least fitted in any shape to be a messenger of God is the one who has not learned his status; every one must, but it is indispensable in a messenger. Trace the history in the sixth of Isaiah. It begins with Isaiah’s acknowledgment of the greatness of God (v. 1). He was “high and lifted up.” The moment Isaiah views himself in the light of God’s glory and of His holiness (v. 3) he judges himself and cries (v. 5) “woe is me, for I am undone.” When he finds his status, what do you see? It is very beautiful. “Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (v. 8). Who answers? The man who has learned himself! “Here am I, send me.” He could not go before -- but now God sends him out with the most solemn message that was ever committed to any man to carry -- and that was to go to announce God’s judicial sentence upon a blinded nation, a disobedient people -- and he rises in the force and power of deliverance to carry it.

Just in passing -- look at one other scripture on the same subject in the NT. See Luke 5. The very same thing occurs with the apostle Peter. Peter learns himself to be a sinful man. “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (v. 8). Not that he had done wrong things, or said wrong things, but he was “a sinful man.” That was the testimony of his conscience, brought home to him in the light of that glory, which shone through the humiliation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ commands the treasures of the deep into Peter’s boat. Who could do that but the Lord of glory? Who could influence the fishes of the sea and bring them into Peter’s net but the Lord? When Peter sees it, he says, “I am in the presence of God” -- “I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

Now I believe the normal character of God’s work in souls is this -- they find out that God is Light, before they discover that God is Love. Love has provided the blood which removes whatever the Light detects. The Light detects and exposes to you what you are in its own presence -- and then you find that the Love has provided what will take away all that is unsuitable to itself. No matter where I turn in scripture, I see it. When we have found out that God is Light, and that He has penetrated down and shown us in that Light the nature that we have received from the first Adam, and in which we stood as men before Him -- then, I say, the love which has completely taken me out of it, stands out vividly before my adoring gaze.

Look again at Peter -- we find that the moment he makes the discovery of his own condition, he forsook all and followed Christ. In the history of Jonah I find the same thing. Jonah now runs his errand, he is now free. He rises as a delivered man who has passed through death, and goes to Nineveh.

And now I come to another exercise, through which you find that souls are passing. I will not dwell long on it, because the other has been upon my mind most, and is most needed. I will say only a few words about it. It is an exercise, not of conscience, but of heart.

Souls pass through both. It is interesting just for one moment to see how Jonah passed through this. We find it in Jonah 4. The exercise was in Jonah’s word being set aside apparently -- that is, as to his testimony that God would overthrow Nineveh -- by reason of the repentance of the guilty city. The Ninevites, from the king down to the very beasts, were clothed in sackcloth -- God’s title is owned, and God is not going to destroy the city. Jonah is so grieved, so wounded, that his word should be, so to speak, set aside by God’s having compassion on the guilty city, that he sits down in a sulk. Now I am struck with the fact that, where *conscience* is in the ascendancy, there is a great tendency in the direction of righteous severity. Where there is much conscience, and the heart has not been correspondingly exercised to know what the compassions of God are, there is a temptation to undue severity. You see it in Jonah. He is positively angry with God because Nineveh is not overthrown. No one disputes the fact that Nineveh *deserved* to be overthrown; yet so rigorous is Jonah, and so demanding is his conscience, and so righteously severe is he with reference to this, that, because the city was to be spared, he sits down and prefers to die, rather than be left in the world with his word, as it were, set aside. How does God bring him to his bearings as to this? It is very interesting and very blessed. God prepares that which was agreeable to Jonah in his circumstances -- that is, He makes his outward circumstances to soothe him -- to soften the grief he had in his heart because his ministry was set aside. God prepared a gourd, and under this gourd Jonah sits down and finds shelter. It soothed him. Do you not know what it is to sit down under a gourd that has soothed you? It was not something that you made for yourself, but that God prepared for you.

But God equally prepares that which deprives Jonah of the shelter; and oh, beloved brethren, if we had the sense of it in our hearts! the same hand that raised the gourd, raised the worm that smote it. The same hand that sent the one sent the other. God prepared a worm which smote the gourd, and it withered; and then what does God do? He allows the whole pressure of outward circumstances suddenly to bear upon His servant the prophet just when he is deprived of that which really suited him in them. And there is the east wind, and the burning sun, and the pressure of everything upon him, and he lies down and faints and is ready to die. What does God say to him? “Look at you -- you never labored for the gourd, you never toiled for it, it came up in a night, and perished in a night; and you have compassion on it. Will you not allow me to have compassions? Am I not to have a heart? Am I not to have affections? Am I not to exercise them?”

That, beloved friends, is the wonderful lesson that Jonah learns in his second exercise -- what the sympathies of the heart of God are. He learns what deliverance from God is, in Jonah 2, and what the blessed sympathies of the heart of God are in ch. 4. He finds an exit out of his troubles in ch. 2 by the delivering hand of God -- and he finds solace amid the agonies of a broken heart in ch. 4 in the fact that God has sympathies that no one could fathom or comprehend. I often think of that beautiful word, “He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” Beloved friends, what a wonderful thing it is to know Him as our *deliverer* -- to be able to lift up our heart and say, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The Lord give you to know Him also in the other character -- as your solace when everything fails around you. There is a worm at the root of all you prize in this world, then where can you turn? There is only one spot where your heart can find solace in the break-up of everything, and that is in the affections of God Himself. That is where I get comfort, and a wonderful thing it is to find it. I feel that we all want to know it more fully, that God has got a *heart* (I say it with all reverence), that He has got affections. It is the very thing