

# THE SAVIOR AS SEEN IN THE EXODUS

Part 2

*A Series of Radio Messages*

by

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## **Table of Contents**

1. Christ, Our High Priest . . . 2
2. Christ, Our Sacrifice . . . 6
3. Christ, Our Lord . . . 9
4. Provoking The Lord . . . 13
5. The Chastening of The Lord . . . 18
6. The Patience of The Lord . . . 23
7. The Purpose of The Lord . . . 29
8. God Is My Savior . . . 33

## **Diagrams**

- Tabernacle . . . 3
- Kadesh-Barnea . . . 14
- Victory Through Prayer . . . 21
- Out of, Across, Into . . . 23

# 1

## Christ, Our High Priest

The plan of salvation as shown in Exodus includes much more than might be expected at the outset. The work of salvation seems simple enough. One can say it is to bring men out of something bad into something good. Many people see this whole matter of salvation mainly as being saved from something that is unbearable. You have been doing wrong; you have been going to hell; now you are saved, which means you are saved from hell. This is very important, but it is by no means all that is involved. Sometimes it strikes people as something almost entirely new to become aware that they are saved into something good. It is true that for the moment, in the crisis, you were saved out of the bad, but actually in the overall plan you are saved into something that is good. When I was saved I was saved so that I would not go to hell, but I should not stop there. I really was saved that I should go to heaven. The meaning of the word saved is not only saved from hell but also saved to heaven.

This is all clearly seen in the exodus of Israel. The Promised Land had been mentioned long before the slavery in Egypt occurred. It was originally in the plan of God. He offered it to Abraham and told Abraham that He would give Canaan to Abraham and to his seed. It was hundreds of years afterwards that Israel went down into the land of Egypt where they were to remain for some four hundred years, where they became slaves, and from which they came into the Promised Land. As you study the exodus of Israel you see that entering into the Promised Land of Canaan did not occur immediately as they were coming out of Egypt. You can see this on a map very easily. Between Egypt and Canaan was a whole territory called the wilderness, or the desert that they had to cross.

In the crossing of the desert they were going to learn something that they needed to know. This did not appear at the outset. Living in the land of Canaan would be different than living in Egypt, where they were slaves. There is a vast difference between being a slave and being a free man. You live differently. You do differently. Slaves live one way, but free people live another way. There would be different responsibilities than that of living in the land of Egypt. For instance, in the land of Canaan they would need to know about God and about His care for His people. They would need to know about His holiness. They would need to know about His grace that He would exercise toward them in taking care of them. This is what they were learning in the desert.

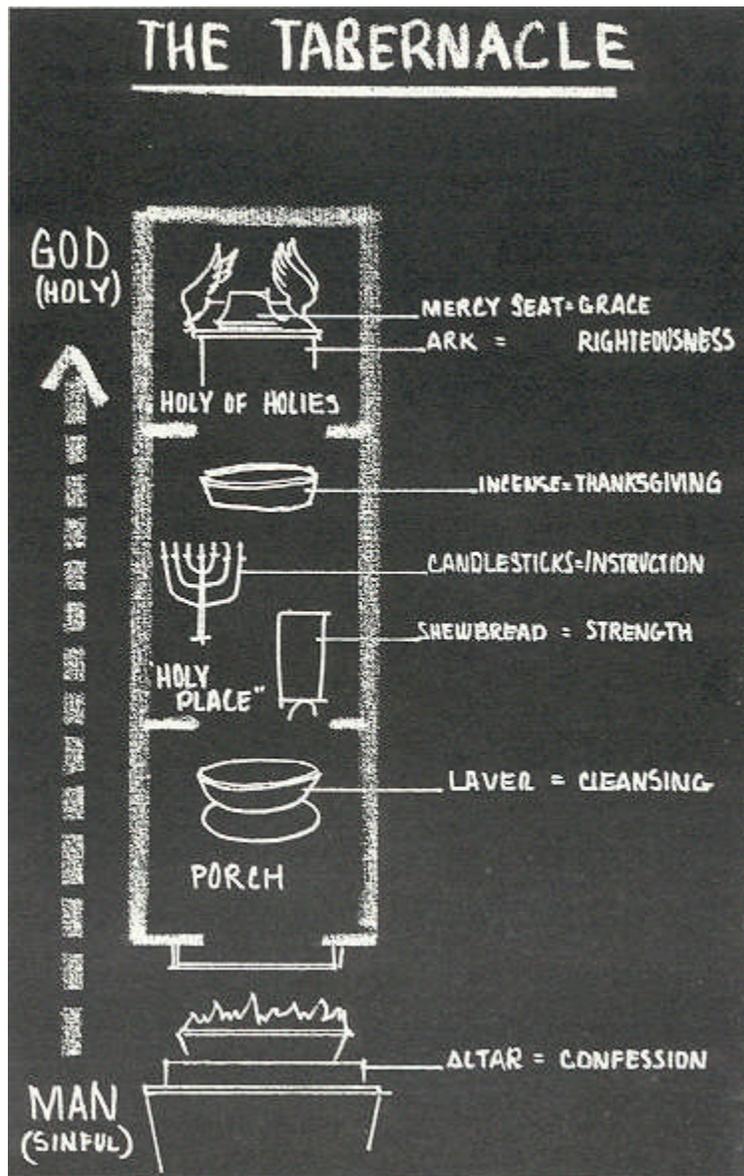
They learned, for instance, that God would take care of them in those problems that they had in the desert. They learned that at Marah where they had the bitter water. They learned that God would take care of them when they ran out of food, and He gave them the manna. from heaven. They learned that God would take care of them when they were thirsty and had no water, and He opened the rocks so that the water flowed forth. They knew that God would take care of them when they got into conflict with Amalek. Joshua would have lost the battle with Amalek if it had not been for Moses praying. Moses would have quit praying if it had not been for Aaron and Hur who upheld him. The whole situation with Amalek taught them that God would help them in answer to prayer. An of this they learned in the desert as they were traveling to Canaan. They learned to know about God and His holiness at Mt. Sinai where they were given the Law of God. There they found out what the holiness of God would require of men, They knew themselves as they were – that they were sinners. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin."

After they knew they were sinners and had done wrong in the sight of God they were able to learn about the grace of God. They learned about the grace of God in the tabernacle. Sinful man could come to holy God if he came according to the pattern that was set out in the tabernacle. As God revealed more of His truth to Moses on Mt. Sinai He revealed not only the ten words that he put on the tablets of stone but He also showed Moses how they should live. For example, whenever they made camp they were to put the tabernacle in the midst. There would be three tribes to the north, three tribes to the east, three tribes to the

south, and three tribes to the west. The tabernacle was in the very center of the camp and the tribes were arranged around in an orderly fashion. This was teaching them that God wanted to be in the very center. God wanted to be with them at all times. Today, God wants us to do everything having Him right in the center with us. In the tabernacle He showed Moses how a sinner could come to God according to the tabernacle pattern.

Whenever man is faced with anything that is new and strange, he needs help. As a Christian you have the Holy Spirit as your guide to show you the way that you should go. They also needed a guide in the Old Testament days. So God provided for a priest who would help the sinner by leading him closer to God. Aaron was the high priest. The word high priest simply means the person in charge of the others. The Bible speaks of Christ as our high priest. You can understand what the Lord Jesus Christ does as high priest if you look in the book of Exodus and see what the high priest did then.

In the diagram of the tabernacle the altar is the first article of furniture. When the worshipper came



with his animal sacrifice to the altar, the priest would take the sacrifice and put it to death. He would listen to the worshipper as the worshipper confessed his sins. If the worshipper needed any help in defining his

sins, the priest would help him. The priest's responsibility was to help this man coming to God to confess his sins. The man would lay his hands on the head of the creature – the lamb, or the goat, or the ox as the case might be – and it would be understood that the guilt and the sin would be transferred, as it were, over to the sacrifice. When the sacrifice was put to death, something in the law of God was justified and was made right.

The next article of furniture was the laver, the wash basin, which was filled with water, and there the sinner would be washed. A priest would lead the sinner to the wash basin, wash him, and then would take him inside the holy place. The priest kept the candlelight burning to provide light, and the man would be conscious of the fact that the word of God was the light of the world. "The entrance of thy words giveth light." On the other side of the sanctuary, across from the candlestick, was the table of shewbread. The priest would put the manna on the table, reminding the people that God provided the nourishment that they would need, and that God would take care of them. Next was the altar of incense which was the place of praise. There the priest would offer praise to God. This was the procedure that the priest would take. He was a representative of the worshipper. It was not left to the individual worshipper to remember all the details, but God provided a priest to act as a guide.

Coming to God according to the pattern set out in the sanctuary also included the offerings that they brought. The priest would receive the burnt offering and burn it all upon the altar. This would signify that the man had committed himself to God to be entirely yielded to Him. The priest would take the meal offering to the fire and burn it. Then there were the peace offering, the trespass offering, and the sin offering.

Those words sound strange to us, but they had a meaning to those people. They can have a meaning to us today. We have a priest which is our high priest, Christ Jesus, who is entered into the holy place, which is the very presence of God, not into a temple made with hands. Right there, in the presence of God, is where a person can have fellowship with God. When you read of Christ, our high priest, you probably think of Him in a black gown, perhaps carrying some sort of special insignia on the black gown. I do not know that the Lord Jesus ever wore a gown at all, and He certainly did not have any regular worship service. He did not have any church in which to meet. The Lord Jesus Christ came into this world and took on the form of man that He might help us. He was interested in and concerned for us. The word priest does not refer to any special kind of clothing; the word priest refers to a function. It is what somebody does on behalf of somebody else. For instance, if you should pray for someone, you are actually exercising a priestly function. That is to be encouraged because it is a matter of doing the will of God and that is what the Lord Jesus would want to do. He prays for me, and if you pray for me, you are doing the very thing that He wants you to do.

The high priest in those days was representing something that you have today, that is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The Lord Jesus Christ is made real and active in you by the Holy Spirit. So you can ask yourself in this connection, what would the Holy Spirit prompt you to do? What would Christ Jesus prompt you to do? One thing for sure is that if Christ is your high priest, representing you to God, He prompts the worship of God. If the Lord Jesus Christ is in your heart, He moves you to want to honor God. One of the ways you honor God is by going to church. When the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth He went to the synagogue every Sabbath day as His custom was, and He went to the temple, because that was the right thing to do. You can know that if the Holy Spirit is working in you and showing you the things of Christ you will go to church. You will worship God when you are in church. Also, if the Holy Spirit is in your heart, and Christ, your high priest, is working in you, praying for you, you will want to confess your sins and forsake your sins.

Jesus told His disciples to "search the scriptures." You can be quite sure that the Holy Spirit will prompt you to worship God by reading the Scriptures. Sometimes it would be special Scriptures that He would have you look at in order that you might follow through in His Will. Another thing, if the Holy

Spirit were in your heart you would just naturally pray. It would come to you as the thing to do. The praying you would do would be acceptable because you were praying in the will of God. The same would be true in talking to other people. You can know that if you were witnessing to other people that the Holy Spirit would prompt you to do it because that is what the Lord Jesus would do. Christ, your high priest, interceding on your behalf, would be prompting you to be interested in the care of other people.

If anyone were to ask you what the Lord Jesus is doing now, you could say that He is right now in the presence of God interceding on your behalf. One of the reasons that the writer of the book of Hebrews rejoiced was that the Lord Jesus Christ was "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." This is going on all the time. Christ, your high priest, is actually interceding for you and moving you along in the way that He wants you to go to serve God. You can be sure that if the Holy Spirit of God is in your heart, He is showing you the things of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will incline you to reverence and to worship God. He will incline you in Sabbath observance to honor God. He will incline you to respect other people, to give relief to the poor, to obey the laws of the land. This is what the Holy Spirit will do in you, activating the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, your high priest, by bringing you into the presence of God.

## Christ, Our Sacrifice

Salvation involves the worship of God. There is to be a certain heart attitude toward God. Worship is an act of homage, of appreciation. It takes place when the individual turns his mind upon the reality of God and esteems Him and adores Him. Worship is looking upon God and desiring to have His blessing more than anything else on earth. When you worship you come into the presence of God in such a way as to show your feelings toward Him. Universal custom is that when you want to show your feelings toward someone you bring a gift. The gift is a token of how you feel. The gift in itself – if it is precious, or costly, or beautiful, or serviceable – is a token of what you think of that one to whom you are bringing the gift. The bringing of a gift is to make the other person happy. Sometimes a person brings perfume. Perfume is sweet and fragrant. If I were to bring perfume to my wife, it would imply that I wanted her to know that my thoughts about her were sweet thoughts. Candy is a very common gift to bring to someone toward whom you feel very tenderly. The sweet taste of this candy represents what the other person means to me. It also represents what I wish I could mean to the other person. Everyone in our society knows what the giving of a diamond means to a girl. This gem is an indication of what you think of that other person. The reason why you give this very precious gift is because you want her to be pleased and to feel good about you. All over the world this is a common custom and it is interesting to notice how very basic in human nature it is. Even babies do it. They will take the best toy they have and hold it out to the person that they particularly like. You have seen the expression in advertisements – "Say it with flowers." The language of flowers is understood everywhere. Whether you bring them in a box, or in the hand, whether you have a nosegay to put in the coat lapel, no matter what it is, a flower speaks a word. The beauty and the fragrance of the flower represent the thought of the person giving it.

There was a sacrifice in the Old Testament of a sweet-smelling savour. In the worship of the tabernacle, the altar of incense was in the holy place. The incense was burning there all the day long. There was a certain compound that was set to burning which gave off a heavy perfume that filled the whole building. This was to indicate that the thoughts of praise and thanksgiving, the thoughts of worshipping God, were sweet and beautiful. In the New Testament story of the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ the wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh which they presented as tokens of their worship and their willingness to serve the babe that was born King of the Jews.

Such gifts are not only brought as tokens of affection and esteem but sometimes are brought as a peace offering. When a wife and husband have had some contention to come between them the wife often prepares a very lovely meal for the husband. You would say that she made a peace offering to him. Or perhaps he has been unkind or harsh, so when he comes home he brings a box of chocolates as a peace. It means to say that this gift is a token of good will and a plea for peace. It pledges that the person who is bringing the gift really means kindly toward the other person and actually is bidding for the other offering person's kind thoughts toward him. Where there has been any kind of estrangement between two people, this kind of thing will happen. It is a very natural thing and I would not be surprised if some of you have done it. Maybe there has been some tension between you and a neighbor. You know what it means to bake a cake and take it over to her. You wouldn't have to make a long speech. That cake you take over to that neighbor would speak more eloquently than all the talking in the world.

Once in a while you hear of a kidnapping case in which a child is kidnapped, and the kidnapers demand a large amount of money as a ransom. The parents give them the money hoping that the kidnapers will carry out their bargain and release the child that they think more of than they do of the money. The term ransom is used with reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Sometimes a gift is brought to satisfy a claim or to make good a damage of some kind because one person has acted in such a way that the other person suffers loss. That caused hard feelings. Then the first person sends a gift that more than makes up for the part that was lost, and in that way it restores the good will between the people. When the relationship between two people is that of friends and they exchange gifts it is called presents. You give presents to each other at birthdays and at certain other times of the year, particularly around Christmas. You bring generous gifts to each other when your hearts feel good and the situation is such that you are made happy by it. Sometimes the gift that you give another person is your behavior. That comes out in courtesy – not just manners, but real courtesy. When one person is very considerate of another person it is a sacrifice in a sense.

When the relationship between two people involves obligation as between a creditor and debtor, the gift that is brought may not be so much a gift as it is the payment of a claim. If one person owes another person some money and they were going to have fellowship with each other, it is quite conceivable that the debt should be admitted, the claim evaluated and the payment made. The particular problem between those two people will never do any harm if it is handled in that way. When the obligation between two people involves sin as in the relation between the natural human self and God, you are reminded of the verse in the book of Romans, "the wages of sin is death." In that case, when the one person is under sentence because of the wrong that has been done the gift could be a substitution for the death. This is not easy to understand but this is something you want to get hold of. If the sinner comes into the presence of God, God has a right to demand something of him. He can demand that the sinner do something that will make it right.

The nature of God is such that He requires certain things of man. What God requires of man is brought out in the Ten Commandments. When man does the wrong thing he is guilty of death and he is under sentence of sin. When the sinner who is under sentence of sin wants to come into the presence of God, the first thing that is going to be dealt with is what he owes. If he owes death the principle of restitution requires that he die. Now you come to this amazing thing in the Bible. When you do not have any gift to bring that will satisfy the requirements of the law that you have broken then it is possible to receive from God a sacrifice that will take the place of you in the situation. This principle of substitution – of allowing someone else to pay your bill – is a basic element in the Christian gospel. The Savior came into the world, knowing that you were in debt and knowing that you had nothing to pay. He knew that you had done wrong and that you did not have the disposition to do right. He came into this world, suffered, and died. He offers His death in place of your death. When you come into the presence of God in prayer you realize that there have been many times during the day when you did not think about Him. many days in the week when you did not think about Him. Now you want to have dealings with Him. The first thing that God would want is a settlement of the claims against you. If you are a sinful human being and you want forgiveness for the wrong that you have done you do not have time to go out and change everything. You can't go out and change anything. You don't have to. God has provided something for you to bring into His presence. When you come into His presence you bring the Lord Jesus Christ who is your sacrifice. Here is the very essence of the Gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ, living a perfect life and dying in this world offers a righteousness that is pleasing in the sight of the Father. When you come into the presence of God, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, God accepts this as your contribution, as it were, that you bring to Him. The sacrifice is brought as a substitute for you. Someone else takes your place. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." You have sinned. You ought to die, but here is someone who perishes for you. This is the kind of thing that we understand, and receive, and believe. We rejoice about it. Of all the various experiences that can make a person happy, the most wonderful is to know that because Christ Jesus died for you you will never come into condemnation. You will never come into judgment so far as your life is concerned because Christ Jesus has paid the price for you. This is the meaning of Calvary. This is the kind of thing that promotes that wonderful song, The Old Rugged Cross – "so despised by the world, has a won-

drous attraction for me." The reason it has such a wondrous attraction is because I know that in it I was spared. When I come to God counting on the death of the Lord Jesus Christ in my place, I am bringing Him as my sacrifice to gain forgiveness.

In the Old Testament there is a story about Abraham offering his son Isaac. Even though you may not understand why he should have done it the fact is that Abraham, coming into the presence of God, felt led to offer up Isaac on the altar. He bound the boy and was getting ready to actually offer him when his attention was drawn to a ram that was caught in the thicket. He immediately recognized the hand of God in this, and he said that God Himself would provide a sacrifice. God provided a sacrifice then as He does for us. In our case, when we come into the presence of God, we do not have anything to offer. We want to come into the presence of God. and yet our hands are empty. So we come before God, pleading the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and pointing to the fact that He gave Himself on our behalf. The Bible presents Christ not only as our Savior from sin and guilt but also our Savior so far as living today and tomorrow is concerned. He offers Himself not only to die for us, which He did on Calvary's cross, but He offers Himself to us that He will live for us as He did at Pentecost.

In the Old Testament in the books of Exodus and Leviticus you will find some chapters given over to the offerings that were made at that time. There were several different kinds and each one shows a different aspect of the death of Christ on our behalf. The sin offering was offered to take away guilt. The sinner would come with the sin offering into the presence of God, offer his sin offering, and God would forgive. The burnt offering, in which the whole offering was put on the altar and altogether burned, is commonly understood to mean total service to God. The entire offering was burned; no one ate of it. In the sin offering, the worshipper ate of it, but in the burnt offering no one ate of it. It was purely, utterly, and entirely, belonging only to God. It presented the total surrender to God, nothing being kept back. The peace offering was offered in request for peace. In the peace offering the person came into the presence of God pleading for God's good will.

This study began with the idea of bringing gifts – bringing something that would be pleasing to someone. You and I, coming into the presence of God, want to bring something that is pleasing, and certainly that would be the Lord Jesus Christ. In the second part of this study the word *sacrifice* was considered. A sacrifice is something you bring as a substitute for you. That is why we call Christ our sacrifice, because He died for us that we might have the benefit of His life for us.

## Christ, Our Lord

Salvation is most certainly the work of God through Christ. Christ Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." Before Jesus was born the angel said to Joseph, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." In the exodus of Israel from Egypt across the desert into the land of Canaan there is a pattern that we can call the plan of salvation. Israel is spoken of as the chosen people, which implies that they were chosen to serve as examples of the grace of God. In other words, whatever happened to them could in a sense happen to us today.

The children of Israel were strangers in an alien country. They had been made slaves. Egypt was acting as a taskmaster over them. They were in distress with each other because of their quarrelling. At times they were in distress because of the fears that they had of the situation that they were in. In other words, these people needed help. That strikes a chord in our own hearts. Every single one of us that have ever had any experience with God have been in trouble. Some of us were in real trouble of our own before the Lord came and helped us out. Israel's situation was that of being unhappy, distressed slaves in a foreign country. The only thing they could look forward to was continued persecution, confusion, and depression. In other words, they were without hope. There was not anything that they could do. This is important for us to keep in mind. because if we truly understand our spiritual situation, we realize that there is not anything we can do about relieving the particular situation we are in, which is beyond us and greater than we are and in which we are caught.

The next thing that we notice in this story is the hand of God. God took a hand with these people. God had promised Abraham that his children would one day be strangers and slaves in a foreign country; they would be left there for four hundred years, and then God would deliver them. This is exactly what happened. These people were in this strange country where they were being treated as slaves and abused. They cried to God. Their fathers had told them that Almighty God was their God and that He had chosen them to be His people. Now they were in all this trouble and so they cried to God. In mercy He heard their cry and in grace He sent them a deliverer. Everyone knows about Moses and remembers how he was sent to deliver the children of Israel.

The Lord Jesus Christ is our Redeemer and our Savior. In a very real sense He is also our deliverer even as Moses was. The plan of God was simple. They were in trouble and God had a wonderful country ready for them. They had to be brought out of the land where they had trouble, across a wilderness into the land where they were to be free. Moses, the deliverer, was going to bring them out and God would work miracles. So Moses called on the people to follow him as God was opening the way before them and strengthening them for all that went along. That was the plan of God. Moses would actually do the leading and the guiding, as it were, but God Himself by His power would open the way and would be the true deliverer. Salvation is really of God.

The works of God by which He effected the deliverance of Israel from the land of Egypt were marked by wonders and miracles of power. Every plague was a wonder. Certain miracles of power, like crossing the Red Sea, also showed what God would do. From a human point of view, Moses was the leader, but from the power point of view, it was God who was doing it. After they came out of the land of Egypt and were out in the desert on their way to Canaan there was a certain sense in which you could say that they were free. But they were also forlorn. They were all alone out there in the desert with a long journey before them. It was not a comfortable situation, but Moses kept telling them about the things of God. In all of this Moses was the redeemer. In the name of God he worked for the people and for their welfare. As redeemer Moses stood between the people and Pharaoh. Again and again he stood between them and the enemy. The people of Israel wanted to come out of Egypt, but Pharaoh wanted to keep them

in Egypt; the man in between was Moses. Finally at the Red Sea, it was Moses that stood between the people and Pharaoh. Then again you will find that Moses stood between them and Amalek in the desert. When Amalek attacked them in the desert and Joshua went out to fight them, it was Moses who went up on the mount to pray. Aaron and Hur helped him pray, but it was still Moses praying all the way through while Joshua was fighting Amalek and winning the victory. After Moses had gone up on Mount Sinai to meet with God we find that Moses stood between the people and their own error. They had done foolishly in making a golden calf. It was Moses who came down and stood between the people and the golden calf, smashed the golden calf and disciplined the people to prevent the spread of error in their midst. Finally, after they had been chastened because of their foolishness, when God in His righteous indignation would have destroyed them, Moses stood between them and God, making intercession and praying for them.

Moses was not only their redeemer but he was also their leader. He told them what to do. Some people think that if you would just do as you think you ought to do, it would be all right in the sight of God. There is nothing in the Bible like that. The Bible teaches that a person would not know to do the right thing unless God would tell him. For example, Moses, as their leader, had given them instructions about the Passover. Death was going through the whole country that night, and every household that had killed a lamb and had put the blood on the doorpost was to be spared. The whole thing took much preparation. There were days of getting ready. The lambs were to be taken up and looked at to see if there was anything wrong with them, and then arrangements had to be made for slaughtering the lamb and for sprinkling the blood on the door posts. All these things were done according to specifications. Moses was their leader by telling them what there was to do.

When they came to the Red Sea, God opened the waters by sending a strong wind to blow back the waters. What a good many of us have overlooked here is that Moses gave instruction about this whole thing. He told the people what to do. When they got on the other side and Pharaoh and his host had been destroyed, they had a period of thanksgiving and praise. Here again Moses functioned as leader of the people as he led them in the song of praise for God's deliverance. At Marah, the place of bitter waters, it was Moses who showed them the tree that they could put into the water to make it sweet. He would not have known this himself, but he learned it from God. When they went on from there and had traveled a little farther they became hungry. They had no more bread. So it was Moses again who, as the Scriptures say "gave them the bread from heaven. Then they, became very thirsty. They had no more fresh water where they were and water was very important. Again they called upon Moses. Moses turned to God. Here again we find that Moses told the people what to do. He gave them water from the rock. In the conflict with Amalek, it is true that Joshua went and fought, but it is also true that Moses went to a hilltop and prayed. The truth of the matter is that it was in the praying of Moses that the victory came for the Israelites.

The actual leadership in the camp was unwisely arranged. All the people would come to Moses for help, so Jethro, his father-in-law, advised him that what he was doing was not good; he should organize the people and make deputies who would hear the smaller cases and bring only the big ones to Moses. Moses arranged the organization of the courts among the people so that they could have quick, ready access to the government, and at the same time the business could be carried on because of the division of labor in such an organization.

From there they moved on till they came to Mount Sinai. Everyone knows that this was the great mountain where Moses received the tables of stone. He had brought the people to this place and then he had left them at the foot of the mountain for forty days while he talked with God. When he came back he had the tables of stone, but he also had more information. He knew not only about the law which he brought back but also about the tabernacle, and the priesthood.

Another thing that Moses did as leader was to give them their ritual. You read in the Old Testament how the sinner would come to God in the tabernacle, how he would offer the burnt offering, and

finally how he would offer himself to God – all of that was outlined by Moses, and he guided the people in it. He also gave them their regulations – how they were to live and how they were to do. It would have been a sad thing for those people if they had not had Moses to instruct them. There was far more than just that they be delivered from their enemies. It was that they be guided into understanding what it meant to live in obedience to God.

All of this about Moses is really a picture to us today of Jesus the Redeemer, Jesus the Savior, Jesus of Nazareth who came to save His people from their sins and whom we call Christ. You see in Jesus Christ the Savior the very things which we have been saying about Moses. For instance, Jesus of Nazareth came to us as from God. You remember the story of the Virgin Birth. When you read the story of Moses you find that in a very real sense God's providence was watching over him. He was hidden in the bulrushes by the water front so that Pharaoh's daughter would see him. At that time all the male babies were being killed. Yet Moses was not only spared but was actually taken into Pharaoh's household as an adopted child. The hand of God was certainly upon him.

With reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, the hand of God was involved in bringing Him to us. He came to us from God. As Moses stood between the people and their enemies so the Lord Jesus Christ stood before Pontius Pilate. He then went to the cross and stood before the whole world for us. He did not have to do it for Himself; He did it for us. He took our sins in His own body on the tree in order to save us and He was raised from the dead on our behalf.

As you go on thinking about the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, you see that He brought us into liberty. Just as Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt into the land of Canaan, across the desert where they traveled relatively free, so we have been set at liberty by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. As Moses brought the Ten Commandments down from Mount Sinai and presented them to the people, so the Lord Jesus Christ, in a very real sense, brings to us the law of God, the word of God. Moses interpreted the will of God to the people. God would show Moses what He wanted and Moses would tell the people. We have in the Lord Jesus Christ our mediator between God and man, and He is the one that interprets the will of God for us. He is the one who does on our behalf. You will remember in the story about Moses how he exercised himself in faith on their behalf. In the crossing of the Red Sea, it was the faith of Moses that was involved. In many other places you see that Moses was a man of faith. In the salvation we have in Jesus Christ, our Lord Jesus Christ was acting in faith all the time. He continually acted in obedience to God. If you read the prayer of the Lord Jesus in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John you will see that just as Moses interceded for his people, so the Lord Jesus Christ interceded for His people.

It is not so easy to understand, but it is still true that just as Moses brought discipline to the people when they were in error, so we today actually can feel the discipline of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is in control; He is watching over us; if in any way we should carelessly or foolishly get into things that are not right, it would be His business to show us these things. He applies discipline to our hearts. At the same time He intercedes for the people for forgiveness.

Just as Moses led his people, so the Lord Jesus Christ leads us. They were led by the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. How do you think they were led by the cloud? Do you suppose they were led by looking up into the sky and seeing the cloud at a great distance and then following it? Do you think that would have been adequate? A cloud on a sunny day casts a shadow and it is very refreshing in hot weather to have the shadow of a cloud. I have a feeling that they followed the cloud by just staying in the shadow. What that means for you and for me is that when we have trouble and we turn our hearts and minds to the Lord Jesus Christ, we can get from Him not only comfort about that problem, but by staying with Him we can be comforted about other things as well. The cloud, the pillar of fire, and Moses interpreting was the way in which they were guided. In our day we don't have the cloud, but what we have is the Scriptures, inspired by the Holy Spirit who interprets and makes them real to us. As we think of the way Moses led the people, we are reminded of the words in the hymn "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,

Pilgrim through this barren land; I am weak but Thou art mighty; hold me with Thy powerful hand; Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more." And in another hymn you have sung many times, "He leadeth me: O blessed thought; O words with heavenly comfort fraught! What-e'er I do, where e'er I be, still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me. Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine, Nor ever murmur or repine; Content, whatever lot I see, Since 'tis God's hand that leadeth me."

## Provoking The Lord

People talk about the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and about Jesus Christ in various ways all over the country. I am sure every one who does so is trying to let other people know something that they have understood about the Lord. No doubt many feel that they honor the Lord by presenting His meekness and evidence of His holiness. And it is wonderfully true. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "I am meek and lowly in heart," but there is something unhealthy and untrue if we present the Lord as being soft or flabby. To be sure, God "is merciful and gracious" slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy." He is quick to forgive and He is kind, but it is also true that, "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." And again, "God is angry with the wicked every day." Some will think that such an idea as this belongs only in the Old Testament, but it was written about our Lord Jesus Christ in dealing with the Pharisees, "He looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts." Towards sinners it would seem that God is most gracious. He is constantly surprising and delighting us with the compassion He has upon those who are ignorant and out of the way. We remember how the Lord Jesus Himself dealt with the woman of Samaria. Or perhaps you remember the story that is told about a woman taken in adultery and how, after He had silenced her accusers, He turned to her and said, "Woman, . . . hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord, And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more."

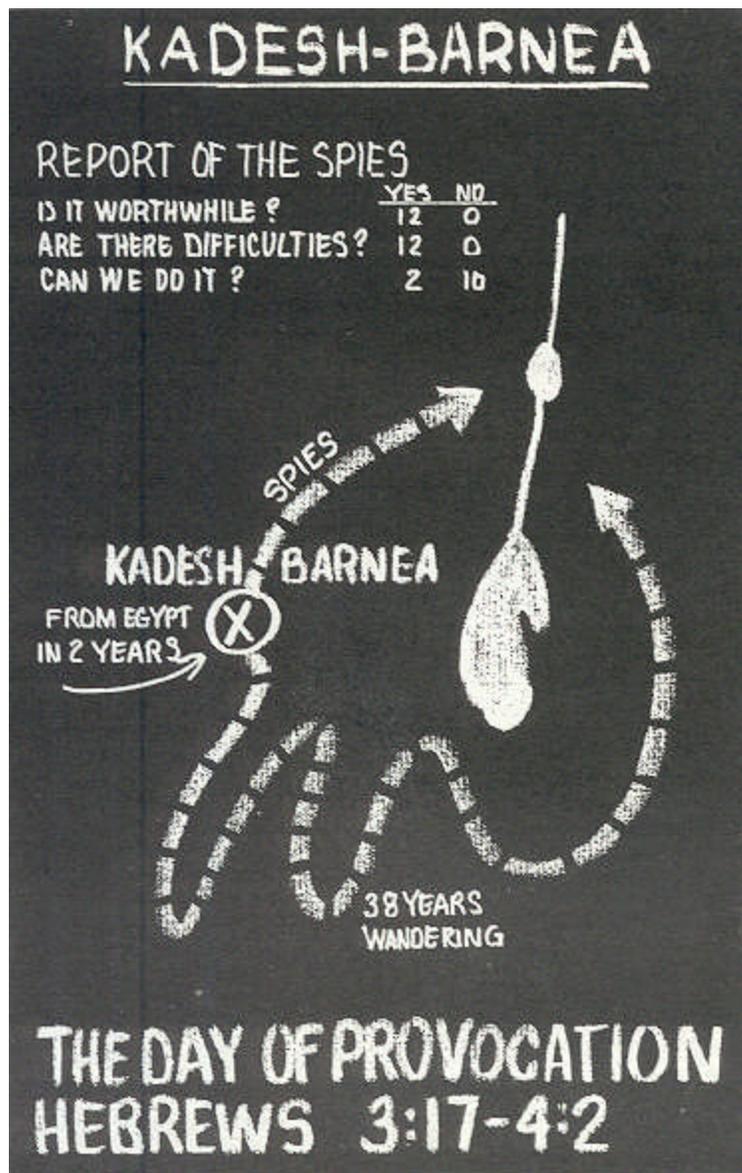
These Biblical accounts are in keeping with everything we understand about the kindness and the mercy of God, yet the Scriptures set out not only the goodness of God, but also the severity of God. For instance, when the Lord Jesus Christ saw the money-changers and those who bought and sold the sacrifices in the temple He made a whip of knotted cords and drove them out of the temple. "And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." He told the parable of the wicked servant who thought he could get away with abusing his fellow servants. We are told that when his master came he was thrown into outer darkness where there was "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Perhaps you remember the story of the five wise and the five foolish virgins. The five foolish virgins came late to the wedding and found the door shut. And it never was opened. In the same chapter of Matthew is the story of the talents. The man with the five talents who had made five received the praise of his master, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." The man who had two talents and made two received the same praise, "Well done, good and faithful servant." The man who had one talent and buried it heard that he was a wicked and slothful servant. They took away what he had and threw him out among the enemies of the master where there was "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Also, in the same chapter is the parable of the sheep and the goats. Those people who had not conducted themselves acceptably to God were shut out from Him. Perhaps you will remember an even sterner warning that is given in the Gospels concerning such as harmed the little ones that believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. He said of them, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." That is the language of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the book of the Revelation is a message from the Lord after He was in glory. The book of the Revelation is not just something that is a sort of a dramatic poem. It is the word of the Lord. He sent word to His churches and told them, one after another, how He would judge them. He told the church at Ephesus for example, that although they were a good church, He had one thing against them – they had left their first love. He told them to "repent and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place." In one after another of those churches He warned them that he would come in judgment.

The Scriptures present the Lord Jesus Christ as being mild and being gentle, but they also present

Him as being stern and straightforward in his zeal for the glory of the Lord. He used the figure of speech, saying "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Those are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. When He was speaking to the disciples in the last days He was here on earth it is reported in the Gospel according to John, chapter fifteen that He said, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: . . . If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them . . . and they are burned." Matthew records the parable Christ told of the wheat and the tares in which the tares would be burned.

With all His mercy and loving-kindness the truth is that the Lord can be provoked. This is a sober thing, but it is absolutely true. He can be provoked and in provocation He can be angry. In the exodus of Israel we have an incident that is a case in point. About two years from the time they left Egypt, they came to a spot just outside Canaan that was called Kadesh-Barnea. In those two years God had provided for



them in many different ways. They had been delivered out of Egypt and they would remember it only a

short two years before. They had been helped across the Red Sea where Pharaoh was drowned and they would remember that. They had traveled across the desert to Sinai, and God had seen them through the various problems in the desert. At Mount Sinai they had received the tablets of stone, the law, the Ten Commandments as we call them. They had received certain instruction about worship in the tabernacle, about the organization of themselves and their camp on the road. They had been organized so that they could do all things decently and in order.

They came to a place called Kadesh-Barnea from whence they could have entered directly into the land. When Moses challenged them to go in and possess the land they sent twelve spies to get the answers to several questions. Is it worth while? Is it worth taking the risk of invading this country? Are there difficulties? Will we run into any kind of trouble? Are we able? The spies brought back their report and we find that twelve of them unanimously said with reference to the land, Yes, it was a land flowing with milk and honey. Then the next question was raised, Are there difficulties? They all agreed there were difficulties. There were high walled cities and giants as soldiers in the land. You must remember that the children of Israel had been slaves in Egypt; they were not trained in military fashion. They had been traveling for two years in the desert, and they would not have battering rams and engines of destruction such as were used in those days for the besieging of cities. They did not have any of those things. So they all agreed there were difficulties. But when the question came up as to whether they were able to do it, they had a divided report. There were ten that said, No, we cannot do it. There were two that said, Yes, we can do it. Now the difference between these two reports – the majority report and the minority report – was not on the basis of the information that they had. They all agreed on the information. The land was a good land, the cities were high, walled cities, and the soldiers were like giants. Nor did they differ in the evaluation of the situation. It was more than they could handle; all twelve were agreed on that. But there was a difference in their faith. The two men who said, Yes, we can go, had their confidence in God. They said that God would help, and they pled with the people to go forward. Now the ten – the majority – had said, We cannot do it, and that was true. Joshua and Caleb admitted that they could not do it, but they said God would be with them. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The people made no comment because they were afflicted at the time and in the throes of unbelief. We read in the book of Hebrews, "They could not enter in because of their unbelief." So far this is a distressing story of frustration and failure. Many of us might say, Well they were just human and they couldn't do it. Or we could say, Well they were just so impressed with the difficulties they just didn't have the heart to go forward. But it is not quite as simple as that. There is a lesson here. This event came to be known in Scripture as the time of the great provocation, the word provocation being a noun for provoking, which is the verb. This is the time when the Lord God was provoked greatly.

Jesus Christ tried to explain to the people how God felt when He was provoked. In the parable of the great supper – the master had sent out his messengers everywhere inviting people to come to the supper. You remember all the excuses they sent. One of them said that he had bought a piece of land and he would have to go and check on it to make sure everything was all right. Another man said he had bought some oxen and he would have to prove them to see what they were like, and he could not come. Another one said he had married a wife and he could not come. The point was with all their excuses that they just ignored the invitation. When He told this story Jesus said the master was wroth and said, "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." The Lord Jesus told that parable to reveal to us exactly how God feels. In the parable of the foolish virgins you will remember that all ten were expecting the master to come some time, but these five foolish people were not ready. They did not expect him to come that night, and so when they went to get oil for their lamps they found the door shut and they did not get a chance to go in. When Paul opposed Christ in ignorance and unbelief God was gracious and called him to be an apostle anyway.

This is the lesson we seem to have: when people have a chance to know from experience the truth

about God and then ignore Him, this is provoking to God. Apparently He has endless patience with the man who does not know. He can thoroughly understand the unbelief of the man who has no faith. But if a man once had faith and he knows something of the good word of God, for him to turn away from God or to neglect the things of God comes under this category of provoking God. This is what I want us to think about here now as we consider the exodus of Israel. Israel had traveled along, coming out of the land, of Egypt when God delivered them with a mighty hand. You will recall all those plagues that occurred, and then the final plague, the death of the first born. Then you remember how God led them and they came to the Red Sea, and there at the Red Sea how He opened the way for the people of Israel to go through. When the Egyptians tried to go through there, God let the waters come back in and drown them. This is something that they had known. This was Almighty God and they knew about Him and had their confidence in Him. Every day they were fed manna from heaven. Every day they were led by the cloud and every night they had the light of the pillar of fire. They had the evidence of God around them. Now when they came to this point and were to go forward they saw that the difficulty was greater than they could manage and they quit. They were right when they said they could not do it, but apparently they had forgotten who God was and how much He had done for them. After all that He had done for them, how could they ignore Him? This was provoking to God.

You and I can learn something from this. This is a word to be spoken to those of us who say we know the Lord Jesus Christ. God will deal as He sees fit with those who have not put their trust in Christ. He will be merciful and gracious to them. But if we do not go on into full consecration, we can provoke the Lord.

In the matter of worship of God, here is a man who does not believe there is a God at all, and he does not go to church. That makes sense. But here is someone who knows the Lord God and he believes in God. He really thinks that the church is the house of God and that the preacher is a minister of the gospel of God. He believes that the Bible is the word of God and that the hymns they sing are praises to God. If he does not go to church, I think that is provoking to the Lord. Do you think it is all right for me to accept all the benefits from God every day and never thank Him? Can I really believe in God, and know that God is merciful and gracious and yet never praise Him? Or if I know that God is available and that He would have fellowship with me and I could have fellowship with Him and I never seek Him I am provoking the Lord.

You may say there are a great many people who do not worship God and who do not read their Bibles or pray. But they do not know any different than what they are doing. I do know, and if I fail in this case I would be provoking God. Take, for instance, the matter of the Bible. I know a great many people have doubts about the Bible. There are many people who own Bibles who have no real confidence in them. But if you really and truly believe that the Bible is the word of God and that reading it you come to know God, can you dare to neglect the Bible? Do you see what that would mean? If you think that God inspired the writers to write the Scriptures and then you never read the Scriptures, this could be provoking to God. If you believe the Bible and understand the gospel comes from the Bible and yet the only time that you talk about it, you criticize it, the only books you read are books of criticism about the Bible, the men you listen to are the men who criticize it, that could become provoking to God.

Now let me draw your attention to another line of provocation. Take this matter of prayer. Do you have confidence in prayer? Do you really believe that God will hear and answer prayer? What do you think it must look like in God's eyes when you go along day in and day out and never pray? You have problems. You have burdens. Things come up in business, people disappoint you, and things go against you. Will you turn to God in prayer? If you do not pray, that is provoking to God. When a person is not a believer, for him to have nothing to do with the reading of the Bible and with praying makes sense, but if a person does believe, then it is important to do these things.

In the matter of witnessing, if you were a Christian and you really believed that your soul was

saved through Jesus Christ. do you think you should say something about that? Do you think you ought to let others know that you wish they knew these things? You may not have too much opportunity to visit in the community where you are, but you surely have some. Have you ever invited anybody to church? Let us say you really believe God gave His Son to die for you, do you ever think about it? Do you meditate on this? This is acceptable to God.

Here is an interesting thing about all of this. Apparently as long as I don't know any better, nothing is held against me for the things that I do. But if I know better, and I know about the Lord Jesus Christ, then I think that what I do with the Bible, church and prayer would be very important to Him. I think He would look upon me closely to see what my attitude would be as far as He is concerned.

When the children of Israel came to the spot where they could have entered into the land, all they needed was to have faith in God. That they did not have faith that God could take care of them was provoking to God. The result of it was that He vowed a vow that none of them would enter into the land except Caleb and Joshua.

So I think it is going to have to be with us. There will be some of us who are just like this. We listen, we believe in Christ, and we are glad that we ourselves understand about these things but we do not work at it. We don't read the Bible. We don't pray. We don't attend regularly in the church services. We don't ever invite anyone to the church. I think we are coming close to provoking the Lord. Do not provoke the Lord to anger. Live up to the light that you have. If you know about God and you believe in Him, turn to Him. Pray, read your Bible, and trust in Him.

## The Chastening of The Lord

The word *salvation* is an inclusive word. It brings us into a special relationship with the Lord whereby, among other things, He chastens us. The chastening of the Lord, as this phrase is used in different places in the Bible, would mean something like this: special treatment follows wrong conduct. Usually there is pain or distress designed to result in better conduct. If I am doing wrong, doing something I shouldn't do, God then deals with me in a special way, probably letting me have some suffering experiences, some distress of some sort. He deals with me in that way with the purpose of affecting me so that I won't go wrong like that again. We would call that chastening.

By the time we have reached the age of discretion we know our right hand from our left. We have it pretty clear in our minds that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap and we are more or less prepared for some kind of consequences. Suppose someone is driving too fast. We'll call that an evil deed. He is speeding down the highway, or perhaps through a residential area. That speeding on his part, that evil deed, could bring any one of three results. In the first place there will be the bad results if he wrecks the car. That wouldn't necessarily teach him anything. That's just the result of what he was doing. He was physically driving too fast for safety, and the result was his car was wrecked.

A second kind of result of speeding could be punishment. The police could catch up with him and bring him into court and assess him a penalty, in addition to forcing him to pay for any damages he might have caused. If he is fined \$50 or \$100 or \$200 for speeding in town, this is a penalty and is in the nature of a punishment. He did wrong and they are going to make him pay for it.

A third result could be some sort of chastening, although we ordinarily don't use that term. For instance, he could be sentenced to attend a driver's school. The idea of having him attend a driver's school is to take up his time while teaching him to be more careful about driving in the future. Or perhaps his license might even be suspended for two weeks. Now the suspending of his license for two weeks won't repair the car or pay the damages. It won't contribute anything to the city treasury like a fine would. The suspending of a license would be to impress upon his mind that he should not do this thing. That's something after the fashion of chastening.

Parents have this same problem of attempting to discourage misconduct. You see, human beings can do all kinds of things, good and bad, and it is easy for them to be bad. Children are just human and they can do all kinds of things. They can be very sweet and they can be very sour. They can be real good and they can be real bad. And so, parents have a problem on their hands trying to discourage misconduct. Now, there are two ways of doing it. One of them is by punishment. They can have a certain penalty that they inflict upon the culprit. That's one way of doing it. Another way is what I am going to call *chastening*. They can try to deal with the child in such a way that they will stimulate some change of procedure for the future. In the case of punishment, the focus is back on the evil deed. You did wrong and because you did wrong you're going to be punished and the punishment is going to be according to the wrong that you did. That's punishment. Chastening, on the other hand, puts the focus on future conduct. Thus, the phrase, *the chastening of the Lord*, has special reference to what God does with people, mainly His people, in trying to turn them from evil into that which is right and good.

As we preach the gospel, we often emphasize that God is not now *punishing* evil. In other words, people are not being called into account for the deeds done in the body; not now. There is a time coming, the Bible tells us, the day of the great White Throne, when the books will be open and every deed that every man has committed, every word that he has spoken will be there before him and will judge him. That's the time when the judgment is going to be assessed. And so you might ask what God is doing now. He is calling people to Himself. This doesn't satisfy you and you ask if God isn't doing anything about that

which is wrong and evil, and doesn't He affect people about that. Yes . . . He chastens them. He is trying to improve their situation by improving their conduct.

If you are acquainted with the way in which sports teams work you win know that every now and again a coach may have a player on the team who is conceited. He is a star player but he is just getting too conceited. The other boys can't even play with him. Then the coach may want to do something to him to cut down his conceit. One of the things the coach might do is to let this man sit on the bench . . . perhaps during an important game . . . doesn't play him at all . . . just lets him sit on the sidelines. Well that's a terrific shock to a man's ego and to his feeling of importance. The coach just lets him find out he's not that important. The coach may do that with the view towards using this man in the future, when he won't be as proud and as cocky as he is now.

Parents have this same thing in mind. They want to train their children. And so, they may warn the children that they're going to reward or punish them on the basis of the way in which they act. Perhaps the parents tell their children that if they are prompt in response when they're called and if they do exactly what they're told, then at the end of the week the parents are going to take the obedient children out to a ball game, and this is held out before them. Suppose it turns out that during the week one of the children is not careful and he makes mistakes and he is careless about what he is doing. The parents are trying to train him to prompt obedience and thoughtful obedience, and so they deny the child the privilege of going to the ball game. They say, "No, we're not going to go." Now they don't do this because they hate the child and they don't do this because they want to hurt the child. Rather, they are doing this because they want to help the child and they are trying to emphasize to the child the importance of doing the right thing.

We see instances of this in the book of Exodus which will help us to understand how chastening is included in salvation. I am going to go over a number of these instances and you're going to find out that the Lord was chastening the people. And you are going to see the lesson that He was trying to teach. The average human being, in his own nature, in his own disposition, is not ready for fellowship with God. He is not ready for the fellowship he'll have in heaven, because he is thinking of himself and he is going to have to learn. And so we are going to see how the Lord dealt with the children of Israel to show them and teach them how they should live together.

First, I want you to notice Moses and his first attempt to deliver Israel. You will recall that when he was forty years of age, although he had been in Pharaoh's household and apparently could have been called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he set that privilege aside in order to belong to his own people. And he went out among his own people to see how they were getting along. You will remember that when he went out to see his own people he found two things the matter. He found that the Egyptians were abusing the Israelites, and he found that, the Israelites weren't getting along with each other. They weren't able to live together in peace. So he tried to correct each of these situations. When he saw an Egyptian abusing a Hebrew he interfered, with the result that the Egyptian was killed. The next day he saw two Hebrews quarreling with each other and he went to them and told them that as brothers they shouldn't quarrel. But they turned on him and asked him if he was going to kill them the way he had killed the Egyptian the day before. And this reaction so shook Moses that he had to flee.

Now, this was Moses at forty years of age. Instead of being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, he tried to attach himself to these people, his own people, that they might be blessed of God. And his first attempt was a failure. He had to leave the country and go into exile for forty years. God let this thing happen to this man. It was a shocking experience that humbled Moses. If he had had any idea at forty years of age that he amounted to anything or that he was indispensable, it was knocked out of his head. He was forced to flee the country and for forty years he acted as a sheep herder, on the backside of the desert, away out in the land of Midian, far, far away from the other Hebrew people living in the land of Egypt. This humbled him. It was part of the preparation.

Then we read about how God called him when he was eighty years of age and how He gave Moses

the commission to go over to Egypt and bring out the people of God. And so Moses got himself ready to go over to this country from which he had fled forty years before. This is a rare mission, the only one of its kind, and Moses is the only man that is led to do it. This is his one great calling in life. But now look at the next thing that happened. On the road, going from the desert to Egypt, Moses was met by the angel of the Lord, who sought to kill him. Moses was threatened with death. Just stop to think of this. Wouldn't that be a humbling experience? Suppose you felt led to try to serve the Lord in some big way. You had the idea that you were meant to do something for the Lord's people that nobody else had ever done for them before. And here right at the very outset you are face to face with the fact that God seems to be about to take your life . . . as if you didn't even count. This would be a humbling thing. At the same time there is a certain amount of assurance to come out of it. You can be very sure that that experience had a very profound effect upon Moses. Moses realized in a very real way that he, himself, was there only because God permitted him to be there, and if God had wanted to take him away He could have taken him away.

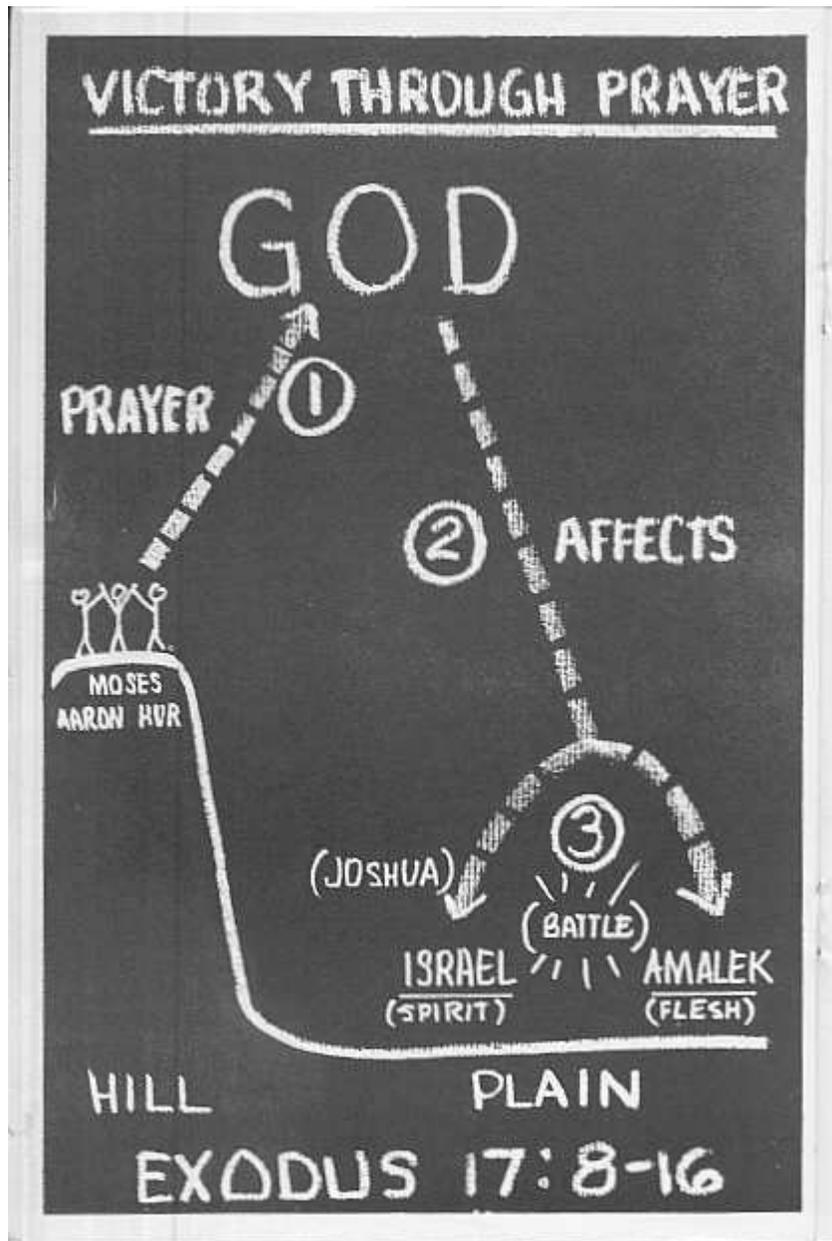
Now let's look at other instances where God dealt with people in a way that humbled them and brought them down, as it were, to a level where He could work with them. Let's think about Israel at the Red Sea. You know how the children had been slaves in the land of Egypt. You remember how Moses came to deliver them and there was quite a bit of talk and a lot of excitement in various ways and so on. Finally, on the night of the Passover they had gotten ready and had left. You can just feel that perhaps in the bottom of their hearts they would have some feeling of importance about the fact that they were the ones that were going. So they traveled out of Egypt and all went well until they came to the Red Sea. They couldn't get across, and Pharaoh was pursuing behind them. They were utterly helpless in this situation. Needless to say, they were panic stricken. Now God let that happen to Israel. He let them have this experience to humble them and to show them how helpless and weak they were. And then, while they were in this condition, God intervened and, so far as these people were concerned, they were delivered. They were set free. Now, this experience for Israel would be very humbling. The fact that they were panic stricken the way they were would, be a humbling experience, and then the fact that they were delivered when they had no power of their own, was very assuring. So here again you see this double pattern. Something happens that is humbling to the people, but in such a way that the people have new confidence in God.

Next we find the people in the desert. They were thirsty, but soon they came to a place where there were wells of water. They stopped to drink there and to have their animals drink, but they found that the water was bitter. They were more or less helpless until they were *shown* how to make that water sweet. And here again it was a humbling thing to be obliged to admit that they were not able to figure out how to get proper drinking water from those wells. It was a humbling thing, but an assuring thing to think that God was right there with them. He showed them what to do so that the water would become palatable.

Very shortly after that they had another experience that in some sense was even more humiliating. And that was their hunger. There they were out in the desert and they had used up their food and couldn't go anywhere to get any more. This made them utterly dependent upon God and they thought they were going to die because they didn't have food. Then there was provided for them, under very specific conditions, food that they would have every day. The manna came from heaven. And from that time on throughout the forty years that they were in the wilderness, they received their manna from heaven every morning and they had to go out and collect it. Again, this was a humbling experience. They were made to feel utterly dependent upon God. No matter how many of them there were and no matter how strong they were and no matter how important they thought they were, they meant nothing before God. They had to depend entirely upon God for their daily food . . . a humbling thing but an assuring thing.

The next problem that they had as they traveled along was again the problem of thirst and here again they were in a desperate plight. Imagine being out there in the desert with your families and animals and not being able to get any water to drink! They were in a desperate situation. And that's when God provided water for them. They didn't have to go back toward Egypt. They didn't have to go to some other

road. God provided the water that they needed that they might be able to go on toward the Promised Land. Here again was a humbling experience because of utter dependence upon God. But it was an assuring experience.



After that, you remember they came to the conflict with Amalek. Joshua was the best soldier the Israelites had and they sent him out to fight against Amalek. But the Amalekites were stronger in battle than the Israelites. And Joshua and his forces were actually defeated. Under those circumstances, you will remember, victory was brought to them through prayer. And here again in this situation it was a humbling thing to realize that if God hadn't helped them they would have been defeated. They were utterly dependent upon God, and yet at the same time, they received from God the assurance that He would take care of them and He would watch over them.

The next problem of these people was their human limitation. When Moses found out that he faced

overwork he knew that it was necessary for him to go about things differently. But the solution had to be suggested by someone else. Jethro, from the outside, came and told him what to do . . . just as if Moses didn't have any sense himself. And there again is a humbling experience. God sent Jethro with the idea which became the pattern for leadership of the people.

In all of these matters, God let the situation develop. God showed them how weak they were, how utterly dependent upon Him they were, and then He would send someone who would bring the help they needed and they would go on. But now look at something else. Moses had been up in the mountain getting blessing from God and insight from God; and while he was up there God told him that the Israelites had turned away from God and were worshipping a golden calf. Think what the golden calf incident did to Moses himself. It meant that the people had forgotten about Moses and had turned to someone else for help. What a humiliation that would be, to feel that the very people that you were working for don't have any confidence in you. That's the way it was with Moses.

When Moses came back he called Aaron to account: this was the chastening of the Lord. The Lord let it happen to Aaron in this fashion and Aaron was called to account for what he had done. This was a humiliating thing. And then, so far as the people were concerned, the people had done wrong. They were on the wrong road and they had the experience of having three thousand of their number killed. Now these things sound rough to us but they are the ways in which the Lord chastens His people; He sobers them and slows them down and gets them to think again before they turn their backs on God Himself.

We have other examples in the exodus from Egypt, ways in which God chastened His people. In the book of Numbers there is a certain place where we read that the people got tired of their way of life. They were murmuring against God. And, because they were complaining, God sent fire in the camp. When this fire came into the camp the people came hurrying to Moses and humbly cried out to Moses that he should call upon God to spare them . . . and it was done. But this was a humbling experience. And this was a chastening experience. They quickly found that if they were going to start complaining against God that God would give them prompt judgment. But they also found that along with judgment there was grace and mercy. Following that, and again in the eleventh chapter of the book of Numbers, you have an instance where these people were complaining about food. They wanted meat to eat. They didn't like the manna any more and they began to cry to Moses to do something about it. And he did. Moses brought the will of the Lord to them and showed them what God's will would be. God had the wind blow a flock of quails up there so that they had more than they could eat. But, just the minute they started to eat, a disease hit them. This, too, is a humbling thing and it shows prompt judgment on God's part, but grace at the same time because God took care of them after that.

There are several other instances like this. There is the case of Miriam, for example, when she criticized Moses because she thought that Moses was taking too much on himself. Actually she didn't like the fact that he had married an Ethiopian. God struck her with leprosy and, of course, the moment she had leprosy she came to Moses. She confessed all that was in her mind and asked Moses to pray for her, which he did and she was delivered from this disease that she had.

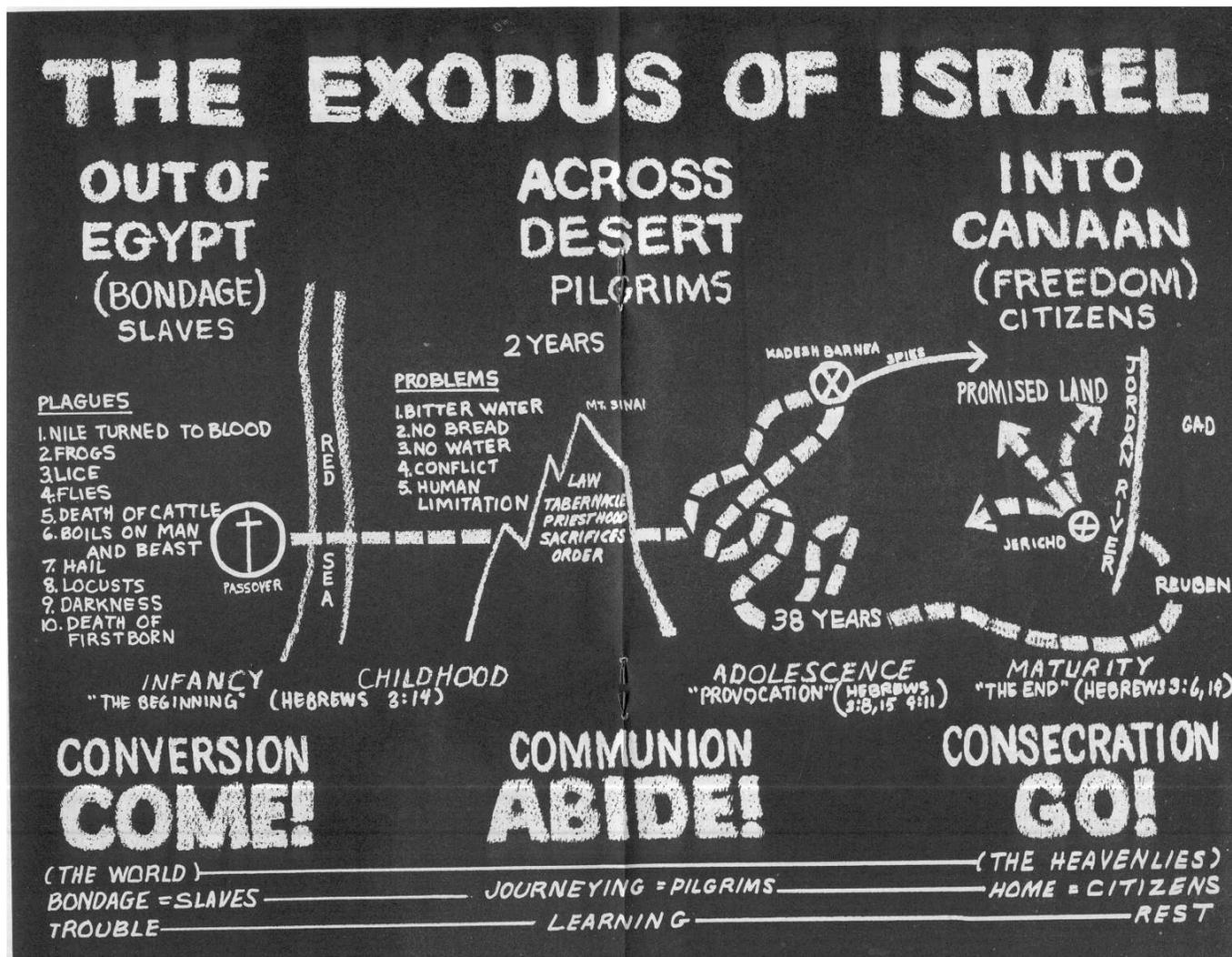
Throughout it all there is prompt judgment, and then there is grace. Look at Kadesh Barnea and there you will see that God interposed and brought defeat and distress upon the people in prompt judgment, but there was grace in God's own way. You'll read about a strange incident when a man by the name of Korah objected to Moses' authority and led the people in rebellion. But God humbled all the people by bringing an earthquake there which swallowed up Korah and his family. You will read, too, of the case when Moses sinned by striking the rock when he should have just been speaking to it: God disciplined him by not letting him go into the land of Canaan.

All of these instances which are hurriedly summarized here show the chastening of the Lord. Just remember that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. May the Lord help us to be humble before Him and faithful to our task.

## The Patience of The Lord

Salvation is the work of God. We rejoice in that, because if God does it we feel sure it will be done right, and we also feel sure it will actually be done. When we say that salvation is the work of God, we have in mind that it is God that calls us. It is He that leads us. It is He that keeps us. It is God who undertakes this project of bringing men out of the natural into the spiritual by His own hand. God Himself works in all this through our Savior, His Son, Jesus Christ. And this is done in us as we are conscious and can respond willingly to His plan.

An interesting thing about becoming a Christian is that you have your eyes open when it happens; this thing of becoming a Christian doesn't take place in the dark. This isn't the kind of thing that will just slip up on you and you suddenly find out you're a Christian without even knowing it. No, when you become a Christian you receive Jesus Christ. He is in front of you and He is calling you. He says, "Come unto me," and you respond to Him. Sometimes you understand what you are doing. Sometimes you don't fully understand what you're doing. Maybe you don't realize all that is involved, but you know who He is, and you're moving toward Him.



Then, as we move, there is a certain situation that occurs over and over again. It's like this: we see what we want to do but the will of God is often different from what we want to do. And so we are face to face with the matter of choice, and we must choose the way we will go. And of course, one of the things we find out as we go along is that we don't always choose wisely. We are not always right and many a time when we make our choice we are doing something that wouldn't be in the will of God at all. Here is where you see the patience of the Lord. The patience of the Lord is seen in the way in which He deals with us when we do the things that would take us out of His will.

The Apostle Paul said in one of his epistles something like this, "He that hath begun a good work in you will complete it." And that's what we are going to be thinking about now. We're to see it in the exodus of Israel. Here was a whole nation of people in the land of Egypt and Almighty God undertook to bring them out of that land and into the land of Canaan. This was a big project, moving a whole nation out of Egypt, across the wilderness and into the land of Canaan. But it could have been done in about two years time. As it turned out, it took forty years time. But whether it would take two years or whether it would take forty years, you can be sure of one thing: the only way they ever got there at all was that God brought them there.

If there had been some other way of saving people, if God could have done this the way He makes the trees grow and the way He makes the flowers bloom, He wouldn't have had problems with people. We would have been brought through without delay. Whatever would be God's plan that's what would have happened without any interference from us. But just because we are human beings as we are and we have a certain power of choice, a certain opportunity to do as we want to do, just because of that, it takes longer, because oftentimes we go in the other direction. We wander away from Him. And in all of this, in our wandering away from Him, in our rebelling against Him, in our turning our backs on Him, in starting out in some other direction and delaying the whole program, what we see in this is the patience of the Lord.

By the word *patience* we have in mind that aspect of Him where He stays on. He keeps on doing. He has begun a good work; He will complete it. He will go on through with it. I think of that oftentimes in connection with parents. Parents show a remarkable patience in dealing with their children. Now if the parents were dealing with the neighbor's children, they might not be so patient. And sometimes even when teachers deal with children in school, they are not so patient. But with persons in your family it's amazing how patient you can be. Now this word patience means more than just long suffering. It may include that, but it means much more than that. The word patience is related to the purpose that you have in mind, and it is the matter of continuing on through until you achieve your purpose.

We see the patience of the Lord in the exodus of Israel. When He started out to bring them out, He brought them all the way out. With all the difficulties and all the failures and all the mistakes and all the times of defeat that occurred along the way, He brought them through. That was His plan and that was His purpose.

Look at the patience of the Lord in the case of Moses. Before Moses ever knew about it, before he was ever born, Almighty God had him and his life's work in mind. And God had him born in just a certain way. He was brought up in Pharaoh's household as if he had been the son of Pharaoh's daughter. She had found him down there by the riverside in the bulrushes and she had brought him home and had brought him up. Then, when he went out at forty years of age to visit among his people, his first attempt to help his people proved a failure. This was the Lord's man and the one that the Lord was going to use. The first thing that he did was a mistake. He tried to stop an Egyptian who was abusing the Hebrews. The only way he could do that was with force. And when force was exercised, the result was that Moses had to leave the country. And so he spent forty years in the desert as a shepherd. But God hadn't given up. That's part of the patience of the Lord. And while Moses was herding sheep for forty years, things were getting worse with his people. In all that time everything else was standing and waiting until the time that this man was going to be ready. God knows these things, and He has the man ready when the time comes. Then He

called Moses.

There was the burning bush that was not consumed by the roadside and Moses stopped to look at it. That's when God spoke to Him, "Take off thy shoes, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." And then He told Moses that He had heard the cry of the children of Israel and had come down to deliver them, and He wanted Moses to go and lead them out. Remember how Moses hesitated? First thing he said was, "They will not believe me." And that seems very natural for Moses to say, but what he is actually doing is questioning God's wisdom. When a person says, "Oh, no, I can't do that," he is saying, "You don't know what you're talking about. When you're asking me to do it, you don't even realize how weak I am." I am sure that Moses didn't have that in mind, but that's what it amounted to. And I think that if you will stop to think about it, God could, perhaps – if He had been a human being – He could have felt some resentment about that. His attitude could have been, "Well, I asked you to. Don't you think I know?" But this isn't what He did. When Moses hesitated, the Lord showed him what to do, and He gave him the power to work certain miracles so that they would believe him. Then Moses said, "I cannot speak." This you would think would again provoke the Lord. And I think that it did anger the Lord in a sense, because you remember how He answered Moses: "Who made thy mouth?" In other words, "I know perfectly well what you can do and what you can't do. And if I am asking you to go, I am asking you to go because I know what I am doing." But I want you to notice what God did. He said to Moses, "I'll give you a speaker. I'll give you someone who can talk. Aaron, your brother, he can talk, and I'll give him to you, and you can find out from Me what to do. Tell it to Aaron and Aaron will tell it to the people."

The Lord met every objection that Moses had and went through with it. He started out to call Moses and He did call him. You could be wondering at this point, why would the Lord be so patient? Why would He put up with a man like Moses who would start making excuses and finding reasons why he shouldn't go forward? And I think probably one of the reasons would be this: The Lord knew what would eventually happen. He knew how He was going to work these things out, and He was able and He was confident in His own ability to meet any need. Despite the fact that Moses' first attempt was a failure, and despite the fact that when he was called he didn't feel that he wanted to come, God was patient with him and brought him in and set him in the place of leadership.

Now notice His dealing with Pharaoh. You remember how Pharaoh was bitterly opposed to God. He said, "Who is the Lord God of Israel? I don't know Him." And his general conduct was against God, if not actually blasphemous. And this was his attitude. He was arrogant in the way in which he dealt with God, and he was an unbeliever. And yet the Lord gave him opportunity again and again and again to fit in with His plan.

In all the dealing that God had with Pharaoh, Moses was the front man. He was the man that represented the God of Israel and talked to Pharaoh about Him. And God gave Pharaoh opportunity after opportunity after opportunity. And He did not punish him for being obstinate. Nothing happened to Pharaoh because he was obstinate with God. Now, such long suffering on the part of God is not weakness, and such long suffering on the part of God is not indifference. So far as God was concerned, although He would wait and wait and wait until His will was accomplished, there was in Him no disposition to compromise. When Pharaoh wanted to compromise God wouldn't do it. Pharaoh was eventually destroyed, but because God was as patient with him as He was and put up with him as long as He did, that didn't mean that He was going to approve him. When the time came, God let the realities of life take over. We remember how this word is found in II Peter in the third chapter, ninth verse: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness." And when you see His dealing with Pharaoh you could almost think that He put up with too much. He allowed him to have his way as long as he had it, because God's way would eventually be done.

And now look at God's dealings with Israel. Here you will see even greater evidence of His patience. Take for example what happened to them when they were coming out of the land on the night of

the Passover. And when they had reached the Red Sea, you will recall that they couldn't go over the Red Sea. Pharaoh's hosts were coming up behind them to take them back. Then the people complained to Moses. They asked him, "Why hast thou taken us away to die? Why didn't you leave us in the land of Egypt and let us die there?" But God was patient with them. He showed Moses how to open the way through the Red Sea, a wonderful miracle, and He assessed no punishment. He didn't punish these people for their attitude. They got across, and after the day of celebration you'll remember they traveled on in the land, God watched over them with the fire and with the cloud . . . the fire by night and the cloud by day, taking care of them in every gracious way as He went along.

They came to a place called Marah. And they found bitter water there. Then they murmured against Moses because the water was bitter. And they again complained that they had been brought out there. But God didn't punish them. He showed Moses the solution. And Moses used the solution to make the water sweet for the people that were there. But there was no punishment of the people because of their complaining. Next they were hungry. And when hunger hit these people they complained all over again. They said, "Would to God we had died when we sat by the flesh pots in Egypt." They felt let down, altogether discouraged. They criticized the government, criticized the leader, criticized whoever it was that was leading Moses along the way. Despite all of this, God did not punish them. What He actually did was to give them manna. And this manna was a remarkable substance. Every day, every morning, before the sun was up, He gave them enough manna for the day. And on the sixth day He gave them enough manna for two days. Apart from that, there was just enough manna for each day. So it happened over and over again. But no punishment. You see, God is going to bring them through. He understands their weaknesses. He knows their shortcomings, and when they fail and when they falter, He understands about that and He carries them right along.

Then they were thirsty – so thirsty they were going to die. And Moses went to God in prayer and said they were almost ready to stone him, and God didn't take objection to that. He didn't tell Moses to defend himself. He didn't tell Moses to organize some way in which all the ringleaders could be put to death. He actually told Moses which rock to smite, and when Moses did it, the rock opened, the water gushed out and everybody had enough to drink. No punishment. You see, the way they had talked was against God. The way they had talked was against Moses, the way they had complained was actually an arrogant assumption that they knew better than Moses did. But God didn't take any offense about this.

Now we come to chapter thirty-two, and this is even worse than anything else that happened. While Moses was up in the mountain for forty days, Israel's heart turned away from the Lord. And they persuaded Aaron to put all their jewelry together and let it be melted and formed into a golden calf which they were going to worship. And when Moses came down, the children of Israel were celebrating their worship of the golden calf. There was dancing in the camp and everybody was having a wonderful time while they were worshipping the golden calf. Now God doesn't give up on us, and God is going to see us through; but that doesn't mean that God will not show a certain amount of discipline. He is going to be gracious but He will discipline His people.

When Moses came down and found what they had done, he displayed the anger of his own heart, but I think also he showed the anger of God. And those tables of stone were smashed on the rocks before their eyes. In other words, he wanted them to know that they had broken the law of God. When he had done that he disciplined the people. He took the calf itself and ground it up into powder and put this powder in the water. and then after he had done that he made Aaron drink it, and he made the people drink it. But he didn't cut them off. Actually, in connection with the golden calf, what Moses really did was to spend time in active, personal intercession, actually putting himself right there before God and asking God to spare these people; and if not, God would just have to blot him out of God's book. In other words, there was actual, personal intercession for the very people who had turned away and were wayward. This is what we mean by patience. It doesn't mean that God says that their waywardness is all right. It doesn't

mean that God says that it is all right for them to turn to the golden calf and turn their hearts like that. That's not the point. But what God is revealing is the fact that He will not give up. They're wrong and He disciplines them. He brings them back into life. But He will not give up.

In the book of Numbers there are several more instances of this amazing patience of the Lord. In Numbers, chapter eleven, the first three verses, there is the very simple statement that the people complained. It displeased the Lord and He sent fire among them. Now that wasn't punishment. That was disciplinary chastisement. That was the kind of chastisement that would make them think, because when He sent the fire, they cried to Moses and Moses prayed to the Lord and the fire stopped. There was no punishment but there was a very real revelation of the fact that God was interested in them. When they complained against God, God didn't appreciate it.

In the same way, you find that the people complained about their food. Now you remember where they got the manna. They got it every morning from heaven. It came every day. But they complained. People can be like that. Now mind you, the manna was free. All they had to do was go out and collect it; yet they complained. In their complaining they remembered what it was like in Egypt and you'll recall how they said, "We remember the fish and the leeks and the onions and the garlic and now there's nothing but this manna before our eyes." And with all the highly spiced foods that they had had, this manna was flat and tasteless, and they didn't like it at all. And so they were complaining against the food. Now God didn't cut them off and He didn't punish them especially. He told Moses that He would send them food, and He sent them quail, and with the quail He sent them a plague. And you'll say that's punishment. No, that's chastisement. When this plague came upon them to show them the results of their wrong doing, and they cried to God, immediately the plague was stayed. But it had served its purpose.

And so they came to Kadesh Barnea which we read about in the fourteenth chapter of the book of Numbers. And at that point you will remember that twelve spies went on ahead into the land of Canaan, and they came back and reported. Ten of them said that the land was good but the difficulties were too great for the people to go in. And all of the people agreed with them; and they lamented because they couldn't go into the land. And they said such things as this: "Would to God we had died in the wilderness." And then they also raised this question: "Were it not better for us to return to Egypt?" And Moses saw this thing happen when these people were actually ready after two years to go back into Egypt. As a result, God decreed that they should go back in the desert for thirty-eight more years. But they weren't cut off. Still every day the manna fell in the morning. Still every day the cloud led them by day and the fire by night. God continued to be gracious to them, even though they had been disobedient and reluctant to follow Him.

There were consequences of conduct and sometimes there was chastening and discipline, but in all this there is no punishment to destroy. The flood, for example, destroyed; nothing like that was brought in on Israel. Or look at Sodom and Gomorrah when God poured fire and brimstone upon these cities; nothing like that in Israel. Or consider Pharaoh who was destroyed by the Red Sea; there's nothing like that in Israel. The patience of the Lord continues to guide His people along.

There were other instances. There was the occasion when Korah led in a rebellion. The people complained saying, "Moses, you take too much on you." Now Korah himself was incorrigible in his opposition and he was destroyed. But the nation was spared. They were not wiped out. Then there was discouragement about the wilderness and because the way was so long. So God sent them fiery serpents in discipline; but when they cried out to Moses, then he made them a brazen serpent and they looked at the brazen serpent and they lived. That wasn't real punishment; they weren't wiped out. When they faced Edom and they wanted to go through there, Edom said they couldn't go through. Israel turned away from them and there was no conflict, no contention, no punishment upon Edom just because they did something that was contrary to the will of God. Even when Moses sinned and became impatient and rebuked the people in a way that he shouldn't have done and so on, he was forbidden to enter the land, but there was no

punishment upon the people because of what Moses had done.

The patience of the Lord is amazing. You find He's not soft, because He is unyielding in His purpose. He is not indifferent, because He dealt in chastisement with those who had done wrong. He's meek . . . no retaliation. He's patient. He brought them through.

## The Purpose of The Lord

Salvation is actually done by the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We don't know of any salvation apart from Him. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." And yet God, in His providence, manipulates my affairs. He watches over me and brings things to pass in my life, and the Holy Spirit in my heart helps me to understand what is happening. He interprets my course to me. I don't understand everything that is going on, and yet I have in my heart a confidence that God has His hand on me and that He is guiding me along the way. Events in life are often so contradictory to each other and they are often so contrary to what I want that I could wonder sometimes whether God has actually forgotten me, or wonder perhaps even more whether or not God has forsaken me. And so I think it's very important for us to study the purpose of the Lord in salvation.

As we have studied the exodus of Israel, from Egypt to Canaan, we have been noticing that God has been guiding the people. Many times they didn't know it, but He has been guiding them through the man Moses. Moses was God's representative working with them. And just as we see Moses as a servant in God's house serving Him by leading the people, so we understand the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who actually leads the people according to the will of God. So we are going to be considering now the purpose of the Lord in salvation, We could ask ourselves this question, who is He interested in? And who is He helping and how is He doing this? Would we say that He is interested in everybody? Yes, we will say that He is interested in everybody to the extent that He is willing to save anybody; and that Christ Jesus died for all men; and that the call has gone out into the whole wide world. And yet when you ask, in the matter of salvation, who is God actually working with and who is He actually interested in, then you would have to say He is interested in His own. In a sense these are the ones who are willing and eager to obey Him, and because they are willing and eager to obey Him, he works with them in a special way. How? By bringing things to pass in the happenings of their life and in helping them to see these things as they occur, so that they will be obedient to Him and trust in Him as things happen. Now everything that we might say along this line can be shown even more clearly if we consider what happened in the case of Israel.

In the exodus of Israel we see something of the way in which the Lord works out His will. You can practically forget about Egypt for the moment when you say that God's purpose was to bring Israel into Canaan. This was the promise that God made to Abraham. When Abraham came out of Ur of the Chaldees and came over into the land of Canaan, God promised him that country. And everything that happened to Israel in the whole exodus occurred with this aim in mind – to bring them to the land of Canaan. Now it's possible so far as the Israelites were concerned that in the early part of their experience the one thing they had in mind was to get out of Egypt by any means possible and the chances are that there were days in those forty years they were in the desert when all they wanted was to live that day through, or to get out of some particular problem that they were experiencing there in the desert. Perhaps it was the problem of thirst or the problem of food or the problem of conflict with the enemy. And yet, we see that even what happened to them there in the desert was bringing them to the land of Canaan. God called them out of Egypt because He wanted them to go to Canaan . . . brought them across the Red Sea because He wanted them to go to Canaan . . . took them across the desert because He wanted them to go to Canaan . . . finally brought them over to the River Jordan because He wanted to get them into Canaan. Now that's a way of saying to us that whenever we think about this whole matter of salvation there is something that God wants to do. God wants to bring us to Himself. He wants us to be in His Presence, in fellowship with His Son and in fellowship with Him forever. That's the ultimate aim and purpose of all that God does in Christ Jesus. The purpose is to reconcile the sinner to God, to bring a man to God.

Another thing that we see in this purpose of God is to give Canaan to Israel. Now He had that in mind from the first, from the first time that Abraham went through there. Almighty God told Abraham that He would give him the land of Canaan and that was something He was going to do. This was the aim all the time. That's the same idea, all the way through in everything that happened to the Lord Jesus Christ: there was one purpose on God's part so far as you and I are concerned who are Christians – that we should have eternal life . . . that we should come into His presence and be with Him. That's why Christ came. That's why Christ died. That's why Christ rose from the dead. That's why the Holy Spirit was given. That's why God's hand is upon us to bring us into His presence. This purpose of God prevails in everything He does. Now again we can say that it was the purpose of God and it was His plan to show His grace, the grace that is eternal and infinite . . . to show His grace in His dealings with Israel.

He could have told us that He was gracious but what would those words mean? Not nearly the same as when He actually exhibits it and manifests it in His dealing with Israel. We know that God is interested in all men because He has created all men and all men do belong to Him. Paul is one of those who tells us that God is not willing that any should perish but that all of us should have everlasting life. Apparently God is moved with compassion so far as all men are concerned. Men are saved through faith and in order to have faith they need to know the things about God that are true so that they may call upon God. For as Paul says, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" There must be a revelation of God's word. There must be some open presentation of the promise of God in order that a man can believe it. Revelation comes through the spoken word and through the meaning that is shown. Now He was going to show His grace so that we would trust Him. And He would, show His grace by dealing with Israel. This is the sense in which Israel is the chosen people. They were chosen to be examples and God was going to use them to show all the rest of us and show the whole world what His grace was like. Part of the process of revelation is in the spoken word and part is in the manner of life of the people who were actually being blessed of God.

One reason for God's saving me is that in saving me He might show others. In other words we all have a certain responsibility to witness. If God has been gracious to us we should let people know. If God has done us a favor we should make it known. We should praise His name. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." This gives other people a chance to find out. The purpose of the Lord, then, in dealing with Israel, was to show His grace, so that other men seeing it, might believe in God.

The purpose of the Lord in dealing with Israel in the exodus was to show us what it is like when you're delivered from bondage. In other words, God intends to deliver us from this present evil world. That's the way of salvation. God actually had Israel in slavery and He delivered them so that you and I could look at it in human terms and see what happens when God delivers people from slavery, when he delivers them from bondage, because that's part of the gospel. God shows His power in deliverance. When we look at Israel we can believe that we can be delivered from slavery. Perhaps we find ourselves in some real difficulty and trouble so that God can show His power in us to deliver and we can manifest it to others. Something of that is felt in the opening verses of II Corinthians when Paul says, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." And so we see the purpose of the Lord in delivering Israel from slavery; it's what He means to do in the gospel, in salvation.

The purpose of the Lord, for example, in preparing Moses for his task and in all the things that happened to Moses, was that Moses was to serve Him, When Moses was born his parents hid him and afterwards they put him in that basket by the riverside in order to try and escape the general order that all the Jewish boys should be killed. Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river in her usual way for bathing.

Now the fact that she came at that particular time shows the hand of God. She saw the baby and took him into Pharaoh's household. And what training he is given there! For forty years he was in Pharaoh's household. There are many details I will not take time to point out, but evidently God was overruling in Moses' life to make Moses an able efficient workman, so that he could do God's work. So even when Moses went out at forty years of age and failed on his first attempt, God apparently let Moses fail miserably that he might learn certain things. And then He kept him for forty years out in the wilderness as a shepherd and all of this was done to prepare Moses for the great task that he was going to have. It reminds us of the text that says " All things work together for good. . . . "

We may not always see in everything that happens what God is doing, but He is working it out. So, for example, He prepares the people to respond to Moses and to His call. In doing this, God let the people have trouble. He actually let that trouble develop over a period of time. For instance, they had to make bricks and they had to do so under trying circumstances. And it became very oppressive to them and very difficult, until they were just hurting and suffering. And in this kind of experience they were ready to leave Egypt. In other words, trouble on their part actually made them willing to respond to the call to come out of Egypt. And so God deals with us. He might let us have trouble. He might let us run into things in order that He might draw us out in His own way and we would be ready to go when He calls us. When the time of the promise drew nigh, that's when God sent Moses.

The great truth in the whole salvation program is that the people are to come out of this world – out of the natural world into which they are born. So God is demonstrating this, and He demonstrates this by leading the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt. God does not plan to bless His people in the situation that they're in by working to change the circumstances. I was born into this world as a human being. In this world as a human being I have trouble. In this world as a human being I myself am sinful and I do the things that are selfish and things that I want to do. All these things that are of the flesh. So I am now going to look to God for blessing. God does not bless me by overruling my flesh in the flesh. He does not bless me by changing the world as the world. He blesses me by taking me out of the world. He would have me die in the flesh and be raised by the power of God that I might live in the Spirit by the grace of God. His plan is to take His people out. And this is pictured to us in the case of Israel when He takes Israel out of Egypt. God's way of blessing you and God's intention and plan of doing you good is not to change the circumstances so that everything around you will be sweet and lovely. It's to take you out of those circumstances into fellowship with Him. Our joy is in the Lord, and our success and our victory is in Him. And so far as this world is concerned we win when we die in this world. Israel in Egypt is being abused but the answer is not to change Egypt. Don't try to change unwilling, wicked people. The answer is to take God's people out of there, away from there, into a land that God will give them.

Look at the purpose of God in what He was doing with Pharaoh. And when you think about what God allowed Pharaoh to do you can think of many, many similar things which go on in this world. In this world there will be many things happening and many things going on that are not good and that are not right, and it's going to hurt you sometimes to see those things which are not good prospering. And the evil will prosper. Now here was Pharaoh in a position of authority, over the people of God, able to hinder the work of God and it's very easy for a person to ask, why would God allow it? And we are given an understanding about that. God allowed Pharaoh to continue that He might show His power when He destroyed him. Pharaoh ruled because God allowed him to. Pharaoh would never obey God and Pharaoh's doom was sure. He was certainly going to be destroyed, but for the time being he was allowed to rule and allowed to dominate because his very position would draw attention to the remarkable power of God when God would destroy him. Elements that are active today in the world which are not in God's will and are incorrigible . . . opposed to God, opposed to the gospel, opposed to the truth, opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ . . . these things may be allowed to continue in order that God may demonstrate His power when He destroys them.

You and I haven't seen the end yet. The last chapter hasn't been written, and as time goes on God will glorify Himself. And this is part of His way of doing it. This is in the purpose of the Lord. You and I can then say off-hand that because a man is prominent, that's no sign that he is being blessed of God. Because he is successful, because he is powerful, that doesn't mean that he is right in God's sight. God may allow a thing like that to happen in order that the time may come when He will glorify Himself in bringing such a person down from his position. For instance, Israel, even when they were slaves, were God's people. You don't have to rule to be a person who belongs to God. You don't have to be the most important person to belong to God. The Israelites were slaves but they belonged to God.

I can think of Gideon, that young man who was hiding out from the Midianites. God sent a messenger to him and hailed him as a mighty man of valor and Gideon said, "What's so mighty about me? Here I am in hiding." And yet God talked to him. He was God's man, hiding out from the Midianites as he was. And we think of David when Saul was pursuing him and David was fleeing from one place to another and living in a cave. He was the true king all the time, and yet he was being treated like a fugitive. Or you can think of Daniel when he had been finally caught in a situation which resulted in his being thrown into the lion's den. But he was still God's man. Or you can even think of the Lord Jesus Christ, when He was in Pilate's courtroom. There you have Pilate, in his case, like Pharaoh with Moses. Pilate has authority over the Lord Jesus Christ. He told the Lord Jesus, "Knowest thou not that I can put thee to death?" All of which is true. And yet you and I know that it was Jesus Christ who was King. He really was King. In other words, God has let this whole matter of Pharaoh be written into the books so that you and I might know forever that we must not judge by appearances.

There are many other similar things in the history of Israel, all of which would show that the things that happened to them were according to the plan of God, the purpose of God. You can think, for example, of Israel at the Red Sea. They couldn't cross. It looked like they were thwarted and frustrated and as if everything were against them. Pharaoh was allowed to come near enough to threaten them. And yet the whole situation was in God's hands. It was allowed to become intolerable so that they would throw themselves on the mercy of God, and then God opened the way before them. But He let the situation come up so that He could show His power in bringing them through.

When He led them along from day to day, as they were traveling in the wilderness, they were going into a strange country, to a land where they had never been over before, and so God gave them the cloud by day and the fire by night. Here again is a situation intended to show us that you and I may move along from day to day with brand new things different than we have ever experienced before, but we can trust God. God gives us some evidence of His presence; He is the one who is leading. He is making us constantly dependent upon Him.

So the purpose of God is to be found in all the various things of life, in everything that happens to you. God is watching over you. All things work together for good for them that love God. And just as He led the children of Israel, so He will lead you.

## God is My Savior

Salvation is the term that we give to all that which God does for a man through Jesus Christ. As we think of man in this world, we think of man as a being who is surrounded by the world in which he lives. He lives in it. He breathes the air. He drinks the water. He eats the food. He is affected by the temperature and He lives in this world. He has to be careful he doesn't fall off mountains and that he doesn't drown in the lake and that he isn't burned in the fire. He has to get along in this world.

This creature we call man is a being who in himself has certain capacities for joy and for sorrow and a certain consciousness of himself and a certain interest in his whole career. A man is interested in what's happening to him and where he is coming out. And so far as the whole universe is concerned, a man is interested in how he is making out in the world. A person can't be satisfied to just let anything happen and if God is real, a man sooner or later comes to the place where he wonders what his relationship is with God.

Perhaps it would help some of us right now if we would stop and ask ourselves for a moment who do we mean when we say *God*? When I say *God* I mean the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the One who made it and made us all. I mean the God who keeps us and sustains us.. And I mean the One who watches over us and knows all about us. I mean the One with whom we have to do, and before whom we are going to have to stand. I mean the Being who knows me altogether and judges me as I am. And we call Him God. We have never seen Him, but we are just conscious of the fact that He is there. And by the way we might do well to remember while we are thinking about it that this is not an unusual thing. The Bible says the fool hath said in his heart there is no God. Apparently everybody else knows there that God is. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." The knowledge that God exists comes to us very early in our thinking. We don't get to be very old before we are conscious of the fact that out there in the world, out there in the universe, there is One who is greater than we are, One who knows all about us. And we call that person God.

Now as a human being living in this world, I can be blessed. And that means I will find living a joy, a fortunate thing . . . the way you feel when you win a game, the way you feel when you complete a job, the way you feel when you're healthy and well and have had a good day enjoying yourself with your friends. Yes, I can be blessed. And then again, as a person, I can be empty. I can be defeated. I can have sorrow. I can have pain. I can have trouble. Normally speaking, so far as I am concerned as a human being, when I look ahead I like to expect joy; I dread to look ahead and find trouble and grief. But whatever the future holds, I like to think that I could do something about it. If I have a garden, I want to have vegetables. And yet, when I have had some experience with a garden I find that just having a garden and putting the seed in the ground doesn't mean I'll have vegetables. There are things to do. The soil needs to be cultivated. The seed needs to be planted in a certain way. It may need to be watered. And then I need to watch over it. I need to protect it from animals that might crush the plants. And I need to work in there and pull the weeds that could very easily choke the plants. I may even need to cultivate the soil and mulch it so that the moisture will remain in it. In other words, there are things I need to do to dress the garden and to keep it, in order that it may produce the fruit. So far as the garden is concerned, God makes the plants grow and God produces the vegetables . . . I know that's true. And yet I know, too, that I have a part in it, that if I didn't do my part the garden would not produce.

Take, for instance, even such a thing as driving a car. If I am in the car and sitting at the driver's wheel and driving, I realize many, many times, so far as my actual driving is concerned, that many of the circumstances that make the trip fortunate are not in my hands. There is the road which is smooth or

rough, and I didn't make that road. There is the hillside, the countryside I am driving through which may be beautiful to look at or it may be ugly. I didn't do that. There is the traffic that comes along that I didn't start. I didn't put them on the road. You see I have nothing to do with this. The traffic may be favorable or it may be unfavorable. And I realize as I drive along that there is much that affects me in my driving that's not my business, and yet I have a feeling, as long as I am sitting there at that wheel and handling those controls and I am the one that is stepping on the gas and I am the one that is steering the car . . . I have a feeling I can do something about it so far as the driving is concerned. Such thinking as that (and it's on every side) arouses in me the feeling that I can do something about what's going to happen.

It is also true that I find in actual experience I can do so little. Things happen to me . . . things that really matter that I can't do anything about. Let's consider our own lives. Just think about your life and I'll think about mine. I will consider, for instance, when I was born. I was born a boy to become a man. Well that's tremendously important. I had one other chance and that was to be born a girl and become a woman. There is a tremendous difference between those two things, and I didn't have any choice in the matter. I was born a male whether I wanted to be one or not. I was born into the white race . . . and I had nothing to do about it. It certainly was no credit to me. There are millions of people born into this world that are not white and they have just as little to do about it as I did. In addition to that I was born with a strong body. I have been fortunate and blessed in the health that I had. Now I confess that there are some physical benefits from the life that I have lived, in the way in which I have handled myself, but there is nothing in the world that I could have done that would have given me a healthy, strong body such as I have. I have seen children born with deformed feet. I had nothing to do with mine being all right. I have seen children born who were blind. I had nothing to do with my being able to see. And so on. What did I do that I was to be healthy? Nothing. And wasn't that important? Why, my whole life is involved.

Now consider where I was born. In my case I was born in Canada and I think I was very fortunate to be born in that country. Furthermore I grew up among English speaking people, and the English culture became my culture. Now, frankly, I personally believe that that was a great good fortune. There are millions of people living in this world that don't have the privileges that were mine. And then again consider when I was born. I was born in this time, the twentieth century. Turn right around and look on any given day and just look out over the world and think of all the things we have today that people did not have seventy five or a hundred years ago. I was born in this time with all that good fortune. Consider the people that I was born amongst. The people in my family. I had nothing to do with choosing my father and mother. I had nothing to do with choosing my relatives. And I had nothing to do with choosing my neighbors – not really.

Just think how much there is over which I have no control from the time I was born, all through my life, right down to the present moment. Certain things have happened to me this very day. I have met certain people. Certain things have been drawn to my attention. I have faced certain things and they have affected me. And these people I have met and the events that I have shared in and the things that have happened, I couldn't have controlled. So you see there's a whole lot going on all round about me that affects me and over which I have no control. And yet I have a feeling in it all that I do have a part in this thing. In other words I do believe in the law of the harvest. "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." Now I realize that I can't make the soil and I can't make the weather and I can't make the plants that grow, but it does matter how I handle these things. Early in my life I become conscious of just that; whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap. And I have the promise that if I will sow wisely and will cultivate properly I can expect to get good results from my effort.

But only a little experience will soon convince me that if my consequences and my expectations are going to depend upon me alone, my wisdom in handling things, my virtue in always doing the right thing, my strength in getting things done, then my situation would soon be hopeless, because I am not big enough, strong enough, or wise enough. I am not smart enough, I am not good enough to handle the

situation as it needs to be done. And so I turn to God with more of a feeling than just that He is my Creator; that He made me. I'll have more of the feeling that He is my sovereign; that He overrules and controls. And I'll have more than the feeling that He is my judge. Indeed He is my judge, but in addition I know that everything that happens to me is actually under His control. Perhaps I wonder in my heart how I can get any help from Him regarding the situation that I am in. Then I come face to face with what we know as the Christian gospel.

In the midst of all this – the world as it is, and I as I am, and life as it is – comes this simple message of the gospel: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And this great truth about God comes through to me, that God is benevolent. He means to do good to me. God is gracious and kind and merciful He's almighty. He's powerful. He's holy and just and true. All these things are so. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil. And God will not clear the guilty at any time. God will be God all the way through in righteousness and in judgment and justice. I know this. But it's also true that God is love. God does care for me. And He has so loved me that He gave His Son to die for me that I would not need to perish according to my sins, but I could be saved.

This is where it comes in. Salvation is by the free grace of God. God's going to do it for me. I don't deserve it and God is going to do it. He is my Savior. He is my help. He is my refuge. And because this is true we who are believers will quickly and readily say to the whole world, salvation is a work that God does for sinners, a work that God does for people in trouble. Salvation is the work of God. God does it. That makes it sure. If God does it, you can depend upon it; it will be adequate. And He does it freely. You and I don't pay for it. And this whole work of salvation, freely and graciously done for me, is in the hands of a God who loves me and cares for me.

The problem that God faced, if one may put it that way, in salvation, was to take man, such as He is, free in His choices but sinful in His disposition, and bring him into the blessing that God is ready to give. What God will do for man is already known. He knows right now what He will do for me. One thing we need to get in mind about the whole truth of salvation is that God doesn't look at me and then, looking at me, form an impression of me and then decide that He can do something with me because I've got such and such possibilities and because I have such potentialities. None of that is true. God in mind and heart knows what He wants to do. He wants to make me like His Son whom He loves. He wants to make me like the Lord Jesus Christ and He is able to do it. He's got it all set up. It's like a person coming along with a bus he has made and offering to give you a ride to town. When he stops to give you a ride, he is not giving you a choice whether you are going to go in a bus, or go in a truck, or go in a roadster, or fly in an airplane. He's just got a bus. And when you get in, it's a bus you're going to get into. You didn't make the bus. He made the bus and you get into it and he'll take you to town.

In our case, it is God who has provided salvation for us. The salvation is in Jesus Christ. You and I are invited to come in and share it, but what we share and what we get is already known to God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. No matter what you and I may think of it, no matter what any human being may think of it, or want to do about it, the truth of the matter is that God will save men through Jesus Christ. That's the only way they'll be saved. That's the way He will save them. And Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever. What God will do for us in Christ Jesus is already known and prepared. Man needs to know something of what this is. We need to know what it is that God has prepared and God reveals it to us in the form of a promise. In other words He will show us what He will do if we put our trust in Him, so that we might choose to walk His way.

Now, the whole matter of salvation, with God's part in it and man's part in it, was revealed for our understanding in God's dealing with Israel. We have the historical record in the Old Testament. We have the story of how God took this nation that had been in Egypt as slaves and brought them out of Egypt and brought them across the wilderness into the land of Canaan where they were to be free and blessed of

God. And all these things happened to them for examples and they are written for our learning that we, through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope. So, in this great movement of God, wherein God took the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt and brought them over to the land of Canaan, we have seen a pattern displayed of the way in which God saves. And when we look back now at the exodus as written up in the Bible in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, we learn things about salvation.

Israel was to be saved. Israel was to be blessed. That was not a new idea. God had it in mind from the beginning, and if you have been reading the Bible right along you will know that away back in the days of Abraham, God told Abraham that his seed would live for a length of time . . . as much as four hundred years, as strangers in a foreign country, where they would be oppressed and where they would be distressed as slaves, where they would have trouble, but God would deliver them out of it. Now that was told to Abraham more than five hundred years before it actually came to pass. Thus, this matter of being saved was not a new idea. It had been promised from the beginning. Neither was this matter of being saved something that came from Israel's own conclusion. It wasn't a matter of their own plan. When we talk about being saved, it's not that people get together and figure out that it would be a good thing if God came and helped them. That's not the way in which it happens. Israel didn't decide it would be a wonderful thing if they worked themselves around so that they would get out of Egypt. They didn't figure that out. In other words, this whole movement, bringing Israel out of Egypt, is not a natural idea at all. The Bible says in one place and repeats it several times over: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." And so it was here.

Neither is salvation a matter of something to be forced on a person. It is not coercive. In other words, no Israelite had to come. Even on the night of the Passover – when the angel of death passed through and every time he saw the blood on the door he spared the people – nobody had to put the blood there. The people were told what to do. The head of each family would take a lamb and keep it and would kill it and put the blood in a basin and take the blood and sprinkle it on the door post. That's what he would do if he wanted to. If he didn't want to and didn't do it, he wouldn't be spared. But if he would do it, if he wills to do it and responds to God's call, then salvation would happen to him.

You can see the providence of God that is involved in this whole situation of Israel. God let them go down to Egypt and God let Egypt develop as it did. As far as my life is concerned, it's in the hands of God. But God let my life develop in such a way that I could be saved. I could turn to the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. Now the salvation of Israel was defined in a specific situation for them. Where they had been slaves in Egypt, they were to become free in Canaan. And that's the way it is for me. That's the way it works when God is my Savior. A savior was sent. In the case of Israel it was Moses. Now Moses wasn't their choice. They didn't hold an election and choose Moses. Moses was God's choice. God sent Moses to them. And so far as you and I are concerned, the chances are that you have had Sunday School teachers that you didn't choose. They were given to you. You have had preachers that you didn't call. The church called them, but you didn't do it, and the preacher preached the gospel to you. You have had parents who taught you about God, you didn't have to ask them to do it.

God sent the savior, the teacher who was to lead the people. The proposal was made to them that they should come out of Egypt into Canaan. They didn't sit down and mull it over and they didn't have a meeting to decide what to do. It was given to them of God. This is the way out. Power would be available as they would go. God would help them. Opposition would be met, but it would be overcome because God would help them. And crises would occur. They would run into real trouble but God would see them through. They wouldn't know where they were going. They had never been over that road before, but God would go before them. They would come into situations that would be too much for them but God would help them. They wouldn't know what to do, but God would instruct them. They would be foolish and

wouldn't always do what they should, and God would discipline them. All the way through God would patiently deal with them, and in power He would overcome their enemy. He would overcome their sin. He would overcome their circumstances. He would lead them through the unknown. God would save them. And this is a wonderful thing to see, because that's what is true with you and me. God will actually save us by His grace and by His power.

*God is my salvation.*