

Emblems From Their Bondage and Redemption

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon explores the themes of bondage, redemption, and salvation, using the story of the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt as a type of our spiritual deliverance from sin and Satan.

Scripture: Exodus 1:14, Exodus 5:7

Topics: "Redemption", "Deliverance from Bondage"

Description

A.B. Simpson's sermon 'Emblems From Their Bondage and Redemption' explores the bitter bondage of the Israelites in Egypt as a metaphor for the enslavement of sin and Satan. He emphasizes that just as God delivered Israel from Pharaoh's oppression, He offers redemption from our spiritual adversaries through Christ. Simpson highlights the futility of building our lives on earthly pursuits, akin to making bricks without straw, and contrasts this with the eternal security found in Christ's sacrifice. The sermon culminates in the assurance of salvation and the call to recognize our true condition, urging believers to embrace their deliverance and sing the song of salvation. Ultimately, it is a reminder of the hope and freedom that comes from trusting in God's redemptive power.

Transcript

SECTION I -- The Brick Fields of Egypt.

And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor." "And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying, Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tale of bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish aught thereof." "So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt, to gather stubble instead of straw. And the taskmasters hasted them saying, Fulfil your works, your daily tasks, as when there was straw. And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten, and demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick, both yesterday and today, as heretofore? Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, Wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants? There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, Make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people." "And the officers of the

children of Israel did see that they were in an evil case, after it was said, Ye shall not diminish aught from your bricks of your daily task."

This is the picture which God has given us of the bitter bondage of His ancient people, which is a type of the rigid slavery of sin and Satan. The land which had been their asylum in the beginning, had become to them an iron furnace and a place of oppression.

Through all the succeeding centuries the language "I am the Lord the God which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," has been the strongest and most vivid picture of our redemption from the power of Satan, and this present evil world.

To us, as to them, it began with a scene of innocence and blessing. But soon another king arose over our once holy and happy Eden; and the prince of this world holds his captives in a thrall more perfect, and a servitude more debasing than Pharaoh or Israel ever knew.

The brick fields of Zoan are fitting emblems of some of its rigors. The very material of which the brick is made suggests the idea of the earthly and perishable. The symbol of God's enduring work is not brick but stone. The heavenly house is founded upon a rock, and its separate materials are living stones. But the houses of Egypt and Babylon are built of clay, and symbolize the transitory and earthly character and issue of all that pertains to this present evil world.

The poor votary of Mammon is spending all his strength to build a house which will crumble, like himself, into dust when a few more years shall have passed away.

The aggravation of this bondage, however, was that the oppressor demanded the severest tasks, without even supplying materials or resources. This is exactly what Satan does with all his victims -- demands that they shall make brick without straw.

He is the great master of an evil conscience; and he loves to lay upon the troubled heart the yoke of the law, quite as well as he does to break its obligations. One of his favorite methods of crushing his victims is to demand of them an impossible righteousness, and then to accuse them and condemn them and drive them to despair because they have not fulfilled it, although he knows that they are wholly unable to do so.

How dreadful is the bondage of a soul conscious of its sin and shortcoming, constantly desiring to do better, and indeed, rushing into a thousand resolves and purposes of right doing, and yet sinking deeper into the captivity of corruption, and beaten for every failure with the cruel rod of an accusing conscience, and a remorseful despair. How different His gentle sway, who commands nothing without also giving the power to fulfil it; and who says to the weary and sin-trodden world, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The figure reaches its climax when it is added that the wages of this pitiless service was literally death. The cruel decree not only demanded that the race should be crushed and prostrated by these severe exactions, but also that it should be ultimately extinguished, by the consignment to a cruel fate, of every male child.

So our hard master not only seeks our service, but has determined upon our utter destruction. Nothing less than the blood of our soul will ever satisfy his fiendish hate and malignity. He is not satisfied with our physical death, but his sting strikes us with an eternal wound, and smites with an eternal death. What fools

men are. They are building what they think are their treasure cities; but like the piles of ancient Rameses and Pythom they pass into the hands of others, and the wretched toilers go down to an eternal grave. "Thewages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This cruel bondage is as unrelenting as it is severe. Pharaoh has no idea of letting his captives go. He may make a little compromise, and consent that they shall go for a few days into the wilderness to worship God; but they must not go very far away. In no case must they go out of Egypt; and even if they go they must leave their cattle and their children as hostages. So the world holds men. It has no objections to a moderate amount of religion, so long as it does not separate us from the world, or lead us very far from its practices and spirit; and like Pharaoh it always insists on holding our family and our property. Where Satan has not all the hearts, he generally controls a large part of the capital, even of the professed people of God. Parents who themselves would not dream of indulging in doubtful association and pleasures, allow their children unrestrained liberty in the enjoyment of the world.

It is a blessing when God makes the bondage so bitter that His people awake to the realization of its meaning, and cry like Israel of old for deliverance. Like them the cry will be met, not only by the Lord's mercy, but by the enhanced severity of their trials. The nearer the hour of deliverance came, the more terrific was the heat of the iron furnace. And so it is, often, that in the very depths of despair the morning breaks and the deliverer comes to us. "When the tale of bricks is double, then cometh Moses," is the beautiful proverb already referred to, in which the sad story of Israel crystallizes its hope; and many a soul has found it true in the experience of salvation or providential deliverance.

Let us stop and ask ourselves what all this means for us. Are we in the brick fields of Egypt, or in the free and happy tents of the redeemed? Are we building the house of sand which will crumble into decay and ruin in a little while? or are we building not only on the rock, but also of the precious, indestructible materials of gold, silver, and precious stones, which will not only stand the test, but shine the brighter in the flames of the final day?

Are we serving that cruel master, the world, who deceives us by his fair promises, and makes us think we are building palaces for ourselves, and then snatches them from the crumbling fingers that can hold them no longer, and repeats the story of the world's deceiving promises in the lives that come after us?

Are we the wretched slaves of a tyrant who is not only using all our strength for his own selfish ends, but who is slowly and inevitably crushing us to an eternal death; who has determined not only to destroy our lives, but to devour our immortal souls? Or are we under the bondage of an evil conscience, and a law that can no longer save or sanctify, wasting our lives and spending our strength for nought, in a futile endeavor to keep our resolutions, and reform our lives, overcome our passions, and fulfil the demands of that law; and then with every failure sinking deeper into helplessness and despair? Blessed be God! for us the hour of redemption draweth nigh. The rigors of our bondage are but the last frantic, convulsive efforts of our tyrant to hold us. The Great Deliverer has come to bind up the brokenhearted; to preach deliverance to the captives; to set at liberty them that are oppressed; to deliver us from the power of darkness and translate us into the kingdom of His dear Son. Only let us recognize our true condition; let us take His side against our oppressor; let us not, like them, refuse Moses when he comes to set us free; let us lift up our cry to heaven, and the answer is already spoken. "Behold the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me, and I have seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. I have surely seen the affliction of my children which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows, and am come down to deliver them."

SECTION II -- The Ten Plagues.

The first stage of the deliverance of Israel was the judgment of God upon their oppressors. And the plagues of Egypt are types of the dealings of God with our spiritual adversaries in the great work of redemption, both in its inception, and final consummation.

We have already seen the principle of salvation by destruction vividly illustrated in the story of the deluge, where Noah and his family were saved by water. The destruction of Pharaoh is a similar illustration of the same principle. The ten plagues of Egypt were directed not only against the persons and property of the king and nation, but more especially against the devil-gods and deified naturalism of the land.. "Against all the gods of Egypt," God says, "He will execute judgment." The ten successive plagues, which filled the river with blood, and the land with swarms of frogs, flies, locusts; which smote the cattle with disease, the fields with hail and fire, the sky with darkness, and all the homes of Egypt, at length, with death, were not only tokens of God's displeasure against the wicked tyrant and the corrupt people, but a still more direct and fatal blow at the dragon-head of him who was the real lord of Egypt; the Prince of the powers of the air; the Ruler of earth's ungodly nations; and the God of this world.

The Nile, the flocks, the beetles, the cattle, the sun, and the King himself, were all representatives of the Divine principle, and objects of idolatrous worship. And they were all in turn smitten in helpless judgment by the hand of Heaven, that Egypt might know that they were but the mockeries of a false religion, and the counterfeits of the true God, who was about to magnify Himself in the redemption and history of His chosen people.

These plagues foreshadowed the judgments which began to fall upon the head of Satan, even in the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus, and which are to each their culmination in the plagues of judgments of the last day.

The first three of these fell alike both on Israel and the Egyptians; implying that to a certain extent, even the people of God share the sufferings and retributions which sin has brought upon the earth. But the last seven were exclusively confined to the Egyptians, and seem to contain a prophecy, or at least a prefiguring shadow of the seven last plagues, which a little while are to fill up the cup of earth's calamities, and immediately precede the personal advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Rev. 16.)

The doom of Pharaoh in the Red Sea is the type of the final overthrow of Satan and his earthly viceregents at the opening of Christ's millennial reign. Not always will right be on the scaffold, and wrong upon the throne. "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse; but there is an end to the wickedness of the wicked, and his rod shall not forever rest upon the lot of the righteous." The chain is forged, and the sword is whetted which are to find and smite the tyrant and oppressor of the ages; and soon the cry will rise again: "The accuser of our brethren is cast down. Rejoice, O ye heavens, and be glad, O ye inhabitants of the earth. Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." As on the farther shore of the Egyptian sea they sang the song of Moses, they shall finish the refrain in a grander chorus, and sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb before the sea of glass, saying, "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." (Rev. 15: 3-5, 19: 6.)

Section III -- The Paschal Lamb.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it." "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt, I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever." (Exodus 12: 1-14.)

Thus did Jehovah mark the starting point of their national history by this crimson token of redemption. So for the church of the New Testament, and so for every redeemed soul, the beginning of months is the cross of Calvary, and the shed and sprinkled blood. The Paschal Lamb was but the summing up in one enduring ordinance of all the sacrificial types which had been already instituted for nearly thirty centuries.

The selection of the lamb on the tenth day of the month, and its being kept until the fourteenth, suggest unmistakably the coming of Christ in the fulness of time, and the three and a half years of his public ministry after he was set apart to his redeeming work by his baptism and while waiting for the accomplishment of his sacrifice. The death of the lamb before the whole assembly of the children of Israel reminds us of how he was delivered up by the national council of his own people, and formally condemned to death at the hands of the Romans. The very time of its death corresponded exactly with the sacrifice of Calvary. The sprinkled blood expresses our personal application of the merits of his death; and the efficacy of that blood in averting the stroke of the avenging angel, is fulfilled in the security into which redemption brings us, and the complete justification and acceptance of the soul that has found refuge under the precious blood.

The flesh of the lamb reminds us that Christ is not only a substitute for us, but the very substance and subsistence of our spiritual life through his living union and communion with us.

As it was eaten that same night that it was slain, so we must feed on Christ from the moment that we accept him.

The unleavened bread helps us to remember that our most holy faith leaves no place for the indulgence of sin, but requires our turning from all iniquity if we would claim that redeeming blood. And the bitter herbs spell out the story of repentance and contrition in the life of every forgiven soul. This, then, was the ground of their redemption, and this is the purchase of ours. "We have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," "not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you;" "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion forever and ever."

Have we learned to blend the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb? Are we resting under the precious blood? Are we feeding upon the flesh of the Paschal Lamb? Is our bread unleavened? Are our feet sandaled, our staves in hand, and our pilgrimage begun? "Are you sure the blood is on the door?" An old Hebrew legend tells us this was the cry of a little girl that first Passover night. "Father, are you sure?" They looked and found it had been entrusted to another and neglected. With eager hands it was quickly sprinkled, and the little heart could rest while waiting for their journey to begin. O if any one who reads these lines is still in Egypt and under the black wing of night and judgment, haste thee to apply it. The gentle Lamb stands with bowed head by your side. For a little longer he offers his bosom to death, and his blood to wash away thy sin. One cry of penitence, one look of earnest longing, one touch of simple faith, and you shall have passed under the protection of his death and life. The one shall cancel all your guilt; the other shall quicken and keep all your future life in covenant love and care. And this hour will be to you the beginning of the months of your eternal history; and shall not be forgotten even when before the sea of glass, you sing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

Notice most emphatically, that the safety of Israel did not depend upon their personal feelings or merits, but on the attitude they took with respect to the Lamb, and the blood. And so, beloved reader, your eternal future absolutely hangs upon your relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Out from under the blood you are lost whoever and wherever you may be. Under its sprinkled canopy you are as safe as an angel, and as dear to God as his only, well beloved Son.

SECTION III -- The Passage of the Red Sea.

"And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and overtook them encamping by the sea. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground; and the waters were a wall unto them on the right hand and on the left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared: and the Egyptians fled against it; and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea. And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on the right hand and on their left. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses." (Exodus 14: 8-31.)

Such is the sublime type of our salvation, repeated afresh in every new and great deliverance which comes in the life of faith. The principles are ever the same. God alone must deliver, and we must let Him,

ceasing from our own works, implicitly trusting Him, and fearlessly obeying and following Him. This is the beautiful figure of the committal of faith, when the soul first comes in trembling fear to Christ for salvation. Pursued by its sins and its bitter adversaries, it sees no way before, and there is no retreat behind. Then comes the blessed word, "Stand still and see the salvation of God." Our first act must be to cease from our own efforts to save ourselves; the next to keep our eye upon God; and then the third, to go forward, not in the old and restless way of the self-effort, but in simple obedience to His leading, and in confidence in His promise. There may seem no pathway but the raging sea; but the soul may commit itself securely to Him, and at once step out into the darkness of the inevitable future and it will find a pathway for redemption and victory.

So we must act in the great crises of difficulty and danger that meet us along the pathway of life. Our first expressions are usually those of distrust and fear, like poor flying Israel; and our greatest danger is that we shall become so agitated and active in our wild efforts to save ourselves, that God cannot really help us. Therefore His word again is to stand still. We must absolutely stop all our contriving, fretting and rushing hither and thither, and let the Lord take charge.

Next we must get our eye on Him, and see the salvation of the Lord, and know that He will fight for us; and as we do this we must continue to hold our peace. We must not begin again the outcries of fear or impatience; we must rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. Then will come the moment to go forward, and our going shall be safe and effectual. There may be no pathway visible. It may be stepping into the cold floods for a moment. But we shall find dry land as we advance, and on the farther shore shall have a song such as they only know who have learned to trust in the dark, and sing in the night.

"March on then right boldly,

The sea will divide,

The pathway made glorious,

With shouting victorious,

We'll join in the chorus,

The Lord will provide."

The passage of the Red sea was not only a beautiful symbol of the committal of faith, but also of death and resurrection. Hence it is called by the Apostle Paul, "baptism unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." It expresses the radical idea of baptism very vividly -- namely, death and resurrection life. It was a seeming grave, as our baptism is; and yet, like ours also, only a seeming death; for they found the solid ground beneath their feet. And yet it was really death to their enemies. And so as we become united to Christ in his death and resurrection, the only things that die are our spiritual enemies. And on the farther shore we see the Egyptians as helpless corpses, unable ever to harm us again.

Thus God permits us to bury our sins, our past lives, our old selves, and even the world of Egypt which has enslaved us, and debased us. This is the glorious meaning of the cross of Jesus. And all who have really accepted it in its real meaning can sing

"I've passed the cross of Calvary;

I'm on the heaven side."

Again, beloved, where do we stand amid these ancient figures of redemption? Have we ceased from our own works and accepted the salvation of the Lord? Have we gone forth in a full committal of faith, and begun like them our Christian pilgrimage? Have we died to sin, and recognized our guilt as buried in the depths of the sea? Nay, have we died to the spirit of self and the world, and left the spirit of Egypt forever behind us? Are we living on the Canaan side of the cross? Have we learned the secret of deliverance in the narrow places of trial through the stillness of faith and the interposition of God? Let us go forth from these meditations with a clearer view of our complete redemption, our line of eternal demarcation and separation from the world, our real resurrection life, and our glorious prospects as we now begin amid the teachings of these ancient types, our Christian pilgrimage.

SECTION V -- The Song of Moses.

It only remains to add in conclusion, that the song of Moses and of Miriam on the farther side of the Egyptian sea was the key note of the song of salvation in every redeemed soul; the song of deliverance which every visitation of God's providence inspires; and the song of him in which all these notes shall yet be gathered up amid the choirs of glory.

Have we learned that first song, Isaiah 12: 1-2, "O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

Have we learned the song of deliverance, which is first the Berachah song going before the redeemed like the choirs of Jehoshaphat; and then bringing up the rear with praise for accomplished blessing? And shall we have our part in that grander chorus where the multitude that no man can number, out of all kindreds and tongues and peoples and nations shall sing and shout, "Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and blessing.

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