



The children of Israel at the Red Sea : an address to children

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AN

Address to Children

BY THE LATE

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PREFACE.

AMONG the many faithful preachers who at various times have held aloft the torch of the pure Gospel in the valley of the Wupper (that focus of religious life in Germany), the late Rev. Dr. Kohlbrügge, Pastor of the Reformed Church at Elberfeld, was at the same time one of the most eminent and the most successful. Several of his sermons have already, at the desire of his friends in this country, been made accessible to English readers. Those who have admired the depth and fervour of these discourses, will readily believe that this earnest servant of Christ was a great favourite with the children. The following series of addresses to the young have not as yet found their way into print in their German home. They embody the substance of copious notes taken by one of the congregation, at the request of some friends in England; and it is hoped that in their present form they may make their way into the hearts of many children, both young and old, and that, by their freshness, simplicity and positive teaching, they may prove an instrument whereby one of the Lord's most faithful witnesses "being dead, yet speaketh."

The Children of Israel at the Red Sea.

(Report of an Address to Children given on Nov. 18, 1869.)

WHAT did the Lord God give the Children of Israel from Mount Sinai?

CHILDREN.—He gave them the Ten Commandments.

Can you repeat the First Commandment?

CH.—I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Was what God here calls the house of bondage an easy or a hard service?

CH.—It was a hard service.

It was a very hard service. The Children of Israel were unable to do all the work that was laid upon them by their Egyptian taskmasters. Their lives were made bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick. They had to wander about the fields to gather stubble instead of the straw which Pharaoh refused to supply them any longer. This stubble they had to cut small and mix with the clay, which was then baked into bricks, such

as you may still see at the British Museum. Now, what is this house of bondage in Egypt a type or picture of? I once heard an infidel lecturer say that the Ten Commandments were only for the Jews, because it was they who had been in the house of bondage. But *we* had never been in Egypt, and therefore they had nothing to do with *us*. But now let me ask you once more, my dear children, of what was the house of bondage in Egypt a picture?

CH.—Of our bondage to sin and the Devil.

And that we can prove from the words of our Lord. One Sabbath day, our Lord, as His custom was, went into the synagogue at Nazareth to teach the people. For in the synagogue everyone who wished to do so had a right to take up the Bible, and to explain it. At that time the Scriptures were written on parchment rolls; one of these is handed to Jesus. He unrolls it till he lights on the passage, Isaiah lxi. 1: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me: because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." When it is said: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," we know that these words refer to whom?

CH.—To the Lord Jesus.

Who are the "captives" and "they that are bound." Do you think that people like the prisoners in our county gaol are meant?

CH.—No.

Whose prisoners are the "captives" and "they that are bound" spoken of in this passage?

CH.—The Devil's

When our Lord had read this passage of Isaiah, He said to those present at the synagogue: "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." How was it fulfilled?

CH.—Because our Lord was then preaching to them those good tidings of deliverance.

What sort of people had the Lord Jesus come to heal and to comfort?

CH.—Those whose hearts were breaking over the sufferings of their lives, and over their sins.

Yes, for all our suffering is caused by our sins. They were bound with the chains of their sins, and their wickedness held them as it were, in prison.

To these captives of sin Christ preached deliverance. Now just turn to Acts xxvi., and read me the 13th and following verses.

CH.—"At mid-day, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

The pricks which are here spoken of were used by bullock drivers in the East instead of a whip. When the bullock kicked out behind, he was wounded by the pricks. Now read on at the 18th verse.

CH.—"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, an

inheritance among them which are sanctified by that faith that is in me."

When you are in the dark, are you able to move about freely ?

CH.—No.

Of course not, because you are afraid of stumbling over something, or hurting yourself. And so if your souls are in darkness you are bound as it were by fear ; you are not free, for you are subject to the power of Satan. Such persons are in the house of bondage, and whoever is in the house of bondage, is a slave and a servant of the Devil. But the servants of Christ are free. The Son of man is not come to be ministered unto. Jesus makes all who come to Him free men, and kings and priests to God. So the words, "house of bondage" and "land of Egypt," in the First Commandment, are meant in a spiritual sense. What was the last of the Egypt plagues ?

CH.—The death of the first-born, not only of man but of beasts.

But why were the first-born of the Israelites spared ?

CH.—Because the Israelites had struck the blood of the Passover lamb on their doorposts.

And wherever the destroying angel saw the blood on the doorposts he passed over that house ; and, therefore, the feast was called Passover. When the first born of the Egyptians had been slain, Pharaoh compelled the Israelites to leave Egypt in great haste. After a few days they came to the Red Sea, which divides Egypt from the Great Wilderness. There they became aware that Pharaoh had repented of his decree to let them go, and was pursuing them with a great host. So they

were at their wits' end. Before them stretched the deep, wide sea, and behind the Egyptians were fast approaching. It was clear that if they were to escape, they must cross the sea, and yet they had no ships. What did the Lord command Moses to do ?

CH.—He was to stretch out his rod over the sea, and to smite the waters, and divide them.

Were the children of Israel alone ?

CH.—No, there went with them a pillar of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night.

Who was in the cloud ?

CH.—The angel of the Lord.

He that was in the cloud is sometimes called "the Lord," and sometimes "the angel of the Lord." This shows that Christ Himself was present with them. And He always continued with them ; for all day long the pillar of the cloud went before the people, and all through the night they were guided by the pillar of fire. Moses, therefore, was brave and fearless, because he trusted in the presence of the Lord. And those were brave words he spoke to the people : " Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord ; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever." And then, at the bidding of the Lord, he lifted up his rod, and stretched out his hand over the sea. Straightway the waters were divided, and the Israelites went through, " about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children." Just imagine : 450 years before that time, 70 souls, all told, had gone down to Egypt : so rapidly had this people increased, in spite of the grinding oppression and tyranny of the Egyptians, who, as you know, threw many of their children into the Nile.

Well, this Red Sea through which the Israelites passed, signifies the world and its affliction. How do you read in Isaiah xliii. 1—2 ?

CH.—“ But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel : Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name ; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.”

The deliverance of the people of Israel at the Red Sea thus shadows out the manner in which God delivers His people, when their trouble has reached its highest point. The history of God's Church is a history of deliverances through the Red Sea. Do you believe that God led Israel through the Red Sea ? If you really do believe that, you will also believe that God will cause you to pass safely through every sea of difficulty which lies in your way. But, then, the Egyptian host thought they, too, could pass dryshod through the Red Sea just as they had seen the Israelites do. What enabled the Israelites to do what the Egyptians could not do ?

CH.—The Israelites could do it because God was with them.

When all the host of Israel had passed through, the waters returned. The Egyptians were pursuing the Israelites, and for that reason the Lord was not with them, and they were drowned in the sea. The children of Israel walked in the light of the Lord, for the pillar of fire shed its brightness on the people of Israel only, while the Egyptians were surrounded with the black-

ness of night. On the one side the pillar of fire was full of light, on the other it was full of darkness. My dear children, we have another kind of light which is a lamp unto our feet. What is it called?

CH.—The Bible.

Does everyone understand the Bible?

CH.—No.

Who understands it? . . . I will try to explain what I mean. What does the word Gospel signify?

CH.—Glad tidings.

Who understands glad tidings?

CH.—Those who are sad, and in need of them.

Who cannot understand them?

CH.—Those who are not sad.

Only those, then, who are sad with a godly sorrow can understand the glad tidings. Do you remember a text about godly sorrow?

CH.—“Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of.”

He, then, who is sorrowful after a godly manner understands the glad tidings, and why does he understand them?

CH.—Because he stands in need of them.

Once more, who does not understand the glad tidings?

CH.—He who does not stand in need of the Gospel.

Two persons have the same Bible; but to one the Gospel is light, to the other it is darkness, because the one thirsts after God, the other does not care about Him. The Egyptians did not desire to have God, they only desired to destroy God's people, the Israelites. What does St. Paul say about those who do not understand the Gospel, in 2 Corinthians iv. 3?

CH.—But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.

Does the fault lie with man, if it is hidden from him?

CH.—The fault lies with man.

Why were the Egyptians unable to see the light?

CH.—Because they hated God's people, and God Himself.

What does St. Paul go on to say in the 4th verse?

CH.—In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

That is to say, the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, because they *are* unbelievers, and do not *want* to see. The Egyptians were to be made aware that the Lord was with Israel; and therefore the pillar of the cloud removed to the rear of the Israelitish host, and was a cloud and darkness to the Egyptians, so that one came not near the other all the night. Now, when the people of God had passed through the sea, the Egyptians tried to follow them with their chariots, and horsemen, and the entire host of Pharaoh. But they had no sooner reached the middle of the sea, than the waters which had been as walls on the right and on the left, returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh, so that they "sunk as lead in the mighty waters." Or, as Moses said in his song: "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." These chariots were used in war, and had sharp sickle-shaped blades attached to them, which cut

down the enemies, and whoever did not perish in this manner, was overwhelmed with darts by those who stood in the chariots. Of these chariots the Israelites had been in great fear, and very glad they were to be delivered from them in so sudden and wonderful a manner. So not only did Moses sing a song of joy, but Miriam, also, the prophetess, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and they, too, sang of the mighty deed which God had wrought; when He threw the horse and his rider into the sea. Who was Miriam?

CH.—Aaron's sister.

What does the name Miriam or Mary mean?

CH.—A rebellious woman.

And what is a prophetess?

CH.—One who prophesies about Christ.

That is a very good answer. How did she come to be a prophetess?

CH.—She was filled with a sense of her own misery.

Good, very good. This Miriam, then, was full of a sense of her own misery, and of godly sorrow. She was filled with the Holy Ghost, and in the prophetic vision had found forgiveness of her sins through the promised Gospel of Christ. God grant that there may be some prophets and prophetesses of this kind among you. In order that you may enjoy the happiness of Miriam, you will, in the first place, have a lively conviction of your own sin and consequent misery; secondly, you will feel godly sorrow; and lastly, you will have a firm and certain assurance that for Christ's sake all your sin has been taken away. So you will have peace, and be full of gratitude to God, and be Christ's faithful soldiers and

servants unto your lives' end. What lesson should their passage through the Red Sea have taught the children of Israel? Surely this, that God measures the waters in the hollow of His hand, and that all things are at His command to do with them whatsoever He pleases. He had given the Israelites a striking proof that He was a God mighty to save; but we shall see whether they remembered what God had done for them. Where did they go when they turned away from the Red Sea?

CH.—Moses brought them out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

A wilderness is very different from the place we live in. In the wilderness there are no bakers where you might buy bread, no gardens where you could get vegetables and potatoes, and no fruit trees from which you could obtain a supply of fruit. In the wilderness you may go about several days, and see nothing but sand and the sky. For three days the people of Israel could find no water, and must have suffered terribly from thirst. In every Christian's life, there are times when he has to pass from a great deliverance such as that of the Red Sea, into the dry and thirsty wilderness. On the first day, the sufferings of the people must have already been great. On the second day, perhaps, they dreamt, as very thirsty people often do, of fountains, and wells, and rivers, and yet had nothing to drink; their lips were parched, and many had already fainted

for want of water. God seemed to be trying their endurance to the very uttermost. On the third day their torments became intolerable. Picture to yourselves the little children crying, Mother, Mother, water, water! and yet their mothers were unable to give them water. The people thought that God had utterly forsaken them, just as the disciples of Jesus after His crucifixion were in great fear that their Lord had gone away from them, and would never come back again. But as our Saviour rose on the third day, so on the third day the Israelites at last found water, but when they tasted it they were heavily dissatisfied, it was bitter, and did not quench their thirst. What did the people do then?

CH.—They murmured against Moses.

They murmured, and yet they had received so many proofs of God's willingness and power to help them. For first, He had brought them out of Egypt; secondly, He had caused them to pass dryshod through the Red Sea; thirdly, He had destroyed their enemies, the Egyptians. Was Moses as foolish as the people?

CH.—No, he cried to the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which, when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.

This tree is the tree of life which makes the bitter water sweet. It points forward to the tree on which our Saviour died, that is, the cross of Christ, which when it is put into the bitter waters of our lives, makes them sweet.