



Divine Deliverance

R. Stanley, 5 August 2021

We in India celebrate our 75th Anniversary of Independence on 15 August 2021. We were freed from British Colonialism on this memorable day in 1947. We gratefully remember the freedom fighters, especially those who suffered torturous imprisonment and even martyrdom. But for their sustained struggle we would still be under foreign reign. We thank God for the fresh air of freedom we breathe since Independence.

Though we are freed from the British rule, a large percentage of our Indian brothers and sisters is still under various bondages of Beelzebub. I understand from a close study of the Bible that each Christian must be an agent of Divine Deliverance in whatever country he lives. Every Christian must be a deliverer. Jesus is the Saviour and we are to be soulwinners, that is soul-snatchers. Jesus is the Chief Shepherd, and we are to be under-shepherds for the “multitudes” which are “weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd” (Mt 9:35,36). Jesus is the Lord of the Harvest, and we are to be the harvesters (vv37,38). All those who by rebirth have “come to Mount Zion,” that’s the Church of God, must be “saviours” or “deliverers” (Ob 21; Heb 12:22a). As Jesus was and is, so we should be in this world (1 Jn 4:17). We must walk as He walked and work as He worked (2:6). Our hands must be the extension of His to deliver folks from the clutches of Satan.

Referring to certain preachers, I have heard people say, “He or she has a deliverance ministry.” The purpose of this article is to correct this erroneous thinking by the Biblical truth that every believer can have a deliverance ministry. Praying for the sick or casting out demons is not a gift to a select few but the right of everyone who believes. Hear the departing words of Jesus: “These signs will follow those who believe (not those who preach): In My name they will cast out demons ... they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover” (Mk 16:15-18). We meet two groups in this passage (Mk 16:15-20): “Preachers” and “Believers.” Jesus has said that both the groups can be involved in healing and demon-casting ministry. When you get up from sickbed and come to Church, pray for “one another” for healing (Js 5:16). The New Testament believers should not look at Elijah as a deluxe edition (vv17,18). He was “like us” in want, fear, depression and so on. He was a “righteous” man, and we are made “righteous” by faith. We too can pray “effectively,” “fervently” and “earnestly” like him, with the help of the Two Intercessors: Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

“Good News of Deliverance”

As a wretched sinner I was saved by God’s amazing grace in 1962 when I had just entered college at the age of sixteen. Overwhelmed with experiencing the power of God in my life in delivering me from sinful habits, I began to passionately share the message of deliverance with as many of my collegemates and contacts as possible. We as the members of the Engineering College Campus Prayer Fellowship I founded in 1963 visited villages and went to street corners proclaiming deliverance through Christ. Being dissatisfied

with the content of the imported tracts and a few Indian ones, in consultation with my friends, I wrote a tract in Tamil, titled, "*Good News of Deliverance*," in 1965. This tract now in numerous languages, including Chinese and Russian, has brought thousands, both non-Christians and nominal Christians, to salvation. The Gospel in its purest form is the (delivering) "power of God unto salvation" (Rom 1:16).

Divine Deliverance Crusades

During our student days in the 1960s, Evangelist N. Jeevanandam (1931-2006) was a heroic inspiration to us. He would not be looking for mega meetings and adorned pulpits but go freely to villages, hamlets and slums with his bold proclamation of the Gospel of Deliverance. We have watched him closely while casting out demons. He believed 100% in the power of the Name of Jesus. His exuberant singing with a handmade tambourine is still fresh in my mind. When the Lord led me to found the Blessing Youth Mission (BYM) in 1971, one of our slogans from pulpits was, "God's extraordinary power through ordinary youngsters!" To actualize this vision, we introduced three programmes: *Join Jesus Rallies* (JJ), *Divine Deliverance Crusades* (DD) and *Gospel Go-give Camps* (GG). The JJ Rallies were meant primarily for soulwinning activities among students. The DD Crusades were conducted in villages for two or three days to preach the Gospel, pray for the sick and cast out demons. The GG Camps were the missionary programmes through teams for a week or a fortnight in tribal areas. The task-force of these three programmes was young men and young women. The needle-pointed saying of Evangelist T. L. Osborn (1923-2013) that "Laymen will write the last chapter of Church History" was the one which revolutionized our minds. The excitement of these teams when they returned was the same as the 70 disciples of Jesus: "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your Name!" (Lk 10:1,17). Sadly the Christians of today have become by and large the "supporters" of superstar evangelists or missionary organisations instead of themselves running into the enemy's territory to captivate the captives for Christ (2 Sam 22:30; Psa 18:29). Where are God's Davids for the day? He was not only a dancing worshipper but also a dauntless warrior!

Evangelism & Exorcism

Exorcism is an integral part of evangelism. While commissioning the twelve Jesus told them, "Preach ... heal ... cast out demons" (Mt 10:1-8). He included demoncasting in the Great Commission also (Mk 16:15-17). Studying how Christ and the apostles delivered the demoniacs will both enlighten and encourage us (Mt 8:28-34; 9:32-34; 12:22-29; 17:14-20; Mk 1:21-28; 7:25-30; Lk 8:2; 11:14; 13:10-21; Acts 8:7; 16:16-18). Our primary weapon against the devil to deliver folks from his clutches is the "authority" we have in Christ. Unfortunately in Charismatic circles the emphasis is more on "power" than on "authority." Power to simply shake and shout! The Father gave the authority to the Son (Mt 28:18; Mk 1:27). Christ passed on that authority first to the twelve (Mt 10:1; Mk 6:7), then to the seventy (Lk 10:1,19), and finally to all believers (Mk 16:17). We enjoy this authority because our names are written in Heaven. That's the reason why demons obey us! (Lk 10:18-20). We are ambassadors for Christ. That's why the defeated enemy bows before us! (2 Cor 5:20c). We can exercise authority over Satan when we submit to

the authority of Christ by walking in obedience to Him (Rom 16:19,20; Js 4:7; Psa 81:13,14). At the same time, do not ever think that the devils will obey you only if you are perfect. If that's the case, no one other than Jesus can cast out demons. Apostle Peter was right when following a healing miracle he asked the marvelling crowd, "Why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" (Acts 3:12b). He ascertained that the miracle-power was only in the "Name of Jesus" (v16). However let me serve a warning here: Commanding the devil while continuing deliberately in sin will make the devil clap hands instead of cringe before us (Acts 19:14-16).

Demon-possession is too common in Indian villages and tribal areas. The victims are waiting in anguish for deliverers to come from Zion. Heaven awards you the D.D. degree! Devil Driver! This degree which no university can award is universally recognized! The devil may despise and disregard ordination but he dreads unction! (Acts 19:13-16; Mt 12:28). I taught the delegates of a Seminar in 1992, "*How to cast out devils.*" It's included as chapter 12 in my book, *Wild Honey*.

Generational Curse

An unscriptural practice of many a so-called deliverance ministers these days is breaking of the chain of generational curse. The Bible nowhere speaks of any "generational spirit." It's only a myth. Even under the Old Covenant, God visits iniquity only on those who "hate" Him (Ex 20:5). There was a proverb in Israel which said, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth have become sensitive" (Ezek 18:2). But God has categorically said, "As I live, says the Lord God, you shall no longer use this proverb in Israel" (v3). Look at the eternal verity with which God stamps this truth: "*As I live ...*" Each man is responsible for his own sins only, and not of his father or ancestors (v4). God has stated this all-important truth through Prophet Jeremiah also (Jer 31:29,30). If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation, not an evolution from the past! (2 Cor 5:17). "Now" all things are "of God," not of our forefathers (v18). Christ's blood has redeemed us from the useless things of our forefathers (1 Pet 1:18,19). God has brought us "out" of Egypt. "Now" there's no sorcery or divination (or Egyptian magic) against us! Do not go about telling what the "devil" is doing, but what "God has done!" (Num 23:22,23). Run away from frauds who talk about generational curse or removing buried charms or tin sheets!

Spiritual Darkness

The Christless masses are those "sitting in darkness and under the shadow of death" (Mt 4:16; Isa 9:2; 42:7). Nothing happens until Christians from the comfort zones of Nazareth leave for Naphtali (Mt 4:13-15). Praying is no substitute for going. The Biblical name for believers is the "children of light" and that for unbelievers is the "children of darkness" (Eph 5:8). Those who are born again are the "sons of light and of the day." Those who have not experienced rebirth yet are still in the "night" and "darkness" (1 Thess 5:5). It's the responsibility of each of us delivered from the power of darkness to deliver those who are still captives of this power (Col 1:13). I would rather be a candle where there's utter darkness than become a tubelight where there are already ninety-nine

tubelights (Lk 15:7). It's the unending responsibility of each Christian to bring each non-Christian to Jesus the Light of the World (Jn 1:9; 8:12). Be bold because the darkness of the majority cannot apprehend the light of the minority (1:4,5). Our weakness is that instead of forsaking the "unfruitful and shameful works of darkness" we are still flirting with them (Eph 5:11,12). What are those works? "Sexual impurity, love of money, unedifying talk" and anything other than "goodness, righteousness and truth" (vv3-5,9,10). We get scared when the World Health Organisation (WHO) predicts a third wave of Corona. But we don't get serious when the Saviour of the World warns us of the coming "night when no man can work" (Jn 9:4; 4:42c). We get wounded when our children disrespect our words. But we don't realise how much the Father God gets hurt when we despise His words.

History of Deliverance

A Bible-believing Christian cannot but be involved in the deliverance ministry. The God of the Bible has manifested Himself as the Supreme Deliverer all through human history. An outstanding confession was made by David: Psa 18:2, "The Lord is my Rock and my Fortress and my Deliverer; my God, my Strength, in whom I will trust; my Shield and the Horn of my Salvation, my Stronghold." God delivered His chosen people from Egyptian slavery, Babylonian captivity and Palestinian oppression. The heart of the Old Testament testimony is, "God is my Salvation" (Ex 15:2; Job 13:16; Psa 27:1; Isa 12:2; Mic 7:7; Hab 3:18). The Hebrew root word, "*yasa*," means "save, give victory, rescue" and so on. The Greek root word, "*sozo*," means "save, cure, deliver, make well" and so on. Both these words are repeated throughout the Bible. Down through the ages God has used several men and women as deliverers. Some of them are Abraham (Gen 14:14-16), Moses (Acts 7:35,36; Psa 77:20), Joshua (Ex 17:8-13), several Judges including Deborah (Judg 2:16; 5:7,12,15), Samuel (1 Sam 7:3-13), Saul (1 Sam 11:9-13) and David (2 Sam 8:1,14). All these deliverers and deliverances foreshadowed the coming of Jesus as the Supreme Deliverer. That's the very meaning of the name Jesus: Saviour, Deliverer. All those who follow Him are to be an army of deliverers, their flag being "Jehovah-Nissi!" (Ex 17:15). Jesus as the Captain of our Salvation goes before us (Heb 2:10).

Bondage of the Law

Though we are potentially delivered from the Law of the Old Testament, there are many believers who have not practically walked into the liberty of the New Covenant. They are not ready to send Ishmael away. They build for him an outer house and the conflict between him and Isaac becomes perennial (Gal 4:28-31). Law and Grace cannot coexist. Not understanding the liberty in Christ, many of God's children get "entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (5:1). This is serious. Apostle Paul calls it as "falling from grace" (v4). Pastors and Preachers have an awesome responsibility to keep on teaching God's people the difference between the Old Covenant and the New, between Law and Grace. Unfortunately the theology of several pulpiteers is defective. The congregations are at an immense disadvantage when the Church leaders attempt to pour the New Wine into old bottles (Mt 9:17; Mk 2:22). Oh, how many extra-Biblical rules and regulations in our Churches, including the so-called "full-gospel" Churches!

I got a profound and full-bodied understanding of the difference between the Old Testament Law and the New Testament Grace by reading and rereading the Epistles of Paul during my personal evening meditations on knees in the forest area adjacent to our college campus from 1963 to 1968. This is coherently reflected in my sermons ever since I started public preaching in 1971. The testimonies from my listeners and readers since then fill my eyes with tears of thanksgiving for their deliverance. I urge pulpiteers to read and meditate afresh the New Testament Epistles, especially Romans, Galatians, Ephesians and Hebrews. Deliver your audience from Galatian foolishness and remove the Mosaic veil from their faces! (Gal 3:1-3; 2 Cor 3:12-17). It's the knowledge I gained from the Epistles that made me distance myself from the group, in which I was born again in 1962, which had links with a legalistic fellowship though it called itself evangelical.

Pagan Practices

The agents of Satan visit tribal villages and remote areas before the first evangelist sets his foot there. This we have seen again and again when our missionary teams reach out to the unevangelised spots. The Church has been sleeping too long during which time the enemy has sown the tares (Mt 13:25). Many of our congregations have developed bedsores. Sorcery, witchcraft, magic, soothsaying and the like are holding millions under bondage. Child marriage, human sacrifice, self-torturing of bodies to appease gods and goddesses and the like are still in India. When will the independent India experience spiritual liberation?

William Carey (1761-1834) alongwith Raja Ram Mohan Roy raised a voice against the inhuman practice of *Sati* and got it abolished in 1829. Born to a Brahmin couple, Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) laboured to improve the lot of widows who were looked down upon as doormats. She obviously caught the spirit of Jesus towards widows. She experienced the Baptism with the Holy Spirit following the Welsh Revival of 1904. Amy Carmichael (1867-1951) devoted herself to the work of rescuing girls from temple prostitution. The Dohnavur Fellowship is a living testimony to her humble but bold endeavour. The two sons of a Malayalee family influenced by our early years of ministry are working in Maharashtra among the victims of human trafficking. They with their families aim at saving the children of sex workers from being forced into prostitution, educating them and enabling them live with dignity in the society. Dear Pastors, throw these challenges before your Church members and raise teams for such deliverance ministries. Don't keep repeating the chorus, "Come to the meeting, Come to the meeting!"

Christian Heathenism

When God delivered His people from the Egyptian bondage, before they entered Canaan inhabited by people of seven nationalities, He commanded them through Moses, "When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the detestable acts of those nations" (Dt 18:9). God's warning later through Prophet Jeremiah was the same: "Do not learn the way of the Gentiles ... For the customs of the people are futile" (Jer 10:2a,3a). Referring to the futility of the Gentile lifestyle,

Apostle Paul reminded the Christians in Ephesus, “You have not so learned Christ” (Eph 4:17-20). There are simply too many heathenic practices in Indian Christianity. We cleverly baptise them by paid priests and hired preachers. Several of my Hindu convert friends are terribly upset over idolatrous customs followed by even Spirit-filled Christians. I am not able to defend any. For example, why so many Christian marriages on the same day? Why buy bridegrooms like bulls? Why casteism in Church elections? (Election itself is unbiblical!) Boiling of cow’s milk as the first item in the Housewarming ceremony, I think, is a Christianized version of the Hindu custom of making the milch cow enter the house as the first guest! Lest I earn more enemies, let me stop here. Here’s Apostle Paul with his lamentation: Gal 4:9-11, “After you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You are observing days and months and seasons and years. I’m afraid for you, lest I have laboured for you in vain!”

I can understand All Souls Day observed in Roman Catholic Churches which value traditions over Biblical truth. But how is it that Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist and several such denominations, Protestants so called, observe this? The observances include prayers for the dead, prayers to the dead, and the like. The Bible outrightly prohibits such practices. Communication with the dead is an abomination to the Lord because it is as bad as the heathenic practices of fire-walk, spiritism, etc. (Dt 18:9-12). Words cannot be clearer than those of Jesus: “God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him” (Lk 20:38). You cannot pray for the dead also, because “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Heb 9:27). Our eternal destiny is decided before our earthly exit. Paul mentions “baptism for the dead” not as a Biblical prescription but uses a prevailing practice to prove his point of resurrection (1 Cor 15:29). We need Martin Luthers to deliver Protestantism from the relics of Romanism and rituals of heathenism.

Relief Ministry

Every deliverance ministry must give sufficient emphasis for uplifting the poorest of the poor. Jesus testified that the very anointing on Him was to “preach the Gospel to the poor” (Isa 61:1; Lk 4:18a). “Broken hearts, mourning, ashes and oppression” are the lot of those in poverty (Isa 61:2,3; Lk 4:18,19). They do not know where their next meal would come from. They go to bed with empty stomachs. They don’t have another dress to change. They are either homeless or their houses do not have even basic amenities. The list is endless. Any ministry that does not totally identify itself with these havenots does not have the mind of Christ (Mt 25:31-46). Sins of omission are worthy of “everlasting punishment” (v46a). Patriarch Job had a deliverance ministry. He was a “father to the poor” (Job 29:16). He slapped the rich who exploited the poor and delivered them from their clutches (v17). Prophet John had a deliverance message. He warned the oppressors of the poor with words like “axe” and “fire” (Lk 3:9-14). Our healing crusades will be void of spectacular miracles until we fill our front seats with “the poor, the blind, the lame and the outcasts” (Lk 14:21-23).

The Church history has been flavoured by ministries like the Salvation Army founded by William and Catherine Booth in London in 1865. Their converts were sent into places the Church never knew existed, seeking the castaways, providing homes, food, employment and medical care, reconciling families, etc. Evangelism was high in their agenda. Every funeral was an evangelistic opportunity. The slogan of Salvation Army was “*Soap, Soup, Salvation.*” I rebuke the Christians and Preachers who mock at this approach. That only shows your Biblical illiteracy. Do you send your children to school without bath and breakfast? Can they be attentive in the class with an empty stomach? Do you go to Church without a proper dress? Don’t you pray, “Give us this day our daily bread,” even after three plus meals a day? What’s the use of saying benediction without sharing bread? (Js 2:15-17). Who said evangelism must always be attached to charity? Does not the Heavenly Father send sunshine and showers both on the good and the bad people without any discrimination? Where is Christian “perfection” without this character? (Mt 5:45,48). What if only 10% of our beneficiaries choose to follow Christ? (Lk 17:11-17).

Dear young men and young women, decide today to do something tangible to blessthepoor. There’s no joy like the one when you bring smile on the face of the downtrodden and the marginalised. During my undergraduate student days in the Karaikudi Engineering College, 1963-1968, about six of us would visit weekly a lepers gathering with eatables purchased from our meagre pocketmoney. Singing with them when they clap their fingerless hands was like Heaven on earth! That spirit of charity is evident in my sermons and writings till this day. How can I be otherwise? I urge Christian youngsters to study MSW (Master’s in Social Work) and join relief organisations like World Vision. Spend your best energetic years in uplifting the helpless (Prov 31:8,9; Isa 1:17; Jer 21:12a). I like the name Mother Teresa (1910-1997) has given to her team: “*Missionaries of Charity.*” If you get a medical seat, decide once for all that you would work only where there’s no doctor. Healing ministry and medical work should not be separated from each other. Don’t we go to work for breadwinning after praying for “our daily bread?” Don’t we wear sandals though angels would carry us up in their hands lest we dash our feet against a stone? Dear Healing Evangelists, please hesitate not to be vaccinated against Corona or hide not if vaccinated. Be human. Be normal. The sick do need a physician. Orthopaedic Surgeons relieve you of backpain. That’s deliverance ministry (Lk 13:16). Dr. Ambrose Pare (1510-1590), a famous French Surgeon, said, “I bandage, but God heals!” Do not feel bad if you do not get an MBBS seat. Do you know that Nurses can stay closer and longer with patients than doctors? Be inspired by the story of Florence Nightingale (1820-1910) who was an English social reformer and the founder of modern Nursing. Her nickname was “The lady with the Lamp!” Learn more about her from Google.

Full Gospel

I may be accused of propagating a social Gospel. According to my Biblical understanding, there’s no such thing as “social” Gospel or “spiritual” Gospel. The full Gospel of Jesus Christ has two dimensions: Spiritual and Social. The birth of Jesus had a 2-fold message: “Glory to God” and “Goodwill toward men” (Lk 2:14). The boyhood of

Jesus reflected a 2-fold growth: “Favour with God” and “Favour with men” (v52b). His entire ministry was characterised by a 2-fold purpose: Meeting the spiritual and physical needs of the people (Lk 4:18,19). The senior apostles, Peter, James & John, cautioned the first batch of Missionaries against forgetting the poor in missionary evangelism (Gal 2:9,10). Spiritual-mindedness and Social conscience are like two eyes or two hands or two legs. Unfortunately our social conscience has become so subnormal that the normal looks abnormal. I’m against Godless Communism as well as Merciless Christianity. Charity without Christianity is as bad as Christianity without Charity! Dr. E. Stanley Jones (1884-1973), was an American Methodist Missionary. He was a good friend of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) whom we remember fondly as the Father of our Nation, especially on the Independence Day. Here’s a quote from Dr. Stanley Jones: “A social Gospel without a spiritual dimension is a corpse; a spiritual Gospel without a social dimension is a ghost!” We Indian Christians cannot forget the fruits we enjoy even today because of the 2-dimensional and balanced ministries of the European and Western Missionaries.

Deliverance from Slavery

The most characteristic act of deliverance in Israel’s history was how God rescued His people from Egyptian slavery. This was commemorated in the annual Passover celebrations. Psalms 105 to 107 refer to this. Christ is our Passover today as our Saviour and Redeemer (1 Cor 5:7). God reminded the Hebrews of their slavery in Egypt whenever He gave them regulations for the treatment of slaves (Dt 15:15). Later the Prophets criticized slavery practices (2 Chr 28:10,11). They called Israel to “break every yoke” and let the oppressed go free (Isa 58:6). We have spiritualized this passage for our convenience. Israel’s exile was God’s punishment for not releasing the slaves as per His directive (Jer 34:8-11,17). God through Prophet Joel promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the male and female slaves also (Joel 2:29; Acts 2:18). Here the word “servants” means “slaves.” Jesus proclaimed release for the oppressed (Lk 4:18,19). He took upon Himself the form of a “slave” (Phil 2:7). He taught the supreme leadership principle as serving like a slave and not acting like one to be served (Mk 10:42-45). In Christ there’s no difference as slave or free (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11; 1 Cor 12:13).

However the slavery system continued in the New Testament times. That’s why the apostles gave instructions on how the slaves should behave and how their masters should treat them (Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22-4:1; 1 Tim 6:1,2; Tit 2:9,10; 1 Pet 2:18,19). There were three types of slavery in Israel: (1) By birth or purchase, Hebrews served fellow-Hebrews because of poverty (Ex 21:2; Lev 25:38-41); (2) Hebrews took non-Hebrews as slaves through purchase or captive in war (Gen 17:12,13,23; Dt 20:11; 29:11); (3) Hebrews sold themselves to non-Hebrews as security against debt (Lev 25:47,48). Slavery was abolished in the 19th century only, first in Britain and then in the US. They were purchasing West Africans for slaves. God raised Abolitionists like Granville Sharp, Zachary Macaulay (1768-1838), William Wilberforce (1759-1833), an outstanding preacher, Thomas Buxton (1786-1845) and T. Clarkson (1760-1846) who voiced, “Slavery is inconsistent with the principles of the Gospel.” However, slavery in some form or the other continues today with 28 million people worldwide trapped in slave bondage, from sex-trafficking to forced labour and child labour. Poverty victims are most vulnerable. Whatever be its form, it violates the Gospel and human dignity.

Pray that God would raise national and political leaders like Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), the 16th President of the USA, who issued “*Emancipation Proclamation*” in 1863 freeing the slaves. He was assassinated by an actor. Another one was Martin Luther King (1929-1968), a black American clergyman, who was also assassinated. Dear Christian friend, have you ever pondered over the subject of slavery that’s so frequently referred to both in the Old Testament and the New? We have not understood the heart of God as we ought because we pick up only those Biblical passages which don’t disturb us. Laying hands on people’s heads for photography is the only deliverance ministry we know of. Many of our Indian brothers and sisters are in slavery because of widowhood and debt. Where are the Prophets like Elisha to save widows and their children from becoming “slaves” due to debt? (2 Ki 4:1-7). How many of us will become paupers if we write off the debts of our poor borrowers? How many times we pray, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors!” Remember, Christ has paid all our debts on the Cross satisfying the demands of a holy God! It was John Newton (1725-1807), a slave, then a slave-trader, and finally an abolitionist, who composed the timeless hymn,

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see!*

I can hardly control my tears whenever I sing this hymn or hear it sung.

Imprisonment is another form of slavery we must look into. There are more thieves, murderers and rapists outside the prison than inside. According to Jesus, lust in the heart is adultery (Mt 5:28). According to John, hatred in the heart is murder (1 Jn 3:15). Innocent victims and under-trial prisoners outnumber confirmed criminals. Join the prison ministerial teams whenever and wherever possible instead of attending another prayer meeting. Never forget the explicit words of Jesus: “I was in prison and you came to see Me” (Mt 25:36c). The exhortation of the author of Hebrews is penetrating: “Remember the prisoners as if chained with them, and those who are mistreated, since you yourselves are in the body also” (Heb 13:3). Affluent people get bailed out easily, but the lot of the poor is lamentable. There’s a grim warning in Proverbs 24:11,12, “Deliver those who are drawn to death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, ‘Surely we did not know this,’ does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?”

There are various kinds of slavery in Churches and Christian organisations also. Heavy shepherding by Pastors is not acceptable to our Chief Shepherd (1 Pet 5:2-4). The Church must not become a clutch. The sheep should have freedom to go “in and out” (Jn 10:9). Believers don’t belong to Pastors, but Pastors belong to believers (1 Cor 3:21-23). Leaders in Missions must not think they are employers and Missionaries are employees. No, all are “coworkers” sharing the money the supporters send as offerings (v9). The Treasurer is not paying from his pocket but distributing the Mission’s funds as a steward

(1 Cor 4:1,2). Dear Mission executives, do not suppress the voices and cries of the Missionaries. They fall on the ears of the Lord of the Harvest. Beware! It was in order to identify myself with the fellow Missionaries, even though I was the Founder and the CEO of the Blessing Youth Mission, I would walk into the Accounts Department to receive my salary from the Accountant. A true leader will stoop down to wash the feet of his associates (Jn 13:13-15). Never ever threaten the Staff in any form (Eph 6:9). We are slaves to God only!

Self-deliverance

There hardly can be anyone who experiences 100% freedom in every aspect of his life, and who need not ask God for deliverance. We may be blind to so many bondages in our life, not necessarily outrightly evil. Only when we reach eternity we would be free of every undesirable thing which resulted from the fall. David prayed so often saying, “Deliver me, O Lord!” (Psa 6:4; 17:13; 22:20; etc.). We may not have the same problems that he faced. But the fact remains that unless we constantly acknowledge our need for God’s power of deliverance in deficient areas, known or unknown to us, we would unconsciously develop over-confidence in ourselves. At any point in our life we cannot say we have attained (Phil 3:12). Apostle Paul had to be constantly disciplining his body and keeping it under subjection (1 Cor 9:27). Read again and again the Book of Psalms which contains so many prayers for deliverance.

As we grow in Christian life, God expects us to do our part in experiencing personal deliverance. “God helps those who help themselves” is an adage! Here are a few texts which emphasize the individual’s responsibility: “Up, Zion! escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon” (Zech 2:7). “Shake yourself from the dust, arise ... Loose yourself from the bonds of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion” (Isa 52:2). “Arise, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light” (Eph 5:14). Among the many areas in our life where God would have us do what we should, I list a few of them here —

(a) Battle between spirit and flesh

No one other than Paul among the Biblical writers has openly confessed this personal ongoing struggle in his life. He says, “I’m not able to do what I desire to do; but I practise what I detest!” (Rom 7:19). He cries for deliverance: “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (v24). This confession and cry are not about his preconversion state. All through this passage he uses present tense: “I know ... I do ... I find ... I delight ... I see ... I serve!” The old man will live with us till we leave this world. We must keep on subduing the old man by our repeated “no” to his desires thus strengthening the new man (Gal 5:24). This would increase the “fruit of the Spirit” and make the “works of the flesh” decrease (vv16-23). In other words, it’s not eradication of the old man but emancipation of the new man (Rom 8:2). I must keep on “reckoning” myself to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (6:11). I must keep on “presenting” my organs to God as instruments of righteousness (vv13,19). This makes me a “slave to God,” and no more to sin (v22a). The outcome is holiness and the end is Heaven (v22b).

Salvation in all three tenses is deliverance. Salvation past is deliverance from the *penalty* of sin (Rom 6:23). Salvation present is deliverance from the *power* of sin (v4). Salvation future is deliverance from the very *presence* of sin (Heb 9:28; Rev 21:27). When you believe and understand this truth, you will be delivered from all self-condemnation (Rom 8:1,28-34).

(b) Habits and Addictions

There may be a few habits in your life inherited from family or imbibed from the society. Some of them may be “lawful” but may not be “helpful” (1 Cor 6:12; 10:23). As one keeps walking with God in the light of His Word, his spiritual sensitivity gets sharpened. He must decide for himself what habitual practices he must avoid in order to go deeper and climb higher in his spiritual life. Forsaking the bad company is the individual’s responsibility to break off evil habits (Psa 1:1; 1 Cor 15:33). The indwelling Holy Spirit is our “Helper” (Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:7). The words “Comforter” and “Helper” are synonymous as the translation of the Greek word, “*paracletos*.” The Latin root word means “*Strengthened*.” Yes, in all our holy desires and decisions, the Holy Spirit “helps” us by “strengthening” us, and He “comforts” us when we fumble! We can count on the power of the Holy Spirit to be delivered from addiction to drugs and drinks. Jesus Christ is the God-sent First Liberator (Jn 8:36). The Holy Spirit is the God-sent Second Liberator (2 Cor 3:17,18). The means they use for our liberation is the “Word of God” (Jn 8:32), which as the “Sword of the Spirit” slashes the ropes that keep us bound to self-destroying habits (Eph 6:17b). When you jump out of your addictive habit, you would feel like walking on water. Do not be scared at the “boistrous” waves of temptation but keep your eyes fixed on Jesus who will see you through. He will lift you up before you sink to the rock bottom (Mt 14:28-31). Never ever give up! If you feel that your addiction is stubborn and chronic, join a de-addiction programme under medical advice. Be patient. Get family support. It will be worth it.

(c) Idolatry of Materialism

There are two sins which cannot be overcome by fight but only by flight. One is adultery and the other is idolatry. We are commanded to flee adultery (1 Cor 6:18; 2 Tim 2:22) and to flee idolatry (1 Cor 10:14). The Bible calls the love of money as “idolatry” (Col 3:5b). It calls the money-lover as an “idolator” (Eph 5:5). The love of money as a “snare” and a “spear” is the root of “all evil” (1 Tim 6:9,10). It is our responsibility to “flee” from it (v11). Be satisfied with the basic necessities of life (v8). Contentment is a virtue we must cultivate. No man is fully saved until his purse is converted. That’s why the greatest among prophets insisted on this as the condition for baptism (Lk 3:7-14). We can even call victory over the love of money as Second Salvation (Lk 18:24-27; 19:8,9). Have you ever considered what Jesus meant by a “bad eye” that makes the “entire body” dark? Do read Matthew 6:19-24. He was dealing with the subject of “riches,” not lustful sexy look. Yes, a money-minded Christian is a blind person! Dear Preacher friend, teach this truth clearly to people if you want to minister deliverance.

(d) Paralysing Depression

Mental depression has become too common both among Christians and non-Christians. It is a deep sense of despondency, discouragement and sadness, often linked with a sense of personal powerlessness and a loss of meaning and enthusiasm for life. Gideon “a mighty man of valor” had moments of depression (Judg 6:12,13). Elijah a champion of faith had his spells of depression (1 Ki 19). David a hilarious worshipper had seasons of depression (Psa 22:1,2,6-8). Jeremiah whom God ordained as “a prophet to the nations” had his lamentations of depression (Jer 1:5; 20:7-18). The causes of depression are too numerous to mention. Root out whichever causes you can diagnose. Do not bottle up your feelings but share them with a trusted friend, preferably a mature Christian, to receive counsel and encouragement (1 Thess 5:14b). Do not isolate yourself from the fellowship of praying friends. God would use them as angels to serve you with “freshly baked bread” so you may continue your life’s journey (1 Ki 19:6,7). Instead of suppressing negative thoughts, substitute them with promises from the Bible. There’s nothing like the Word of God in delivering us from depression. Psalm 119 illustrates this best (vv28,50,61,83,92,110,141,143). Read your favourite passages in the Bible repeatedly whether or not you feel like it. Stay healthy through balanced food, good sleep, regular exercise, exposure to sunlight, etc. Resort to psychiatric help if needed. (Our daughter, Evangeline, 49, a Christian Psychologist, can be contacted at 98430 11943).

Final Deliverance

The Bible speaks of two curses: The Curse of the Fall and the Curse of the Law. By the death of Christ on the Cross, we are delivered from the Curse of the Law. “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us” (Gal 3:13a). The Curse of the Fall pronounced in the Garden of Eden, as we read in Genesis 3:14-19, is not removed yet. The Curse was on the animal kingdom (vv14,15), the woman (v16), the man (vv17-19) and the plant kingdom (vv17b,18). It is because this curse is still not lifted off, “the whole creation groans and labours with birthpangs together until now. And not only they, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:18-24). The final and total deliverance is when Christ returns. In the New Heaven and the New Earth, “there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Rev 21:1-4).

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