

# LIGHT TO LIFE



## ADULT SERMON

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**FOCUS:** God has created all people to be free - moving from darkness to light.

'When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."' (John 8:12 *NIV*)

'Afterwards Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'" (Exodus 5:1 *NIV*)

'There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.' (Exodus 3:2 *NIV*)

## INTRODUCTION

On this specific Sunday, all around the world Salvationists are gathering to pray and intercede for the victims and survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT), their families and friends, and those creating the demand, traffickers and exploiters. We worship and follow a God who hears the prayer of his creation, those who were created in his image (Genesis 1:26-27) to reflect his nature, including the ability to make choices and exercise free will, allowing victims to think, reason and free themselves from situations of slavery, human trafficking and exploitation.

In this current year, as we celebrate the International Day of Prayer for Victims of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, God has inspired people to consider this challenging theme 'Light to Life', based on John 8:12, where Jesus calls himself the light of the world.

I am sure that we have all experienced walking in darkness and know the feelings it can bring, including: fear or insecurity; isolation; calmness; curiosity arising from not seeing or knowing what is around, which can cause vulnerability and anxiety about the unknown.

Yet there's the power of light that brings life, which is brought by Jesus and Jesus alone. In John 8:12, Jesus affirms: 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' This declaration reveals Jesus' responsibility as the one who dispels spiritual darkness, bringing clarity, hope and renewal of lives. His light not only offers direction and purpose, but also exposes and conquers sin, allowing believers to experience the fullness of divine grace and love.

The light that is Jesus is inclusive and radiant to all. It shines in everyone, including victims of human trafficking, exploitation and violence, who are subjected to oppression and humiliation, and are deprived of their freedom and their right to live freely.

To Christians who have received the light, God is here inviting all to speak and share this light that is Christ, the one who promises life, hope and renewal of the minds and situations for those who are walking in and experiencing darkness – especially those dealing with trafficking, exploitation and violence.

To accept this invitation, we need to understand two important things.

Firstly, we need to boldly obey God's calling as Moses and Aaron did in Exodus 5:1, where it is noted: 'Afterwards Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness.'"' Despite their fears and earlier hesitations on how to approach Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron boldly stepped out in faith, trusting that God will lead them in their mission and they will succeed.

We need to understand that God's invitation for the task will not be easy. We might need to go the extra mile, or when it involves confronting

challenging circumstances, we ought to be ready to speak up for the people who are voiceless, for the rights of all the downtrodden and oppressed. We must speak out for justice and stand up for the poor and destitute, as it says in Proverbs 31:7-9.

Secondly, if we are to step into this invitation to speak up and share the light that is Christ – that promise of life, hope and renewal for all of his creation – including those who have experienced trafficking, exploitation and violence, we need to understand God's authority and our position in Christ, which is confirmed in Ephesians 2:4-6 (NIV): 'But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him...'

We have to understand that God not only raised Jesus up and sat him beside him in heavenly places above all authority, but he did the same with all of us. As he did with Moses and Aaron in Exodus 5, God asserted his authority over the most powerful ruler of that time – towards the man who saw himself as God – in order to release his people. This ruler was being ordered by the true God to release his people. No matter how hard or complicated the situation can be, no matter how difficult the experience of human trafficking, exploitation and the situation of violence can be, be assured that God's power is above all, and his plan will prevail.

In order to express this authority in Christ, we need to:

- Renew our perspective and grasp the right to stand with confidence, identifying ourselves with Christ in his life, death and resurrection, and remembering that we have been raised with him to proclaim, to speak out for those experiencing voicelessness and defend those

experiencing oppression, as Jesus said in Luke 4:18-19.

- Forget about what is behind. In Philippians 3:13-14 (NIV), Paul states: 'Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.'

This is what is needed to win the battle, to stand for and on behalf of those in darkness – allowing us to leave our past behind to move forward in faith, towards the future that God has prepared for us, while showing the brightness of the light.

Let our old self die in order to fulfil our purpose, which is to:

- **Advocate for Justice:** We are called to speak up for and amplify the voices of those who cannot speak for themselves, as emphasised in Proverbs 31:8-9. Defending the rights of the oppressed, including victims of human trafficking, aligns with the biblical mandate to protect the vulnerable and marginalised.
- **Restore Dignity:** Victims of MSHT often suffer dehumanisation and exploitation. Our role is to work towards their restoration, offering help that promotes their dignity, healing and freedom.
- **Raise Awareness and Support Prevention:** Raising awareness about MSHT and supporting preventative measures is vital. This involves educating communities, supporting laws that protect the vulnerable, and partnering with organisations that work on the ground to rescue and rehabilitate victims.

## CONCLUSION AND CALL TO ACTION

God led the Israelites out of slavery into a land of abundance, symbolising life from light. As his light guided them through the wilderness, it also represents the new life and hope that he offers to us. In every generation, God's light continues to lead his people out of the physical and spiritual slavery into the fullness of life with him. Ultimately, our purpose in this fight for life is to reflect God's heart for justice, mercy and love, working to free those in bondage and restore them to a life of dignity and hope, as it is God's purpose: 'Afterwards Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the wilderness'"' (Exodus 5:1 NIV).

We are invited to be reflections of this light in the world. We can support, care for and be a source of hope for the oppressed and wounded. Take some time to reflect on how you can do this in your community and life.

As we celebrate this day of prayer, the message can remind us that even in the darkest situations, the light of life shines through the grace and mercy of Christ.

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