

OUT AND IN

"And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers." Deuteronomy 6:23.

One of the best services anyone can render us is to help us to interpret rightly the experiences of life. That is what the Bible does for us. A photographic plate is a dark, meaningless thing when it lies in your hand, but hold it up against the light and the picture in its heart breaks into view. That is exactly what Moses did with the dark experiences from which the Israelites had just emerged. Their experiences had been filled with hardships and misfortunes, but when Moses held them up to the light they could see in them and through them God's hand at work. God was bringing them out of Egypt, with its bondage and frustrations, into Canaan with its freedom and fulness of life.

Wrapped up in our text are principles which constitute the very warp and woof of all Christian experience, and which illustrate the methods of divine grace in the human soul. This text is part of the answer which the people of God were to give to their children when, looking upon all that God had done and pondering over it, they ask their parents, "What mean these things?" They were to explain that they had been brought out of the land of bondage by the outstretched arm of God, and had been brought into the promised land.

In a sense this brief statement summarizes the message of the entire Bible. It is a statement of profound and comprehensive significance. In the case of Israel God's action and His intention are here brought together.

I. God's Action.

God's action is expressed in the words "He brought us out from thence," meaning Egypt -- the land of bondage. When Moses made that statement, "He brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers," the Israelites were "out" of Egypt, but they were not yet "in" the promised land, and many of them never entered it but perished in the wilderness.

This experience, in part or in the whole, is traceable through the ages. When Terah and his family left Ur of the Chaldees, their objective was the land which God had promised to show them, but the record tells us that "they came unto Haran, and dwelt there;" and, it is added, "and Terah died in Haran" (Genesis 11:31-32). Here is an illustration of good intention unfulfilled, of worthy purpose unaccomplished and of divine design frustrated. No doubt Haran was a good place in which to live. With plenty of room and an abundance of food for man and beast, the family decided to sojourn there for a while, fully intending to continue the journey later, but always putting off that event until for Terah it was too late. Not until after Terah's death did Abraham and Lot and their families go into Canaan. Terah, like all the others, left Ur of the Chaldees, but, unlike them, he never entered the land. He came out, but he did not go in. He made a goal of a stopping-place on the way. Being the head of the family, he impeded their progress as long as he lived. Nobody can stop like that without influencing and delaying others also, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Romans 14:7).

There were two great crises in the life of Jacob; the one when he was leaving home, and the other when he was returning. Jacob's experience that night at Bethel wrought a spiritual change in him which was the equivalent of what today we call conversion. Up to that time he had not had a vision. He had been so occupied with the material that he had remained insensible to the spiritual. But that

night, on the scarred upland where Bethel stood, he had a glimpse of another world and heard the voice divine. Thereafter life was never the same for him. The following day was a new one for him, and much depended on what he did then.

What he should have done is clear. The very thing that every man should do the day after conversion is to put right, so far as it is possible, what is wrong. The first act of getting right with God should be getting right with our fellows. Jacob had grievously wronged both Isaac and Esau, and, at this particular time, was fleeing from the wrath of them both. After that Bethel vision, he should have retraced his steps and by his confession and renunciation remedy that wrong in so far as possible. But that was not what he did. He continued his journey to Padanaram, and was there for the next twenty years. His duplicity and craftiness during this period were in spite of what he saw and heard at Bethel, and during all those years he was disobedient to the heavenly vision.

On the way home, however, God met him again, and by the Jabbok there was completed what was begun at Luz. Many have been at Bethel who have never been at Peniel. It is possible to go to the "House of God" (Bethel) without seeing the "Face of God" (Peniel). It is possible, as Jacob did, to put twenty years between one's conversion and one's full surrender to the will of the Lord. Jacob's case is better than Terah's, in that he did eventually reach the goal, but, in doing so, he lost twenty years of his life, years which could never be recovered.

In like manner, God, by wondrous demonstration of His power, had delivered the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage and had guided them to the border of the Land of Promise, but there they rebelled and returned to the wilderness, where they wandered for thirty-eight years, and where a whole generation perished. God had brought all of them out, but half of them never went in.

The ceaseless care of God for His people is worthy of note. His providence and His discipline were certainly seen in the leading of the Children of Israel out of the land of bondage, through the wilderness, into the promised land. He did not bring them out that they might go back again. He did not bring them out that He might drown them in the Red Sea or the Jordan River, or slay them in the wilderness. He overcame every difficulty for them. He would have brought them into the Land of Promise and Blessing sooner but for their unbelief.

A further parallel between God's bringing Israel out of Egypt and His bringing us out of our lost state is seen in Israel's deliverance at the Red Sea. Their foes pursued them, but God said, "The Egyptians ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever." And it was so. There is a wonderful finality about God's deliverance. That divine deliverance at the Red Sea, which finally set Israel free, is frequently referred to as the highest exhibition of divine power in the Old Testament. By reason of our acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, there is a glorious finality about our deliverance from the guilt and penalty of sin. He Who has brought us out has done so completely, so that we shall never come into condemnation, but we are passed from death unto life. All that we have to do is to step our boldly into the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free by His precious blood shed on Calvary.

II. God's Intention.

"He brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in." There were three stages in God's dealings with the Israelites. There was a time when they were in Egypt; and then He brought them out. There was a period when they were in the wilderness. Even though they had been brought out of Egypt, they had not been

brought into the promised land. Finally the time came when they were in Canaan. So it is with the believer in Christ. There was a time when he was in the bondage of sin and unforgiveness. Then came the time when he was saved and brought out, but not yet brought in. He has been saved, but as yet has not been brought into the gloriously victorious life which the Lord wants him to experience and enjoy. Many Christians are still in the wilderness. They have been brought out of bondage, but they have gotten stuck in the wilderness. The Holy Spirit is calling all such to "pass clean over Jordan" into the land of their inheritance.

If you will only turn back the pages of the history of your life and carefully examine the record of your yesterdays, you will certainly be able to discern the outline of a divine plan. You will discover that your life has not been haphazard. The reason you are what you are is because God has taken thought of you and planned for you. It must be an unspeakable comfort to you to know that while your experiences may have seemed strange to you, they have not been strange to the Lord. Although your life may have been filled with difficult and unsolved problems, God understands them all, and He knows all that lies before you as well as the experiences through which you have passed. As certainly as He has brought you out He will bring you in by and by.

It is God's intention that your life as a Christian shall be one of:

1. Complete Separation.

To get into the land of Canaan the children of Israel had to cross the Jordan. In speaking to them in Joshua 24:15 God said, "Choose you this day whom ye will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

2. Conscious Victory.

What an encouragement to know that the Lord meets our particular needs at the proper time.

3. Close Watchfulness.

There will never come a time in your life when you are beyond the need of watchfulness from the onslaughts of Satan.

4. Blessed Companionship.

Observe Joshua as he awaited the orders of the Lord. Moses, his great leader, had been removed, and the people were deeply grieved. But God always raises up His leaders for us when He takes others from us. So He came to Joshua with the wondrous assurance that "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee nor forsake thee" (Joshua 1:5).

However great our difficulties may be in our journey through the land of Canaan if He is in command and we trust and obey, then we shall have a blessed life indeed. When He requires us to surrender one thing He always fills the vacancy with something better.

God has brought us out of bondage into freedom, out of darkness into light, out of sin into holiness, out of sickness into health, out of poverty into wealth, out of weakness into strength, out of weariness into rest, out of conflict into victory and out of death into life.

"Out of my bondage, sorrow and night,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light,
Jesus, I come to Thee;

Out of my sickness, into Thy health,
Out of my want and into Thy wealth,
Out of my sin and into thyself,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

"Out of my shameful failure and loss,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into the glorious gain of Thy cross,
Jesus, I come to Thee.
Out of earth's sorrow, into Thy balm,
Out of life's storms and into Thy calm,
Out of distress to jubilant psalm,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

"Out of unrest and arrogant pride,
Jesus, I come, Jesus, I come;
Into Thy blessed will to abide,
Jesus, I come to Thee;
Out of myself, to dwell in Thy love,
Out of despair into raptures above,
Upward for aye on wings of a dove,
Jesus, I come to Thee."