

OUT AND IN AND THE WAY BETWEEN

"And He brought us out from thence, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore 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. A photographic plate is a dark, meaningless thing when it lies in your hand, but hold it up against the light, and the picture hidden in its heart breaks into view. That is what Moses did with the dark experiences from which the Israelites had just emerged. It had been full of hardship and misfortune -- a jumble of disconnected events, but when Moses held it up to the light, they could see in it and all through it God's hand and work. He was bringing them out of Egypt, with its bondage and frustrations, into Canaan with its freedom and fulness of life.

Let us note two key words in this verse -- "out" and "in". Within the compass of these two little words there lies what God had done for us and what He is willing and able to do for us, so that we may be able to say: "He brought us out, that He might bring us in." This brief statement is of profound and comprehensive significance.

I. God's Action.

He brought them out of Egypt, that place of bondage and that land of darkness. When Moses made that statement, "He brought us out, that He might bring us in," the Israelites were "out" of Egypt, but they were not yet "in" the Land, and many of them never entered into Canaan but perished in the wilderness. This experience, in part or in the whole, is traceable through all 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 that "They came unto Haran, and dwelt there;" and, it is added, "And Terah died in Haran." Here is an illustration of intention unfulfilled, of worthy purpose unaccomplished, and of divine design frustrated. No doubt Haran was a good place in which to live. There would be plenty of room and food for man and beast, so the family decided to sojourn there for awhile, always intending to continue the journey later on, but always putting off that event until for Terah it was too late; and not until after his death did Abram and Lot and their families go into Canaan. Terah, like all the others, left Ur of the Chaldees, but, unlike them, he never entered into the Land. He came out, but did not go in. He made a goal of a stopping-place on the way; and being the head of the family, he impeded the progress of them all while he lived.

Then, take the case of Jacob. There were two great crises in his life; the one when he was leaving home, and the other when he was returning home. Jacob's experience that night at Bethel wrought a spiritual change in him which was the equivalent of what we call conversion. Up to that time he had not had a vision. He had been so occupied with the local and the material that he had remained insensible to the vast and the spiritual. But that night on the scarred upland where Bethel stood he had a glimpse of another world and heard the voice Divine, and life could never be quite the same again. The next day was in his spiritual experience a new day for him, and much would depend 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 out 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." God hath delivered us from the bondage of sin in order that He might bring us into a life of freedom and victory. There were three stages in God's dealings with the Children of Israel. There was a time when they were in Egypt; and then He brought them out. Then, they were in the wilderness, and though they were truly brought out, yet, they were not brought in. 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 Egyptian sin and unforgiveness. Then, he was saved and brought out, but he is not then brought in. He is saved, but he is not as victorious as the Lord wants him to be.

In the believer's experience there is that which is represented by Egypt, the wilderness, and Canaan. Canaan is not a picture of heaven. In Canaan there were foes and fighting; but, there will be no foes and no fighting in heaven. Canaan is the land of God's present provision and of God's protection for His delivered people. All Christians are not in Canaan; some are in the wilderness, brought out, but not brought in. They

are still under the domination of the flesh. The emphasis is upon the self-life -- self-ambition, self-gratification, self-glorification -- that is the wilderness life. Many Christians are tramps and not travellers; they are wanderers and not pilgrims; they are out of Egypt, but they are not in Canaan; they have gotten stuck in the wilderness. The Holy Spirit is calling all such forthwith to "pass clean over Jordan" into the land of their inheritance. For this end we were redeemed. God brought us out that He might bring us in. If you are not in -- go in. God is always preparing something better for us, and endeavoring to prepare us for something better. There is grace now as well as glory hereafter. Grace is glory in the bud.

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.

"Jesus, I Come"