

### CALLED OUT

A rich nugget, packed with foundational doctrinal truth, lies largely unnoticed, almost incidental it would seem, in the first verse of the eleventh chapter of Hosea: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt."

#### A Historical Statement or a Spiritual Principle?

At first reading one would hardly think it necessary to look for anything more than the face value of a historical statement in this verse. Nothing in the context gives any warrant for it. The nation Israel is being personalized as God's son. In its infancy it was brought up out of Egypt and forged into a full-grown nation through wilderness probation and conquest of Canaan.

But the New Testament will not permit it to rest there. We are told in Matthew 2:15 that the young child, Jesus, was taken into Egypt "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son." It is commonly thought that Jesus was taken into Egypt in order to keep Herod from killing Him. While it is true that Herod sought to do so, and that this was most certainly foremost in the minds of Joseph and Mary, we know that but for God's protection the child yet may have been easily found and murdered in Egypt. Also, God could have used any number of means to prevent the destruction of His Son. He could have started a diversionary war, sent an earthquake, an epidemic of disease, struck Herod himself and killed him. No, Jesus was not taken into Egypt to prevent His death, but in order to fulfill the prophecy of Hosea 11:1.

At this point we should remind ourselves that the often-used phrase "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet" is a great deal more than the Lord's providential accommodation to a prophet's independent prediction. The prophecy is not the word of the prophet but the word of the Lord. Nor is it simply a brief glimpse of God's insight into the future. Divine foreknowledge is not mere precognition, but foreordination. The event to be fulfilled was already predestined before the prophet spoke, foreordained according to God's particular purpose.

Now this puts yet another face on the matter. Not only is the statement historical, literal and prophetic, but it seems to be an important declaration of a spiritual principle in allegorical type. Why should it be so expedient that God's Son be brought up out of Egypt that He had to be taken down into Egypt? The answer to that is to be found in the topological significance of Egypt, the call of God, and the nature of gospel salvation and Christian experience.

Egypt is the Iron Furnace, the House of Bondage. It is the lying pleasantries, the power and station of this world that Moses forsook for the riches of Christ's reproach (Hebrews 11:24-27). It is the prodigal's far country, the hog-pen from whence the seeking father receives his lost, dead son. It is sin's bondage, nature's night, Satan's chains. It is the world which is "spiritually called Sodom and Egypt where our Lord was crucified." It represents all that is anti-Christ, in rebellion against God, and at deadly enmity with Him. And all we who have hope of being heaven's citizens are immigrants from that infamous country. We are all Egyptian alumni.

Abraham, the father of those who are justified by faith, went down into Egypt. Joseph, the type of the Rejected, the Redeemer and Savior, went down and was brought out of Egypt. Jacob and all his children went down. Isaac alone of the Patriarchs, a type of the heir for whom all things are prepared, did not go down.

So our Lord, the Author and Finisher of our faith, in order to fulfill the type and to fulfill all righteousness (as in His water baptism), had to go down into Egypt. He, our faithful, abiding High Priest, Who was made like us (yet without sin), is perfectly identified with His people.

The word "church" used to designate the people of God in the Authorized version of the Bible is translated from the Greek *ekklesia*. This word most literally translates "called-out assembly." Modern churchmen have abbreviated that phrase to one word, "assembly," and fostered the thought of the church's being essentially that. The mentality then developed that people, of their own free will, may group themselves together for a religious purpose and a church is thereby constituted. God is then invited to participate in, bless, and invigorate this human get-together. Actually, "assembly" is the least significant idea in the phrase, almost incidental. The crucial word, one which can and often does stand alone in the Scriptures as representative of the redeemed, is "called." The next most important word is "out." If there were no call, there would be no people. The objective of the call is "out." An assembly exists by virtue of the fact that more than one person is called, for God calls them all out to one place - Himself.

## **Exodus: The Book of Redemption**

### **The "Out" Book**

Here, then, is the New Testament church prophesied in the history of Israel's exodus from Egypt. The whole of redemptive experience begins with God's call. It is His Son who is called, not the whole world. God's elect are His eternally, even while they by nature are children of wrath, even while they are dead in sins and trespasses and at enmity with God. They are not then justified, alive, or reconciled; but they are His elect children. The cause of His call is His electing love. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him." No cause can be found in them for such love, for after four hundred years in Egypt they were full-fledged Egyptians, having fully absorbed the culture, sins, and idolatries of that country. It is Egypt, the world, all that is scripturally represented by that country, from which they are called. The objective of God's call is *out*. It is an *exodus*.

This is the unvarying principle. God calls His children out of Egypt. They all come up from there reeking with the swill of swine, in the tattered rags of slaves, struggling and fighting to shake off the idolatries and lies of a life of vanity and death, having never known any other, but seeking a better country.

This gives the book of Exodus a most prominent place in the Bible. It is most intensely the redemption book of the Old Testament, gathering up in its types and symbols all the rich gospel of salvation by grace we find fulfilled in the substitutionary death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is most significant that it is named the "out" book.

The elect sinner does not immediately respond positively to God's call. Sitting on the throne of his heart is a "King of Egypt" that obstinately and steadfastly refuses to yield to God's claim. God's dealings with this rebel and his reactions tell us volumes about the gospel call, the progression of its revelation and realization, and the ultimate application of redemption.

### **A Three-Fold Call: To Sacrifice, To Serve, and To Sup**

It is interesting to note that the call is given to facilitate three different objectives, all in the order in which gospel revelation comes. First, the king of Egypt is to be told that Israel must be allowed to go that they may *sacrifice*: "and now let us go, we beseech thee, three days journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God" (Exodus 3:18). This tells us that God's people are a *sacrificing* people, "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2:5).

This may be a delightful thing to us, but to the unregenerate sinner it is not at all a pleasant prospect; in fact, that is why he so stoutly refuses the offer of God's free grace. Tell him that salvation will cost him nothing, that Jesus paid it all, that the riches of God's grace are freely bestowed at no cost to the sinner, yet he will have nothing of it. Why? He suspects that there is a "joker in the deck," some fine print in the contract, that this is too good to be true. In short, he is persuaded that this is going to cost him something. And he is right!

He has more sense than the starry-eyed "soul winner" who promises him forgiveness for sins and a guaranteed home in heaven without repentance, reproach, or loss of anything of this world, or even his own rebellious independence. He rightly suspects a sacrifice will be expected of him, and if we are to evangelize with integrity and honesty we must let him know up front that he is absolutely correct. Otherwise his "faith," having been fabricated by the cleverness of men's "wise" psychological approach, will fall.

It is much better to tell the truth. The faith that then comes forth in response to an unflinching gospel ultimatum will be wrought by the power of God, and will stand the trial of fire (I Cor. 2:2-5, 3:13).

Second, the king of Egypt is to be told that Israel is God's son and that he is to serve Him. "Israel is my son, even my firstborn: and I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me" (Exodus 4:22-23). This tells us that God's people are a *servicing* people. A progression has also been made in the people themselves. They are not just a nation. They are now called God's son. A family setting has been introduced. Serving is not contemplated in the dreary and grievous mentality of unwilling slavery, but in the loving, privileged functions of family. Jesus told His disciples that greatness in His kingdom was to be found in "he who made himself servant of all."

Again, we must call attention to a defective evangelism that puts this revelation of the gospel out of order. Some seek to pander to the pride of men by appealing to what they can do for God or the church or for their fellow men. Puffing them up with their self-importance, they allure them into the church, a strutting mass of bloated flesh, expecting to be thanked and admired for their contributions of ability and resources. Not so! No one struts in unhumiliated and unbroken. Nor do we come in as enlisted outside help. We come in as sons. Only the person who responds rightly to the first proposition, that of sacrifice, can know anything of the second. The presentation of our bodies, ourselves to God, trusting Him to do wisely as He pleases, will avail to us the spirit of sonship. To those who come to Christ in unreserved surrender, God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts crying, "Father!" The son is privileged to serve.

Finally, the king of Egypt is told, "Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness" (Exodus 5:1). This tells us that God's people are a *supping*, a fellowshiping people. We have now progressed from the general people concept where sacrifice is in focus, and the son concept where service is in focus, to an intimate-union concept where communion is in focus. Christ uses the idea of Bride and Bridegroom to illustrate this relationship between Himself and His redeemed. It is the most sublime and sacred relationship between two parties that mortals can comprehend. This is intended to show to us the unutterable bliss and joy realized by all who find full salvation and deliverance in the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **The Response to The Call**

Such is the nature of the offer made by Christ to His people. This call always comes to a people in sore bondage, hearts prepared by affliction of soul. One would think, then, that there should be an immediate, joyful, positive response to such a gracious call. This, however, is never the case. The king of Egypt, occupying the will and heart of unconverted men, will not permit sanity or reason. His answer is always an unequivocal and emphatic No! "Who [is] the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2).

One might think that somewhere, sometime, a sinner would be found who, upon first hearing of the claims of Christ, would be happy to say, "Why, this is what I have been seeking all my life! I am so happy to hear this gospel and will be delighted to comply with whatever my God, Creator, and Savior wishes of me." But there never has been and never will be such an initial response. "There is none that seeketh after God." The devil and selfish flesh have made all of us God-haters and hostile to righteousness. Pharaoh's words, "I know not the Lord," are true; and we all heartily join him in his refusal of obedience. We are all willing slaves of Satan who "opened not the house of his prisoners" (Isaiah 14:17); and none of us shall go free until the Stronger Man makes captivity His captive and lets the captives go free.

The sinner's first reply to God's call is a resolute, obstinate No! Never! Absolutely not under any circumstances! Men may have to accept that refusal, but not God. He has recourse. He may, and does, employ all the courses and circumstances of all creation to deliver those upon whom He has set His love. He may, to be sure, and often does, let the rebel sinner's refusal stand. In such a case, He simply withdraws His gracious offer and leaves this self-willed captive to work his way to a devil's hell. But in the case of His elect people, He will pollute Pharaoh's river, fill his house with frogs, his country with lice and flies. He will send plagues, disease and pestilence, fearful darkness, death and destruction. He will spare nothing to accomplish His predestined purpose.

### **The Temptations to Compromise The Call**

It is our nature, when subjected to external pressure to do that which we are yet unwilling to do, to seek some sort of compromise that will get us out from under the pressure, yet stop somewhere short of compliance with the original terms. A customer will haggle with a merchant over the price of his goods and sometimes purchase them for a lesser price. A little boy who doesn't want to spend an hour on piano practice may wheedle his mother into letting him off with 30 minutes. An employer who requires a good high school diploma as a condition of employment may be persuaded to accept a G.E.D. We are all familiar with such compromises. And we make the deadly mistake of thinking we can bargain God into accepting less of us than He requires. It is a sad reality that countless thousands have corrupted their faith with such compromises, and think they have been delivered from Egypt's bondage when they are just as fast in the devil's chains as ever.

Under duress, the king of Egypt proposes four different compromises which we can readily recognize as familiar attempts to make a show of compliance, yet wriggle out of true submission.

### **The "In The Land" Compromise**

The first compromise is offered in Exodus 8:25, "Go ye, sacrifice to your God *in the land*." This is the easiest and most popular of all compromises. It readily presents itself, seems reasonable, and deceives millions. This is the way it translates: It is unnecessary to leave Egypt. That would be an unreasonable inconvenience. After all, God simply wants a sacrifice. Do it here in the land where you are. You need to forsake nothing, leave nothing, change nothing. Just pay God His due, get Him off your back, and go on about business as usual. Repentance is unnecessary. Go to church a time or two a week, three times if absolutely necessary, pay Him His ten percent, learn how to make pretty prayers, and leave the rest of your life intact. In short, *add* a Christian dimension to your worldly life.

The rich young ruler went away sadly because he discovered that he could not have eternal life also. Jesus told him how he could have eternal life *instead* of this present Egypt, but this is not what he had in mind. No, we may not sacrifice to our God *in the land* for four very good reasons.

First, the God with whom we have to do is specifically designated as "The God of the Hebrews" (Exodus 3:18; 5:3, 9:1,13; 10:3). The word "god," in Egypt, as it is in the world today, might provoke all sorts of ideas. "Gods" abounded then as well as now. What god? The frog-god, the river-god, the fish-god, the wind-god? Even so, the world has many gods who are tolerated by a people who will not have a Sovereign Almighty God who must be glorified as God.

The God of the Hebrews is that Sovereign Almighty God of whom the Egyptians know nothing. He is God to a special people whom He has called out to Himself. "He has met with us," Moses and Aaron reported. He meets only with His own, not a mixed multitude. Because He is Holy and Separate, the first thing His people must learn is to be holy and separate. He calls them out. They may not stay in and sacrifice to Him.

In the second place, they are not only called to sacrifice, but called to go three days' journey out from Egypt. How far is three days' journey? It is the distance Christ put between His covenant people and Egypt when He took them with Him to the Cross, and from the Cross to the grave, and up out of the grave three days later. For them, Egypt with its bondage and death is left behind forever. They are all the way out. They have been translated to another City, another Life, and another Kingdom.

In the third place, sacrifice, service and supping is to be done *in the wilderness*. The wilderness is a place of probation, of trial, purifying and proving. It is the interim between what we were called out from and what we are ultimately called to. We who have been called out of the bondage of the world and Satan have not yet entered into our final and eternal rest. We are pilgrims, strangers, sojourners. It is in this status that the Christian life, typified by the ceremonial feasts of the Old Covenant, is lived. Every one of those feasts, the Passover (being a type of redemption itself) excepted, were instituted and observed in the wilderness. It is the place of our sanctification, where we learn to die to sin and self, have our hearts and minds renewed and transformed from the Old that has passed away to the New that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It was in a garden of bliss and abundance that man lost his innocence, trust, dependence upon and communion with the Lord. But it is in a desert of trial, affliction and struggle that he learns Christ, Who is his life.

In the fourth place, worship of the true and living God was so contrary to Egyptian religion that the Egyptians would be scandalized and outraged if it were done in their presence. This is the forceful objection Moses gives to Pharaoh. "It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the Lord our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?" (Exodus 8:26). Animals revered as sacred deities by Egyptians would be sacrificed by the Hebrews in their worship. Egyptians would surely be enraged by such sacrilege in their presence. There can be no ecumenicity that harmoniously embraces at the same time the empty idolatries of this world and the eternal realities of Christian worship. "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" (II Cor. 6:14-17). The very things the world reveres, seeks after, bows down to, giving itself to serve, are the first things Christians are ready to renounce and count loss for Christ. The values, truths and principles of Christ that the believer treasures and adores are contemptible and hateful in the eyes of the world. The world marches to an entirely different drummer.

It is a silly and vain delusion that imagines that the institutions of this world may be Christianized. There are no Christian night clubs, Christian sports, Christian businesses, Christian hospitals, Christian schools. Some of these may have Christians in them, operating them, exerting Christian witness; but the world will set the terms and the spirit under which they will function. There can be only one institution in this world truly and uniquely Christian, and that is Christ's church. It is in the world, but not of it, for it has been called out.

### **The "Not Very Far Away" Compromise**

The king of Egypt now offers a second compromise, "I will let you go . . . only *ye shall not go very far away*" (Exodus 8:28). This is something of an oxymoron. Stringent freedom. Restricted liberty. "I will release you, but I will not let you get too far away." A limited freedom is not freedom at all, but simply a lengthening of the chain. As long as someone is telling you how far you can go, that someone is still in absolute control. He is still calling the shots. Many are the poor deluded souls whom the Son has not set free, but only have been given a temporary or limited freedom by their captor. Imagining themselves to be free because they can perform some Christian duties, they do not realize they are still fast in Satan's grip.

This sort of compromise has all sorts of faces. "It is all right to become a Christian, but do not become a fanatic," i.e., snake handlers, poison drinkers, pew jumpers, guru slaves, refusers of God's gifts of medicine. This is not, however, Christian fanaticism. All these activities fall outside the pale of Christian devotion. But if love of God with all the heart, mind and strength, devoted obedience to Christ, diligence to obey all His revealed will be deemed fanatical, then fanatics we shall be.

"Don't become narrow minded," we are cautioned. Jesus' claim to be *the way, the truth, and the life* is quite narrow. He forthrightly declared the way to life too narrow for the many. We may not broaden truth. It is razor-edge thin, exact, precise, rigid and unbending. If belief in the Word of God as absolute truth be too narrow for the world, then we shall be narrow.

"Be sane and sensible," we are warned. Who can determine sanity other than the Creator of minds and reason? It is worldly thinking that has taken leave of senses. In true conversion to Christ men are given back their right mind. Christian reason so contrasts with the vanities and delusions of the world so as to appear foolish to it. But the most elementary rudiments of God's truth make fallen man's most astute wisdom sound as madhouse babble. We must not let the world tell us what is sane and sensible.

"Be careful you do not alienate anyone," we are admonished. The Christian desires fellowship with all men, but he cannot choose the terms and locale of that communion. Ours can be only in the Lord Jesus Christ (I John 1:3). Our life is nowhere else. Jesus told us that our union with Him would cause us trouble with the world, with other people, even the dearest of our own family. We may not set aside the offense of the Cross without destroying the gospel and emptying it of its redeeming power. It is intended to get us out and away from the world, not make us acceptable in it.

"But God wants you to have fun and enjoy life," it is objected. This is a best-seller today. A. W. Tozer addresses it in his tract "The Old Cross and the New":

The evangelist does not demand abnegation of the old life before a new life can be received. He preaches not contrasts but similarities. He seeks to key into public interest by showing that Christianity makes no unpleasant demands; rather, it offers the same thing the world does, only on a higher level. Whatever the sin-mad world happens to be clamoring after at the moment is cleverly shown to be the very thing the gospel offers, only the religious product is better.

There is fullness of life in Christ, but it bears no resemblance to what the world thinks of as "fun and happiness." And one will never be known until the other is forsaken for Christ.

There is a Satanic lie that tells us that since sinless perfection is impossible in this life, then we must not be "overly righteous." Some sins must be retained. This form of godliness which denies the power thereof must be refused. There is no known sin for which we do not have resources in Christ to defeat. He has called us out. With that call is the enablement to forsake all willful sin. Our captor will not set us that free, but our Savior will.

### **The "You Who Are Men" Compromise**

Under continued pressure, the king of Egypt offers yet another compromise. In response to Moses' assertion that they should take their whole families with them he says, "Go now, *you who are men*, and serve the Lord, for that is what you desired" (Exodus 10:11). The proposition set forth here is that if you must become a Christian, keep it to yourself. Don't try to take anyone else with you. The logic is that since salvation is a personal thing, between each individual and God, and that none of us can save the other, then we should not try to impose our "convictions" on anyone else, especially our little ones. Keep your religion to yourself, and leave your family in the devil's bondage.

An astounding number of professing Christian couples have bought this pitch, tying into the world's permissive, free-spirit, non-coercive stance with their children. "They don't want to go to church, to pray, or study the Bible; and we don't believe we should make them." "It would not do them any good, and it might drive them away." "They don't get anything out of it." So Mom and Pop go to hear the gospel, and the kids go who-knows-where, and it is not unlikely that they will all meet in hell. There is something quite impossible in this. We who still have a whit of natural affection *cannot* utterly forsake our own flesh and blood. If salvation is so urgent that we must flee, how can we leave them to destruction? Such an attitude betrays our own infidelity, for we who do so believe neither the riches of Christ nor the damnation of hell.

While it is true that we cannot save our children, it is a lie that we can do nothing toward their salvation. God commands us to bring up our children to know Him, teaching them His word, His precepts, His ways, loving them as God loves us, chastising them as God chastises us, practicing worship with them, living exemplary conduct before them, being consistent in word and deed. Such practices never have and never will drive anyone away from Christ. But we well know that they will not secure their salvation either, so we will be on our knees, constantly crying out to God, Who alone can save them. We cannot literally take them with us out of Egypt, but we cannot leave them either. We will carry them in our hearts, in our walk and in our voices as long as we live in this wilderness sojourn.

### **The "Leave Your Flocks and Herds" Compromise**

One final, last-ditch compromise is offered, "Go ye, serve the Lord; *only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you*" (Exodus 10:24). To appreciate the significance of this proposal, we must be reminded that there existed no Cairo Savings and Loan Association, no Egyptian Stock Exchange. There was no paper money or stocks and bonds one could handily carry off in his luggage. The wealth of the Hebrews was invested in their livestock. It is therefore being suggested to us that we are to give our souls to Christ and leave all our worldly possessions under the

devil's control. After all, is not salvation a free gift? Is it not true that we cannot with our money purchase our salvation or anyone else's? Does God need our substance? Are we not to offer unto God what is God's (our souls) and to Caesar what is Caesar's (our money)? Such goes the reasoning, and it is mightily appealing to covetous and worldly hearts who would give lip service to God and material sacrifice to worldly pleasures and vanities.

Salvation indeed is free - but it isn't cheap. God requires none of your substance *for* salvation, but all of it *in* salvation. He requires the same of the poor as the rich and puts it in equal reach of both - *all* either has. We are called out to serve God, and we shall serve Him with our substance. The only warrant a child of God has to hold one penny's worth of this world's goods is whatever use it may be to him as means to glorify and serve God. This certainly does not mean we should cash in all our assets and send them to some electronic evangelist or any one of the hundreds of religious and social hucksters vying and clamoring for support. In fact, it means just the opposite. For if we should give away all our possessions at the outset, we should have nothing left with which we may serve God. And it is not at all certain that many of these would serve God with our substance. God does, on rare occasions, command us to give all away (Luke 18:22), especially if these things have an idolatrous hold on us, but that is not the usual way we serve Him. It is far easier to give it all away than it is to hold it loosely, living as if we did not have it, knowing it is not ours to do with as we please. Every asset is God's lent stewardship, His to call for at any time He pleases. "For thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; *and we know not with what we must serve the Lord until we come hither*" (Exodus 10:26). We go out with all that we are and all that we have, to wherever He leads us, to do whatever He commands, with whatever we have with which to do it. "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go . . . there shall not an hoof be left behind." **WE HAVE BEEN CALLED OUT.**

- C. M.