

**GONE DOWN INTO EGYPT****F.B. Meyer:**

"Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land [of Canaan]." -- Genesis 12:10.

The path of the separated man can never be an easy one. He must be willing to stand alone; to go outside the camp; and to forego the aid of many of those supplies on which other men freely draw. It is a life, therefore, which is only possible to Faith. When Faith is strong, we dare cut ourselves adrift from the moorings which coupled us to the shore; and launch out into the deep, depending only on the character and word of Him at whose command we go. But when Faith is weak, we dare not do it; and, leaving the upland path, we herd with the men of the world, who have their portion in this life, and who are content with that alone. Ah, how can we say enough of His tender mercy, who, at such times, bends over us, with infinite compassion, waiting to lift us back into the old heroic life!

"And there was a famine in the land." -- A famine? A famine in the Land of Promise? Yes, as afterwards, so then; the rains that usually fall in the latter part of the year had failed; the crops had become burnt up with the sun's heat before the harvest; and the herbage, which should have carpeted the uplands with pasture for the flocks, was scanty, or altogether absent. If a similar calamity were to befall us now, we could still draw sufficient supplies for our support from abroad. But Abraham had no such resource. A stranger in a strange land; surrounded by suspicion and hostile peoples; weighted with the responsibility of vast flocks and herds -- it was no trivial matter to stand face to face with the sudden devastation of famine.

Did it prove that he had made a mistake in coming to Canaan? Happily the promise which had lately come to him forbade his entertaining the thought. And this may have been one principal reason why it was given. It came, not only as a reward for the past, but as a preparation for the future; so that the man of God might not be tempted beyond what he was able to bear. Our Savior has His eye on our future, and sees from afar the enemy which is gathering its forces to attack us, or is laying its plans to beguile and entrap our feet. His heart is not more careless of us than, under similar circumstances, it was of Peter, in the darkening hour of his trial, when He prayed for him that his faith might not fail, and washed his feet with an inexpressible solemnity. And thus it often happens that a time of special trial is ushered in by the shining forth of the Divine presence, and the declaration of some unprecedented promise. Happy are they who gird themselves with these Divine preparations, and so pass unhurt through circumstances which otherwise would crush them with their inevitable pressure.

How often do professing Christians adopt a hurt and injured tone in speaking of God's dealings with them! They look back upon a sunny past, and complain that it was better with them before they entered the wicket gate and commenced to tread the narrow way. Since that moment they have met with nothing but disaster. They had no famines in Ur or Charran; but now, in the Land of Promise, they are put to sore straits and are driven to their wits' end. The trader has met with bad debts, which sorely embarrass him; the capitalist has been disappointed in several of his most promising investments; the farmer has been disheartened by a succession of bad seasons. And they complain that the service of God has brought them misfortune rather than a blessing.

But is not this the point to be borne in mind on the other side? These misfortunes would probably have come in any case; and how much less tolerable would they have been had there not been the new sweet consciousness that God had now become the refuge of the soul! Besides this, God our Father does not undertake to repay His children in the base coin of this lower world. Spiritual grace will ever be its own reward. Purity, truth, gentleness, devotion, have no equivalent in the ore drawn from the mines of Peru, nor in the pearls of the sea; but in the happy consciousness of the heart at peace with God, and rejoicing in His smile. Had God pledged Himself to give His servants an unbroken run of prosperity, how many more counterfeit Christians would there be! Well is it that He has made no such promise; though it is certainly true that "godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Do not be surprised if a famine meets you. It is no proof of your Father's anger, but is permitted to come to test you -- or to root you deeper, as the whirlwind makes the tree grapple its roots deeper into the soil.

"And Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there." -- What a marvelous history is that of Egypt, linking successive centuries. Full of mystery, wonder, and deep thinking on the destiny of man. The land of Pyramid and Sphinx, and mighty dynasties, and of the glorious Nile. We need not wonder that Egypt has ever been one of the granaries of the world, when we recall the periodic inundation of that marvelous river, which preserves the long narrow strip of green between far-reaching wastes of sand. Thither in all ages all countries have come, as Joseph's brethren did, to buy grain. The ship in which the Apostle Paul was conveyed to Rome was a grain

ship of Alexandria, bearing a freight of wheat for the consumption of Rome.

In the figurative language of Scripture, Egypt stands for alliance with the world, and dependence on an arm of flesh. "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses; and trust in chariots because they are many; and in horsemen because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord!" (Isaiah 31:1)

There were occasions in Jewish story when God Himself bade His servants seek a temporary asylum in Egypt. Whilst Jacob was halting in indecision on the confines of Canaan, longing to go to Joseph, and yet reluctant to repeat the mistakes of the past, Jehovah said, "I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt" (Genesis 46:3-4). And, in later days, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt" (Matthew 2:13). There may be times in all our lives when God may clearly indicate that it is His will for us to go out into the world, with a view of accomplishing some Divine purpose with respect to it. "Go, shine as lights," He seems to say. "Arrest corruption, even as salt does. Witness for Me where My name is daily blasphemed." And when God sends us, by the undoubted call of His providence, He will be as sure to keep and deliver us as He did Jacob and his seed, or the Holy Child.

But it does not appear that Abraham received any such Divine direction. He acted simply on his own judgment. He looked at his difficulties. He became paralyzed with fear. He grasped at the first means of deliverance which suggested itself, much as a drowning man will catch at a straw. And thus, without taking counsel of his heavenly Protector, he went down into Egypt.

Ah, fatal mistake! But how many make it still. They may be true children of God; and yet, in a moment of panic, they will adopt methods of delivering themselves which, to say the least, are questionable; and sow the seeds of sorrow and disaster in life after, to save themselves from some minor embarrassment. Christian women plunge into the marriage bond with those who are the enemies of God, in order that they may be carried through some financial difficulty. Christian merchants take ungodly partners into business for the sake of the capital they introduce. To enable them to stave off the pressure of difficulties, and to maintain their respectability, Christian people of all grades will court the help of the world. What is all this -- but going down to Egypt for help?

How much better would it have been for Abraham to have thrown the responsibility back on God, and to have said, "Thou hast brought me here; and Thou must now bear the whole weight of providing for me and mine: here will I stay till I clearly know what Thou wilt have me to do." If any should read these lines who have come into positions of extreme difficulty, through following the simple path of obedience, let them not look at God through difficulties, as we see the sun shorn of splendor through a fog; but let them look at difficulties through God. Let them put God between themselves and the disasters which threaten them. Let them cast the whole responsibility upon Him. Has He not thus brought you into difficulties, that He may have an opportunity of strengthening your faith, by giving some unexampled proof of His power? Wait only on the Lord, trust also in Him: His name is Jehovah-jireh; He will provide.

SEE HOW ONE SIN LEADS TO ANOTHER. -- When Abraham lost his faith, and went down into Egypt, he also lost his courage, and persuaded his wife to call herself his sister. He had heard of the licentiousness of the Egyptians, and feared that they might take his life, to get possession of Sarah; who, even at the age which she had reached, must have been possessed of very considerable charms.

There was an element of truth in the statement that Sarah was his half-sister; but it was meant as a lie; and it certainly misled the Egyptians, "for she was taken into Pharaoh's house." It was a mean and cowardly act on Abraham's part, which was utterly indefensible. It was a cruel wrong to one who had faithfully followed his fortunes for so long. And it endangered the promised seed. Yet so it happens; when we lose our faith, and are filled with panic for ourselves, we become regardless of all and every tie, and are prepared to sacrifice our nearest and dearest, if only we may escape.

The world may entreat us well (12:16), but that will be a poor compensation for our losses. There is no altar in Egypt, no fellowship with God, no new promises; but a desolated home, and a wretched sense of wrong. When the prodigal leaves his Father's house, though he may win a brief spell of forbidden pleasure; yet he loses all that makes life worth living, and brings himself down to the level of the swine. In such a case there is no resource, save to retrace the way that we have come, to "do the first works," and like Abraham to go up out of Egypt to the place of the altar where we were "at the first" (13:4). Abraham's failure in Egypt gives us an insight into the original nature of the patriarch, which was by no means heroic; and betrays a vein of duplicity and

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deceit, similar to that which has so often re-appeared in his posterity.

How thankful should we be that the Bible does not shrink from recording the story of the sins of its noblest saints! What a proof of its veracity is here, and what encouragement there is for us! --for if God was able to make His friend out of such material as this, may we not aspire to a like privilege, though we, too, have grievously violated the high calling of faith? The one thing that God requires of His saints is implicit obedience -- entire surrender. Where these are present, He can still make Abrahams out of us, though, by nature, the soil of our being is prone to barrenness and weeds.