

Horatius Bonar:

"Go in and possess the land." Â– Deuteronomy 10:2

Israel passed through many changes in their history; but here we have its terminationÂ– the possession of the land. They were bondsmen, wanderers, outsiders, borderers; but they were not to remain such; they were to possess the land. Here their earthly history, which began with Abraham, ends. Let us learn from this something as to ourselves and our history.

I. We are not to be without a land. We are to have a country and a city. When in the world, we have these in a certain way, but they are all carnal, they pass from us and we from them. The world's cities and possessions will not do for us. They cannot fill us, nor satisfy us, nor abide with us. Hence, even when in the world, we are truly strangers; landless, cityless, homeless. And after we have come out from the world we are strangers, though not as before; for a land, a city, a home have been secured to us. Sinners, God offers you the better Canaan!

II. We are not to be dwellers in Egypt. The house of bondage is not for us. Pharaoh cannot be our king. We must, like Moses, refuse to be called the sons of Pharaoh's daughter. We must go out, not fearing the wrath of the king; counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than Egypt's treasures.

III. We are not to be dwellers in a barren land. The wilderness may do for a day, but not for a permanent abode. Ishmael may have the desert, Israel must have the good landÂ– the land flowing with milk and honey.

IV. We are not to be borderers. To be out of Egypt is one step, to come up to the borders of Canaan is another; but that is not to be all. We are not outsiders, never crossing the boundary; nor borderers, belonging to neither region, ever crossing and recrossing the line, as if we had no wish to stay or no portion in the land. The border lands are not for the church, nor for any one calling himself a Christian, an Israelite indeed.

V. We are to go in and possess. Out of Egypt, out of the wilderness, across the borders, into the very heart of the landÂ– Judah's hills, Ephraim's vales, Issachar's plains, Manasseh's pastures, Naphtali's lakes, and Zebulun's fertile reaches. We go in and take possession, leaving all other lands and regions behind. It is the God-chosen, God-given land. Let us enter on it. It is rich, goodly, well watered, let us possess it. Not merely let us survey it, or pitch our tents in it, but build our habitations there, to dwell in it forever. What I gather specially from our text is, that we are not to be borderers; not merely not Egyptians, nor Ishmaelites, but not borderers. The place to which God invites us is the land, the kingdom, the city. Just now, of course, it is but the promise, for the kingdom has not yet come. But I speak of the promise as if it were the thing itself, for the promise is God's, not man's.

There are many borderers in our day; half and half Christians; afraid of being too decidedly or intensely religious. They are not Egyptians, they are not perhaps quite outsiders, for they occasionally seem to cross the line and take a look of the land from some of its southern hills. But they are borderers. They have not boldly taken up their abode in the land; they have not entered in nor possessed it. They are vacillators, worshipers of two Gods, trying to secure two kingdoms and to lay up two kinds of treasures. Let me speak of and to these. Why should you be borderers?

1. It is SIN. It is not your misfortune merely, it is your guilt. That half-heartedness and indecision is about the most sinful condition you can be in. Borderer, you are a sinner; a sinner because a borderer!

2. It is MISERY. You cannot be happy in that half-and-half state. You don't know what you are, nor whose you are, nor where you are going. You are sure of nothing good; only of evil. Were you dying in that stateÂ– were you cut off on the borders, you are lost; and does not that thought make you truly wretched?

3. It is DANGER. You think perhaps that because you have gone a little way that all is well; or at least that you are out of danger. No. The danger is as great as ever. Were you to die on the bordersÂ– only almost a Christian, Â– you are as sure of hell as if you had died in Egypt.

4. It is ABOMINATION TO GOD. It is an insult to him. It says that you do not care for him or his goodly land. That half-heartedness is abominable to God. It is like Laodicea, or perhaps worse. Borderer, beware of thus provoking and insulting God.

5. It is **LOSS TO YOURSELF**. Even just now, how much you lose. You might be so happy! If decided and sure, you might have such peace! And then the prospect of such a land! What a loss! Yes, your own interests as well as God's honor demand decision. It is such a goodly, glorious land! It is so foolish, and so cowardly to hold back. Oh decide. Be a borderer no more. Enter in and possess the land at once!

THE OUTLINES OF A SAVED SINNER'S HISTORY

"He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye." Â– Deuteronomy 32:10

We might take this figuratively, of Abraham, in Chaldea; or of Israel in Egypt; but Moses is speaking literally of the Sinaitic wilderness, and of Israel there. No sooner had they crossed the Red Sea than they became wanderers in the desert. There God found them; he came to them. It was truly a desert land; without bread, or water, or dwellings, or cities. All heat, barrenness, danger, terror. He met them, came to them, took their hand, and became their guide (Deuteronomy 1:31,33; Nehemiah 9:19); by day and night he kept and led them for forty years; taught, protected, watched, as if they had been the tenderest part of the tenderest member of His body. Such was Israel's story, until brought to Canaan; and such that of every Israelite indeed, every saved sinner from his first arousing until he enters into the joy of his Lord. ConsiderÂ–

I. THE SINNER IN HIS NATIVE COUNTRY. That land of his nativity is a desert waste; it is the far country into which the prodigal went; the world where all is evil. It is a barren land, without comfort, or safety, or friends, or kindred. No living bread to feed his famished soul. No fountain of living water to quench his thirst. No peace, nor rest, nor gladness; no shelter from the wrath to come. He is wretched and empty; a poor wanderer of the desert, a man without a home.

II. THE SINNER FOUND BY GOD. (Jeremiah 2:2) The three parables of our Lord bring out this: the lost sheep found by the Shepherd; the lost silver found by the woman; the lost son found by his father. It is not the sinner that seeks God, but God the sinner; and when God comes He finds him in the land of barrenness, and famine, and danger; He finds him in his sin and wretchedness; a child of wrath, an heir of hell. He goes in quest of him; seeks him; saves him.

By convictions, by terrors, by disappointments, by a sense of need, by weariness; by these he pursues him from valley to valley, from refuge to refuge; and not by these only, but by a thousand such things great and small. Each believer, as he looks back reminds himself of thisÂ– "He found me in a desert land, a waste howling wilderness." Ask them all, and they will tell you this. Ask Abraham, Moses, Manasseh, Zaccheus, Paul; ask the Corinthians, the Thessalonians; they will tell you the same storyÂ– "He found me in a desert land; "He chose me, sought me out, found me, called me, sent from above, took me, and drew me out of many waters. I was a lost sheep, but He found me! A prodigal, but He found me! Some in childhood, some in youth, some in manhood. Yet all the same at last.

III. THE SINNER UNDER GOD'S CARE. The finding is not the ending, but the beginning of God's dealing with him; which from first to last is all marvelous; the display of wisdom and love.

(1.) **GUIDANCE.** No place needs a guide like the desert. One gets utterly bewildered in its intricacies and labyrinths of rocks and plains. He who finds him knows this, and takes him under his guidance, so that at every turn, every step, he shall be sure of being in the right way. No, and often does God bring him into circumstances, in which there can be no help except in Himself. The desert is pathless, the sinner is ignorant; there are false guides, uncertain ways, as well as darkness and enemies. Therefore does God lead us! By His word, His providence, His rod, His hand, His eye; by sorrows and joys, prosperities and adversities; by the footsteps of the flock; hedging up our way; denying us our own will. He "leads us about;" not directly, but with many a winding, and apparent backturning; many stages and unlikely bypaths. He does not take us at once to Canaan, but leads us about; for wise ends; of grace and discipline, and purifying; for the manifestation of Himself and the overthrow of Satan. What a leader! Whatever be the entanglements, briars, thorns, darkness, He will guide us; onward, still onward, to the city of habitation; we come up out of the wilderness leaning on the Beloved. We pray, "your Spirit is good, lead us to the land of uprightness."

(2.) **INSTRUCTION.** One of his first words is, "Learn of me." The sinner needs his teachingÂ– divine, not human teaching; as to what sin is, himself, God, Christ, the cross, the love of God, the grace of Christ, the glory to be revealed. These God teaches us. Every day and hour is a teaching time; and He who has found us is one who has compassion on the ignorant.

Be Not Borderers.

(3.) PROTECTION. He comes at once under the shadow of the divine shield; so that he is kept by the power of God; "preserved in Christ." No enemy prevails; no weapon injures, no evil comes near; he is made more than conqueror. How careful God is of the new found one! How sensitive about injury done to him, as if done to Himself, to the apple of His eye! What a guardian, what a protector do we find in God! The sun shall not smite by day nor the moon by night; nor shall the sand of the desert blow into our eye. O men of earth, are you still wanderers? Lost, unguided, uninstructed, unprotected? What will the desert do for you? Will it be an equivalent to Canaan and Jerusalem? God pursues you, appeals to you, seeks to win you, asks you, Have I been a wilderness to you? He calls! In every way, and by every agency; by the gospel, by the law, by a sense of want, by sorrow, by pain. He calls— he pursues! Oh, flee no longer from him. Let him this day overtake you!