

Getting Out, but Not In

by Jim Cymbala

The sermon 'Getting Out, but Not In' encourages listeners to leave their old life behind and trust in God's plan, rather than living a half-baked or lukewarm Christian life.

Duration: 29:11

Scripture: Exodus 14:11, Jeremiah 29:11, John 8:32, John 8:36

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that God never intended for us to be slaves to our emotions and impulses. He reminds the congregation that Jesus came to set us free and that true freedom is found in Him, not just in attending church on Sundays. The preacher also highlights the potential and plans that God has for young people, encouraging them to remember Jeremiah 29:11. He then discusses the story of the Israelites in the wilderness and how their grumbling and lack of faith prevented them from entering the Promised Land. The preacher concludes by urging Christians to be radical and fully committed to their faith, contrasting it with the world's dedication to worldly pursuits.

Transcript

One of the most obvious questions when graduation comes is, fine, I graduated, but now what? I'm out of high school, but now what? Go to college, whatever. By the way, that happens when you get out of college. I'm out of college, but now what am I going to go into? At crossroads in life, it's great to be done with something, but the obvious question is, now what? And why did I get that high school diploma? Why did I get that college degree? Maybe the most important turning point in the whole Old Testament, tragic turning point, is in a little story found in the book of Numbers.

And it's all about getting out and going in. But I found a better title for it. Life, change, through an apostrophe T. Life, change, through an apostrophe T. The whole future of a nation, hundreds of thousands of people, are going to be changed by an apostrophe T. Moses came, was sent by God to get the Jewish people out of slavery in Egypt.

The descendants of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were down in Egypt for hundreds of years, about 400. And they became slaves there. You know what slavery is, when someone beats you down and makes you do things whether you want to or not.

And you can't get ahead because you're a slave. Well, that's the slavery that the Jewish people were in. But God sent Moses to go to Pharaoh, who was the head of Egypt, and say, let my people go. Go, let my people go.

He didn't, and then God began to judge the nation of Egypt. That's all told in the book of Exodus. And finally, God, through miraculous power, got the Egyptians to let the Israelites go.

And the Israelites were liberated from slavery. And now, let's look at the map, make believe this is a map. And the bottom part of this pulpit is Egypt, which is basically what I want to say.

It's south. And they came up out of Egypt into a desert or wilderness, which was here, and above here, north, is the promised land, the land of Canaan. So God said, come out of Egypt, because I'm gonna bring you into the promised land.

I promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that I would settle their descendants there, and now it's time. So, if I were to ask a Bible question here, like, how long did the Israelites wander in the desert before they got in the promised land? How many do you think you know how many years they wandered? The count of three, yell it out. One, two, three.

40 years. 40 years. But most people don't know that that was not God's plan.

No, that wasn't God's plan. God told them His plan. He brought them up out of Egypt, and He brought them into the wilderness for what? Well, they moved slowly across the desert, learning lessons from God, His faithfulness, and they got to a mountain called Mount Horeb, or Mount Sinai, it's called, and Moses received the 10 commandments from God, which is the basis of morality and jurisprudence in many ways to this day, and then He taught them about how to build a tabernacle, and He told them about animal sacrifices to make to cover the disobedience of the people when they sin.

Blood would be shed, because sin is so horrible to a holy God, and it's so destructive to the people who do it, so God warned them about that and gave them a whole bunch of instructions how to govern the nation. What happens when your cow falls in a ditch and someone else gets it out? Or what happens if you get angry and hit somebody and you knock out an eye? What should happen? He gives all those instructions in the book of Exodus, and now, about one year into it, moving slowly, about one year, God says, all right, time's up. Now we're gonna go up right to the edge of the promised land.

Here's the promised land. They're up in a place called Kadesh Barnea, and God says, time to move. Go in and possess the land that I told you about, and that's where everything changed in history.

For them, look what happened. The Lord said to Moses, send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe, send one of its leaders, so 12 men representing 12 tribes, and they go and they go all over the land and they bring back a cluster of grapes and they check out everything, and then they came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the desert of Paran, and there they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land, a big cluster of grapes, and they gave Moses this account.

We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey. Milk and honey is a Hebrewism, which means it's a rich, productive, fruitful land, not that there were containers of milk flowing and honey in the rivers. Here is its fruit.

They show it to him, but the people who live there, oh, they're powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites live in the Negev, the Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites live in the hill country, and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan.

Then Caleb, he's one of the spies, 10 gave that first report. Now Caleb and Joshua are gonna give a different report. Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses.

The people are uproar now. We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it. But the men who had gone up with him said, we can't.

Look at the verse 30. We can, C-A what? N. What does the next one say? C-A-N, apostrophe. We can't attack those people.

They're stronger than we are. And all the people didn't believe Joshua and Caleb. You know what the whole nation of Israel believed? They believed the 10 men who gave what the Bible calls an evil report.

Why was it evil? They weren't cursing or lying. What they were saying was, we came all this way for nothing, because now we're either gonna die here or these people are gonna kill us. But our goose is cooked, it's over.

That was an evil report. And the people believed that and started grumbling. And you know what they did? They said, why did we even leave Egypt? And they said, get rid of Moses.

What kind of leader is this? Takes us into wilderness, and now we find out that the people are gonna kill us in the place we're supposed to go. We thought this was the promised land. We thought it was a good place.

How good could it be if there's giants and armies ready to fight us? We don't know how to fight. We've been slaves for 400 years. We're not trained military people.

Oh, and God was listening. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, how long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. Next time you and I are tempted to grumble about how tough life is, remember that verse.

And hush your mouth, right? So tell them, as surely as I live, declares the Lord, I will do to you the very things I heard you say. In this desert, your bodies will fall. You'll never go back.

You'll never go in the promised land. You said we can't, then you won't. You said they're too strong, we can't do this, then you won't.

Every one of you, 20 years old or more, who has counted in the census and who has grumbled against me, not one of you will enter the land, I swore with uplifted hand, to make your home, except Caleb, son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, son of Nun, end of story. So you know what they did for the next 39 years? Look, let's say this is the desert. They went like this.

For 39 years, they went nowhere. Were they God's people? Yes. Was he feeding them every day? Yes.

Was he faithful? Yes. Were they going anywhere? No. They just went like that.

And then when they all died off, then God said, all right, Moses, your time is up. Joshua's gonna lead them into the land, but not the generation that wouldn't believe the promise and dare to trust God. Now what do these things mean to us? The story's so old.

Well, Egypt in the Bible is a picture of our old life before Christ. It's a picture of living in sin, the control of the world. And it's a picture of slavery.

But a different kind of slavery. Because most people, if you talk to them about, come to Jesus, because here's what he promised. He said in the synagogue in Nazareth when he began his ministry, the Lord has anointed me to break the chains of the captives and set the prisoners free.

What are you, just come for do prison ministry? No, I've come for the whole world. I'll break the chains and I'll set you free. Hey, I'm not in prison.

You are in prison. Because before you know Jesus Christ, we're all in different kinds of prison. We're in a different kind of slavery, shall we say.

What is slavery? Slavery is being compelled to do something that's not good for you. You don't have liberty. You don't have the ability to be what God intended you to be.

And that's what sin and the world, through pressure of peers, and the culture of ungodly world, and that's what Satan and sin does. It builds a kind of slavery into our lives so that we obey impulses. It's called compulsive behavior.

And these impulses come. And even though your conscience and something else tells you this is not a good thing to do, this is not a good relationship to get into, everyone's doing those drugs, but something nasty is gonna happen that no, that conscience won't stop and those impulses compel and push, and the next thing, you stop even fighting them. You just give up, and now you're a slave, but you just don't know it.

Do I have to go into any details if you pick up the newspaper, or if you see the news, that people who are very educated have positions of authority, that they're slaves? They're slaves. We all know that. The abuse of food, the abuse of drugs, it doesn't have to be crack cocaine.

It doesn't have to be smoking weed. It can be a slavery of anger. You can't smile, you can't be happy because anger is driving you into being a person God never intended you to be.

But you feel like that's fulfilling you by being angry at the world, giving everybody a nasty look. But that's a slavery. You're not free, you're a slave of anger.

And the more people yell and say, don't tell me I'm a slave, I don't want to be a Christian because that will ruin my life. Oh yeah? No, Christianity will give you a beautiful life. It's when you fight off Jesus that you become a slave.

Come on, can we say amen to all of that? Slave. A slave to prejudice. A slave to prejudice.

Parents are going to talk nasty and use nasty words. White prejudice, black prejudice. And they're going to talk in front of their children and put a curse on their children because they're a slave to their prejudice and their anger.

Slave to laziness. Can't get up, can't do anything, can't make a life for yourself. And yet you're claiming you're free.

You're not free, you're a slave. And that's why Jesus came. So that God's purpose for our life could be fulfilled but the first thing that has to be broken is slavery.

I've come to set the prisoners free. You can be free but living in a prison. You can be in prison but free.

And that's for all of us here. This is what it means to be born again, have a new chance in life. You don't have to be bound by peer pressure.

I meet people, they have no freedom. They have to do what their friends tell them to do. That's freedom? They have to do what their culture told them to do.

Their Jamaican thing, their Trinidadian thing, their white thing, their black thing. They're locked in. You can predict what they're gonna do because they're slaves of these emotions, these impulses.

God never intended you and I to be like that. He has a great life for us. He has a promised land for us.

So Jesus came to set us free. And a lot of people go to church and are free. They've reduced religion to I go to a building on Sunday.

Where would you find that in the Bible? Whom the Son sets free is free indeed. Not I have come that you might have church on Sunday. There's no such a verse as that.

Come on, let's put our hands together. The potential of these middle school graduates, the potential of these seniors graduating, just think the plans God has for them. Listen, young people, remember that verse.

I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord. Not to harm you, to bless you. But the battle is gonna be who they're gonna be a slave to.

They will be a slave to someone. Everyone's a slave to someone. You're gonna be a slave to God, to Christ, or you're gonna be a slave to something else.

Athletes, actors, they self-destruct. How could you have all that talent and all that money and all the women wanting to be with you? How would you then, how would you, because you're a slave. The more people that yell that they're free, they're not, they're a slave.

And the more people say, no, I belong to Jesus Christ. Oh, how boring. No, how beautiful.

How beautiful it is to belong to Jesus Christ. Now I can be what God intended me to be. So that's Egypt, so let's close.

So then what's the promised land? Here's the promised land. Here's the wilderness, down there is Egypt. God got them out of Egypt.

And now he brings them to, what's the promised land? Well, it's not heaven. A lot of the old Negro spirituals and other Christian songs would picture Canaan land as crossing the river, the Jordan River, and going home to be with the Lord. But the promised land is not a picture of heaven because when they went there, they had to fight these battles.

Under Joshua, they had to fight the battle, possess the land, Jericho, all that stuff. No, no, it's not a picture of heaven. Oh, I'm so happy in heaven, no more battles.

Come on, that's what I'm talking about. No more battles, no more enemies, no more struggle, no more school. All in favor, say aye.

Oh, my goodness. So what's that a picture of? It's a picture of not just coming out, but going into the thing God planned for you. Very few get radical enough to do that, and that's why Christianity is in the state as in today in America.

I just heard a statistic. 1,200 people every day stop reading the Bible. Don't you and I be one of them? And people just live on the edge of what God purposed for them.

The promised land is I will be what he called me to be. He wants me to be a doctor? I'm gonna be the best Christian doctor in the world. He wants me to housewife, school teacher, minister, athlete, basketball player, whatever.

Musician, and I'm not living with sin controlling me. God's gonna break every chain in my life. He's pulled me out of Egypt so I can be totally free.

You know, some of us are like, he pulled us out of the tomb like Lazarus, and then Jesus had to say, get his bandages off of him. He was alive, but he got it all wrapped up. Jesus is a Jesus who not only takes us out of the tomb, but he gets the bandages that are restricting us off of us.

Not only out of Egypt, but into the promised land. Victorious living, radical living, crazy for Jesus living. I'll be what he wants me to be.

No worry about the future, because if God got me out of Egypt, what, he's gonna let me down now? Think of that. Think why he got so angry with the people. Think how God felt about that when he hears them talking smack, talking trash about, oh, yeah, Moses, we got out of Egypt, but now what? Well, if God got you out of Egypt, don't you think he's gonna take you to the next level? Come on, can we say amen to that? If you're not what you used to be, rejoice in that, but now be what he wants you to be.

It's not enough to just say, I'm not what I used to be, but I want it all. I want everything God has for me. Paul, the apostle, says it this way, that I might apprehend why I was apprehended.

He captured me. He got a hold of my life. Now, for what? That's what I wanna go after.

Might be to be a minister. It might be to be to whatever. I didn't want what he wanted me to be.

I didn't want that. When it dawned on me that he wanted me to be in the ministry, but I wasn't trained, I had my mind on other things. And you wanna talk about miserable, empty living? Just be a Christian who doesn't wanna be what God wants you to be.

That's depression city. That's fight with your wife and husband. That's be miserable.

You can't even enjoy a good meal when God is fighting with you and saying, no, all the way. I didn't get you out to be wandering around in the desert, the wilderness. Let me close.

That's where a lot of people live, maybe some of you. This is not for the students, the graduates, or dads alone. This is for all of us.

How many people do you think today in Christendom who go to church on Sunday, they're not living in Egypt, they're not what they used to be, but they're not in the promised land either. You know what they've been content to do? You know what they've been tricked to do? You know what they've been lied to where to live? They're circling for decades in the wilderness, just like the Israelites. Are they God's people? Yes, he got them out of Egypt.

Are they where they ought to be? Not even close. They're just circling. And then they wonder why they're so empty and frustrated.

And they try to ease their conscience by saying, but I go to church on Sunday. I'm in the tab almost every Sunday. No, no, no, no.

You think that's why Christ died on the cross for you? You think that's why he took a spear for you? Look at me up there. You think he took a spear for you and they crucified him and he died and rose again so that you would stop by a church? Do you think, I mean, that's like blasphemous to even say that sentence. No, but a lot of people, that's why it's just humdrum, circling.

Not, yeah, not in Egypt, but not in the promised land. Not ready to go and fight those giants and say, I will possess everything God wants me to possess. I'm gonna be what he wants me to be.

Yeah, but there's big, bad armies. So God is bigger. God is bigger than the giants.

God is bigger than the walls. Come on, can we get an amen? God is bigger than all of that. What kills the cause of Christ is not Egypt or the promised land.

You know what kills Christianity is people living in the wilderness who are half-baked. They're not radical. The world isn't like that.

No, when the world gets into something, they're like crazy. I just heard an article, read an article that said that they followed some youth in Chicago, New York, or whatever, I think it was inner city youth, and they averaged 12 hours a day either watching, playing a video game, watching something, or on their phones. Could that be? Could that be? I don't know a Twitter from a twatter.

I wouldn't know how that, I don't know how that works. I don't wanna know. But I'm asking you a question.

Do you see how people give themselves over to something? Social media or whatever? You see how people give themselves over to a cause that they get into? And then when it comes to Christ, we're like, we're in the wilderness. We're not what we used to be, but we're nowhere near that crazy, sold out, you know. When you play athletics, I've often thought of that and been convicted.

When I was on the field of athletics, all city basketball player here in New York for Erasmus Hall and then through college on a full basketball scholarship and just traveling around the country playing ball, do you think I held back anything when I was playing ball? Have you lost your mind? I would hold back something? At 13, 14 years old, I was shoveling snow in PS92 in the winter with a shovel, shoveling it off the basketball courts at 8.30 in the morning and with gloves on and mittens, shooting baskets at nine before anybody came out with my hands frozen because I was into it. Could it be that we're more into

something else in our life than into Jesus? Is there some idol that would take more of our affection than him? See, that's that promised land, being crazy all out. Because when you get into something, winning and losing, I, let me, you know, repeat it.

There was a loose ball in a game played up, I think in Boston, Boston College. Or maybe it was a home game, I can't remember, but I remember it was on television and my roommate was up in the top of the balcony, three, four, 5,000 people there. Big game, tight game.

And I'm what, 19, 20 years old? And there's a ball rolling out of bounds and me and this other guy are gonna go for the ball and I realize if I can get to it, I could save it and knock it over to one of my teammates, but he's running for the ball too. But it's going out of bounds. And if it goes out of bounds, it'll be off of our team and then they'll have the ball.

So I elbow him, but in the name of the Lord, when I did that, I was, and I elbow him and he's elbowing me and we're fighting and then I break loose for him. There's only one way to save it and that was to dive on a gym floor. And it wasn't in days now, like when they play basketball now, the guy's got shorts down here, down here, the big baggy shorts that's in.

We're talking old school now, shorts up to here. We're talking Dr. J and all that old stuff back there, Larry Bird. Do you think I was thinking about, might you get hurt if you dive on a gym floor, full speed? Do you think that was a thought in my mind? No.

But what happened was I might've got knocked off of balance by him because we were still fighting for inside position. And as I leaped, I got knocked off of balance. So I skidded, I did save the ball, but I skidded and I got what's called a floor burn that went for so long, the skid was so long that my roommate heard it up in the balcony with people yelling.

It was like. And later on, when the adrenaline wore off, I remember someone reminded me that they had a floor burn about a shower, just a shower hit. We're talking raw red skin.

I don't know how many layers I took off. But worse than that, they don't heal quick. So I had the problem of sleeping because I needed a cover on me.

It was winter, but the cover, nothing could touch my leg, not a sheet, not a tissue. But do you think I complained about it? Do you think I went, no, man, this is bad. I ripped my leg open here.

I don't know about this basketball. No, it was, hey, I got the ball. I saved the ball.

Come on, give me a little, give me a little pound. And when they got hardship in the desert, they started complaining and saying, we gotta go back to Egypt. So that's why Joshua and Caleb said, don't rebel and don't be afraid.

Go for it. If God brought us out, won't he bring us in? Don't live with a can't. Live with a can.

Don't lose your life to an apostrophe T. I can't, I won't, it's impossible, I'll never, I'm not smart enough, I'm too young, I'm too old, I'm too whatever. No, with God, everything is possible. But don't rebel and want your way.

Say yes to God today. Some of you here, you're in the wilderness, aren't you tired of the same circles? You've been circling for how long now? Some of you, how long have you been circling? You're going

nowhere, you know it. You haven't progressed in your faith.

You're not capturing the land God gave you to capture. You're just going in circles. You wanna do that for the rest of your life? Whatever he's called you to do, he's gonna give you the power to do it.

And do you think if he got you out of what you used to be, do you think he's gonna run out of power now and go, what do I do now with my children? No, he's gonna help you. And don't be afraid. See, rebellion holds us back, my final word, but fear holds us back.

And that's why Jesus kept saying to his disciples, fear not, don't be afraid. Don't be afraid of failure. Don't be afraid of what people will say.

Don't be afraid of what others think of you. You think when you die, the opinion of others are gonna matter? You think when they put you in the grave, you'll be biting your nails as they drop you down there and you'll be saying, I hope everyone liked my funeral. You know, nobody thinks that way.

No, let's do it. Let's do it. Let's do it, let's do this thing.

I remember that in the huddle. How many times in a huddle be at a critical place in the game? You know, I was the captain of the team at a couple places I played. So you look at those big guys and the coach gets through with his talk.

The defensive coach says what he wants to say and then you look at the guys and you're sweaty and the game's hanging in the balance and you go, we can do this thing. We're behind but we can catch up. We can do this thing.

And if guys are moping and they're looking negative, you even have to say to them, hey, if you don't think we can do it and you don't wanna play hard, then sit down, let somebody else try. But we're gonna do this thing and we're gonna do like that in sports and then when it comes to Jesus Christ, we're gonna sit back and circle in the wilderness for how many years? Young people, you'll miss all the peace and all the joy God has for you. Mothers, fathers, you'll miss all the great things God has.

You never know what God can do until you get where he wants you to get. Listen, in the wilderness, they could not know how the walls of Jericho would come down. In the wilderness, they could not ever imagine how God would fight for them.

You only know how God will fight for you when you fight. How in the world would I ever know what God will do unless I get in this situation where he's gotta do it? Let's close our eyes.

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