

The Servant

Newsletter for Christian Servants

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Ins and Outs

If any man be “in” Christ... Paul knew it was all about being “in” Christ and Christ being “in” us. “That Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith...” When reading the Bible, notice the word “in” and also the word “out.” Please, don’t be counted “out.” The church has seen many servants who have burned-out, dropped-out, fallen-out, held-out. Satan would like nothing more than for you to be counted “out.” Lord, count me “in.” May I be “in” your will. May I be “in” your hand. May I be “in” your word. Please don’t count me “out.”

Outs

Burn-Out Elijah knew about “burn-out.” He was God’s prophet. He stood up to kings. He challenged false prophets. He called down fire from heaven. His prayers stopped the rain. Elijah however, was a man of “like passions as we are.” He was at his highest moment on the top of Mt. Carmel. His highest moment was followed by his lowest. After running before the king’s chariot, he ran from the fury of the wicked queen Jezebel and fell exhausted beneath the juniper tree. There he utters the words “It is enough.” He was burned out. “Burn-out” is a common experience in many professions. Teachers, Lawyers, Civil servants, are often those who speak of “burn-out.” Unfortunately, too many ministers, preachers, and missionaries, have also used the word. Many have come to some juniper tree experience and thought “It is enough.”

Had the curtain come down under that tree, Elijah’s story could be just another tragedy. God came down instead. Paul once said, “when I am weak, then He is strong.” God was the secret strength of Elijah. The angel of the Lord “touched” him. God fed him. God let him rest a while. Let God determine when “it is enough.” Say with Elijah, “I am not better than my fathers.” Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God. Rest. Then find Horeb if you must. Pray. Don’t look for God in the wind that rends the mountain, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire. Listen. Listen for that still small voice. Open God’s word again and listen. God will meet you there.

Drop-Out Dropping out is a conscious decision. Demas was a drop-out. High School drop outs live to regret it. One day

they find that certain doors are closed to them. They did not like “cracking the books.” Cracking the books is hard work. In the spiritual life, there is one Book that must be studied often. There is only one Book that must be read. “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.” What could keep us from the Book of Books? The same thing, perhaps that drew Demas away, the World. Demas forsook Paul, “having loved this present world” (2Tim. 4:10). Paul makes a point by speaking of the “present” world. The troubled teen who “drops out” of school to embrace his “present” world, will not be ready to engage the “world to come.” Stay in school.

Fall-Out Some are no longer serving God because they have had a “fall-out.” Lot is an example of this condition. He and his servants had a disagreement and “falling-out” with Abraham and Abraham’s servants. Never was there a better time for humility than when Lot thought he deserved better. Many a ministry has suffered during arguments over territory and mineral rights. Abraham, the man of faith and grace that he was, gave Lot the opportunity to choose. If you choose the right we will go left, if you go left we will go right, but let’s not fight. The church has lots of Lots. Lot chose the best for himself. His lack of grace and selfishness caused him to fall-out with his uncle and the Friend of God. We must be gracious. We must seek peace. We must forgive. Jesus taught us to love our enemies. If we don’t we may find ourselves counted “out.”

Hold-Out Early in church history we find the danger of “holding-out” on God. Ananias and Sapphira are sad examples of this. When others were giving their “all” they pretended to do the same. They pretended to be something they were not. They were not honest. How can we follow the One who is called the Truth and not be honest? We can’t. Not everyone is asked to give their property to the church, but foolish is the man who refuse to give it to God. There is a difference. God gave us His best. God gave us His all. The secret of faith is in trusting God with everything. The early church understood this. Their outward giving was a reflection of what was in their heart. Ananias and Sapphira tried to fool the Apostles. That was foolish. Man looks on the outward appearance, God

looks on the heart. Peter asked them why they had lied to the Holy Spirit. Before I am “counted out” I should ask myself, “Have I been totally honest with God?” Am I holding out from giving Him my all? (Acts 5:4).

Bottom-Out Many a Christian servant has found themselves dragging bottom. They have either found the shoals or shallows, or like Jonah have sunk to the bottom of the deep blue sea. Jonah was serving God on his own terms. He was going to Tarshish when God asked him to go to Nineveh. Many might have gone down to the docks to wish him bon voyage thinking he was doing something heroic and setting sail in spiritual service. When God asks us to do “A” we cannot fool Him by doing “B.” Being God’s servant means going where God tells us to go. Going for God is important, but we must go in the right direction. We should never go against God’s word. Going to or doing what we want is not obedience. Much of church work today is simply people doing what they want, where they want to do it and has little to do with the needs of Nineveh or the will of God. (Jonah 1:2).

Wash-Out Judas was a wash out. There is hope for the drop-out that he will change his mind. The bottom-out may see his vessel rise with the tide. The fall-out may say he is sorry and become a friend again. The hold-out may go over his accounts and seek to balance his books. A wash out is a wash out. Judas was a disappointment to everyone including himself. He was a stain that God put away. Judas kept the books. Judas was the treasurer, but his heart was out of balance. He sold his soul for a few pieces of silver and found that he could not get a refund. “He having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night” (Jn. 13:30) Never was a man more “out” than Judas when he left that room. “Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in

the way everlasting.”

Out and Out

Abraham was Out and Out for God. His father Terah left Ur but stopped for some reason at Haran. (Gen. 11:31). Haran was half way. He had his reasons, we have ours. Abraham, upon the death of his father, went “all the way.” God called Abraham “my friend.” James tells us we cannot be the world’s friend and God’s friend at the same time. (Ja. 4:4). Paul also made it clear that we cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. (1Cor. 10:21). Too many try to sit at both tables.

The great men and women of faith left no doubt about where they stood. Joshua said, “choose ye this day whom you will serve; whether the gods owich your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh. 24:15).

The New Testament puts it another way. “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you” (2Cor. 6:17). The Christian is to be in the world, but not “of” the world. The twentieth century church seems more concerned about being “hip” than being holy. From music, to clothing, hair styles, and entertainment, there seems to be little difference between the world and the church.

How is it that Abraham became the famous man of faith we know him to be? Listen to God’s word to him. “Get thee out...” Abraham was “all out for God.” Lot needed to get out of Sodom. God even sent angels to help him as a kind of promise to Abraham. He did not get out as far away as he could. His wife did

not survive. He was too close to Sodom going in and too close going out.

“By faith Abraham when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb. 11:8).

We will never come close to becoming an Abraham, but each of us must decide if will will be someone who is “Out and Out” for God.



Inns

There was no room for Christ in the Inn. Jesus was never in the “In Crowd.” The world still has no room for Jesus. God is not looking for a stable. He is looking for a stable heart. Not one that cannot make up its mind or one that is double minded. “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” If any man is in Christ he is a new creation, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.”



Out of Ur

Faith that’s real has ins and outs
a beginning and an end
it then abandons all its doubts
like Abraham, God’s friend

It must now get self out of UR
or err if it stays in
the word of God it does prefer
to a world with all its sin

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