

THE PURPOSE OF TESTING #11

“Life’s Bitter Pool”

Introduction

We continue our teaching on “The Purpose of Testing” with message #11; “Life’s Bitter Pool”.

Once again we will take our text from the Old Testament story of Israel’s redemption as a prophetic picture of our New Testament journey with Jesus. The Apostle Paul says...

1 Corinthians 10:11

Now all these things happened to them as *examples*, written for our admonition...

The physical experiences of Israel explain the spiritual experiences of the Christian

For example, salvation of Israel is like a 3- act play:

OUT OF EGYPT/THROUGH THE WILDERNESS/INTO THE LAND

New Testament salvation follows the same pattern: God saves us *out of Egypt* (the world) to take us *into the Land*-the fullness of our destiny and purpose in God. But there is an unavoidable *wilderness* of testing in the middle.

The Spiritual Meaning of the Wilderness

- A place of *transition*
- A place of *preparation*
- A place of *education*

When we study the story we see that...

**The wilderness is where God brings us to the end of ourselves;
It is a school where come to the end of all human help and learn to totally
depend upon God.**

For Israel, the school of the wilderness began immediately after God brought them out of Egypt through the Red Sea.

I. The Journey Begins

A. From the Red Sea to Marah

1. The wilderness journey begins at the Red Sea; one of the most notable miracles in the Bible.

2. God has brought His people through the Red Sea and drowned the Egyptians beneath the waves; in Exodus 15, Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron sings her famous song:

Exodus 15:20-21

Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them: “Sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!”

3. This is a perfect picture of how we feel when we are saved. What a deliverance! What a victory! But who could have guessed what happened next?

Exodus 15:22

So Moses brought Israel *from the Red Sea*; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And *they went three days in the wilderness* and found no water.

4. Don't miss this: they went from the TRIUMPH at the Red Sea to the TESTING in the wilderness.

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“Great joy is often closely followed by great trial.”

a. God is immediately establishing the cycle of the Christian life; from triumph to testing.

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This was their first disappointment, and it was a very sharp one; from the height of exultation they fell almost at once to the depths of despair. Such disappointments we have all experienced, especially after the first conscious sense of spiritual triumph and freedom.

Matthew Henry

“This was a sore trial to the young travelers, and a dimming of their joy; thus God would train them up to difficulties; so as David, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, they would reach forth towards God.

Matthew Henry

5. Remember this: The same God who brought them through the Red Sea has now led them into a wilderness where all their resources ran out! (So much for the teaching that if you follow God you’ll never have a need!)

a. So here we have 3 million thirsty people; they left Egypt with full water skins which now are empty.

6. But wait. Up ahead they see a great pool of water! Imagine their excitement! But their delight will turn to disappointment...

Exodus 15:23

Now when they came to Marah, but they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah.

(Marah in Hebrew means “bitter”)

7. Over the next 40 years, Israel will make 42 stops in the wilderness; each one contains a spiritual lesson for the Church; but one is more important than this first stop.

“Marah”

The first great test of Christian faith often comes when we drink from “Life’s Bitter Pool”...

8. *This is the place where we must learn how to deal with the disappointments of life.*

B. Dealing With Disappointment

1. In my personal experience as well as with working with others, the difference between those who mature in Christ and those who don’t depends upon how they deal with disappointment when they come to life’s bitter pool.

2. And make no mistake: even the most committed Christians can encounter the bitterness of disappointment.

Dealing With Disappointment

- A broken marriage: In a perfect world there would be no divorce; no adultery; no court custody battles. But not so in the real world. Some invest years in a marriage only to suffer the heartbreak and disappointment of divorce. A bitter drink for sure
- A business failure: You may have invested all your resources into a business venture and then lose everything
- A health breakdown: some serious physical setback; mental or emotional problems; or injury in a serious accident

Dealing With Disappointment

- Betrayal of trust: Someone swindles you; breaks a promise; goes back on their word and you suffer serious consequences
- Disillusionment with a human leader; Someone you respected and cared about let you down: an employer; a teacher; a Pastor; or perhaps a parent
- Disappointment with God: This one is more common than you think.

a. The untimely loss of a loved one or family member; a child is killed in a car accident; a father of 4 suddenly dies of a heart attack at age 40.

3. Life can deal us many bitter blows that test our faith; and sooner or later, it will. But, as Derek taught us...

Derek Prince

“The question in our lives is not *whether* we will experience testing but only how we will *respond* to the testing.”

a. Derek wrote a little book on this subject:

Derek Prince

“When it all falls apart that’s a bitter pool. But God led you to the bitter pool. He has something good for you at the bitter pool if you respond the right way.”

4. There are 2 possible responses to the bitter pool of disappointment:

Exodus 15:24-25

And the people murmured against Moses but Moses cried out to the Lord.

- a. Notice the people *complained* (murmured) but Moses *prayed*.
- b. To “complain” means to murmur or “grumble”.

Thomas Brooks

“The sin of murmuring is a souring sin. As the sweetest things put into a sour vessel are soured, or put into a bitter vessel are embittered; so murmuring puts gall and wormwood into every cup of mercy that God gives into our hands. The murmurer writes ‘Marah’, or bitterness, upon all his mercies, and tastes bitterness in them all. As ‘to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet,’ so to the murmuring soul every sweet thing is bitter.”

5. The wilderness is where God exposes things in our hearts we didn’t know were there.

Derek Prince

“Man’s disappointments are God’s appointments. Human nature is when things are going well we are very superficial and ordinary. So God leads us to the bitter pool-and as we cry out to Him He brings us to a deeper place.

C. The Deeper Place

Exodus 15:24-25

And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet.

1. Here we have a powerful prophetic picture of spiritual truth; this is what God wants us to see.

- a. When Moses prayed, “the Lord showed him a tree.”
- b. The term “tree” in Hebrew can refer to a tree growing in the ground as well as a tree that is cut off (like a plank).

2. The tree was quite ordinary; Moses only knew it was special because God gave him a revelation of it. When he cut it off and cast it into the bitter waters the waters were made sweet. The Bible tells us Christ was crucified “on a tree”!

1 Peter 2:24

...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness — by whose stripes you were healed.

3. The message of Marah is simple: when you drink from life's bitter pool, the cure is in the Cross! We can deal with all our disappointment when we apply the Cross by faith!

4. The tree left to itself did not make the water sweet. It was there all the time. But it was the act of faith that released the healing power of God to the problem! And so it is with our own disappointment.

5. The tree that was cut off made the waters sweet; Christ on the cross (made from a tree that had been cut off) releases our healing; physical and spiritual!

Exodus 15:25-26

There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, 26 and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you."

a. The Hebrew for "the Lord who heals you" is 3 words: aniy Yahweh, Ropha; Aniy=I am; Yahweh=the Lord; "Ropha", your healer, literally "your Doctor!"

6. God brought them to the waters of Marah to give them a new revelation of Himself; something they could learn no other way; that He is the Lord our Doctor-our Healer!

- a. For our physical sickness
- b. And for "life's bitter pool"

7. When we apply the Cross by faith the deep disappointments of life, the "waters" are "made sweet".

- Bodies are healed
- Bitter disappointments are made sweet

Derek Prince

"The bitter turns to sweet when we rightly respond to God's dealings."

8. Trials, troubles and testing cannot be avoided; but God has a purpose for every test He allows into our lives. Marah is a key to a great secret of life.

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“Disappointment is the hardest of all things to bear because it finds the soul unbraced to meet it -- relaxed, at ease, and tuned to indulgence and joy. Who has not muttered 'Marah' over some well in the desert, which he strained himself to reach and found to be bitterness? But it strikes me that we have, in this miracle, most important suggestions as to the philosophy of all miracles...to reveal the order of God’s world.”

J.B. Brown

9. God has ordered the world to bring sweet out of bitter; to bring life out of death.

III. Close: The Meaning of Marah

A. How God Has Ordered the World

1. The Old Testament example is something God said through the Prophet Hosea:

Hosea 2:14-16

Therefore, behold, I will allure her, I will bring her into the wilderness, And speak (tenderly/to her heart) comfort to her. I will give her vineyards from there, And the Valley of Achor (trouble) as a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. (Miriam’s song) "And it shall be, in that day, "Says the Lord, "That you will call Me 'My Husband,' And no longer call Me 'My Master,'

a. Have you lost your song? God will bring you into the wilderness to speak “comfort” to you; He will give you vineyards from there; the Valley of Trouble shall become a door of hope.

b. God will give you back your song! He will restore the joy of your salvation you had at the beginning.

c. Best of all, He will reveal Himself to you in a new way! You have known Him as “Master”; but now you will now Him as your Husband!

- Israel knew God as Savior in Egypt; but they did not know Him as Healer until they were in the Wilderness.
- When God leads you to the bitter pool it is so He might reveal Himself to you in a deeper way; a way you’d have discovered no other way.

2. The New Testament example is from the pen of the Apostle Paul:

2 Corinthians 1:8-10

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, 10 who *delivered* us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us...

a. Even one as great as Paul went into a wilderness:

- Trouble came
- Burdened “beyond measure”, beyond strength
- To the point he despaired of life
- Under sentence of death

b. It couldn't get worse; but it all had a purpose!

“so that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead...”

c. The wilderness is where God brings us to the end of ourselves; the school where we learn to totally depend upon Him.

- The woman with issue of blood suffered 18 years at the hands of many physicians and was none the better; but her desperation drove her to Jesus and one touch of His robe brought her healing. As one said...

“When you reach the end of your rope you'll find the hem of His garment.”

d. He is the one who delivered (past tense) does deliver (present tense) and will deliver (future tense) us!

3. This is a law built into the universe: It's out of death God brings resurrection, a life far above what we had before.

Derek Prince

I once asked God, “Why do you only bless the things that first die and are

resurrected?” And He said, “Because when I resurrect something I resurrect it in the form I want it to be in”.

4. And so it is with us; in God’s purpose for every testing.

B. Ministry

1. Think of you own bitter pool. Think of how you responded.

2. Has God “shown you a tree”? Have you applied the Cross to the pool?

Communion

“Life’s Bitter Pool”