

Camping with God – 2

Ex. 16:22-27

Lessons:

1. Experience and Celebrate God’s deliverances in your life.

God took Israel through the Red Sea, and then as Pharaoh’s army followed in pursuit God closed the passageway, drowning every one of the soldiers.

Moses declared,

“The Egyptians you see today you will never see again!”

Summary of Moses’ declaration: (Ex. 14:13-14)

¹³But Moses said to the people,

“Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD

which He will accomplish for you today;

for the Egyptians whom you have seen today,

you will never see them again forever.

¹⁴“The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent.”

Some of you have experienced God’s deliverance and answers to prayer.

Have you remembered the great things He has done?

Have you rejoiced in celebration and praise?

2. Trust God to provide for you in His way and time.

Setting: they have just experienced God’s deliverance from bondage in Egypt and from Pharaoh’s Army as they walked on dry ground through the Red Sea.

The children of Israel were led into the wilderness:

- Cloud by day and pillar of fire by night (light and heat)
- Presence of God is with them constantly

I. Leading to Testing.

²²Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea,
 and they went out into the wilderness of Shur;
 and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

²³When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah,
 for they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah. (Ex. 16:22-23)

Three days into the wilderness of Shur

Once across the Red Sea, the Israelites went to Shur. (“Wall”) This is a vast, rugged, and sparsely populated wilderness region in the northern Sinai, stretching from what in modern times is the eastern side of the Suez Canal to the Negev of Israel

Sources estimate it to be 30-40 miles from where they crossed the Red Sea. Numbers refers to this area as the Desert of Etham (Old Egyptian word for ‘fort’). The first stop mentioned is Marah.

Major Problem: No water

From a human point of view, it is entirely understandable that the Israelites would have begun to worry about water by the third day without finding any. They and their animals probably had consumed nearly all the water they had carried with them in skins, and it is not inconceivable that as they approached Marah in expectation of being able to drink all they wanted, many of them drank their last water and/or gave it to the animals. Accordingly, finding foul water at Marah was not merely a disappointment but a cause of panic... Some Israelites may even have tried to dig around the edges of the water at Marah, presumably without success.¹

The water they found was undrinkable.

At Marah the waters were bitter.

“Bitter” water (*mārāh* means “bitter” in Hb.) is often clear so that it looks potable but in fact contains large percentages of dissolved mineral salts that render it undrinkable.

The NIV Bible Commentary described the waters of (contemporary name) Ain Hawarah’s waters as “notoriously salty and brackish.”

When Naomi returned from the land of Moab with her daughter-in-law, Ruth, she changed her name for she had lost her husband and two sons.

She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi [pleasant]; call me Mara [*bitter*], for the almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.” (Ruth 1:20).

Bitter experiences in life tend to make us bitter or better.

Israel had spent their lives in bitterness in Egypt.

¹ Stuart, D. K. (2006). *Exodus* (Vol. 2, pp. 365–366). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Moses, the deliverer, had led them out of Egypt, as an antitype of Christ, who leads God's people out of this world into the eternal promised land.

Legitimate question- "What are we to drink?"

And that Moses was God's representative, and so became target for the blame.

"So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"
(vs. 24)

God led them to a place without water, and the waters were undrinkable.

Instead of being patient and trusting God, they grumbled.

– **grumble** – speak in a low discourse, murmur, complain.

It may not have been loud, but it was none-the-less contagious.

Like a virus it spread

Moses' solution was to pray for God's solution

What do we do initially when we meet a difficulty?

Verses inviting and urging us to Pray:

Phil. 4:6-7

"Don't worry about anything but pray about everything..." (LivTrans)

Jer. 33:3 "Call to Me and I will answer and show you great and mighty things which you do not know..."

James 1:5 – Whoever lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives...

Life is short; Death is sure; Sin the cause, Christ the cure.

²⁵Then he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw *it* into the waters, and the waters became sweet.

God's cure for the bitterness of sin was Christ on the cruel cross. Christ was hung on a tree – made a curse for us, to cure our sin.

Nature forms us, Sin deforms us, School informs us,
but only Christ transforms us.

II. Teaching by Testing

There He made for them a statute and regulation,

and there He tested them.

God tests us when He leads us?

The 'testing' referred to is the challenge of giving total obedience to God; all along the way, God is looking for total commitment and consecration. Will his people listen to his voice or not?

Deut. 8:2

“You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.”

James writes, “...the testing of your faith produces endurance and let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect [mature] and complete, lacking in nothing. ...Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him.”

(James 1:3-4, 12).

What is the end of Testing?

Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted (tested) by the devil.

Luke writes,

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil...When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time. And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit... (Luke 4:1-2, 13-14)

The power of the Holy Spirit comes the same way for us.

What does it mean to be tested by God?

Testing is not for our defeat but for our victory and strengthening.

Tests of faith strengthen our faith.

Physical work-outs tear down muscles;
as they rebuild they become stronger.

III. The Result of Testing

There He made for them a statute and regulation,
and there He tested them.

²⁶And He said, “If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer.” **Ex. 16:25b-26**

The tests of the Lord display and develop our trust in Him.

We then are able to trust Him in even greater trials.

“...He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.” (Heb. 12:10b-13).

God’s Restoration:

²⁷Then they came to Elim where there *were* twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped there beside the waters.

After the trial comes a time of refreshing, recharging, and rest.

When Jesus had finished his trials angels came and ministered to Him.

After Marah there was Elim.

Just seven miles south was an oasis at Elim – “paradise resort.”

Three to six hours ahead ...

God’s intention was to train by testing and then treat them, by meeting their need and at the same time growing them in their trust of Him.

An example of the mature believer’s faith is found in Hebrews 11:

“And all of these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.”
(Heb. 11:39-40).

The Lesson: **Trust God to provide for you in His way and time.**