

Faith Series: The Wilderness Experience

(Exodus 15:22-23 NKJV) “So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; ... into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. {23} Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah.”

Life will surely include a trip to the desert. The people of Israel were about to begin a bitter, thirsty wilderness experience.

Point 1.
We all have wilderness experiences.

Every one of God’s children entered the wilderness on the same footing. It was the same sand. They all began the trip with the same strength and provision. They all had the same potential.

- Among them were Moses, Aaron & Miriam, Nadab & Abihu, Achen... Moses, Joshua, Caleb and ten other spies.
- Everyone had choices. Some moved toward bitterness and discouragement, others were swayed to join them. A few moved toward God.
- God is looking for a few that will move toward Him!

(Exodus 15:24-25 NKJV) “And the people complained against Moses, saying, “What shall we drink?” {25} 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. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them. And there He tested them,”

The waters were bitter, poisonous. Some were moved to murmur and complain. Moses moved toward God and a miracle happened.

Point 2.
If you want your miracle, move toward God. He will show you your part and He will perform His!
(He will turn the bitter into sweet.)

The Test

*(Exodus 15:25b-27 NKJV) “... 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*

The Test
Will you conquer the wilderness, or will the wilderness conquer you.

The Wilderness
*The wilderness will try to destroy you through fear.
You will conquer it through faith.
You are more than a conqueror... through faith in Christ.*

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.” {27} Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.”

*(Exodus 16:1-4 NKJV) “And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. {2} Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. {3} And the children of Israel said to them, “Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” {4} Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, **that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.**”*

The test is always the same – You have two options:

1. Will you sin, manifest doubt, unbelief, rebellion, murmuring and lies about the fix you are in. Will you lose your joy?
2. Will you stand on your faith, trusting God, building integrity and displaying diligence to do the right thing?

**The most telling description of any wilderness experience:
It is a faith test!**

Jesus had His wilderness experience.

He had three faith tests!

Test #1 Would He act apart from God to satisfy His own needs? (Or...Would He depend fully on the Father to provide for Him.)

*(Luke 4:1-12 NKJV) “Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, {2} **being tempted for forty days by the devil.** And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. {3} And the devil said to Him, “**If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.**” {4} But Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, ‘**man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.**”*

Jesus’ First Response (Paraphrased for today): “The Bible says, ‘Get your eyes off the natural need and eat the Word with unwavering faith in God!’”

Significant Words

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1. “complained”
2. “said”
 (“lied”)

The Lie

“We sat by pots full of meat and ate bread to the full!”

Test #2 Who would He worship?

{5} Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. {6} And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. {7} “Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.” {8} And Jesus answered and said to him, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.’”

Jesus’ Second Response (Paraphrased for today): “The Bible says, ‘Worship God only.’ So why don’t you just give it up. I know who I worship! I know who I serve.”

Test #3 Would He do something foolish to try to make God the Father move on His behalf?

“{9} Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. {10} “For it is written: ‘He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,’ {11} “and, ‘In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.’” {12} And Jesus answered and said to him, “It has been said, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’”

Jesus response: “The Bible says, ‘It is always foolish to tempt God. Don’t be foolish!’”

Agreeing with anything Satan says is absolute stupidity. Do not be foolish. Every time you hear his miserable, shifty little voice, tell the devil to take a hike – to get behind you – to eat your dust! It will build your faith and give you strength and great joy!

A Different Perspective

A trip into the wilderness can be a dangerous fear-filled experience. However, **if you look at it through the eyes of faith, you will see God is in it** (incredibly welcoming and reassuring as you travel through it). The wilderness is perfectly suited to miracles!

A Natural Perspective on the Wilderness

- The wilderness will not naturally bless you. It will curse you.

- The wilderness is a cursed place. It is a harsh, dry place. It is full of sand, snakes, serpents & scorpions.

A Supernatural Perspective on the Wilderness

(Luke 10:19 NKJV) “Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”

(International Children’s Bible) “Listen! I gave you power to walk on snakes and scorpions. I gave you more power than the Enemy has. Nothing will hurt you.”

The wilderness is the place where God comes down and visits his fire upon all the power of the enemy! The glory of the Lord will visit your wilderness even when you are knee deep in the sand and the snakes are crawling all around you.

- You have dangerous feet. You are authorized to stomp snakes in the sand!
- You have been given more power than anything you will find opposing you in the wilderness. Nothing will hurt you.

Why?

(Luke 10:19 NKJV) “Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”

Point 3.

The wilderness is perfectly suited to miracles.

A Spiritual Law of Cause and Effect

Or → “Because...Therefore!”

(From God’s lips to Yours)

(Psalms 91:13-16 NKJV) “You shall tread upon the lion and the cobra, The young lion and the serpent you shall trample underfoot. {14} Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore I will deliver him; I will set him on high, because he has known My name. {15} He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. {16} With long life I will satisfy him, And show him My salvation.”

In these latter verses of Psalm 91, God is the Speaker. His words, rearranged and paraphrased would read like this:

“Because my sons and daughters have dedicated and directed their love toward Me... and because they have known, acknowledged and called upon my name...

Therefore,

- 1. I will deliver them from their troubles.*
- 2. I will answer their prayers.*
- 3. I will be with them. They will never be alone.*
- 4. I will honor them and give them long life.*
- 5. I will satisfy them with things that they can value through eternity.*
- 6. I will display my salvation to them in whatever form they need it to be in the dangers of the wilderness... and beyond!*

God made his declaration. This should be yours:

(Psalms 92:1-4 NKJV) “It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; {2} To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night, ... {4} For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands.”

- The wilderness will test whether you will display your love for God and your trust in His name when the going gets tough.
- The wilderness is perfectly suited to miracles because it is best place for God to show His glory in response to your display of love for Him and your trust in His name.

(Romans 8:28 NKJV) “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Point 4.

What seems like a wilderness road can be your highway to blessing.

(God is just waiting to show up and direct traffic.)

A Desert Flower

(In God's eyes, you are a desert flower)

The Characteristics of a Desert Flower

1. It is an extremely beautiful creation of God.
2. As it blossoms, its beauty and fragrance change the landscape of the wilderness into a beautiful place.
3. It is hardy, durable, and able to withstand the assault of wind, sun, sand stress, heat and harsh conditions. It is hard to kill. It will not wither and loose its life easily.
4. It brings new life to the desert through its seeds.

God allows us to have wilderness experiences so we can bloom like desert flowers. He is the Original Gardener. He has the best fertilizer in the world. It is the original "Miracle Grow" – sometimes called the anointing. A desert flower is a miracle. You are God's miracle in the making. Whenever you find yourself in the desert, remember that God is making you blossom and bloom into what He wants you to be.

Some of God's best surprises are waiting in the midst of your trials in your desert experiences.

The Path to Your Promise (Bless, Be Blessed and Bloom!)

You will find that what was a desert experience was also the path to your promise. Since we have no option to deny the desert experience, we should not ignore the opportunity. We should bless, be blessed and bloom.

(Isaiah 43:2 NKJV) "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you."

Moses walked through his desert by faith. Joshua took the Promised Land by faith. Caleb conquered his mountain by faith. All three knew the desert, but they also knew the miracles. They were faithful and faith-filled in their paths through the desert.

The Key to Gaining Maximum Benefit from Your Dry Places

Do not wait for the end of your desert experience to praise God. Start where you are. Be like the blooming desert flower whose very life is a faith-song unto God... whose very beauty is a blessing that points others to the majesty and faithfulness of the Most High.

Moses was still in the desert with a couple million rebellious people. The journey was really not finished, only just begun. Yet he began to sing a new faith-song to the Lord. He began to blossom.

Moses said:

(Exodus 15:1-2 NKJV) "Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! {2} The LORD is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him."

(Exodus 15:9-13 NKJV) "The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, My hand shall destroy them.' {10} You blew with Your wind, The sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters. {11} "Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders? {12} You stretched out Your right hand; The earth swallowed them. {13} You in Your mercy have led forth The people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in Your strength To Your holy habitation."

Miriam said:

(Exodus 15:20-21 NKJV) "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. {21} And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!""

Point 5.

**Don't wait for your wilderness experience.
Praise God now!**

*(Hebrews 13:8 NKJV)
"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."*

He still redeems and delivers. He's not dead. He's alive. We have been redeemed from the curse of the Law. Those tablets given in the desert are replaced by what is written on the tablets of your heart.