

DANGER OF DISCONTENT

Exodus 15:22-17:7

As we've considered the life of Moses –we've seen how God promised that He would glorify Himself *through Pharaoh*.

–not by avoiding Pharaoh

–but *through Pharaoh*

I should've observed that God was glorified through Pharaoh *in the desert!*

My prayer that God would send the Pharaohs so that we might learn to trust Him and see Him glorified is fine for people headed off on short term missions.

It didn't dawn on me that on Monday *WE* were headed for the desert.

After a cracked radiator in the middle of the desert on the way to Utah,

And a blow out in the middle of the desert on the way to California,

Helen reminded me of my prayer for God to “send the Pharaohs” that He might be glorified *through them!*

Our misfortunes in the desert were MY fault!

Bible presents a long list of people who trust God when faced with life's adverse circumstances.

Many are listed among the heroes of the faith in Heb. 11.

Their conviction that God is worthy of our trust motivated them to be willing to give up their children, if God asked, & leave their families to go to foreign lands in obedience to God.

Israel, as a nation, never fulfilled requirements to be included in that list.

In spite of abundant evidence of God's care and protection, they were always doubting and complaining when things didn't work out the way *they* thought they should.

They continually demonstrate unbelief in spite of all God has done for them.

Israel's experience in the desert is recorded for OUR benefit!

1 Cor 10:1-6

I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. ²They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. ³They all ate the same spiritual food ⁴and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. ⁶Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

11-13 *These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. ¹²So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! ¹³No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”*

Liberation from Egypt 1-13:16

Journey to Sinai 13:17-18:27

After describing God's act of redemption, the author describes their journey from Egypt to Sinai.

The trip can be divided in 3 logical phases:

To the sea 13:17-14:14

Through the sea 14:15-15:21

To Sinai 15:22-18:27

After the deliverance of God's people at the sea, . . .

After God glorifies Himself through Pharoah, "Then" & only *then*, they're ready for the desert.

The next step is a wilderness experience designed by God--*just for them*--to teach them to trust Him.

GOD took them into the desert--they followed *His* cloud and *His* pillar of fire into the wilderness!

After the glory of victory, God often leads us into the desert to teach us that we can trust Him in the wilderness.

But why are they there?

Couldn't God have taken them straight to the promised land?

Of course! God can do anything!

But they weren't ready for the promised land until they spent some time learning to trust God in the desert.

God puts us in the wilderness to test us--to stretch our spiritual muscles--to develop us into men and women of faith.

Deut. 8:2 *"Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands."*

Spiritual roots grow deep only when the winds around us are strong!

In 1st 2 stages, Israel experienced God's direction and protection.

Although Israel should have been convinced to trust Yahweh and to submit to His rule forever, the effect was shortlived.

As they continued into 3rd phase, **from the sea to Sinai, new tests of their faith caused new doubts** and new complaints.

In spite of repeated evidence of God's care and protection, Israel still didn't trust Him.

They still complained in the midst of each test.

THREE TESTS OF THEIR FAITH:

1st test: Bitter water sweetened 15:22-27

After crossing the sea, 1st problem faced had to do with lack of water.

They traveled for 3 days in the desert, without water.

In Arizona I didn't have to explain the danger of being stranded on the desert without water.

Our trip--waiting for an hour on the desert without water.

Concern about illegal immigrants dying on the desert.

A nation--2 ½ million people--without water for 3 days.

They were tired, lacking adequate food and water.

We can only imagine the extent of their desperation.

They came to Marah; found water--but it was bitter--*they couldn't drink it!*

Their disappointment with God, when **He didn't do what they expected**

Him to do, led to complaint: *"The people grumbled."*

Instead of trusting God, they began to complain against Moses **15:24**

So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"

"Our needs aren't being met!"

God used Moses to provide a solution.

Though they didn't deserve it, God acted in mercy--it's *grace!*

God gave him wood that he threw into the water. It became sweet.

This wasn't a special kind of wood with magic, curative powers.

The cure was in God, the means was trusting and obeying God, in spite of the obstacle.

Lesson: Listen to the Lord; do what He says, He will protect you. **15:26** *"If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."*

Finally God provides a place of rest and refreshment at Elim, where there were 12 springs and palm trees--with *water!*

2nd test: Food shortage solved 16

Then--after they've spent time camped beside the refreshing springs of Elim, it's time to go back out on the desert again!

It's time for the second test--after seeing God's faithfulness, they step back into the desert and start complaining again.

A few days later there was a food shortage. **16:1** *The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt.*

God used these tests to teach them to trust Him.

Instead of trusting God, they complain against Moses again.

They doubt and grumble. **16:2-3** *In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. ³The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the LORD's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."*

They blame Moses for all their troubles.

They long for *the "good old days!"* They look back at how it used to be.

It won't be long until the complaints follow.

You forget the painful times of the past--[Israel forgot the affliction in Egypt]

You see those times through "rose-colored glasses"

You look for someone to blame.

You don't trust God for the present; => you miss the blessings in the desert!

Too often we miss present blessings because we're fantasizing about some golden era of the past, while God wants to show us His faithfulness in the present.

Water provided on the desert

God wants to bring us to the place where we trust Him totally in the desert! "Lord, if you want to take my life in the desert, here it is!

Take it! I'm yours!' Job: *"Though He slay me, yet I'll trust Him!"*

Moses denies responsibility for what has happened to them.

Moses didn't bring them out of Egypt.

GOD brought them out of Egypt.

"Who are WE, that you grumble against US? We're just people like you!

This wasn't OUR idea! WE didn't lead you into the wilderness!

That was GOD's decision!"

He's not responsible for supplying their food.

Only God can do that!

The Lord will glorify Himself by providing all they need.

God promised to provide bread from heaven, but they would have to demonstrate their dependence on God by gathering it according to His instructions **16:4** *Then the LORD said to*

Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

The sabbath rule reminds them that this special diet comes from God. When they go out in the morning, after the dew disappears, they find flakes like frost on the ground.

They ask each other: *"What is it?"* That's the word *"Manna"*

Moses explains that it's the bread God gave them, & and would continue to give them for the next 40 yrs.

Later we find them grumbling about that too!

That's the way the flesh responds to God's provision.

God decides what's good for us. He gives us an abundance of it; we decide we don't like what He's chosen to give us!

6 days they could only gather enough for 1 day--some tried to hoard more and it became wormy. [16:14-21]

The 7th day they were told to gather double for the Sabbath. Others tested this rule too and suffered the natural consequences of their disobedience. [16:22-30]

Thus every week they were reminded again that God was providing their daily needs.

They must trust Him and obey His instructions.

God provided for them in order to reveal His glory, to confirm His presence with them, and to establish a basis for their faith **16:6-12** So Moses

and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, ⁷and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?"

⁸Moses also said, "You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD."

⁹Then Moses told Aaron, "Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.' "

¹⁰While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud. ¹¹The LORD said to Moses, ¹²"I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, 'At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.' "

In addition to bread, God provided quail meat for the first day 16:11-13
God provided in abundance all they needed.

For 40 years they had a continual reminder . . . ,

. . . of God's care

. . . of the importance of trusting God and obeying Him.

3rd test: Water shortage supplied 17:1-7

The provision of the manna continued

Again there was a water shortage **17:1** *The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.*

By now they should be able to look back and see how God has provided what they need in the past, so they will trust Him for the future.

Instead, they again doubt and complain against Moses **17:2-3** *So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?" ³But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?"*

Again they blame Moses for their troubles.

Moses tries to focus their attention on God.

"Why do you quarrel with ME?"

"Why do you put the LORD to the test?"

He tries to help them see that their discontent isn't with *HIM*.

They are fighting **GOD!**

God is the One who brought them to this point; *NOT Moses!*

How often do we point the finger of blame at earthly leaders, when God is the one

who has led us into the desert!

We blame our husband or wife for our troubles.

We blame the boss, the company we work for, our teachers.

We blame the pastor or elder board

When God brought us out here to teach us to trust HIM and watch HIM work!

Moses warns them repeatedly about testing the Lord, but they refuse to listen.

Moses throws up his hands!

“What am I to do with these people?!”

In spite of their unbelief, God once again graciously responds in abundance: He provides water

17:4-7 *Then Moses cried out to the LORD, “What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.”⁵The LORD answered Moses, “Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?”*

Again God uses Moses to give them water.

He struck the rock in Horeb and there was abundance of water

In order to remind them of what happened here, Moses named the place Massah and Meribah (“testing and quarreling”), to remind them of their argument with God there.

It was like “Remember the Alamo!”

Multiple tests follow as Israel continues across the desert.

TRUSTING GOD IN THE DESERT

WILL PRODUCE CONTENTMENT INSTEAD OF COMPLAINING!

What was Israel’s problem which caused them to protest and complain constantly?

Wasn’t there sufficient evidence of God’s power to cause them to trust Him?

HOW DO WE RESPOND WHEN WE FACE TESTS OF OUR FAITH TODAY?

Do you sometimes feel like God has brought you out to the desert to die?

Have you looked back to the “good old days” & found yourself grumbling about life?

Are you blaming somebody else because you’re going through a dry spell on the desert?

Each of us faces different tests in the desert –for some it’s a pack of “wild indians” at home—for others it’s the lack of children that causes pain.

–for some it’s an unbearable spouse--for others there is no spouse, or the spouse has left us.

–for some it’s an impossible situation at work--for others it’s the lack of work--no job

–for others it’s financial pressure, or concerns about health, or family.

God wants to use our time of affliction to teach us to trust Him!

He is faithful! We can trust Him!

Is our confidence in the Lord?

Are we... ... satisfied? ... grateful?

How often, when faced with a huge need, have we trusted God totally to intervene on our behalf.

Is it more common for us to complain and struggle to see how we can get ourselves out of the mess we're in?

God is the same today

God's power is just as great

God's faithfulness is the same

God still waits for His people to trust Him and submit ourselves to Him

God still waits for us to be grateful for what He's doing in our life.

God wants us to learn from our experience in the desert.

He wants to change our appetite, change our habits, change our style.

He wants to change our life--teach us to trust Him and grateful to Him for what He plans to do in our life.