

THE WAY THROUGH THE WILDERNESS

Exodus 13:17-18

INTRODUCTION:

We have discussed the matter of a crucified life - the passover. And the crossing of the Red Sea, which was the filling of the spirit. Now today, we take the wilderness journey - which has to do with the testing time and then preparing us to move on to the promise land. Israel is camped here on the Red Sea, at the center of the camp are the camels. They are packed with water bags, and saddle bags. The tents have been folded up. The signal on the ram's horn pierces the sky. The little groups begin to form in a vast caravan and they move away, into the wilderness. The shuffle of feet, on the wild place of stoney hard ragged rocks.

The question, why the wilderness. Had not God promised the land of Canaan. Now they were headed due South almost - the (short route) would have been through Philistine land. And the promised land would have been near. But in our Scripture text, it says, God led them through the way of the wilderness. Think about it. The promise land was near. But God brought them through the wilderness. Why through the detour. Weren't they ready. They were not ready for warfare. And the enemy occupied the promised land. And there would be battles.

Your spiritual journey takes place in the same way. You are not prepared and Satan mounts his most devastating attack against those who are going to the promised land.

This is true in the church. You have a revival - the Devil gets right in the middle of all that is going on. He sows friction, mis-understanding, difficulties, divisions. And God has taught us that there is spiritual warfare - that the Devil will come night after night. And unless we are prepared, we don't know how to handle it.

Therefore, between Egypt and Canaan - there was always a wilderness. God's training ground, God's testing land - and for 40 years God is going to prove and test these people whether or not they will keep His commandments.

You will never be ready for the fullness of God's promises until you are prepared for the conflict with the Devil. The most important thing we need today is for our people to know how to meet Satan. The greatest thing against you is to have blindness to his existence. Satan is real. He opposes every spiritual life. 2 Cor. 2:11.

Satan uses (oppression) - this is one of his methods in the life of dedicated Christians. He pounces on you - be careful - watch out - for the attacks from Satan, your great enemy. He goes about like a roaring lion - looking for some victim to tear apart. Stand firm when he attacks. Trust the Lord and remember that other Christians all around the world are going through these sufferings. 2 Peter 5:8-9.

Satan attacked (Job). Storms raged, thieves moved in, lightning fell, sickness befell him. Think of it. Satan has power to send all of this. Job 1:13-2:7. Satan attacks from without. He sends calamity. He sends affliction. He drives a man to drink. He plunges a person into despair.

Satan uses (suggestions). The most common weapon Satan employs however, is the power of suggestion. This attack is within. He invades your mind. This was his method in the Garden of (Eden). Listen to his suggestion to Eve - hath God said ye shall not surely die. God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, that your eyes shall be open and ye shall be of God. Gen. 3:1-5.

If Satan (whispers) in your ear, then he leads men to speak hastily. To think incorrectly. To doubt needlessly. To desire lust. To grasp greedily. To covet.

He accuses you. His standard remark is, don't you know your rights. Don't let them treat you like that. Go ahead, and do it. Nobody will know about it. Just try it once - go ahead. And Satan triggers these thoughts.

Although Satan can do these horrible things, that is not to say that he can do everything. He can do nothing except what God allows him. And sometimes God intercedes - Romans 8:28. And God makes out things for his purpose. And God plays a part in every testing experience. There hath no temptation or testing taken you but such as is common to man. But God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted or tried above that you are able to bear it. I Cor. 10:13.

God withholds his protection. And Satan will seek to oppress. It is only when God withholds his protection that this happens. For you remembered that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Ex. 14:8. And yet, he delivered them.

God withholds his provisions. Here we have the children of Israel, for example. They have just escaped. They are out in the wilderness. They ran out of food and God temporarily withheld any provision. And this was a test of their faith. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness - would to go we had died in the land of the Lord - in the land of Egypt. When we sat by the flesh pots and did eat bread to the full - for yet have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger. Ex. 16:2-3.

They were tempted. Countless other times, when I have heard people say - and they have complained -- God seems a hundred miles away. And they are left and they are discouraged. And sometimes they are fearful. And they are in a pit of despair. Now here is God. And we hear Satan - comes in. But his is man's will. And Satan gets his hook on you and you bow your will to him. You will play a part in every testing process. To prove you to know what is in your heart. Deut. 8:2. It is very much like tire.

It goes flat - now the sight of it is a horror. Well, you think the whole thing must be replaced. And then you are greatly relieved when somebody takes the wheel off, takes the inner tube out, and looks at it and inflates it - and listens for the weak spot and then marks it. And then it is deflated, and there is a patch put on it. And it is then placed back on the wheel again. Now in the same manner, God tests the very inner tube of your life. There are times he will turn you over to Satan, in a way. And he will allow Satan to pressure you and find out the weak points. And there will be testing.

Between Egypt and Canaan there is always a wilderness. Merely because you have come out of Egypt does not qualify you for the promise land. You must die to yourself. You must be filled of the spirit. And you must be prepared through the wilderness. Now this is great news for us. That we can go through the most severe, and difficult times of life in the company of the committee. But taking you through the wilderness - let God use each crisis to humble you. And to reveal the weak spots in your life.

Once you recognize a weakness appropriate Christ's strength for that area of your life. God will patch it up and send you on your way, toward the promise land.

Now the snare that Satan would catch you in would hamper you in these weak spots. He will always seek to capture you. And your first wilderness experience will be most severe.

I think that the besetting sins are the things that trouble us.

Now the way through as you see the desert, the pebbles, and the hard places. The sheep are moving and the camels. And here is the parched desert and trees. And in a sense you have lost the passing of time. They are aware of their hunger. They are searching for a resting place. To be sure, the wilderness is no place to live.

It has its purpose but it is unfit for human habitation. You might travel through it. It has hunger. It is a testing ground. And it will test your obedience. Now the children of Israel took a three day journey beyond the Red Sea, and God told them what he required. If thou would diligently harken to the voice of the Lord, thy God, and will do that which is right in his sight - and will give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes. Exo. 15:26. They were to obey.

On this same journey, the second month following - their escape from Egypt. God demanded their obedience again. That I may prove them whether they will walk in my law or not. Ex. 16:4.

During the third month of their journey, God asked them to obey again. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice, indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure, unto me above all people. Ex. 19:5.

Remember Israel had been obedient enough to be delivered from Egypt.

But this generation of Israelites never did enter the promised land because they never fully obeyed. Numbers 14:22-24.

They obeyed God to a point. Now the wilderness uncovered certain weak spots, in their lives. And the places where the devil snared them -- first they murmured and complained of hardships. Ex. 16:2-3.

Second, they lusted. Numbers 11:4.

Third, they turned again to idols. Ex. 32:1.

They were besetting oft re-occurring sins, which that generation never conquered.

This is the sin that weakens your faith. Deadens your conscience and shatters your testimony. And the Bible promises triumph. Think of it. There is no habit which cannot be broken. There is no temptation which you cannot exist. There is no weakness which you cannot over come. But you must know that our old man is crucified with him. Now think about this with me.

Christ's death paid for your sins. He died your death.

Paul assures our old nature was included - V. 6. Christ died for you and the self-centered aspect of your inner nature - the flesh, the old man, was nailed to the cross. God wants you to know this. Therefore, since Jesus died your death, you are potentially dead. The truth of baptism symbolizes this. If you die to the old man, and arise to walk in newness of life. V. 2-5.

Someone might ask, how much triumph can one have. You can be set completely free of every sin that snares you. He that is dead is free from sin. Death means that you are going to be unresponsive. You are going to be like a corpse. You are not going to be stimulated by sin. How do you become obedient to each command. I think here is a formula in the Bible.

First, V. 13 it suggests that there is a yieldedness. You being dead to sin from a position of yieldedness. Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God. You make Christ Lord by yielding all you are. Furthermore, you are to yield your members as instruments. Your members refer to your feet, your eyes, your hands, your lips, your mind, your emotions. An instrument is a tool, which is used for a specific purpose. The verse refers to specifics.

Then the very impulse of his bidding, your hands will reach out - your feet will go. Your lips will speak. When you say, I yield, in your daily routine - there will be

instant obedience to specific tasks. It is what the Lord impresses you to do. Having surrendered all rights to your life - if he impresses him to witness to someone - your lips will speak. If you feel led to go aside to pray, your knees will bend. If you are impressed to give an extra effort to your labor, your hands will be busy. The instrument is the tool which is used by another. So you yield your life and obey, and do it for God.

This means you will walk in the spirit.

By reckoning yourself dead - V. 11. Now reckon is a word of faith - it means to rely upon. It means to bow your head in prayer. It means to name it, and chose it, to be dead too.

Through the spirit, it is through the spirit that you put these sins to death. You face it, your old nature loves that besetting sin. You enjoy it too much to quit. But the holy spirit will put you to death, when you are willing. And after having prayed Lord I reckon myself dead to this sin, you must add these sins, and I trust the Holy Spirit to carry out the execution.

Now V. 17 if you do this (from the heart), God be thanked that you were the servants of sin but you have obeyed from the heart. So from the heart, and from the mind - you have come to dependence upon God. That you are not going to sit back and let God do it. But you are going to be so released to God, that he begins to work through you. Your life will then multiply and be effective. And you can draw from God's power and God's interest. You seek to find a way and you enter into a deeper and a spiritual way. You take up his yoke and you will win the victory over your sins. So, this obedience is with yieldedness. It is by reckoning through the spirit and from the heart that you are able to do it. Now I want to give you an illustration of what we have been discussing. A member of Fairview Baptist Church, Fairview Heights, Illinois whose name was Lee Maurer. He was a rough railroad engineer. He had a little

room and taught a Sunday School Class of boys on Sunday morning. Then he would skip the worship service and walk on home. He would not stay to hear the sermon. Quite often the preacher was in his study preparing his heart to preach. He would kneel in prayer and arise to preach with all his heart. But it was thrown out of tune because he would glance out of his study window and see Lee walking home again - not staying for the preaching service. One Sunday morning Lee accidentally over heard a conversation between two boys. And one of ^{his own} their friends. (I) don't know why we should ^{NOT} smoke - the friend told these boys. Your Dad does, and he teaches a Sunday School class down at the church. The statement hit Lee with tremendous force. He felt the way - the only way he would ever keep his sons in school - is to keep them playing football. But our coach had a strict rule -- no body could smoke and play football. Lee had counted on the church to keep his boys clean. While his own influence counteracted that.

Later that same day, Lee was still worrying a little about the effect his smoking would have upon his boys. When the deeper thought struck him, yes, and (what reflection) will it cast upon my Lord. In that instant, Lee Maurer became convicted that what he was doing was wrong. But he had tried to quit smoking no less than a dozen times without success. He was a chain smoker - and that chain kept him down. The next Sunday morning, Lee remained for preaching service and in the providence of God, the pastor preached on Romans 6. He kept repeating the promise that God made. There is no sin which can have dominion over a Christian. After the service, Lee asked to speak privately with the pastor. And he says, I knew he really had a problem - if he stayed for preaching service and then if he wanted immediately to have a conference. He related the story about smoking. And shared his convictions. Then he asked, does Romans 6 teach that God will give me the power to quit smoking. Well, no, he won't do it for you - the Preacher said. What do you mean, he said. You just spent 30 minutes proclaiming this victory is for everyone. No, not for you, Lee. The preacher insisted. Don't you recall - I said you had to seek this victory from a position of yieldedness. Then he said, I went on to remark that surely his life wasn't yielded. The only time he showed up at church was for Sunday School. And he wouldn't stay for the worship services. And then he elaborated

a few other things that he knew that neighbors had said about Lee. The pastor said he never would forget, Lee pounded his fist down on the desk and said - all right, I yield. The preacher said I knew he meant it. He took his cigarettes out of his pocket and tossed them over on the desk. And he said we knelt down together to pray and the man prayed something like this Lord, I don't fully understand all of this but I know that smoking is wrong for my life. I have always believed the Bible - there fore I reckon myself dead to this sin, just because the Bible tells me. I am ready to die regardless of the pain. I reckon, I reckon, it is done. Oh yes, and Lord, I trust the Holy Spirit to carry out the execution - in Jesus name I pray, Amen.

After the prayer, they arose. He encouraged Lee to pray the same prayer each morning and assured him that he would be doing the same. On Monday night Lee gave him a telephone call to inform him that he had made an entire day without smoking a single cigarette. I didn't smoke a one. He said, but I chewed 12 packages of chewing gum.

Tuesday night, he called the pastor again to report on a successful day.

Wednesday night, he phoned him again with the same victorious report. That day his fireman had been sick - and the substitute fireman was a compulsive smoker. He said, smoke was everywhere. There was more smoke inside our engine than there was coming out of the smoke stack. There were times the smell of cigarette smoke made me think I would die without one. But there was always a switching station that diverted my attention. A Scripture verse, or I would be sharing my verse with a fellow and ashamed to ask for one. God saw me through and I didn't sneak one puff. So went the days - and by Sunday, Lee was thrilled out of his mind. You see, this was the first sweet days of his conversion.

For the first time since that conversion, Lee had become aware that God was real. He had actually experienced God's power and he never got over it. When a man touches fire - he can never again doubt that fire burns. And Lee knew that God was alive in

him and he soon became a leader in the church. And one day, later on he said in about two months he heard a knock at his study door - and it was Lee. He was there with a huge Bible under his arm. He said, well preacher, I have decided to take a night shift at work, so I can go visiting this afternoon. He would go and tell people about Jesus and how God can meet their deepest needs. The preacher said, he didn't want to attempt to describe Lee's appearance - but he said he almost fainted at the suggestion - because he wore the wildest colors. And he had no time for a hair cut. Now with that big Bible under his arm, people could spot him two blocks away. He looked like Elijah. And so they went off. He would show up promptly every day and he said he became a great soul winner. As well as a great aid to the pastor. Then one day, he arrived to say preacher - I don't need you anymore. The preacher said that was something. No, I don't need you anymore. What, I've watched God use your approach, it is simple. Now, I will get someone to go with me - and you get someone to go with you. And we can reach twice as many folks. He said, that year we baptized 85 new adult members into our church. Adults who were led to Christ by Lee. About a year ago, he said, that he telephoned Lee long distance and asked him how things were going. He said, preacher, this is our best year (Lil and I) were used of God to lead 105 persons to Christ, in the year just ended and saw them unite with the church. All this because one man discovered God was real and alive with power to those who believed. Lee simply claimed God's promise to rid him of besetting sins. And he obeyed it in a Scripture way. He died to that sin. With his yieldedness - you remember he slammed his fist upon the desk and said - "I yield." By reckoning, he prayed, that he had always believed the Bible - and therefore, he reckoned himself dead to sin. Through the Spirit, he said, I trust the Holy Spirit to follow out the execution. This was from his heart. And if you will recall the steps in his conviction - that smoking was wrong because of the influence upon his boys. Soon it moved on higher. And he felt it was wrong because of the love for his Lord. And he reckoned himself dead by simply praying. Even though he chewed 12 packs of gum - there was a great joy, in that man's life.

How do you get released from bondage. You must come to the place where you are

willing to write out your own obituary. You must survey your own life, you must seek out your own besetting sins, and you must die to those sins. Now if you are going to gain victory and get through this wilderness.

Let me close with a story. One of the unique battles of the First World War took place on a bloody hill in France. There were many small hills across the battle front. Hill 60 was a vital hill at the center of the battle line. When the Germans held Hill 60, they dominated the front...and when the Allies held it, they dominated the front. The Hill changed hands many times. The Allies determined to undermine the Hill and blow it up - they dug a tunnel right on through to the heart of it. They were loading it with high explosives - they heard the Germans coming into the Hill - from the other side, to do the same thing. But the Allies were there first. And they loaded the Hill with dynamite - they put on an offense, and then when the counter-attack came and the battle raged, Hill 60 was abandon and the Germans occupied it. In full strength, they began to fortify it. Then the Allies stood back and when the moment was right, they pushed a button. And the Hill was destroyed. As the Hill blew - the Allied armies crossed into no man's land. And the whole battle moved forward right down the line. They swept forward for three miles.

Now somewhere in your life there is Hill 60 - in the center of the battleline. It is the point in the battleline when you are constantly defeated. Perhaps only you and God knows about it. And you put your finger on Hill 60 in your life - and place another one on Romans 6, and then say - here it is Lord, destroy it. Put it to death. We have learned with yieldedness by faith through the spirit, that in our hearts we can have real victory.

What is it that you think about when you are alone. What is it that occupies your thoughts when your mind goes free. What do you miss most of all. What makes you most excited and happy when you possess it. What fault irritates you most.

You remember some of the old church fathers set up sin in seven different ways.

They said, there was first - pride. Which when a man had his feelings easily hurt or resented correction.

Second, there was avarice. Covetness.

Third, envy. Slander, gossip, lust

Fourth, lust, adultery, and other sins of the flesh.

Fifth, anger, and ill temper.

Six, gluttony.

Seventh, sloth - laziness.

If you are going to get through (this wilderness) These besetting sins, or oft repeated sins - they are snares of the Devil. When Satan can entice you to sin - he will. Mostly they are Hill 60's - there are seven areas that are hard to defeat. But if you will follow God's plan and zero in on these sins. ~~List~~ those that you intend to seek victory over--make application to the cross of Calvary. And become dead, and pray with yieldedness. And commit myself to act as you direct, Lord. Independence upon the Holy Spirit throughout this day. I will do as you lead - one impulse at a time. You do that today.

Would you today by reckoning say, now Lord, I reckon myself dead to the sin and then name it. And I believe and I will become responsive to thy will. Through the Spirit, I am asking you to carry out the execution.

Perhaps God has spoken to your ^{Heart} ~~head~~ in A Special way - Reakige Heart Empty -

Restless
You want God do something in your life that you have never been able to do for yourself -
Right now you can make your commitment to Christ while the spirit of Christ is speaking to you -
If that is your desire, I am going to ask you to come to the front of the church & by so
doing say, Today I want my life changed