

GETTING A MIRACLE IN THE WILDERNESS

Exodus 16:11-15

As we continue our journey through the wilderness as we discussed on the last Lord's Day - that it was a place of testing. Today we want to center on the idea of how to believe God for a miracle in the wilderness, and how to get through.

We have a scene before us of a caravan of Israel coming out of the wilderness. Behind we see the thorn trees, the dust, and the desert. And they are approaching Kadeshbarnea - at the southern edge of the promise land. The small children are gathered along the roadside. Some are playing with their sling-shots. The women are working over their fires making soap and food, and meals, and men are working out seeking to gather food. You are finally at a crossroads in your journey. Here is Canaan - the door to the South. Now you are (forced to decide) whether you will enter or not.

This is the position of every person here today. You are being forced to decide whether you want to enter Canaan or remain in the wilderness. In a little while Joshua steps forth - presents God's challenge. We are now here on the border of the promise land. The Lord God hath given us this land - go and possess it, as he told us too. Don't be afraid. Don't even doubt. Deut. 1:21.

Suddenly, you are actually faced with a decision - will you base it upon faith or will you let it go by.

A man and his wife went into a shop on the island of Cyprus. His wife had been searching for some gifts. And there was a display of jewelry that caught her attention. Everything in the jewelry case was modestly priced. And the man's wife was shocked when she picked up one of the smaller pieces - to be told that it would cost about \$40.00.

But when she questioned the shop keeper - the worth of the little item - it became evident as she lifted a 'small latch' to reveal that the jewel of real value was within that stone.

Now when you lift the latch of (God's finest saints) and the Christians that you have known, you will always find one precious quality. And it will surpass all others in value. It will be faith.

A (man of God) is always a man of faith. All the promises of God are appropriated by faith. Heb. 6:12.

The question today is (what) are you believing God to do. You are going through the wilderness like the children of Israel. There was one reason why the children of Israel failed to enter the promise land - at that particular point. It was unbelief. Their faith was too small. Now this is a commentary of the Old Testament experience. Also, of yours today. The 3rd chapter of Hebs. 8:19 - would do well for me to read because it talks about unbelief. "Harden not your hearts as in the provocation of the day of temptation in the wilderness. When your father tempted me, proved me, and saw my words 40 years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said they do always error in their heart. Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. But with whom was he grieved 40 years - and to whom swore he that they would not enter into his rest. But to them that believed not. So we see, they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Israel lacked the faith to obey. Israel measured the possibility of conquering Canaan in terms of what they could do. This was apart from God.

Obedience comes by faith. By faith, Abraham when he was tried offered up Isaac. Heb. 11:17. He passed his test by faith.

In a profound sense, the wilderness is not only for testing as we discovered last Lord's Day, but it is for trusting. God tested Israel's faith to obey. In Heb. 3 - Israel lacked faith. Their sin was not non-belief, the absence of faith - but it was unbelief, insufficient faith. They did not put their whole heart into it. It is with the heart that a man errors. And it is with his heart that he sins. And commits unbelief. In the book of Esther it says that Haman thought in his heart - it was there that we discover that everything was set in motion.

So your faith means that it involves your mind, your emotions, your will - the inner tube of your life. All is involved. I think your faith is tested in at least these three ways. Now everything that you believe God for - what do you most want to believe God for, even this morning. Whatever it is - fix it in your mind.

I. WHAT IS YOUR FAITH BASED ON / *mind -*

Now this has to do with your mental test. There is this part of your faith. Is it intelligent that you just believe God for anything and everything. Or is it, on an intelligence basis. It must be on something that God has promised in his Scripture. God punished the Israelites because they did not enter Canaan, at that point. They were without excuse. Ex. 6:8.

However, I believe that God knew that the children of Israel were having a difficult time believing his promise and I think that he tried to strengthen their faith, by giving them some other promises.

Let me illustrate -- the promise concerning diseases Ex. 15:25-26. He proved them and said - if thou would diligently harken unto the voice of the Lord - I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians.

He tested them concerning food. ^{//} Then said the Lord unto Moses behold I will rain bread from Heaven for you. That I may prove them. ^{//} Ex. 16:4.

Now had the children of Israel responded to these with their faith and believed God for the promise land - I think faith develops that way. All Christians are given an amount of precious faith. 2 Peter 1:1. And as we exercise it, it is like yeast, it grows, it develops, and we grow with it. It is faith in God's Word that causes us to grow. So what is it based on. What is your faith based on. Now faith is not something that is blind.

Let me tell you the story of an old Arab. He dismounted from his camel late one evening at the close of a day. He took a lamp and his little nap sack and walked over to sit in the sand. He lite his lamp, unfolded his nap sack, before him were three dates. Now this was the substance of his (evening meal). He picked up the first date and held it over the lamp or under the lamp and opened it. To find a worm in it. He threw it over his shoulder out into the darkness. And reached for the second date. He held it under the lamp and opened it. To his dismay, it also had a worm in it. So he threw it back over his shoulder also into the darkness. He looked down at the last one for awhile, then he leaned out and blew out his lamp, and picked up the date and ate it.

That is blind faith. But it is somewhat characteristic of many Christians and their faith today. Faith is based on the light of God's Word. On his promises. Before we exercise faith, we must ask ourselves - is what I am believing God for in keeping with his word. Do I have an intelligent faith - is it Scriptural.

In Joshua it is written this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth but thou shall meditate therein day and night. That that mayest observe to do all that is written therein for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous.



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II. WHY DO YOU WANT IT

Emotions

This is another test of your faith, as you think of the miracle in the wilderness. Now we have said that it ought to be based on intelligence - our mental. And now our emotional part comes into play. The thing that we are believing. This is an element in man's faith. And faith should be motivated by love. Gal. 5:6. The highest object of your love should be the Lord.

Why do you want this? Do you want it for God's sake or for the sake of those God loves. Or do you want it just for yourself?

Now, one reason God tries our faith, and tests us in the wilderness is to discover whether or not he can trust us. God wants us to trust him for his sake. Not just for our sakes. Love places others first, yourself second.

Moses as he lifted the prophet's rod over the Red Sea, Ex. 14:16 - the Israelites passed over on dry ground. While the waters reconverged upon the enemies. But the motive of Moses was not just to save himself. He had a higher motive - and it was this. Ex. 14:18.

"And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots and upon his horsemen. Moses did it for the glory of God."

Because before you act in faith, examine really your emotions. Do I want this for my good or to bring God glory. Now God demands that we love him enough that we will trust him for your good and for his glory.

The Israelites viewed their trials in the wilderness as threats - rather than opportunities. They were 45 days out into the wilderness - they found themselves without food. The test was on - but they viewed it with alarm. Ex. 16:3. "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt. When we did eat bread to the full; ye have brought us forth into the wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

This was certainly not the response of love. They considered it a threat - they lacked the love to trust him and of course they complained against him.

Let me repeat - do you want it for his glory or just for yourself. Paul learned to take pleasure in infirmities. In reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake. 2 Cor. 12:10.

Peter taught that our faith would be tried for God's glory. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the firey trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you. But rejoice that when his glory shall be revealed. I Peter 4:12

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Now whatever you believe God for - want it and desire it for him. Your greatest good is to bring him glory.

The great men of God of the past have accomplished things by faith - but they acted to the glory of God.

Look at this experience of the Philistines encamped on one mountain - the Israelites on the other. A valley between them - and the great giant Goliath came down into the valley cursing God. Challenging the men of Israel to combat. 40 days he challenged them. The giant stocked in the valley twice each day - defying Israel and their God. Finally David arrived - he responded. "Who is this uncircumcized Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God. I Sam. 17:26. Now this is a classic showdown with great drama. Young David came down the mountain into the valley, he had faith that five little stones and a sling-shot were more than a match for the giant armed with a sword, sphere and shield. He believed that the Lord would deliver thee into mine hands - but he was moved by a proper desire. As he came down that mountainside. I Sam. 17:46. That all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel - his desire was for the glory of God.

Think about Elijah on the mountain with Baal at Mt. Carmel. A demonstration of faith - he called down fire from Heaven. Let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel - that this people might know that thou art the Lord God! I Kings 18:36.

Now, when you think about getting a miracle in the wilderness where you live, you must want to trust him. Never murmur, grumble, gripe, complain, - this is so much like the life of so many Christians today. Man's system since the fall, has been contrary to God. Man has a system to build a tower to reach Heaven. God's system is to bring Heaven down to man. But man's system is to build on what man can do. And it is to try, to try, to try. But now God says trust, trust, trust! And we must see until we come to the place - the invisible - then we are able to do the impossible.

Think about Jehoshaphat - 2 Chron. 20 - there was an invading army - a size that looking at it from the standpoint of flesh, it was out of question. This was the first decision. He chose to get his eyes upon the invisible. He proclaimed to fast. He declared himself in prayer. The means of opening the view to the invisible. Lord, we have no power against this great company that is coming against us. Neither, know we what to do but our eyes are on you. V. 12. Now have you ever thought of what might happen to that king had he kept his eyes on the problem. No, he looked to the resources that were not visible and he turned his eyes to the problem solver. In faith, his emotions were moved. That his faith was for the glory of God. It is a matter of faith, that demands no evidence. We are no where employed to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. But we are to be filled. There must be a balance in your life. And I think we ought to note - right at this point, that if in this wilderness we are going to have miracles, we are going to believe God for a miracle, we think back to those early disciples. They were not called baptizers. They were not called charasmatics - not called penecostals, not called full gospel folks, not even called children of God. Not glussalalists - but they were called Christians. Now, they were known for baptizing - they were known for speaking in other languages. They were known for Pentecost. But

when you and I, earn the right by our faith to wear the name that we already claim - Christian, there will be miracles taking place in our midst.

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III. HOW DO YOU EXPRESS IT

Will

If we are in the wilderness, and we want to be involved in believing, how do we have faith and express it as these early Christians who had genuine faith. There is always something that you are to do in order to express faith. Now God led the Israelites through the wilderness to test their will. You have a will, to know what was in their hearts - whether they would keep the commandments. Would they obey. Would their faith fulfill their action. Before you believe God for anything, ask yourself this question - how do you express it. There is always something to do in an expression of faith.

Let us look for a moment at Heb. 11. We call it the roll call of faith. It is a list of great people who had faith. You will notice how they express their faith.

By faith Abel offered a sacrifice - V. 4. By faith Noah prepared an Ark. V. 7

By faith Sarah delivered a child - V. 11.

By faith Abraham offered up Isaac - V. 17.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau - V. 20.

By faith Jacob blessed both sons of Jacob - V. 21.

By faith Joseph gave commandments - V. 22.

By faith Moses kept the passover - V. 28.

By faith the Israelites encompassed Jericho - V. 30.

By faith Rahab received the spies - V. 31.

In every case, faith was expressed by some act of the will. In the Bible, when you see faith - you must want to believe. You must give your mind or mental assent - and you must exercise your will. You take an action to display your faith.

The ten lepers came to Jesus and wanted to be healed. They believed in their minds and hearts that is why they called out. But healing did not come until they took an action to demonstrate their faith. God told them to go to a priest. And they would be healed. The Bible says, as they went, they were cleansed. Luke 17:14. Healing came at the point of their action. Think about it! They would have appeared mighty foolish if God had not come through. And if they had told the priest something that had happened - when after all, it never happened. But that is what God does when he fulfills your faith. It is when you get so deep into it with your faith.

James Mahoney told a story about how God worked a miracle in his Christian work. He had a project and he needed \$700 - but he says, I lacked the faith to believe God for it. And then he remembered, I want to put my faith to the test. And I can honestly say I wanted the \$700 for the sake of God's cause - not just for my sake. And he began to think about that. And then he read Phil. 4:19, my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory. Now he said, my motive was right. I had a Scriptural basis for my faith. But I had to believe. He said I made a telephone call and sealed the matter as if the \$700 were already mine. He told his wife the money was on the way. He says, I acted as if what had happened hadn't happened had happened. So what hadn't happened could happen.