

**"The Sweetening of Bitter Waters"**

**Exodus 15:22-27**

**Introduction:** This morning we looked at Exodus 15:1-21 where we were able to see the glorious song which was sung by Moses and the children of Israel. It was a great time of celebration for them. The Exodus was to them what the cross is to us. They worshipped God as their Savior and their Deliverer. They praised Him as their Covenant God and for His faithfulness. What a time of celebration that must have been.

**Notice Exodus 15:22a**

Here we see that it was time to move on. The celebration of God's victory was great, but it was not to hold them back. There would be more battles and more victories so they must keep moving.

**Application:**

Let us also understand that victories are not to be permitted to hold us back. We cannot sit back and bask in the rays of the victory forever. There is more to do, there are battles to be fought. Victory is not meant to slow us down and hinder us, but it is meant to give us encouragement to draw from for the battles ahead.

When the pillar of cloud began to move again, Moses did the right thing by getting Israel to follow. It would have been nice to stay by the Red Sea and continue to relive the events which happened there but that was not the will of God. It was time to move again.

Wherever we are in our lives we can be sure it is not the will of God for us to sit down and stop. There is more ground to cover and so we must be willing to go where God leads us.

As Israel would continue their journey into the wilderness, they are about to face a water crisis and tonight we are going to look in some detail at this crisis to gather lessons for our own lives.

**I. The Deficiency of the Water**

**Notice Exodus 15:22**

Israel was only three days journey into the hot dry wilderness when the trial came to meet them. It was a large trial for water was even more important than food. The magnitude of this situation can be understood when we realize there were over two million people plus their herds and their flocks. They could possibly carry enough water for themselves for a day, but they could not carry enough for their livestock. The amount of water needed each and everyday would have been hundred of thousands of gallons if not more. In this hot dry

wilderness water was essential and a daily supply was a must. This was a big problem which they were facing.

**Application:**

Tests and trials are also permitted into our lives as we make our journey through this barren world. It should never come as a surprise when we face a situation where we do not have the resources to meet the need. We also must understand that God often permits trials of great magnitude to come upon us in this life. There is a purpose for the extreme trials that we encounter in this life. Let us notice the words of Simeon as he comments about the magnitude of Israel's trial.

***"God had permitted their trial to be great, in order that He might the more magnify His own power and mercy in their deliverance."***

Let us understand that if our trials are always small, we would never have the opportunity to see God do a mighty work which can cause our faith to become greater. Our flesh certainly does not want big trials but without big trials we would miss seeing God do big things and we would not grow in our spiritual strength.

There is something else here we also need to see. This trial came only three days after the crossing of the Red Sea. The echoes of the song could still be heard through the wilderness. Israel had just escaped the great pressure at the Red Sea and now they were faced with another test. They had scarcely finished the celebration and now there was no water.

**Application:**

Let us understand that tests and trials often come one right after another in this life. As long as we live in a fallen world there will be frequent problems.

**Job 5:7**

*<sup>7</sup> Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.*

Just as sparks rise from the fire one after another so do problems in this life.

**Job 14:1**

*Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble.*

We can see a picture of how trials come in the life of Jesus.

**John 6:1-6**

*After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias.*

<sup>2</sup> And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased.

<sup>3</sup> And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.

<sup>4</sup> And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.

<sup>5</sup> When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?

<sup>6</sup> And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.

Jesus and His disciples had just climbed a mountain and when they turned around, they were faced with another test.

The Truth that life is full of frequent problems is not to discourage us. Rather it should cause us to strengthen our faith and be prepared for the trials so that we might live in victory and not defeat.

Let us consider yet one more thought before we move on. Israel experienced this great water problem while they were walking the path of obedience. They were following God and Moses who was leading them in God's will. Let us understand that obedience is not exemption from trials.

#### **Psalm 34:19**

<sup>19</sup> Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

#### **Romans 8:36**

<sup>36</sup> As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

Let us notice the words of Parker on this thought.

*"History has again and again shown us that the field of duty has been the field of danger, and that the way which has conducted directly from the earth to heaven has been beset by temptations and difficulties too great for human strength. You may be right, even when the heaviest trial is oppressing you. You may be losing your property, your health may be sinking, your prospects may be clouded, and your friends may be leaving you one by one, yet in the midst of such disasters your heart may be steadfast in faithfulness to God."*

Just because there are problems it does not mean we are out of the will of God. Many problems come to Godly people walking in the will of God to help them grow strong in the

Lord. We must also understand that the Devil will also bring afflictions and problems upon us in an attempt to discourage us as we walk the path of obedience. Let us learn to stay true to the path of obedience for it is better to walk the path of obedience great problems than it is to walk in disobedience with no problems. Obedience secures the help of God and it brings great comfort to the heart in the deep valleys of life. Walking in disobedience is a completely different story.

## II. The Defilement of the Water

### Notice Exodus 15:23

Israel needed water and when they saw the water the joy and the relief must have been overwhelming. Their hearts rejoiced, they confidence in Moses soared, and any doubts they were entertaining were now gone. But when they took the first drink, they had to spit it out. The water was defiled, and they could not drink it. Their disappointment was so great. It was bad enough to be without water, but to find water and then not be able to drink it multiplied the pain and the discouragement. It would have been better to find no water at all. The bitterness was so great from the experience that they named the place "Marah" which means "bitterness".

Now we know that Israel was walking on the path of obedience when all of this unfolded but there is an application here that we must see. It does not fit the context, but it is so important.

The waters at Marah can be seen as sin. Just like the water promised to satisfy and bring great pleasure, in the same way sin does the very same thing. But just as the waters left the people with a bitter taste so sin also does the very same thing. Sin promises one thing but always brings a deep inward bitterness. Let me give you a few examples:

That marriage outside the will of God that looks so attractive to the disobedient, will eventually bring bitterness as the end result. The great job offer, which, takes one out of church, looks very attractive, but eventually down the road bitterness will come to be the experience. The opportunity to join with an unbeliever in business and make hundreds of thousands of dollars, looks to be so satisfying, but given time you can be sure there will be bitterness.

### Ephesians 4:22

<sup>22</sup> That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

### Hebrews 3:13

<sup>13</sup> But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Sin is very deceptive. It promises joy and satisfaction but only brings sorrow and bitterness.

### III. The Disgruntlement about the Water

#### Notice Exodus 15:24

Poor Moses! His problems just continue to multiply. First there was no water, then the water was found to be bitter, now the people have turned upon him and all he was doing was leading the people to follow after God. Let us consider the murmuring of Israel for a few moments.

➤ **The reason for the murmuring.**

The reason they murmured against was really twofold. They took their eyes off God and they forgot what had just taken place three days earlier.

When problems come, and they will, we must keep our eyes upon the Lord, or we will sink in the middle of the storm.

#### Matthew 14:22-30

<sup>22</sup> And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

<sup>23</sup> And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.

<sup>24</sup> But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

<sup>25</sup> And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

<sup>26</sup> And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

<sup>27</sup> But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

<sup>28</sup> And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

<sup>29</sup> And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

<sup>30</sup> But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

Peter took his focus off of Jesus and began to sink. This is what happens to us when we lose sight of the Lord in the midst of the storms. Let us remember what Paul wrote to the Philippians.

**Philippians 4:4**

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

There is always a reason to rejoice in the Lord. This will keep us from murmuring.

**IV. The Remedy**

**Notice Exodus 15:25**

Moses went directly to the Lord with the problem and God showed him a tree and when it was cut down and cast into the waters, they became sweet. We need to see several points about this tree.

**1. It pictures the cross.**

The waters of the old sin filled world are not satisfying. They are nothing but poison cisterns. No matter what well the world offers it will eventually become bitter.

But when the cross is brought into the life of the sinner the bitterness of sin is taken away and life takes on a new sweetness. Everything changes in the believer's life. He or she begins to see things through the eyes of the Lord. It is then that priorities and perspectives change.

**2 Corinthians 5:17**

<sup>17</sup> Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

The cross changes everything and it brings a sweetness to the believer's life.

**2. Its usefulness.**

In order for the tree to be useful and serve its purpose it had to be cut down from its place of "comfort" and then thrown into the water.

**Application:**

This is a great reminder to you and me that if we desire to be used of the Lord, we must be willing to leave the places of comfort and enter into places where we would not normally choose to be. Let me take you back to the storm which the disciples experienced.

**Matthew 14:28-29**

<sup>28</sup> *And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.*

<sup>29</sup> *And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.*

In order for Peter to walk on the water he had to leave the comfort zone, he had to get out of the boat. In order for us to be used of God we too must be willing to get out of the boat and step into places that are very uncomfortable at times.

**Conclusion:**

**Notice Exodus 15:24-25**

God made a statute and an ordinance that day. He made it clear to Israel that obedience would bring blessings in their lives.

The same is also true for us but our blessings are spiritual blessings not necessarily physical blessings. When we walk in obedience to our Lord's will, we can be sure there will be tests and trials but there will also be spiritual blessings that will sustain us as we travel the path to our eternal home. Obedience will bring a sweetness into our lives regardless of the situations which we face.