

Desert Survival Series Pt 21- Moses the Servant of God

by Don Courville

The sermon explores how life's bitter experiences can lead to spiritual growth and a deeper understanding of God's purpose for us.

Duration: 34:47

Scripture: Exodus 15:26-27, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Desert Survival"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of focusing on Jesus Christ and not getting distracted by worldly games. He acknowledges that Satan is active in the world, but also highlights that God is moving and wants to work in our lives. The preacher shares his experiences of traveling and witnessing God's work in different states. He then delves into the biblical passage of Exodus 15, specifically focusing on the bitter experience of the Israelites in the wilderness and how God provided a solution to their problem. The sermon concludes with a prayer for God to speak through the preacher and for the congregation to be aware of their dependence on Him.

Transcript

Thank you for humbling us. Many times that's the very thing that we don't want, but the very thing we need. Because if we will let you humble us, then Christ would be seen and be exalted.

And so many times we'll sing the songs like this one of be thou exalted, but in reality we want to exalt ourselves. And because of that, as Don said this morning out there, we have a plastic Christianity. We have a, we have a, a mock Christianity really.

And so much of what goes in the name of Christ has nothing to do with you whatsoever. And as you were teaching me early this morning, on putting you first and seeking you, as the young rich ruler came and he wanted to get to heaven, but he didn't want you. And so many times I think that's the way our worship is even.

We just want something for ourself. We want to experience. We want to be happy.

We want to be joyful. We want this and that, but we don't want you. And if we miss you, we miss everything.

Lord, would you just speak to our hearts this morning from your word? Just speak through me. I'm more aware and you're teaching me to be more aware of how I am nothing. And Jesus, you said that without me, we would do nothing.

And so much of our efforts are flesh. Spirit of God, you just control now and do that what you need to do in our hearts this morning. In Jesus name.

Amen. Didn't know how things would go this morning. We didn't get to do our handshake and maybe we'll do that afterwards.

I like that. It just really seems to break the ice. And, uh, and our fellowship turned in your Bibles, if you will, to Exodus chapter 15.

Exodus chapter 15. This is another in our series in the desert survival series. Some things that I've been thinking over for several weeks and as I've been traveling out in the different countries, not countries, but states.

Actually, I didn't preach a message last week. I just shared what God was doing out in Pennsylvania and Michigan and by way of revival. And these things have been settling in for the last about month probably.

And I just want to share some thoughts with you. Maybe not so much even to preach, but just to share some things that, that we need to know. And I'm just trusting that God will take this and just let it hit you where you need to be hit.

There's a lot of rough things going on out in the world. And, um, I've learned a lot of things in the last few weeks, the last six, seven weeks of traveling, especially working with preachers. Just worked with dozens of preachers where you learn a lot of things fast.

And I see where John got a lot of his wisdom as such a young man. John must've came here last summer. When you're with these guys, you learn a lot of things and there are some, some serious things going on in our country.

And a lot of the preachers are beginning to see that we're on the verge of something big. And what we're saying, and this is my vision, is if we don't see revival in our country, then we're in for some real tough times. But we need to see it personally in our own lives also.

This isn't the day to play Christian. This isn't the day, the day to have a church service where we come and we sit and we do not hear about Jesus Christ. And this is not the day to be playing games because those that play games are going to be left behind.

And those of us that know Christ are going to know what's going on. Satan is moving in this world, but God is also moving too. And I have seen God and I've seen what God wants to do.

And I think we need to see God in our lives. I want to share with you this morning on the bittersweet experience of life. I've titled this message, the bittersweet experience of life.

That may sound like a contradiction, but after I'm done, you'll see what I'm talking about. In Exodus 15, there's a passage that we covered the first part of it several weeks ago. And I want you to look at verse 22.

And I want to read down through these passages. And I want you just to let your mind grab a hold of the setting before we take off. Exodus 15, verse 22.

So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter.

Therefore, the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet. And there he made for them a statute and an ordinance.

And there he proved them and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his commandments, his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians. For I am the Lord that healeth thee. And they came to Elam, where there were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.

That finishes up chapter 15 of Exodus. The normal Christian experience, the normal Christian experience today, and I mean by normal what most Christians experience, it's not the real thing, but the normal experience is we get saved, we go through the Red Sea, as Egypt was delivered through the picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, which when we receive Christ as our Savior, and we follow him in believer's baptism, and we go under the water and come back up as the Lord commanded him, that is a picture of death to the old life, we're buried with him, and we're risen to walk a new life with Christ. That's the whole point of baptism.

It doesn't save us, it has no merit to it. It's just a symbol, as the Bible teaches. But when they come up out of the Red Sea and on the other side of the land, they went through what is the normal Christian experience, they come into a trial, they face the trial, and they come across this bitter water.

Hey, life is hard. What is this? I thought that now that we're saved and we've been delivered from the bondage of Satan, that life's just going to be a dream. No, life is hard, whether you're saved or unsaved.

Life is hard because of sin being in this world. But there's something that makes life bearable, and that gives it purpose. So the normal experience is we get saved, and we come up, and we just somehow or another struggle along for so many years in our Christian life, wondering, well, this must be the best there is.

But we have no joy in our experience, we have no power in our witness, we don't see God in our lives, and we think this is normal. Well, it's normal because that's what most Christians are experiencing, but that's not what God intended it to be. He intended us to come to this bitter, and in the bitter, learn how to find the sweet.

And if you haven't found the sweet, I'm praying that you'll find it. Wes and I, and I'll just use him and I, have found as pastors that we were in the bitter a lot of our ministry, a lot of our Christian lives. And God has been doing something in our lives and many of your lives to show us that there's sweetness in following Christ and in knowing the Lord.

Now I want to just start off with a question. What is the purpose of life for you? What is your purpose for living today? I see too many people that have a purpose for living that is very shallow. Even we just heard

of somebody that maybe many of you know, Lois Lomke, and a tragic thing in their family.

If we place the purpose of living on others and they're taken from us, then we'll just find ourselves devastated. If we place our purpose for living on material things and finding those things, we'll find that life is empty and then barren. And then when we lose it all, we say, what's the use of it? When God took Israel out from bondage through the Red Sea and up on the other side, He was in control of their lives.

And He was the one that planted that pool of bitter water there. And what God was doing for them, He's trying to do for us. And I've spent so much of my Christian life kicking against God.

Now, let me read you a passage of scripture. Here's the purpose of life in a nutshell. If you miss it, you've missed it.

You've missed it all. Like I have this little card I like to pass out to people, especially if they won't take a track from me. Then I'll say, well, here's my calling card.

And then I have my name and my address on it. And they flip it on the other side. And it's one of these little orange cards.

You can buy them at the bookstore. But it says this, it says, if we meet and you forget me, you've lost nothing. But if you meet Jesus Christ and you forget Him, you've lost everything.

The Bible says in Mark 12, 30, and thou shall love the Lord thy God with all of thy heart. And thou shall love the Lord thy God with all of thy soul. And thou shall love the Lord thy God with all of thy mind.

And thou shall love the Lord thy God with all of thy strength. This is the first commandment. Do you know that if you miss this, you've missed life? Life is knowing God.

This is what Jesus said in John 17, 3, they want to know what's life. He says, and this is eternal life that they might know thee, the only true God in Jesus Christ his Son. If you don't know God in a personal way, in Jesus, you've missed it all.

And our churches across America are full of people that don't know God. Even preachers don't know God. And this is why so many, we've had our different generations.

We've had our, we've gone from the beatnik generation, you know, on up to the hippie generation of the yippies. And then to, I guess, I don't know what you call it, the punk generation now. But each generation was saying to the church, we're rebelling because you're not meeting our needs.

And each generation tried to move on down a little bit to become like them. But they were saying, hey, look at yourself, there's no reality. An interesting thing, God just showed me this as I was talking with a young man out in Michigan or Indiana, lived in Indiana, how each generation from the beatnik age, the church began to go to the coffee houses and on down to try to, and dress like them and everything.

When they're saying, hey man, there's no reality. And that's true. There's been no reality in a lot of Christianity, what's professed to be Christianity.

We call it a plastic Christianity. And it's not real. It's fake.

Now, I think we can gain some valuable principles from this passage. As you sit here, you ask God to speak to you. You're not going to do me a favor or anybody a favor by just sitting here.

And then you get up, you're done, you're not, gave God your nod, you know, and then you go off, get something, get something from God. I learned in Bible college many years ago, when you sit there and God sends somebody to speak to you, say, God, do you have something for me? And I've learned, I dare not go to sleep because the moment I go to sleep, I'll miss the very thing that God had for me. Or even miss church.

Now, here's some principles here. Let me give you a little background. First of all, in chapter 15 and verses 1 through 3, when they were delivered, the first thing they did was they praised the Lord.

And they went into the song, the song of Moses, and they praised the Lord. And just before that, they'd been complaining. Back over in 14, if you look at 11 and 12, they were complaining.

They said unto Moses, because there were no graves in Egypt, thus brought us into this wilderness to die. Well, he was delivering them. It just so happened, God was bringing Pharaoh along with his army and was going to drown them.

And they'd turn around and look, hey, we've got problems. They complained. God brings them up and out of that land.

And what do they do? They get saved. The first thing they do, they come to a trial and they start complaining again. And this is basically how Christians even do it.

But let me share this with you. The unsaved are never happy. Those that don't know Christ are never happy.

They're never happy in this world. And you want to know something else? The Christian, the saved, are never happy in this world either. As long as we live in the realm of this world and saturate our mind with the thoughts of this world and try to live like the world, and we're not separate, and we're not plugged into God, we're not going to be happy.

And you ask yourself right now, am I happy? I admit to you, I spent a lot of my years as a Christian not really happy. And the basic problem was I was trying to live a Christian life and not let God do what He wanted to do. And I wasn't happy.

And it's just a, you can just, you know, figure it out for yourself whether or not you're happy. Man, circumstances, if circumstances determine whether or not you're happy or not, then most of the time we're not happy, aren't we? Because circumstances are usually rough. Mine are.

You know, if you don't have enough rough ones, I'll give you some of mine. I know some of you have some tough ones. We've got to have something more solid than circumstances.

And that's where Jesus is. You know what Jesus said? He said, These things have I written unto you. He says, These things have I spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace.

In the world you have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. And what the Christian does, he gets saved.

And then the first thing he does, he tries to go right back into the world and live in those areas where God saved him from. And he spends his time miserable. We have to be careful.

Now, why did God let these things happen to Israel? We're going to go through these things in this study, unless God directs different. The first thing He did, He let them get thirsty. Why did He let them get thirsty? Well, so they would come to Him.

And so that they could find out that He could satisfy their thirst. I want to share something with you sometime along the line here on the I am. I've been learning some deeper things about God's name, I am.

It's just fantastic. Actually, when He said, I am, He says, I am whatever you need. I am whatever you need.

And if we're going without our needs being met, it's because we're not coming to God. And we're just tattling on ourselves. Now He let all these things happen to them for two reasons.

One, to draw them to Himself. And two, to give you and I an example so we wouldn't have to go through it. But if we won't follow their example, then we'll go through our own bitter experiences.

So here they are. We come up and they're free. But they come up and they've got a trial.

They've got a trial. Bitter water. Not only did they have no water for those days, but there's just bitter water.

And I was going back over to this chapter 15 and looking it over and 4 through 6, they were free. They were singing the song of the free man. They were free.

You know, the Catholic can't sing the song of the free man. The free man sings this song, Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy. If you're not free to stand up right now this morning and say, I love Jesus and He's my Savior, then it may be that you're not saved.

I'm not going to pull any punches with you. Life's too short. It's too rough.

You may not be saved. And I'm very well aware of that because I spent 10 years of my life in church thinking I was saved after I'd had a little experience. Before I really found out that Christ wasn't in my life.

Well, they came out of captivity to freedom to struggle. It's just like that. Bang.

They're out of captivity through the Red Sea. Hey man, we're free. And all of a sudden they're struggling.

And they say, hey, life is hard. Well, life was hard back there and life's going to be hard. The hardness now is going to be this.

Out in the desert, the hard part is going to be when they will not believe God, life is going to be hard. And if you and I will not live a life of faith, it's going to be hard as a Christian. And I had a lot of hard years.

It's going to be hard, but it doesn't have to be. God says it can be easy. He says, my yoke is easy.

My burden is light. He says, you come into me. Well, Lord, we like it, but we don't really want to come to you and let you do what you want to do.

You know why so many times we struggle is because I want to do what I want to do in my Christian life. Instead of letting God do what he wants to do in my life. And life is hard.

I will struggle with a habit. I will struggle with a goal. I will struggle with this or that because I do not want to let go and let God do it.

And it's hard if God isn't God in my life. I've been learning. I've learned in this, in the last, in this two weeks out east, as I traveled, I learned the sovereignty of God that, and God just really opened up.

I mean, in so many years, I knew the sovereignty of God. I knew the theology of the sovereignty of God. I could go teach it in a Bible college if I wanted to, but I was not living it.

We don't know it until we live in it. If God is sovereign, then we can let him do whatever he wants in our life. But you watch when we get to murmuring as they did, then we're saying, Hey, we've got a problem.

God, where's he at? He slipped off the back door. No, the spirit filled believer. When the bitter water comes up, God is reigning.

Praise the Lord. He's letting me go thirsty so he can show me how he's going to supply my thirst. And if I die, then I die to the Lord.

If I live, I live to the Lord. Whether we live or die, we die to the Lord. It doesn't matter whatever the Lord wants to do.

Paul said in Romans, what was that? 14? Yeah, Romans 14, 8. From captivity to freedom to struggle. That's the normal thing, but we're to go from captivity to freedom and stay free. Now, here's a little thing.

The cisterns of Egypt didn't satisfy the water wells of Egypt didn't satisfy because they were slaves. You know what God is saying? Hey, there's another well that has to be plugged up. We got you out of Egypt, but now we've got to get self out of you because you see the cistern of self, the well of self doesn't satisfy either.

And he's letting them to go thirsty so that they will see that they can't satisfy themselves either. In 23, it says, when they came to Merah, they could not drink of the waters of Merah for they were bitter. And so when we come into our Christian life, we find, hey, this is great.

I'm free. My sins are all washed away. And then we tuck our, you know, our shirt in and we take off.

Hey man, it's great. And all of a sudden we find out it's not so great. It's hard.

Why is it hard? Because we were saved by grace and now we go along and try to live by works. Doesn't work. And that's why he's letting them go through the trial and why he's letting you and I go through our trials too, just to show you that we can't do it.

Paul said, I know that in me, in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. Actually, Don Andrews almost preached my sermon this morning. I was amazed.

I had all the verses here on notes that God gave me and he used up probably three quarters of the same ones and the same message. But they say in life is bitter when they come to this trial and God has said, yes, that's what life is going to be for you. Life is going to be bitter and it's going to be hard unless you will

come to me and let me satisfy your thirst.

And he did. Now, actually, if life is bitter, you will be bitter. If you find the sweetness of life, I'm going to share that with you right now.

And if you miss this, you'll miss, you'll miss what you need. I was just thinking of some stuff. I'm going to keep going.

I'm going to keep going. Let's, let's get into this. If I have time, I'll come back to it.

It's something I slipped over. And if the Lord wants us to come back to it, we'll come back to it. Look at verse 24.

And the people murmured against Moses saying, what shall we drink? What shall we drink? And what Moses did? He cried unto the Lord and the Lord, did you see that tree? Probably an old dead tree. How do I know it's a dead tree? Because it says that, uh, and what's when he, he cast it into the waters. I don't know if Moses had a saw, a long ago, saw it down.

Probably just an old dead tree laying over there at the desert. It killed, but it's just a tree. And God says, Moses, I want you to take that tree and I want you to throw it in the water.

And Moses, he took that tree and he threw it in the water and he made the water sweet. Now, does that make sense to you? Actually, this is what God wants us to do in our trials. Now catch this.

We get saved and we're free. And then we hit a trial and God says, I want you to take this tree and throw it in the water. I want you to just die to it.

I want you just to die. Let me do what I want to do. But we'll say, well, Lord, I don't know about this.

And he says, no, you just let me do what I want to do. I know what I'm doing. Moses didn't argue with the Lord.

Not here. At least we can't tell. He took the tree and he threw it in the water.

And as I began to meditate on this passage of the cave, why did he throw a tree in the water? God must have some kind of meaning for that tree, you know? What's this have to do with him being thirsty and throw a tree in the water? It's bitter water. The water became sweet because of the tree. So the tree must be the key.

And you know what? This old tree is the key to every area of your life. This old tree is the key to whether or not you will have purpose in life or not. And as they were there and they watched Moses, and what's wrong with that old guy? He's been, he's losing his marbles, been out in the, and you know, God didn't tell them that.

God told Moses. Moses walked over, picked up this tree and chucked it in the water. They said, great, great, Moses.

Not only do we have water that's bitter, but it's got a tree in it. And Moses says, drink. And they drank and what did they discover? That the tree turned the water into sweet water.

Now, if that tree did that for that water, that tree will do the same thing for your life. You know what the tree is? God is saying, listen, I want you to see me. And when you see me, I want you to look at that tree because that tree is a cross.

That tree was the cross. The cross, what's the cross stand for? Huh? The tree represented the cross. The cross represented death and life.

You see the cross represented the bitter, which is death, but the cross also represented the resurrection, which is the sweet. And when we come to our trials, when we come to our trials, if we don't apply the cross, we'll stay in the bitter. And he's going to take them through and show them this lesson all the way through, and they're going to miss it.

All except for two of them, Joshua and Caleb will get into the land, but they just wouldn't listen. And they just wouldn't relax and let God do what he wanted to do. They had it made.

They had all their food, their clothes wouldn't wear out. They had an insurance program that had no premium that they had to pay. I mean, all their travel expenses were paid.

All they had to do was enjoy God. And this is a fascinating trip you can go on. And if you will learn from their experiences, their failures, you'll find that life will be great as you know God, but life will really be sour as you know God, but you don't let God lead in your life.

Now, there's the death. The tree is the emblem of death. You know, we sing the old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame.

But let me tell you, there's a resurrection. And if we'll learn this principle, they will experience a resurrection. Now, let me ask you a question, a couple of questions.

Who died on the cross? On that cross died two people. The cross that they nailed Jesus to, he died on that cross. And when Jesus died on that cross, actually, he died before he got to the cross.

He died two deaths. Did you know that? Max Chaney shared this when we shared at Life Action Ministries out in Michigan. I never thought about that.

Jesus Christ died two deaths. First of all, he died to self, to humble himself and come down. And then he died for sin.

And we need to die two deaths too. We need to die to self and to sin. But not only did Jesus die on the cross, but the Bible says that I died on that cross too.

When I received Christ, I died. But the Bible says I am crucified. That's it.

I am crucified with him. Have you ever saw that? And if Christ died, if Christ died, he died to sin. The Bible says he died to sin.

I died to sin. He died to self, so I died to self. And if I will stay on the cross, then Christ will live.

And this is the cross truths. He died to self. He died for sin.

I died on the cross too. It's in Romans 6. It's all laid out. The heart of this thing is in Romans 6. Well, if I stay on the cross, the bitter waters, the experiences of life will be made sweet.

That means I won't necessarily, I don't have to like them, but I can have freedom. And I can have joy. And I can have power.

The old devil will work on you. He's been doing some things on me continually, would try to lure me off. And once we know the cross, then he'll get more subtle.

Don't get away from the cross. Just stay dead to self and let Jesus do what he wants to do. Now just imagine yourself going out today and you've got some plans.

I don't know what your plans are, but you've got some plans. Suppose you've got plans after we're done here to eat dinner. Would it upset you if something come up and all of a sudden you didn't get to eat your dinner? If it would, then it's showing you that God really isn't the ultimate thing in your life that your plans are.

And suppose this week you've got an appointment somewhere and somebody comes along and your whole life gets scrambled around. You can't make that appointment. It just really complicates your life and you come unglued and I can come unglued.

It just shows that God isn't the Lord in my life. But as those things come along and I say, okay, Lord, I'm just going to die to it. You just do what you want to do.

I have my plans. Some of us may plan on living through the week, but the fact of the matter is we may not. The fact of the matter is most people would be upset with God.

Most people are upset with God. I've seen them curse God because he upset their plans. And this is what's wrong with the church.

Most of the church today needs to be revived because we're doing what we want to do. And it's bitter and it can be bitter for us. Churches are full of strife.

Preachers are unhappy. The people are unhappy. And it all comes back to this thing right here.

We just are not coming to God and letting him do what he wants to do. You know what God said to them? He says in verse 26, the last thing he says, I am the Lord that heals thee. And I'd like to take off on all the I am's.

Do you hurt somewhere? I mean, physically? Have you ever asked God to heal you? And he didn't. Sometimes he does and sometimes he doesn't. You are on the cross when you ask him to heal you and you're just as content with God if he doesn't heal you as if he would.

It really shows you something. You see, we want to make God do what we want him to do. And if he doesn't do what we want him to do, we get upset with him.

I've seen people do that. We can be angry Christians, angry at our own Savior. Is it no wonder that we have a plastic Christianity? Now, if you think this is deep, you wait till 230.

It's going to be simple, but it's going to be right to the heart. I'm going to share some stuff with you on the young rich ruler. I never saw this about him, the young rich ruler.

You know, when he came to Jesus and he was asking for eternal life, do you know that he didn't really want eternal life? And many of you may be the same thing. You want to go to heaven, but you'll never get to heaven because you want the wrong thing. You've got to want Jesus.

You've got to want Jesus. If you don't want Jesus, you're not going to get to heaven. You may be a member of this church, but if you don't want Jesus, all you want is something for yourself.

You're going to miss it. Let's bow and close our eyes. Lord, I love you, and I thank you for showing these things to us.

Oh, how we can sit in darkness even as we have the light. Lord, forgive me for all those past years, and I thank you that you already have. Every time I sinned and every time I will sin, you were there covering for me.

But I thank you that you're showing me Jesus. Lord, the cross does us no good unless we see Christ as the living Lord. And if we're free, if we're really free, you said the truth, you shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free.

If we're really free, then Christ will be seen in our lives. Father, thank you for dealing with us. I just pray now if there's someone that needs to make a decision, we'll have a short invitation.

If they want to come up here at the altar and confess that they have been the God of their life, when actually they've been professing to know you and love you, but actually they have been the God of their life, and you've been letting one bitter water experience after another come to them like a wave coming in off of an ocean and even on me, wave after wave after wave, and we've been mad at you all along, and all you were trying to do was to get us to come to you, to get us to see you. Just like with the children of Israel, all you wanted them to do was to see you. And they struggled.

They went from one struggle to the other. They wouldn't just be free and enjoy you. Lord, thank you for showing yourself to us this morning.

Thank you now, Holy Spirit, as you deal with hearts. If there's one that needs to be saved, I pray that they just come up here and slip up here, and we'll just pray, and they can just give their heart to you. If there's one that needs to just head for a prayer room somewhere and get along and confess that they have tried to be the Lord of their life, even though they've known these things, they haven't been living them, you do what you need to do.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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