

Sweet Water With Wilderness - Exodus 15+16

by Phil Beach Jr.

God allows trials and difficulties to teach us to trust in Him, not ourselves, and to learn to depend on Him for provision and guidance.

Duration: 39:16

Scripture: Exodus 15:1

Topics: "Wilderness", "Dependence On God", "Finding God in Trials"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. emphasizes the lessons learned by the Israelites during their journey from Egypt through the wilderness, highlighting how God uses trials and tribulations to teach dependence on Him. He explains that while the Israelites initially rejoiced after witnessing God's miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea, they soon faced bitter waters in the wilderness, which tested their faith. Beach encourages believers to seek God's presence in their difficulties, suggesting that the key to spiritual maturity lies not in escaping trials but in finding God's provision within them. He reminds the congregation that Christ is the sanctuary that provides sustenance and hope amidst life's challenges. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a shift in perspective, urging believers to invite God into their struggles to transform bitterness into sweetness.

Transcript

...that I believe we can all profit from tonight and be encouraged. I would invite you, if you would please, to turn your Bibles to the Book of Exodus. The Book of Exodus.

And we're going to be looking into the 15th chapter of the Book of Exodus, and then we're going to look into the 17th chapter of the Book of Evidence, of Exodus here. First of all, we just want to give you a little bit of history in relation to where we're reading and what has happened. The Lord has delivered the children of Israel out of the nation of Egypt, where they had served for some 430 years as slaves under the belligerent tyranny of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Belligerent tyranny. That is evil rule. They were serving a merciless taskmaster.

And their nation was multiplying as God promised to Abraham. If you will go into the Book of Genesis, you'll see that when God appeared to Abraham in a night vision, the Lord promised him a great nation, but that his seed, that is Abraham's children, would go into a foreign land, into a strange country, and they would serve another king for 430 years. You'll discover as you go through the Word of God, you'll discover that the purposes of God regarding mankind, regarding His people, have always been the same.

Why has God, always after revealing Himself to a people, subjected them to, if I might even say, tormenting circumstances and very, very difficult circumstances? Why does eternal God feel it necessary to allow us to be subjected to the most difficult, trying circumstances that can be imaginable? From the very beginning, God speaks to Abraham, calls him out of the land of his fathers. In other words, God was calling him from serving idols. It's believed that we don't have too much information about Abraham's father, but we do know that he came from a land, the Ur of the Chaldees, where they served many gods.

God called him out from serving many gods. We don't know if Abraham served those gods or not, but he came up in a family where he was taught to serve many gods. God called him out, revealed Himself, I am the Lord, I am God, I am God of gods, Lord of lords, and I want to make of you a great nation.

I want to begin, I want to begin to reveal Myself to a people who will become a nation, and then through that nation I will bring forth My Son, and there provide redemption for all that will believe. But why did God, even in Abraham's life, allow Abraham to go through such incredible testing? Even when he left the land and went into Canaan and sojourned in that land, there was a severe famine, and there Abraham's faith was tested. God said, you go to Canaan, and there was no food in Canaan.

So he wandered into Egypt, and there things happened, and then he went back into Canaan and built an altar in Bethel again. Why? May I suggest that one of the many purposes for which God allows us as believers, and we see it as a pattern in the Old Testament from the very beginning, why God allows us to be tested is because He recognizes that it is absolutely essential that we trust not in ourselves, but in God. And in the wisdom of God, He has deemed it necessary not to give us the power apart from trial to learn this lesson.

You see, we need to accept the purposes of God, and we would be able to go through the trials in such a better way. Listen, listen. Why aren't we 27 feet tall and 10 hands and 16 feet as human beings? Because the Lord God was not pleased to make us like that.

Now, how many are losing sleep over that? How many are really upset with God because He didn't make you like a character you would see on the cartoons? None of us. We've accepted the fact that human beings look the way we look. Okay.

It would be good for us as children of God to learn this lesson, that God in His infinite wisdom and the counsel of His own mind from eternity past decided that He was going to create human beings, and in creating them, provide for them during their earthly pilgrimage all manner of trials and tribulations in order to teach them the lesson, as Paul said. These things have happened unto me that I might not trust in myself, but in God. So, accept the fact right now, you cannot learn obedience.

You cannot learn the sense of, I am dependent upon God. My very breath comes from Him. My everything that I am is dependent upon God.

You cannot learn that apart from being subject to trial, tribulation, and testing. So consequently, as we learn more of the character and the nature of God, and we can see this in the Scriptures, then we can indeed do as Peter said, rejoice. Be exceedingly glad when you find yourself in the midst of all kinds of difficulties.

It is Heaven's opportunity coming to you, saying, I want to teach you how dependent you are on me, how necessary it is to see how easy it is to become dependent on yourself, and then walk you through that

transition. How many here want to learn dependence upon God? Okay, let us forever settle it. We will not learn it apart from trial and tribulation.

So consequently, when it comes, let us look at it not as the world looks at it. Neither let us allow it to affect us the way the world allows trials and tribulations to affect them, but rather through the working of grace in our life, through the teaching of the Word of God, let us come to God and let us face the difficulties of life as a renewed Christian, understanding that it is God who is teaching me how to trust in Him and not myself. This is why God, one of the reasons why God permits difficulties.

Now, God forewarned Abraham that his people would go into a foreign nation, and there they would be slaves for 430 years. And then the Bible says the Lord would call them out and lead them into the promised land and make of them a great nation, and He promised them many things. So in context now, we are reading about God had already delivered the nation of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

And He had sent His guiding presence, which was the cloud by day and the fire by night, and they were going through the wilderness, and eventually God was going to bring them to the land of Canaan there to possess it, and that would become their land where they would be a nation that would be an example to all the world as to what the true Lord God was really like. Now, God had brought them out of Egypt. Pharaoh's army was pursuing them.

We know the story. They stood at the banks of the Red Sea. They had experienced a marvelous redemption out of the land of Egypt, and now they came to their first difficulty.

They had to go over the Red Sea, and they had no boats. There was a raving, angry, bloodthirsty army chasing them. And back then, they hadn't gotten the revelation yet on building the Washington Bridge or the Triborough Bridge or the Tappansee Bridge or anything like that, and there were many, many thousands of children in their army, in their clans, and there was food, there was supplies and provisions, and they couldn't understand why God had done this.

Well, as we go on here, we recognize that God told them to be still, and God was going to provide them with a miracle, and the Lord separated the Red Sea. And oh, how nice it is when God works a miraculous miracle for us, isn't it? And He manifests and displays His marvelous power. Well, to make a long story short, the sea separated.

Israel went right across the sea on dry land, and then as the armies pursued them, they all got into the middle of the sea, and God spoke to the waters and said, Now go back to normal. And Pharaoh and the horse and the chariots were swallowed up. Not Pharaoh, but his right-hand man, the commander of the army, and all the armies were swallowed up by the sea.

Okay, verse 31, chapter 14, we'll pick up right there. And Israel saw the great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord and believed the Lord and His servant Moses. May I stop right here and make a comment that is very important for tonight.

The people saw a great miracle. The Bible says that was the Lord had done. Now we're not talking about a little miracle.

We're talking about a miracle where they just marched through an open sea, and the waters were being held up by the very word of God. And the whole clan came marching through, and then as they looked, the sea recovered, and all the army of Pharaoh was swallowed up and drowned. Now this is a significant

miracle.

Now the Bible says they saw this miracle, and they believed in the Lord, and they believed in His servant. Now let me say something here. Seeing the miraculous provision of God, seeing the hand of God work in our life, as they saw it work in their life, produces a belief in God, as it did with them.

It produces a confidence in the word of God, which it did in them, because when it says, and they believed in His servant Moses, Moses represented to the people God's spokesman. So it produced a belief in God, and it produced a belief in His word. However, it was a belief that was not tried or tested.

Now may I say that there is a place for this kind of belief in the Christian life. God will work the miraculous. How many have experienced God providing your needs in a miraculous way? In some fashion or another.

Brother Ron has just experienced it. He was taken out of an apartment happily, and the next night he was in another apartment. And he has all that he needs now.

God has provided him a worn home. He's provided him friends. He doesn't know this, but he's getting a chair soon for his... Did you tell him? No? Well, you're gonna get a chair.

Somebody let us know that they're giving away furniture, and we thought of Ron. So God provides miraculously. Huh? Someone's giving him a toaster oven, so that he can have raisin toast, and bagels, and blueberry muffins, and oatmeal bran muffins.

Sound good? Okay, now here's the lesson that we can learn before we even get into what we're gonna read. When God moves in a miraculous way, we acknowledge, we believe in God, we acknowledge that we have trust in God, and then we can even begin to sing and praise the Lord. But let me say that the purpose of God in the life of the believer is not just to instill a faith, and a belief, and a trust in Him, as a result of seeing the miraculous, but it is to instill a faith, and a trust in Him, that is the result of being tried, and tested, and proven, and learning to trust God.

There's a great difference. So, let us begin reading chapter 15, verse 1. Now you feel the setting. You feel the excitement.

We've just had a people who've seen a great miracle of God. Then sang Moses and the children of Israel, this song unto the Lord, and spoke, saying, and we sing this song all the time, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

Now how many here realized that when we sang that song, it was here in Exodus 15? How many didn't realize it? Anybody? Okay, then we're all pretty much aware that this song is here. The Lord is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation.

My Father is God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war. The Lord is His name.

Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea. His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. Now some would have us to believe that at this time in history, the Red Sea was just about a foot deep.

And I heard one preacher say, well, if that's true, then it's a greater miracle, because how can a whole army drown in a foot deep of water? I like that. Of course, we don't believe that's true. We believe that it was a sea, and that it was very large, and we'll get into that sometime.

The depths have covered them. They sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power.

Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy. Where has the Lord God placed Jesus Christ? At His right hand. And in the greatness of Thine excellency, Thou hast overthrown them that rose up against Thee.

Thou sentest forth Thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of Thy nostrils, the waters were gathered together. The flood stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

The enemy said, I will pursue. I will overtake. I will divide the spoil.

My lust shall be satisfied upon them. I will draw my sword. My hand shall destroy them.

Thou didst blow with Thy wind. The sea covered them. They sank as lead in the mighty waters.

Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? There's another song we sing. Who is like unto Thee? Now see, when you sing these songs, they're going to take on new meaning to you. This song was born from the heart of a people who just watched God drown an army in the sea.

Praise the Lord. When God takes some of your enemies and drowns them, you'll sing this song, not your natural enemies. I'm talking about your spiritual ones.

Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness? Oh, hallelujah. Fearful in praises, doing wonders. Thou stretchest out Thy right hand.

The earth swallowed them. Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed. Thou hast guided them in Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation.

The people shall hear and be afraid. Sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. This is true.

This is true. After this great miracle, the word spread. You know, it would be like the Lord doing a great miracle in Hackettstown and the inhabitants of Washington, the inhabitants of Bud Lake, the inhabitants of Philipsburg, the inhabitants of Eastern Pennsylvania, the inhabitants of Stanhope, the inhabitants of Newton.

Everyone around heard about this great God who redeemed the church in Hackettstown. Wow, we better watch out for those people if they come marching our way because that God might tear us to pieces. This is literally what happened.

God put the fear of Himself in all the nations at that time. That's why He did it. So that the nations would fear Him and fear His people.

Wow. We're serving a God of power, aren't we? Verse 15, Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed. The mighty men of Moab trembling shall take hold upon them.

All the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Now see, Canaan was the land where they were going to. And if God did this at the Red Sea, the inhabitants of Canaan were saying, what's He going to do when they come to the brinks of the River Jordan and they come in after us? See, God's got this whole thing

worked out.

Boy, I'm glad He's a man of war. Fear and dread shall fall upon them. By the greatness of Thine arm, they shall be as still as a stone.

Till Thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over which Thou hast purchased, Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. Of course, we can't get into what the spiritual implications are, but it's very difficult not to. Of course, for the church, the place where the Lord was pleased to dwell was in the person of Jesus Christ.

And now as Christians, He has become our sanctuary. We flee to Christ, and in Him we hide, and by Him we triumph over all of our enemies. You see, He has become our dwelling place.

Christ is the sanctuary from which we are shielded from the enemy. Christ is our strength. So, what a marvelous fulfillment this is as we see it in light of the New Testament.

The Lord shall reign forever and ever, for the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them. But the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

And Miriam answered them, Send you to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. 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 Morah, they could not drink of the waters of Morah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Morah. 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.

There He made for them a statue and an ordinance, listen closely, 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 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 Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and three square and ten palm trees, and they encamped there by the waters. Now, God had brought a marvelous victory, and we can see this, but the moment the victory was over, God said, Let's move on.

Let's move on. And immediately this host of people who were singing, rejoicing, praising the Lord, who had seen with their eyes and heard with their ears, were suddenly being brought into a test. They had gone for three days and there was no water, and then when they came to water, the water was bitter and it wasn't drinkable.

And so what happened? After the water was found to be bitter, they began to murmur to the Lord. Now here's the lesson that God was teaching them. Verse 25, 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.

Beloved, here's what God was trying to teach Israel. When in life's journey, listen closely, when in life's journey, you come to bitter waters and they're not drinkable, in that state of bitter waters, look to the Lord, listen, bring the Lord into the situation and that which is bitter will turn sweet. That which is bitter will turn sweet.

Listen closely. There's several incidents in the journeys that Israel went through in the wilderness where they were tested and here's what the test was. God allowed difficult circumstances to come in order to see, listen, where were they living? Were they living in the wilderness or were they living in the sanctuary? Were they living, listen, when you're in the wilderness and you have nothing to drink, you can either look and see the parchedness of the land, the dryness, or you can realize that in the wilderness there's a rock that brings forth water.

Listen, you might be in the wilderness and you might see that there are waters but they're not drinkable, they're bitter waters, but then you have to be able to see that in the wilderness there's a tree, spiritually speaking, that represents Christ and when the tree is brought to the bitter waters they become sweet. They become sweet. May I ask you a question tonight? What are you aware of right now? Well, shall I say, where are you living? Where are you living? Are you living in your wilderness or are you living in the rock that is in the wilderness? Are you trying to swallow and drink the bitter waters or are you finding the branch, the tree, that if cast into those bitter waters the bitter water becomes sweet? Is it possible, is it possible that God is not going to take you out of the wilderness as you have so prayed and hoped He would but instead show you the rock in the wilderness so that you can jump into the rock and while you're in the wilderness swim in the water that flows from the rock? Are you tired of the bitter water that is in your life? Well, maybe tonight you're going to stop praying, Lord, take this bitter water out of my life.

Maybe you're going to say, Lord, come into this bitter water and make it sweet. Have you found the Lord's provision in the midst of your test? Why did God allow thirst and bitter waters to plague Israel? Because He was trying to teach them that He was their sanctuary, not the wilderness where they were living. He was their provision.

He was all that they needed. The lesson of learning to depend on God can only be learned in the bitterness of seeing how much we depend on our circumstances. But we never see that unless our circumstances get bitter and dry and all the other different things that characterize our daily circumstances.

God tested them and proved them. God is testing us. He's proving us.

He's teaching us. Listen, listen closely. He's teaching us not only during the times when He does the miraculous for us, but He's teaching us during the times when in our everyday journey, apart from a great miraculous thing, we come across bitter waters.

Did you know that in every single experience in the wilderness, there was a provision that Israel could have had? Every experience in the wilderness, there was a provision. May I say tonight, find God's provision in the midst of your wilderness. Israel murmured.

What does that mean? That showed them that rather than seeking His provision, they became caught in the circumstance and how it felt. How often we get caught in the circumstance and how it makes us feel. Rather than find the Lord in the midst of it.

Perhaps tonight, God will show you the tree that will take your bitter water and make it sweet. Or perhaps God will show you the rock from where living water is flowing. The key to Christian maturity is not escaping the wilderness, but dwelling in the sanctuary that God has provided in the wilderness.

Dwell in the sanctuary of Christ Himself. And then the circumstances that are brought to you in the wilderness will not affect you the way they do when you're in the wilderness, but rather you'll find God is all sufficient in every circumstance, in every situation to provide for you. I'm wondering as we close if we could just bow our hearts and pray for a moment and ask God if anyone wants to come for special prayer, I want to invite you to come at this time.

And let's just pray and thank the Lord for His provision. Father, we thank You for the Word of God. We thank You for the rejoicing that You gave us tonight.

But we thank You, Lord, for the insight that Your Word provides. Lord, You are the sanctuary in the wilderness. And Lord, we've all been guilty of complaining about the bitterness of our circumstances.

And in complaining about the bitterness, we have completely failed to find You who could make the bitterness turn sweet. Lord, we thank You for Your patience. We pray, Lord, that You'll teach us to dwell in You and to receive from Your hand.

Do this work in us, Lord. Transform us tonight as we sing this song together. Awe.

The bitter water will suddenly become sweet to You, beloved. Bring the Lord in. Invite Him.

Awe. Awe. Awe.

Awe. Awe. Awe.

Awe. Awe. Awe.

Awe. Awe. Awe.

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