

Significance of Wilderness

by Reuben Walter

The wilderness experience is a necessary Christian experience that brings us to a place of dependence on God, prepares us for service, and purifies us for the purpose of God.

Duration: 39:27

Scripture: Hebrews 12:5

Topics: "Wilderness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that there is a purpose and plan in the challenges and obstacles we face in life. While we may only see the immediate difficulties, God sees the bigger picture and the fruits of righteousness that will come from our trials. The speaker uses the example of Moses, who was meek and humble, to illustrate how God prepares us for service through the wilderness experiences. The sermon also highlights the joy that comes from being delivered by God, but cautions that this joy is often short-lived as we quickly find ourselves in new challenges and periods of exposure.

Transcript

It takes some groups for a certain way of dress. Some groups are just as harsh and buggy, or whatever it is. We become oversensitive to some things and judge other people on the basis of it.

That definitely would be a seared conscience. But I wasn't sure if I was going to speak this morning, and it's not seeming well. And the message I have here, or the Lord has made in my heart this week, is not one I can speak of in five or ten minutes, so I'm not sure if we should go ahead with it here.

It's a very important topic, it's one that laid on my heart later in the week, as I was pondering, Father, what do you want me to speak on? I don't want to just speak on things that are irrelevant. And the Lord seemed to come through and said, speak of yourself. As we relate our Christian experiences, it certainly helps those who may be going through the same things, or who may, when they go through them, find some assurance and some comfort and direction in their life, that God has not cast us off.

And so the thought, the thing that came to my mind was the significance of wilderness. Wilderness is a Christian experience. Wilderness is something that every single believer needs to face.

Wilderness is a time of exposure. Wilderness is a time of extremes. And brothers and sisters, when I see a man, a believer in Christ, that is humble, that is a meek and a broken spirit, I just know he's been through

the wilderness.

You don't need to ask many words. Because a human being is naturally not a humble being. He's a human being.

And the only way that God can give glory from a human being is by putting him through the wilderness. In the wilderness where we get molded and shaped and cut and bruised and formed into the image that God wants. The people that can bring glory to the Savior.

I'd like you to turn to Deuteronomy chapter 8 for a few verses. Deuteronomy chapter 8 verses 1 to 3. All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee and to prove thee, to know what is in thine heart.

Whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or not. And he humbled thee and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God the Lord does man live. You see brothers and sisters, that's what the wilderness is for.

If we look back at notable Bible characters, three most notable ones that come to my mind is David, Moses and Jesus. Probably the most significant men in the scriptures. How did they get to where they were? Wilderness.

But there's a big difference between the wilderness of Jesus and the wilderness of Moses. One was forty years and the other was forty days. Jesus went through the wilderness just like Moses did.

Jesus came out after forty years in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. Moses came out of the wilderness after forty years, the meekest man that ever walked on earth. So was the wilderness worth something? I think we can answer that quite easily.

Wilderness is a Christian experience. And it's something that comes to us as after we are delivered. After deliverance.

If we take the story of the Israelites out of Egypt in Exodus. We see a picture unfolding that characterizes every single believer that comes to the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole nation of Israel is a type of believers.

Of a single believer entering into the rest and the joy of the Lord. And we can picture Pharaoh as Satan who refuses to let us go. We can picture Pharaoh as that cruel taskmaster we talked of last week.

Who will not refuse, who will not let his slaves go. And only through the supernatural working of Jesus Christ in their lives, typified by Moses, we are delivered. From his grasp.

Through the powerful workings of God, we are delivered. And it also shows here that after deliverance, in Exodus it shows that after deliverance, the devil doesn't give up. And it follows him through right to the Red Sea.

And the Red Sea was typified as a believer's baptism into the body of Jesus Christ. Into Christ where he makes that promise. Signifying what has happened on the inside.

That is where God deals with the devil. That's where God deals with Pharaoh and his army. He drowns him out in the Red Sea.

He takes care of them, puts them where they belong and leads us safely through. That's the first step. And many of us can relate to the joy that has been ours after knowing that Jesus Christ, what he's done for us.

After knowing deliverance from that cruel taskmaster, many of us can know what that kind of joy was. Just like the Israelites. They came out of that wilderness.

They came out of that Red Sea. What was the first thing they did? That was joy. They were shouting, they were singing the entire Exodus chapter 15 is a song of joy.

Israelites singing for joy. For being delivered from that cruel taskmaster. Brothers and sisters, we can relate to that.

But the joy is often short-lived. They made all kinds of promises. All kinds of promises that they're going to serve God now and follow him and obey him because of the miracles he's done.

We're going to follow him. Many of us have heard the story dozens of times. And we know it didn't last long.

It says three months. It didn't take three months. It took a few days and they were grumbling for water.

It is characterized in every one of us as we enter into that new life in Christ. We suddenly find ourselves in the wilderness. We suddenly find ourselves in times and periods of exposure.

In periods of extremes. In times, as David wrote in many of his songs, where he was crying, Lord, how long? How long until I get delivered? Yes, there's oasis. The children of Israel came to oasis as ever so often, pools of water.

And they settled there. They had water. They had manna coming down.

And they were content to settle down there. And the same for us as we go through our Christian life, as we go through the wilderness. We come to places where there's rest.

We come to places where there's a little bit of respite and ease. And we want to settle down there. We want to be content with that.

But we forget that we're still in the wilderness. Still a long ways off from the rest in Christ. And God wants to keep us moving.

He's not content with us sitting around a little oasis in the desert. He wants to get his people on to the rest. On to the promise.

And we can relate to that. It's a time when we are exposed to the elements and the heat of the day. In James 1 it says, The trying of your faith works patience.

But he says, Let patience have a perfect work in you. Or something like that. He wants us to consider where we are in.

And not question God or why he put us in there. But submit to his hand of chasing over us. So that he can bring us out sooner.

How long we stay in that wilderness depends upon every one of us. Do you feel like you've been in the wilderness for 5, 10 years? No? Is it getting long? Is it getting grievous? Is it getting burdensome? Apparently God hasn't finished killing off those 600,000 yet. The flesh in us.

He hasn't finished dealing with all the flesh in us. And that's what the wilderness is for. To bring us to that place.

Where he can use us for his purpose and his glory. The extremes sometimes lead us to cry out. I'd like you to turn to Psalm 69.

69 verse 1. The extremes of the wilderness, they cause us sometimes to cry out, Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow me.

I am weary of my crying. My throat is dry. Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.

Sometimes the children of Israel were sitting for an entire year in one spot. It says so in Exodus. For a whole year without moving.

We think that's senseless. They could have gone through that wilderness in a matter of days. Right away when they left Egypt, the way was to the Philistine country.

And it was very short. 7, 8, 10 day journey. That's it.

He led them down to the wilderness of sin. And it says purposefully he led them down there. First of all, so he could get rid of Pharaoh and his army.

Secondly, to bring them to the place of dependence on God. To bring them to the end of themselves. That's what the wilderness was for.

Sometimes we wonder, Lord, how long must this go on? How long till I get my head above the water? God seems like he's so far away, he can't hear us. Sometimes it seems like the heavens are brass. My prayers are unanswered.

Do you think God enjoys hurting us? Do you think he gets a pleasure out of it? His people, when they were in the wilderness, he never had a pleasure. That they went through so many trials and tribulations. He had no pleasure in that.

He was grief to his heart. And our wilderness struggles depend on us. When we come to the place, we say, Lord, do with me as you please.

I'm finished. I'm not charting my own course anymore. I'm not trying to play God anymore in another person's life.

I'm not going to use my Christian liberties to the extreme anymore. Some of us have that problem. I think because we're in Christ, we have lots of liberties.

And God has to bring us to the place where we lay down those liberties. Because of the defeat it brings in our lives. Because of the utter meaningless existence in our Christian walk.

We give up our liberties for the sake of fellowship. For the sake of brotherhood. And for the sake of Christ.

And until we do that, there is nothing but wilderness. And it can go for more of us. It can go for those of us who have religious hang-ups.

See, God wants a people that are purified. And if we've got hang-ups, He's going to be relentless. He's going to keep pressing on us and pressing us until we scream and let go.

And sometimes we think we're ready. Lord, it's enough now. I understand what you're doing.

I understand why you're working this on me. But if we quit, it seems like He don't hear. And He don't quit.

He keeps on pressing us because He knows what is in us. In that first passage we read, it says, To know what is in thine heart. God knows what was in our heart.

That's why He puts us through it. God knows what's there all alone. We don't.

We don't know what's there. And therefore, the wilderness experience is, I would say, is the most important experience in a Christian's life. The wilderness experience determines whether we become workers for God or whether we become fruitless trees.

The wilderness experience proves it. It puts us out on a limb. It puts us out of misconceptions and preconceived ideas, out of our greenhouse or whatever you want to call it.

It exposes us to the elements. We can hide behind one another, but only so long. And God exposes us.

And these exposures are the best thing that can happen to us, not the worst. And too many times we Christians, we think, Oh, that's such a terrible thing that's happening. That's so bad, that's so... And we don't understand that it's being done by a loving God, not by a hating God.

A passage in Hebrews 12, for most of you know it. You don't even need to read it. He says, It should make us glory in tribulation, said Paul.

Glory in the working out of His perfect will in our mortal and weak lives. How long we are in there? It depends on us. Many of us, we have such an old covenant way of approaching situations and problem solving.

He's got to hurt that out of us. And He doesn't let go. He just keeps on doing it.

And I'm speaking from my own experience. Till we willingly give up and say, Lord, You are sovereign. You are the one who purchased me and You purchased me for a purpose.

And I want to fulfill that purpose, regardless of what it's going to take. So have we felt we've been in the wilderness for years and months unnecessarily? That's impossible. That was necessary.

Yes, there's always a few Caleb's and Joshua's around that are ready to go in after a year. But that's not what God wants. He wants to take us all in there.

They were ready to go in, but God, because of the others, were dragging their feet, were not willing. They had to go back and spend another 40 years in the wilderness. You think that wilderness was good for Joshua those 40 years? I think it was.

I think it was very important for him. Joshua was made into a leader in those 40 years, suffering right alone with the rest of the stubborn Israelites. See, God has an individual plan for us.

Let's look to that. Let's look to His immense workings in our lives. See past our circumstances and look to Jesus.

Recognize that everything He's putting me through, everything I'm going through, I don't see the end yet. I don't see the purpose in it. But there must be a purpose.

There must be a reason. Don't you think the Israelites sometimes scream at the senselessness of sitting around in the wilderness when they could have gone and conquered a land? I'm sure they did. I feel like they would have because we feel the same way.

In that wilderness, many die off. Many turn back. If you remember the parable of the four soils in Luke chapter 8, 11-15, we know it quite well.

Luke chapter 8. Now the parable is this. The seed is the word of God. Verse 11.

Those by the wayside are they that hear, then come up to the devil and take away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they which, when they hear, receive the word with joy. These have no root, which for a while believe, but in time of temptation fall away.

Matthew says time of tribulation. So the same thing applies. And that which fell among the thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth and are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life and bring no fruit unto perfection.

But they on a good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience. Brothers and sisters, two of those seeds died in the wilderness. One was with the temptations.

They became unfruitful. The others were choked. See in the wilderness it gets very dry.

In the wilderness it gets hot. In the wilderness, like I've said before, there are extremes. And I don't know your personal wilderness.

I'm speaking of mine. But I trust every one of you knows his own. That wilderness is where we get prepared, should I say, for service.

And I'd like to add here, don't die in that wilderness. Just let the flesh die. Let the flesh don't corrupt.

It is corrupt. But don't you die in that wilderness. Because God wants to lead you into a rest.

Into a place where he can use us for his purpose and for his glory. In 1 Peter 4.12 it says, Think it not strange concerning the fiery tribulation. In other words, concerning the wilderness.

Think it not strange. As though some strange thing is happening to you. It's nothing strange.

I believe if we understand that concept, we can go through it in much less time than those who've gone before us. But it's a fact of understanding it. And then in chapter 5, 1 Peter 5, verse 8, he says again, But the God of all grace, who has called us into his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect.

Establish, strengthen, and settle. Is there a purpose? We have to admit there is. We have to admit there is a wonderful purpose and a wonderful plan.

Sometimes we may only see the senselessness of something. But God is above. He's up above and he's looking down.

And he sees the end from the beginning. All we see is that little obstacle right in front of our noses. And we think it's such a huge mountain to climb across.

And God sees the other side of that obstacle and sees the wonderful fruits of righteousness that are going to grow out of our lives as he puts us through the wilderness. Through that we get prepared for service. We get prepared to be that sweet nectar.

Them people that God wants to use to bring his... glorify his name on this earth. Think about Moses for a second. He was so meek, so humble, so broken.

He beat God with patience. He actually had to rebuke the Lord. That just boggles my mind.

That's what he did. That's what you call a perfect work done by Almighty God in a mortal human being. I believe that's why Moses can be spoken of as the meekest man on earth.

He certainly was a meek man. How he led those people, those uncivilized Egyptians. Those idol worshippers, which they were.

How he led them out and converted them and brought them into that land or at least right up to the borders. That was something that's superhuman. That's divine.

Divine leading. That's what those 40 years did for Moses. I believe if he wouldn't have gone through those 40 years of wilderness he would have dealt with just like he dealt with that Egyptian at first.

He would have really beat him up. God would have said, get away from these people. I'm going to devour them.

And he said, go. I'm pretty sure he would have said that. Let them have it.

I'm finished. But Moses came out there a perfect lesson. Ready to take on one of the biggest tasks in history.

And finally I'd like to just make a few comments here. Just consider for a moment if there was no wilderness. Think of ourselves.

Let's just reflect on ourselves for a minute here and think what if there was no wilderness. In my life. All the bad habits that we've acquired before we got converted.

Before we were Christians. We won't see the need of ever getting rid of them. Now I didn't want to go and mention bad habits.

But we all know what we got. How about that ugly pride that is a stench in God's nostrils. Do you think that would ever leave us? We hate pride when we see it in somebody else.

But do we see it in ourselves? God has to hurt it out of us. We can easily detect it in someone else. And you know brothers and sisters, I just thought here.

Maybe sometimes if we've been in the wilderness for many years and we're seeing no end. Maybe we should take an honest look at ourselves and maybe go to a close brother or sister and maybe he knows. Maybe he sees us as we don't see ourselves.

Ask him. Brother what do you see? What is it? Just a thought here. Just think of all the hang ups that we won't let go if God won't put us through the wilderness.

Just think about it. Just think how spoiled, rotten we'd be. A little ailment comes our way, a little tribulation, zap, say a prayer and vault ourselves out of that situation and just walk along snuggly.

We're done, we're done. Can we produce fruit unto righteousness? No. The Bible says, Jesus says the one that brings fruit I'm going to purge so he brings forth more fruit.

That's what it's for. Purging. And lastly we would certainly not be hungry.

No we won't be. Through this wilderness experience we learn what brokenness means. That's my prayer for all of us.

That we would really come to know what it means to be broken bread and poured out wine. Through that wilderness experience I believe that is what's going to happen. How long it's going to take? That depends on us.

As individuals it depends on us. How long that's going to take. Forty days or forty years? Forty years is a long time.

But see God doesn't care. He doesn't calculate days and months and times and years like we do. He don't care how long it takes.

All he's interested in is that product comes out of the end usable. And useful. That's what he cares about.

If it takes ten years, well then it's going to take ten years. It's going to take twenty years? God's worried about the end product. Not the first.

That first days after conversion. Everybody can have that joy. That glory.

That we feel. How God has worked in our lives. How he's done a wonderful work.

And we think all is smooth sailing for now. But we realize pretty soon that we don't sprout wings after conversion. We fly.

We realize that in a very short order. Some think they do. But they come crashing to earth pretty fast.

They actually try to fly. They don't have any wings yet. God's after the finished product.

Brothers and sisters. I pray this word. Bless your hearts.

I'm only speaking for myself. It's been spoken where the word, where the wilderness, what it has done so far. And I believe many of you can identify with it.

At least to some measure. Can identify what we're talking about. And if we can, that's glory in it.

Glory in tribulations. Because he will come through one day. Just like with Joseph.

He came through. There was no special announcement beforehand. Just one day.

A guy came into the prison and said, Joseph, let's go. We got to see Pharaoh. Bam.

One day. He was transformed. From a jail to a prince.

I don't think he planned it. That's the word the Lord gave me for this morning. And so we'd like to come to our knees and pray to the Heavenly Father for his guidance.

That the words may, his word may become more real to us. That we may see every obstacle in our way as a stepping stone instead of an obstacle. That we may learn to interpret our circumstances.

And know what he's saying to us. And why he's dealing with us the way he does. Let's go to our knees in Jesus' name.

Oh Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning in the precious name of your Son Jesus. Our Lord and Savior who loved us and cares for us. And doesn't want any one soul to go astray or be lost.

Heavenly Father, we praise and bless your holy name. And honor you Father for all that you've done for us. For your workings in our lives.

We thank you Father for the wilderness that you put us through from time to time. To draw us closer to you. To draw us away from ourselves.

And into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Heavenly Father, may the words that come from your mouth Lord be not in vain. May they accomplish their work in our lives.

Father, you have begun a great work and we know that you are going to finish it. You are not slack concerning your promises. Heavenly Father.

And you are faithful to finish them to the fullest. Heavenly Father, help us to see that and to lay hold of it. What your Son has promised us.

For every promise in the book can be ours. Every one. And Lord, if we don't attain them, it is not your fault.

It is our fault. Thank you Heavenly Father that you have counted us worthy to be called your children. Thank you that you have made us worthy to be sons and daughters Lord.

We know you've got a greater work yet for us. Help us to just humble ourselves in your sight so that you can use us for your purpose and for your glory. We pray Father for all of us Lord those who are physically ailing and sick.

Lord give strength and life. Lord you can, by just your word and your touch you can heal those, you can raise the dead as we heard already this morning. There is nothing impossible to you Father.

But at the same time help us to realize what? That you have an overall plan in motion and that everything works together for those who love you. Who are called according to your purpose. Heavenly Father.

I pray for grace Lord. I pray for our brotherhood and our sisters Lord, our young people. Lord help us to grow, to esteem each other and love.

Father for the work you've done in us and to see Jesus in each one of us Lord. That you can fulfill what you have promised Lord. Thank you for Jesus.

Thank you for that finished work on the cross. Thank you for all the blessings you give us. Thank you for allowing us to worship in freedom without hindrance Lord.

We know this. We don't know how long this will last. But Lord help us to take advantage of every opportunity you give us to proclaim your name Father.

And we thank you once again in Jesus precious name. Amen.

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