

Coming Out of the Wilderness - Part 4

by Walter Beuttler

The wilderness experience is a time of testing and refining, where God seeks to add a new dimension to our Christian experience and broaden our relationship with Him.

Topics: "Suffering And Trials", "Gods Sovereignty"

Description

Walter Beuttler preaches about the ways of the Lord in the wilderness, emphasizing the importance of understanding God's ways in our afflictions and the need to seek His guidance and comfort in times of confusion and suffering. He highlights the story of Job as an example of how God allows afflictions to test and refine His servants. Beuttler also discusses the significance of dressing respectfully as a reflection of honoring God and the importance of surrendering to God's will even in the midst of trials.

Transcript

We are about to get out of the wilderness, but we will stay there a little longer, and then we will come out.

This study on the ways of the Lord is based on Moses' remarkable prayer, "Show me now Your ways that I may know You." Two years ago when I was with you, we were talking about, "That I might know You." This time, we are considering the other part, "Show me now Your ways."

Many Christians either do not know, or know very little about the "ways of the Lord" in our daily experience. The reason is that there is simply little teaching in this area. So we are sharing about the ways of the Lord.

In part one, we talked about, "The Way of the Lord in Affliction." Which ever way, or in whatever manner we are being afflicted, there is a "way of the Lord" in our affliction. An outstanding example, of course, is Job. He was righteous, a very godly man who was very careful in his religious observances. God Himself bore testimony of him to Satan that there was none like Job who was righteous and just and godly in all the world. And yet God allowed this man, at the instigation of Satan, to be thrown into severe affliction because of Satan's challenge.

Most of you know the story. God had the angels assembled before Him (Job 1-2). We are told that Satan also came among them. Now, I do not know whether Satan snuck in, or whether he had a standing order from God to appear with the angels to give account of his activities. The fact remains that God said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job?"

Apparently God observed Satan going about upon the earth, and that Satan took special note of Job's piety. Any man or any woman with outstanding piety or godliness, will become a conspicuous object for the attention of Satan, who does not like such people around. Apparently God took notice that Satan took notice of Job, so God said, "Now Satan, where have you been?"

Satan answered, "Oh, from walking up and down in the earth." There are attacks against God's people that are Satan originated. He is known, or is described in the Bible for instance in Zechariah, as the adversary. In Revelation he is described as the accuser of God's people.

In the case of Job, Satan said, "There is a reason why Job serves You. You have blessed him and he is the richest man in the east. His fame is known all over. He has cattle, mules, and camels, more than any other man in the east. Why wouldn't he serve You. You just touch what he has and he will curse You to Your face. Now what do You say, God?"

The Lord said, "He will not curse Me." Satan said, "Yes he will." "All right, let's find out. He is in your hands." Lightning struck, a tornado came, the roving bands of the Sabeans attacked. While one was yet speaking, another came and told Job of more trouble.

Have you ever gone through situations where you have a problem, and are hardly over it, and something else crops up? You wonder what on earth is happening, one misfortune after another. Will this thing ever stop? I do not know what it is, but I do know what it could be, a repetition of the situation of Job, where God, under Satan's accusation, feels obliged to vindicate His name and His servants, to put the devil to shame. If you say, "Why does God have to do that?" That is something I cannot answer. I can only speak about the Wilderness on the basis of the story of Job, which in that respect is very clear.

When we go through situations for which we can give no adequate accounting, attribute no valid cause, or give our inquiring friends no satisfactory explanation, we need to know what God is doing and have an insight into His ways, so we are not so easily overthrown by what others say or think about us.

The "wilderness" is a situation in which we find ourselves, where we cannot understand why it has happened, can give no explanation, and are confused and do not know what to do. God permits some situations for which we will never get an answer, and in which all that we can do is cling to what I said, "Let him trust in the name of the Lord."

In one place where I ministered, I saw a lady sitting to my left in a wheelchair. I did not look closely because I did not want to appear curious, but I thought and took notice at just a quick glance that she appeared to be crippled. I also noticed that she was very well dressed, not gaudy. I do not think we can please our heavenly Father either with gaudy, unbecoming, or sloppy attire.

You know what you have in Matthew 6 where the Lord speaks to His disciples and calls their attention to how beautifully God clothes the grass of the field, and calls attention to the lilies of the field. These lilies are not the lilies we see at Easter. That is a different lily. The lily of the Bible is a very pretty, but a very common flower in the ordinary meadow.

And the Lord said, "Look how beautiful God has clothed the lily. Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. How much more then will your heavenly Father clothe you." Sloppy, dirty dress is a reproach to the heavenly Father. The cult of sloppy dress is not what our heavenly Father appreciates. If God so clothed the grass, consider the lilies of the field, how much more will he clothe you. Our manner

of dress can either be a credit or discredit, an honor or a dishonor to the heavenly Father who so cares for His children that He loves to dress them well, like the flower of the field.

God is ashamed of some of His children, in the same way some parents are ashamed of their children, but there is nothing they can do about it, because if they put a little pressure on, they will run away. So the earthly parents, like our heavenly Father has to put up with the sloppy dress of His children, when it is in His power to clothe them decently and respectfully, as an honor to Him instead of a disgrace.

Now this lady of whom I spoke. I just happened to see her with a quick glance several times, as I was speaking. She appeared to be a good-looking woman. I noticed that her hands appeared to be bent under, and apparently her legs.

Later, I said to the pastor there, "Could you tell me who was that good-looking, well-dressed lady in a wheelchair?" He said, "Brother Beuttler, she was the beauty queen of our state, but when she was 18 years old, she was stricken with polio."

I don't know how old she was, but I would say she would be middle-aged. I had so wished to talk to her. Although she said a few words to me, I did not linger. This is what I am getting at. Can you imagine a girl being the beauty queen of a state, with a future of one kind or another, being struck by polio and confined to a wheelchair, for life?

Can you image how she could ask, "Why God, did You permit this? I know nothing, but can you put yourself in her wilderness, wondering how can it be? Why did it have to be me of all people, a beauty queen of the state, crippled by this virus, or whatever it comes from? How can a person like that keep faith in the integrity of Almighty God? Now that's easy enough to say.

As I have mentioned, there are perils when we go through these experiences. We can call it quits, cast away our confidence. We can say, "What's the use of believing in God. Look what God did to me." Which of course is the wrong way to say it, but how easy it is.

I was teaching in a camp meeting where I stayed at a farmhouse. They had a boy who was born mentally deranged. The mother became saved. The father was bitter. He told his wife, "I do not want a preacher in my house." And he was very hostile, but his wife overruled, and I was in their house.

He let me know how he felt about our God, "Why did God do this to me? Explain that to me. If there is a God, the kind that you talk about, why did He give us a boy like this? Now answer me Reverend." How are you going to answer him? "That is what God did to me, and now I should believe in Him and serve Him? Look at my boy!" You cannot understand it, even though of course, his attitude was wrong.

When I was a student in Bible school in 1927, they had a waitress there who knew that my weakness was apple pie. I mean good apple pie. She was a nice chipper girl. The kind of waitress one feels like eating, with her around. She would say once in awhile, "Brother Beuttler, there is near where you sit, I put it there for you."

She was engaged to a student. They were married on graduation day, but he died four weeks later. They were made for each other, what an awesome blow! It is surprising how suddenly lightning strikes and the thunder rolls, and our hopes come down with a crash. Then is where we should have some grasp of the ways of God.

I mentioned to you some of the perils: Unbelief. We quit our faith. What is the use serving God? Look how He treated me. I mentioned rebellion when we rise up against the sovereignty of God. I told how I have done it, and rebelled against Him.

We can say, "If God is a God of love, then why does He permit this? We prayed for a little girl for years, but she got sick and died. We could say, why, God?" We ought to learn not to ask such questions. But there is the potential of rebelling against God. I also mentioned the risk of murmuring about the way in which the Lord leads us, or where He takes us.

The last point that I touched on is in Deuteronomy 8. You have here a very remarkable verse.

"Who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought you forth water out of the rock of flint; Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers knew not, that He might humble you, and that He might prove you, to do you good at your latter end." Deuteronomy 8:15-16

As we go through the wilderness, we need to be aware that the Lord is leading, either consciously or unconsciously. When I lived alone in New York City in 1925, I was not saved. Although I did not get into any kind of trouble while I was there, still I was dreadfully alone. As I look back, I can so clearly see the leading hand of God in my circumstances, before I even knew Him. He leads us consciously or unconsciously.

"Wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought." Did you ever go through a length of time, a period, in which you could not seem to sense any Presence, got no blessing, or anything out of the Word, a time in which everything was dry and dead and you felt withered? This is a part of the wilderness. Then we must simply go by naked faith and say, "It is written, I will never leave You nor forsake You."

"It is written." You can practice this, as it works. I frequently base my approach to the Lord on Matthew 6:6, "When you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door...." This can mean many things. When you have shut off the radio, or the television, because there is a danger that these will rob us of the Lord's presence.

When you are completely cut off from observation, being observed, being distracted, being disturbed, then pray to your father which is in secret. This is one of my main pillars for praying: Shut the door, approach Him - not bringing my shopping list. That has to wait, but a conscious approach to a present Father, whether I feel Him or not. It does not change anything.

"Your father which is in secret." No matter how dead or dry you feel, how far away God seems to be, here is a strong pillar: Your Father, which IS in secret. I say, "Father, I thank You for Your Presence," whether I feel it or not.

I was so eager to have a little sense of His Presence, and I did not have it, so I said, "Father, I acknowledge Your Presence," because it says, "and your Father which IS in secret." And I felt just as dead as the driest desert. No Spirit, nothing. I said, "Father, I thank You for Your Presence. I know You are here because You said so." I still got nothing. I said, "Father, I am going to tell You something. You might just as well give me Your Presence, because I know that You are here, whether You do or whether You do not." And it came. I just would not let Him withhold His presence from me, if that is the way we can address this. So, in the wilderness, He is there.

"How do you know?" "It says so." "Well, I know it says so, BUT" is failure to believe God just because we cannot sense His Presence.

"Who fed you in the wilderness with manna." This manna was different things to different people. The word manna in the Hebrew means what is it. They had mysterious bread. Every morning they picked up the what is it. It says, some said it tasted like wafers of honey; others said it tasted like oil; and others said it tasted like this. They had a different perception. How come? Because it meets every ones diverse needs. Have you ever heard people say, "Say, you know when he said that, that was just for me." What was that?

Another one would say, "I did not get a thing out of that, but when he said such and such a thing, that was for me." That is the what is it, bread from heaven. What is it? It is one thing to one person, another thing to another, one likes this flavor, another likes that flavor, but they were all fed and kept alive with God's "what is it."

If any of you are in the wilderness tonight or this weekend, I think the Lord is sending you some what is it. Some said, "Oh, I am so tired of this what is it. On Friday night it was what is it, the way of the Lord. Saturday morning we got more what is it. Saturday night again we go back to what is it. Sunday morning there is more what is it. It is coming out our mouths and ears."

They complained against the very bread, God's what is it, that sustained them in their wilderness during every kind of need. "Who fed you in the wilderness with 'what is it,' which your fathers knew not."

"And you shall remember all the way which the Lord thy God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or no." Deuteronomy 8:2

"You shall remember all the way which the Lord you God led you." You know there is such a thing as reflecting upon the past. When I think how God led me before I was saved, I marvel how I ever came through to the Lord. When we go through the wilderness, or the darkness today, there is such a thing as reflecting on the past and remembering how God brought us through when we thought all hope had gone, and yet we came through.

There was a time when I was sick in the hospital, had surgery, and it looked like I could not fly anymore, and it looked like I had my last trip around the world, that this was the end. Yet the Lord came along and raised me up, seven years ago now. Ever since then I have traveled around the world once a year. I am still in orbit. When I think back, it sustains me in the present - and it can sustain you too. Let us not forget what God has done. This will help to sustain us in the situation we are in today.

"To know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or no." It is in a wilderness experience when we are under pressure, when we are in God's crucible as it were, with the fire burning underneath, in a situation calculated to bring out of our carnal nature, all the little devils that are in it.

It will bring out all the meanness, all the tinder, all the discouragement. God puts us into situations and listens to our sputter. He hears what we say now, but He wants to find out, so He knows what to do. I am going to bring you out of the wilderness presently.

"He (God) found him (Israel) in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye." Deuteronomy 32:10

What's howling? Oh, fears, doubts, frustrations, temptations are howling in the wilderness. When things are howling in the wilderness, the Lord finds and leads us. God will find you in the wilderness, and keep you as the apple of his eye.

The wilderness does not last forever. Deuteronomy 2:3 says, "You have compassed this mountain long enough; turn you northward." And going down to verse 7, "He knows your walking through this great wilderness; these forty years the Lord your God has been with you." God comforts us. How people need comfort.

We had a girl in school who said, "Brother Beuttler, do you know what I am praying for?" Well, how would I know? She said, "I am praying for the ministry of comfort. I want God to give me a ministry to people who are in despair, and in need of help and comfort. What do you think about my prayer?"

I said, "Well, that's a great prayer, but I wonder what its fulfillment is going to cost you?" She said, "Cost me?" She was such an innocent thing! I said, "Yes, cost you."

She said, "Doesn't God answer prayer?" I answered, "Yes, God answers prayer, but do you think He is going to hand you a pretty little box with a pink ribbon around it with your name on it, 'Here is the answer to your prayer.' Look here Suzie, first of all, God is not going to answer your prayer right away."

"Well, why not?"

I said, "Because God is going to take His time before He even gets started." She asked, "How come?" "God will wait and see whether your prayer arises from a fleeting emotion, or some kind of euphoria you might have picked up somewhere or whether you really mean it. Then God, if He decides to answer will get to work, and things are going to happen to you. If you want a ministry of comfort, God is going to take you through deep distress.

In all probability, where you find no one to give you comfort and you have to learn to find your own comfort from your own God. If you want to minister to the despairing, He's going to take you through despair and teach you in despair, and give you a ministry in your own despair, if you can stand it."

She woefully said, "Oh, do you really think so?" I answered, "No, I know so." "Oh, it was nice talking to you, Brother Beuttler." As far as I could tell, that was the end of her ministry of comfort.

Where do you think I learned the way of the Lord in the wilderness - in a fairy tale book, the Encyclopedia Britannica, higher mathematics? You know better than that. I learned it when I walked in circles and had no one to give me direction, but my God and His Book. The greater the ministry, the bigger the price that you are going to pay for it. Real ministry that is going to amount to something is not found in God's bargain basement. You pay a stiff price. It's got to be that way.

Deuteronomy 2:7, "He knows your walk through this great wilderness." This is for your comfort. I have already read Deuteronomy 32 about your preservation. Now what is God going to do? This brings us to the end of the tunnel. I think Isaiah 43:19 summarizes about everything, although I will give you other things. Reading Isaiah 43:18-19:

"Remember you not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth, shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert."

What is God doing in the wilderness? Let us boil the whole answer down without boiling it up. In the wilderness, God is seeking to add a new dimension of whatever kind to our Christian experience. This is the principle and the essence. He will broaden our experience. He will improve our relationship with God. He will extend our knowledge of God. He will transform us another degree or two, into the likeness of His Son. In summary He will add a new dimension to our Christian experience.

"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her."
Hosea 2:14

Let us look at the word allure. If we can imagine, in our thinking eliminate from a word an evil connotation, we could say, I will entice her into the wilderness. Or again, if we could eliminate the evil connotation of a word, I will seduce her, entice her, allure her into the wilderness. I do not suppose this is necessary, but who knows. A man can drive along. It has happened many times, stop next to a little girl walking, offer her a bit of candy, "Come here honey, I have some candy to give you." She accepts and he takes her off. That would be alluring or enticing.

You walk down a street in Bangkok, Thailand, in the western hotel areas. All of a sudden you have a lady walking next to you and is she ever painted up. And she makes a proposition. Well, you do not have to be allured, enticed, you understand.

I was in a Paris restaurant eating, the door opened and I saw a lady walk in. I could tell at once she had spotted me. They look for Americans you know. Sure enough, here she sat down next to me. I went on about my eating. "How do you do Mr. American?" "How do you like Paris?" "Fine." "Have you been here before?" "Oh yes."

"Honey, wouldn't you like to come with me?" She looked at me and you could tell right away what was what. She said, "Honey, you are so difficult." "Please leave me alone." Five minutes later she walked out with an American officer.

I will allure her. How does God allure us into the wilderness? Now we have to think here without any evil connotations. The Lord gives us a hunger, "Oh God, I want more of You. Amen. Lord, my soul is so hungry for You. Lord, draw me in a new way. Do a new thing for me Lord. O God, I have to have more of you. I have such a hunger, such a drawing in my heart. Lord, I'm ready for anything. Thy will be done."

One of our Bible school students said, "Lord, I will give all I have for Your best."

And the Lord answered him and said, "It will cost you just that." We can say, "O Lord, I surrender all." The Lord says, "O really!" "Yes, all Lord, so help me."

And things start to happen. We get up in church and say, "Please pray for me. I do not know what is wrong. The devil must be attacking me. This went wrong, that went wrong. I do not know anymore where I am at." Well, God is answering prayer.

God gives us a hunger, a desire, a yearning. We think of a bundle of blessing. He does too, but the blessings lie beyond the wilderness, so He allures us, entices us into the wilderness to take us through the wilderness, and while we are going through to answer our prayers.

"I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her." Obviously there is distress, there is sorrow, there is suffering. He brings His comfort, but then Hosea 2:15: "I will give her, her

vineyards." Vineyards stands for Pentecost - I mean the experience, the things of the Spirit. And the valley of Achor (or weeping) for a door of hope. In our wilderness there may be weeping, as there are things to weep about. And she shall sing THERE!

He takes us to the wilderness to give us a new song, a song in the wilderness - and she shall sing there. No more groaning, moaning, complaining. She shall sing there: O this is like heaven to me in the wilderness. Then we really have something. When we can lie on our bed in pain and still praise the Lord.

I am thinking of a pastor who lost his boy in a very unfortunate way. They were very careful with their children. They took them to the doctor every six months for a checkup. They wanted to be sure that nothing snuck up on them. When they were done with the doctor, they went home. A short time thereafter, one boy got sick and died from the sickness. The doctor said, "That's the one thing I forgot to check. If I had checked it and found it, I could have saved the boy. That's the one thing I forgot."

Now why would the doctor forget the very one thing that cost the boy's life? Well, I wouldn't know, but one thing I do know. I was speaking at the funeral. I saw the pastor stand back by the door. That man had the glow of the radiance, the joy of the Lord on his face at the funeral. That man was aglow with the joy of the Lord - and they loved their children. Now she broke, but he - I still see him stand there.

He said to me, "Brother Beuttler, people would not understand this, but the Lord has given me such a joy as this little casket passed me, I could hardly contain from shouting." This is true Christianity. That man loved the boy, but he could hardly hold back the rejoicing in the Spirit in spite of what happened. "And she shall sing there."

Now when we can have the joy of the Lord when we are standing in front of the casket of a loved one. When we can keep the joy of the Lord when things go wrong, we have something. "And she shall sing there."

Two points from Song of Solomon 3:6:

"Who is this that comes out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?"

"Who is this perfumed with myrrh and frankincense?" The wilderness is God's perfume shop where He puts upon us the very perfume of the life and character of Jesus Christ. But He does not put it on the outside. He puts it on the inside from which the very nature of Jesus Christ is evidenced openly. This woman here came out of the wilderness, perfumed. When a lot of Christians come out of the wilderness, they smell like a little animal dressed in black and white. Do you understand? They smell like a little cat dressed in black and white that nobody can stand. In this wilderness, the Lord gives us His perfume.

"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Song of Solomon 8:5

In the Song of Solomon, there are three classes of people: the bridegroom (Solomon), the bride, and the daughters of Jerusalem. In the passage just read, it is the daughters of Jerusalem that are watching the bride coming out of the wilderness. Who is this that comes up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved? The bride had been in the wilderness. I do not know how she got there, but the Bridegroom came for her and brought her out.

Hopefully we are the bride of Jesus Christ, and if you do not know what to do in the wilderness, sit down and wait for the Bridegroom. Wait for your beloved to bring you out. These daughters looked over into the wilderness and said, "Who is that? Who is that woman that is leaning on the arm of her beloved?" They would have liked to be that woman.

Here, the Bridegroom brings His bride out on his arm, as she is now relying upon Him. In the wilderness, among other things, He perfumes. And if we cannot find our way out, He will even come for us, and so to speak, give us His arm and say, "Honey, just lean on me. Come with Me. We will go out of the wilderness, together."

The end result will be, or can be, the very envy of your Christian friends, "You have had a great experience and the Lord is so real to you. How your life has been changed. I wish the Lord would do for me what He did for you."

Let Him take you into the wilderness. If you do not rebel there, close up your ears and throw in the sponge, but keep trusting, believing Him by submitting to Him and waiting for Him, He will come for you, and offer you His arm, His support, His strength, and bring you out, to the envy of all your fellow believers.

You have received a new thing, a new dimension in the way of the Lord in the wilderness.

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