

Series: Life of Moses

THE TESTS OF LIFE

EXODUS 15:1-27

Text: Exodus 15:22-27

Exodus 15:22-27

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.*

²³ *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.* ²⁴ *And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?*

²⁵ *And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,*

²⁶ *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.* ²⁷ *And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.*

Introduction:

One of the greatest challenges that you will face in life is to try to keep bitterness at bay. Everyone has to guard against bitterness creeping into their hearts. A lot of things in life have the potential to make us bitter. Family problems, marriage stresses, rejection, past abuses, loneliness, misunderstanding, conflicts, church problems and the list could go on forever. All of these if not dealt have the potential to become bitterness.

Note five principles here that certainly can teach us many things.

Note:

1. GREAT VICTORIES ARE SOMETIMES FOLLOWED BY GREAT PROBLEMS (v. 22)

Exodus 15:22

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.*

They were on their way to the Promised Land, but it was proving to be a difficult journey. We see Israel move quickly from the joy of victory to the bitterness of disappointment.

The text says “then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea...they traveled in the desert without finding water.”

Only three days into their journey they encountered their first difficulty, a shortage of water.

Note not only Great Victories Are Sometimes Followed by Great Problems but also:

2. PROBLEMS AS WELL AS VICTORIES ARE PART OF GOD’S PLAN (v. 23)

Exodus 15:23

²³ 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.

They plunged their faces into the water to quench their thirst only to find that the water was bitter.

It was not poisonous but it was unpleasant.

Because the water was too bitter to drink the people called it the “waters of bitterness.”

When it became apparent that their hopes for relief from thirst were in vain, they reacted as they had in the past.

Notice that in the space of three short days they have gone from singing and praising to turning on their leader, murmuring and complaining.

But in truth sometimes we can do that in a lot shorter time.

The fact that “Marah” came to the children of Israel is proof that it can and will happen to us.

Notice not only that Great Victories Are Sometimes Followed by Great Problems and Problems as Well as Victories Are a Part of God’s Plan but also:

3. WHEN WE MURMUR WE FAIL THE TEST (v. 24)

Exodus 15:24

²⁴ And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?

Their cry tells us of their disillusionment and disappointment.

Instead of turning to God in prayer they assumed the problem was unsolvable and that they were doomed to die in the wilderness.

Even though they had only three days before witnessed an amazing deliverance, they assumed that God had

now left them to die.

Difficulties come to us all, and we are faced then with how we will respond to them.

When we are faced with a “Marah” experience we have two alternatives. We can either get bitter and turn from God or we can believe the promises of the Bible and be blessed by God.

Once again the children of Israel had to be taught that no problem is so severe and no danger is so great that God cannot find a solution.

Notice not only that Great Victories Are Sometimes Followed by Great Problems and Problems as Well as Victories Are a Part of God’s Plan and When We Murmur We Fail the Test but also:

4. GOD BRINGS US INTO TRIALS IN ORDER TO TEACH US GREAT LESSONS (V. 25)

Exodus 15:25

²⁵ And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, *which* when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them,

In this situation God showed Moses a nearby desert tree and told him to cut off a branch and throw it into the nearby water.

Here he asked Moses to by faith do something that may or may not make sense to him on a natural level.

God rebuked the lack of faith among the people of Israel and told them that it had been a test.

It was a test of the people, a test that we can easily see that they failed miserably.

God had used these difficult circumstances to show the children of Israel what was in their hearts.

He said to them in verse 26:

Exodus 15:26

²⁶ 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.

Here we find God reveals himself as the God who heals.”

“The word heal means “to mend” as a garment is mended, to repair – as a building is reconstructed, to cure – as a diseased person is restored to health.”

When we find our lives have become bitter because of our circumstances if we will go to the Lord he will help us.

He does not always do it the same way;

(1) He may change our circumstances and remove the cause of bitterness.

(2) It may be however, that he adds a new ingredient as he did at the well of Marah.

It is God who can take the bitterness of the death of a loved one, the bitterness of family relationship problems, the bitterness of severe illness, the bitterness of losing your income and the bitterness of having yielded to temptation and make those experiences to become sweet.

As the psalmist discovered in his own life and recorded for us in (30:5):

Psalm 30:5

⁵ For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

He assured the people that he would continue to be with them as they made their journey to the promised land.

Notice not only that Great Victories Are Sometimes Followed by Great Problems and Problems as Well as Victories Are a Part of God's Plan and When We Murmur We Fail the Test; God Brings Us Into Trials In Order To Teach Us Great Lessons, but also:

5. WHEN GOD IS FINISHED WITH THE TEST HE TAKES US BACK TO A PLACE OF BLESSEDNESS (V. 27)

Exodus 15:27

²⁷ And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.

The children of Israel arrived at Elim which means "large trees" here they found an oasis with twelve wells and seventy palm trees where they drank their fill and rested.

Close:

Application

1. Not all of life is going to be sweet! Life is a combination of the bitter and the sweet.
2. Rather than complaining we must go to God with our needs and seek His provision.

3. God not only gave them relief at Marah but rest at Elim.

Illustration:

One day, two monks were walking through the countryside. They were on their way to another village to help bring in the crops. As they walked, they spied an old woman sitting at the edge of a river. She was upset because there was no bridge, and she could not get across on her own.

The first monk kindly offered, "We will carry you across if you would like."

"Thank you," she said gratefully, accepting their help.

So the two men joined hands, lifted her and carried her across the river. When they got to the other side, they set her down, and she went on her way.

After they had walked another mile or so, the second monk began to complain.

"Look at my clothes," he said. "They are filthy from carrying that woman across the river. And my back still hurts from lifting her. I can feel it getting stiff."

The first monk just smiled and nodded his head.

A few more miles up the road, the second monk griped again, "My back is hurting me so badly, and it is all because we had to carry that woman across the river!

I cannot go any farther because of the pain."

The first monk looked down at his partner, now lying on the ground, moaning. "Have you wondered why I am not complaining?" he asked. "Your back hurts because you are still carrying the woman. But I set her down five miles ago."

That is what many of us are like in dealing with our families.

We are that second monk who cannot let go.

May we learn these lessons well.