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Various

"The Believer's Sojourn Through Life"

March 15, 2017

Would you join me in just a moment of prayer as we look to our wonderful Lord to teach us this evening? Dear heavenly Father, we bow before you in our hearts this evening. We want our hearts ready and prepared. We want our ears ready also - ready to hear. We thank You, Father, that You've given us the greatest curriculum in all of the universe - Your wonderful Word. More than that, You've given us Your Holy Spirit, the greatest Teacher of all, as well. And so Father, we sit before You this evening with hearts ready and open, ready for You to teach us just as Your Word tells us that You've come to do. And I pray, Father, that through it all, Lord, we'll learn those lessons that You have for us. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well tonight we're going to go on an adventure. We're going to join the children of Israel as they are delivered out of the bondage of Egypt and taken towards the Promised Land. But between Egypt and the Promised Land, there are many lessons for them to learn; and not only for them to learn but also lessons for us to apply. And so we're going to be looking at that whole trek through the wilderness to the Promised Land, and I see there, in that wonderful recording that God has given to us in the book of Exodus, "The Believer's Sojourn Through Life" as well. Now, no doubt you've probably discovered by now that this sojourn is filled with many trials and tests. In fact, Jesus said this before He went to the cross; He said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Now He said those words prior to the cross. "I have overcome the world." So, we can be overcomers regardless of the things that we see and go through. So, we have much to learn from the Old Testament Scriptures, and I'm so thankful that we do have a pastor - in Pastor Jack - who teaches us the whole counsel of God, all sixty-six books of the Bible, because those sixty-six books are God's complete revelation that He has given to us. And we just need to know it and study it. Why? Because Paul would write these words. He said, "Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). So the Old Testament is very important. And I love the Old Testament. I've always been a great fan of the Old Testament because I've often said in the Old Testament, you see the power of God; in the New Testament, you see the grace of God. But when you move back to

the Old Testament, you see miracles after miracles, amazing miracles that you don't see so much in the New Testament. And for me, that was such a great faith builder, just really built my faith up. So we can be thankful that God has given us this complete revelation for us.

Now, as I said earlier, we're going to join the children of Israel as they make that Exodus out of Egypt. The entire history of the children of Israel, from Egypt to Canaan, is one long Old-Testament type. And the things that happened to Israel are pictures in a historical pattern of the things that happen to us in a spiritual pattern. By personifying the nation of Israel - especially the wilderness experience - we can see a picture of the believer's sojourn through the Christian life. So, as we look at the Old Testament, again we see these types. And what are those types? Well, types can be events, they can be persons or statements in the Old Testament which are often seen as types; that is the prefiguring of events and persons found in the New Testament. The typology in the Old Testament is rich and varied. Types can be connected with persons such as Melchizedek (there in the book of Genesis) or Joseph or David; or objects such as the tabernacle and the Temple; or rituals such as the offerings and the feasts. When Paul wrote to the Hebrews, there in chapter 10:1, he said, "the law is a shadow of the good things to come." So, our experience in the New Testament is built upon the foundation of truth found in the Old. Now the apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, said this; there, in 1 Corinthians 10:11, he made reference to this entire exodus recording in the Old Testament, and he said, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." So Paul saw that whole exodus experience and all the things that God had written down about that experience as being vitally important; and important so that we can be encouraged and follow the examples and the lessons that we have applied there.

Now going back to Egypt, we see the means of deliverance that God gave to the children of Israel. First of all, God called Moses, through a burning-bush experience, to be the means whereby He would deliver the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. And as such, Moses is also a type, a type of Christ who delivered us from the bondage of sin. Now the place where that deliverance was to be given, of course, was there in Egypt. And the account opens with the children of Israel in bondage in the land of Egypt. And throughout Scripture, Egypt is also a type, a uniform type, of the present world in which we live. Now, comparing Egypt to today, much like our world today, Egypt was not without its own splendor

and glory. It had an advanced culture and a splendid civilization. It was rich in the arts and the sciences. Its religion was a strange mixture of gross idolatry, advanced theology, so to speak, and occult mystery. But Egypt always typifies the world. And, of course, we live in a world, and we're immersed in this world. And God calls Egypt a type of the world.

Now the means whereby deliverance was going to be given to the Israelites - God told Moses, He said to him, "Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying: 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household' " (Exodus 12:3). " 'That lamb,' " He said, " 'shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight' " (Exodus 12:5-6). Now, this event that Moses instructed the Israelites to do had no precedence, so to speak. They had never celebrated Passover before. They had never killed a lamb for the purpose of the Passover. So what they were about to do would take a real step of faith. Picture yourself. Say that someone came to the door saying to you, "Take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses" (Exodus 12:7). Imagine that taking place at your house! How would you respond? And I can almost picture it. "Well, what good would that do? Why would I do that? That's the most illogical thing I can think of! Why would I do that?" Well, certainly it would have to take a real step of faith because, furthermore, they were told that on that particular night, that fourteenth day of the first month, there would be this death angel who would come and go over Egypt and slay all the firstborn of every family - every family except for those families who did what Moses told them to do and to slay that Passover lamb and apply its blood accordingly. Now after the Passover, when the death angel began to slay the firstborn (finally, after those ten plagues), Pharaoh finally gave permission for the Israelites (the people) to go; but not without opposition, as Pharaoh and his army began to pursue after the Israelites. But you know, even in that time when the Israelites were fleeing out of Egypt, God protected His people by giving them a protection or separation. God guarded them by obstructing the foe who was trying to follow them because we're told (in Exodus 14:19-20), "And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. So it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night." So here was God protecting His

people, and the armies of Pharaoh were not able even to pursue after them because they couldn't see anything up ahead. So God separated the people from the armies of Pharaoh. Now, as the Egyptians pursued the Israelites, so the world is relentless in pursuing after us, trying to draw us back into the world. Well the Egyptians, of course, didn't want the Hebrews to leave because they were forced labor and a great benefit to the nation; and so they wanted them back. Well the world does the same thing with us, does it not? When God rescues us from the world, the world comes after us in so many different ways, trying to draw us back into the world. But that pillar of cloud and that fire separated the Israelites from the Egyptians. So God protected them. So that night, having spoiled the Egyptians, Israel marched out of Egypt. The journey to Canaan, the Promised Land, had begun.

However, not all of those who came out of Egypt that night were blood-bought Hebrews. A motley crowd of adventurers seized this opportunity, we're told, to win freedom from the irksome circumstances of Egypt. And so we're told in Exodus 12:38, "A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds - a great deal of livestock." So here the world kind of mixed in with the Israelites. And so often the world does that with us as well because it wants to infiltrate those who follow the Lord. Later on we're told this same multitude, that mixed multitude, infected the faith of the Israelites and prompted them to grumble and complain. We read in Numbers 11:4 these words, "Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: 'Who will give us meat to eat?' " But it all started with this mixed multitude complaining and grumbling. And so when we associate with the people of the world, so often we become very susceptible to their grumbling and complaining, do we not? So we must protect ourselves from those bad and evil influences that come from without.

So we see that separation continuing here because we're told, "Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left" (Exodus 14:21-22). Now, as they moved through that dry ground and that Red Sea, Pharaoh's army also pursued because we read further, "Now it came to pass, in the morning watch, that that LORD looked down upon the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud, and He troubled the army of the Egyptians.

And He took off their chariot wheels, so that they drove them with difficulty; and the Egyptians said, 'Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians' " (Numbers 14:24-25). I hope the Lord has a video of that; I would like to see that someday. That would be awesome to see that taking place. So we find also that, "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back upon the Egyptians, on their chariots, and on their horsemen.' And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and when the morning appeared, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing into it. So the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea" (Exodus 14:26-27). Now, the importance of the parting of the Red Sea is that one event in the final act of God delivering His people from the slavery in Egypt. The exodus from Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea is the single greatest act of salvation in the Old Testament, and it is continually recalled to represent God's saving power. Now how does that apply to us? Well, throughout the history of the church, there is this anti-type of the Passover and the crossing of the Red Sea where people get saved by placing their faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ and subsequently are water baptized. Symbolically, in baptism they proclaim that their old life of bondage to sin is behind them and represented by the going down into the water, and their coming up out of the water depicts their new life in Jesus Christ.

Now, once saved and baptized, believers enter onto a road of sanctification, a road filled with many purifying trials that contribute to a growing faith and a love for the Lord. Peter would write these words, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6-7). I've often said for love to be proven, it has to be tested. We say we love the Lord, but do we really? And so often the Lord will put us to the test to find out if we really do believe what we say. Through the years when I was on staff here at Morningstar, I would do pre-marital counseling, and we would take couples through several weeks of counseling and so on like that; and finally, when it was all done, I would look at the couple straight in the eye, and I would say, "Do you love each other?" And they'd think, "Well, this is a stupid question. That's why we're getting married!" But I would use it as a leading question because I would say to them, "I sincerely hope that you do love each other, but your love is yet to be proven. But I promise you you'll have many opportunities to prove your love - time and time and time again - because you'll have

all these tests to look forward to." So, before love can be proven, it has to be tested. And that's what Peter's basically saying here.

Now, going back to that exodus journey, the most direct route to the Promised Land was right along the Mediterranean, all the way to the land of Canaan; and that would be a rather short venture, so to speak - just maybe three or four days, and they would have been there. And so it would make logical sense that the LORD would just lead them along the Mediterranean Sea and, boom!, they would be in the land of Canaan. But that didn't happen that way. Why? In order for God to protect His people, God did not lead them along that route because the Israelites would have encountered the Philistines who lived in that area. We're told in Exodus 13:17-18, "Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, 'Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt.' So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt." Now from this we learn that sometimes God takes us through the long way around in order to protect us, to keep us from danger. Many times we cry out to Him when we face trials, but the answer doesn't come right away because God is working out a greater plan than we see at the moment, and so we just have to trust Him. Now, forty years later Moses would remind the people of the route that God chose for them and the reason why. He said, in Deuteronomy 8:2, "And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not." So, doesn't the Lord so often do that with us? He puts us in the classroom. "Okay, you say that you love Me, you say that you trust Me, you say that you believe Me. So I'm going to put you in the classroom and give you a test." And sometimes we grumble and complain at the test. But nonetheless, God has a purpose and a plan through it all.

So off they go - not going directly towards Canaan; somewhat in the opposite direction. And so here the LORD sends them now to that first stopping-off point, the place called Marah. So we're told in Exodus 15:22-23, "So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah." Now recall, too, that after Jesus started His public ministry, what happened? Well, we're told that the Holy Spirit

led Him into the wilderness, and there He was for forty days and forty nights. Before He launched His ministry, He too had to go into the wilderness like these folks here. So here Jesus was led into the wilderness - a place where there was no food. Well, these people now are finding that they are having a great lack - no water. So Moses, we're told, as he led them out, they went to this Wilderness of Shur, and we're told, "And the people complained against Moses, saying, 'What shall we drink?' So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There Moses made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there God tested them" (Exodus 15:24-25). So the people, first of all, complained. Now we'll be seeing this word quite frequently here in the words to come. But we're told also, "there He tested them." He tested them. My wife and I, Marilyn and I, are very much involved in a ministry here at Morningstar called Christ & Cancer. And we have a lot of folks because cancer's kind of an epidemic situation now, and so we have a lot of folks that are going through cancer and cancer treatment. And my wife went through that several years back, and I still remember being with her when that diagnosis was given to her, "You have cancer," that dreaded "C" word. Well, it was a test. All of these situations, all these circumstances, are a test by God. And so the LORD purposely put these people in a place where the water was undrinkable in order to test them. And God often allows a bitter experience to confront us at the outset of any new venture for Him because He wants us to trust Him. He wants us to trust Him.

Now, the solution to the problem of the bitter water was very simple. God just simply told Moses, "Cast a tree into the waters," which, upon his obedience, were instantly and miraculously made sweet. Now, that doesn't make a whole lot of sense. How would throwing a tree into the water turn it to be sweet water? But nonetheless that's exactly what happened. And so the tree, of course, is a well-known symbol of the cross. Moses directed them (in type) to Calvary, and all of our bitter experiences will be made sweet when we accept them in the light of the sufferings of Christ. The cross is God's provision for every single trial. So, recall that when man was originally created, he was put into a garden called Eden, and in that garden, there was that tree of life. But when man sinned, he was barred from partaking of that tree. But notice what we read here further. Peter writes (concerning Jesus), "who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed" (1 Peter 2:24). So notice that Peter refers to that cross as a tree, and he says, "by whose stripes you were healed." Is God still doing miracles today? He

certainly is. If you know the Lord Jesus Christ, and you've been saved, that's a miracle. The greatest miracle that a believer can ever experience is that eternal healing of the deadly disease of sin, which has affected us all. But the solution, the remedy, the prescription, is always found at the cross because that's where sin was dealt with.

So, going back to Egypt, off the people go again to the next stopping-off point, this time to Elim. And we're told (in Exodus 15:27), "Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters." So God led them to an oasis, this oasis called Elim. Well, you know, the Lord often gives us a time of rest after He allows trials so that we can be refreshed and nourished and then prepared for the next great trial. Such was the case of the early church after facing the persecution for their faith because we're told in Acts 9:31, "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied." Now I've noticed that God has this particular pattern throughout all of His creation, and I find that God often provides relief and deliverance from trials so that we can be refreshed and stabilized for future trials. We can see this pattern in the plant world. Here (on the overhead screen), we see a rose grow for a while and then rest a while, then grow a while and then rest for a little while. And if you were to take a time-lapse record of growing things in your garden or something like that, you'd see this same pattern over and over again. Those of you who have had young children, you perhaps have known times when suddenly they are eating you out of house and home. Why? They're going through a growth spurt, right? And then they kind of stabilize, and they back away from having such a great appetite until the next time. Well that is a pattern that I see throughout all of God's creation. He puts us in a situation where we're forced to grow. But after we go through that time, then He just pulls back a little bit and allows us to stabilize.

Going back to the exodus journey, we're told thus it was that the Hebrews came to Elim where there was plenty of water and where seventy palm trees raised their branches in triumph to the sky. Notice this - the people took this experience for granted. They had murmured at Marah, but they did not give thanks at Elim. Aren't we like that so often? You know, we get into a situation, we cry out to the Lord, He delivers us, and then He brings us to a place of rest and peace, and we don't even think about Him. We just kind of go on, cruising our own way, without giving Him any notice whatsoever.

The next stopping-off point, we're told, is the Wilderness of Sin. Interesting name. Now, we're told, before the people had been thirsty there at Marah; now they were hungry, and again they turn bitterly upon Moses, murmuring against him and Aaron for bringing them into the wilderness. Now, for the first time, they wish themselves back into Egypt; and how soon they forgot the taskmasters and the tombs that once loomed so large. How appetizing the flesh pots of Egypt seemed in retrospect. God had brought His people into the wilderness expressly to teach them that what this world has to offer cannot feed those who are Canaan-bound. So, in spite of much murmuring and complaining, God graciously provided, in the barren wilderness, bread from heaven that they called manna. Again, the Lord so often takes us into the wilderness where there're no seemingly human solutions. Maybe we lose our job. Maybe we even lose our home. There's no way we can pay our bills. And with health care somewhat on the centerpiece of our news today, so often people are having a struggle just trying to make payments for medical bills and things like that. So the LORD took these people and put them in the wilderness where there was no water, there was no food. Why? To test them for sure. But more than that - so that He could demonstrate to them that they serve a God who has no hindrances, no limitations whatsoever, as we'll see here. Because suddenly the LORD caused this food to come floating down out of the sky, this thing that they called manna. And so God's grace came through once again. Did they deserve it? Not after all their complaining. But God graciously provided that for them, as He'll do that same for us. Now, that manna that God provided was provided in order to sustain the people over a brief period of time until they reached the Promised Land. It was never intended to satisfy the appetites of the people. It was going to be just a temporary provision for them for this short journey through the wilderness - until they reached the Promised Land. But the rest of the story tells us that, because of unbelief (found in Numbers 14), a generation of people was not permitted to enter Canaan; but instead they were consigned to a meager life of daily manna and wandering that lasted for forty years. There in Exodus 16, we find these words (over several verses, there in that same chapter), "Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness" (verse 2). " 'And in the morning,' " Moses said, " 'you shall see the glory of the LORD; for He hears your complaints against the LORD. But what are we,' " Moses said, " 'that you complain against us?' Also Moses said, 'This shall be seen when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the LORD hears your complaints which you make against Him. And what are we? Your complaints are not against us

but against the LORD.' Then Moses spoke to Aaron, 'Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, "Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your complaints" (verses 7-9). " "I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel,' the LORD said. 'Speak to them, saying, "At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I am the LORD your God" ' " (verses 11-12). So again we have a reminder that God puts us in those places of testing so that He could demonstrate His power to us, and we can learn through that. But know this, "Your complaints are not against us but against the LORD," Moses said. So, when we find ourselves in situations that tend to prompt us to grumble and to complain, who are we really complaining against? When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he said this, "Do all things without complaining and disputing." How much? "All things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life....." (Philippians 2:14-16). The Lord is really working on me on that. I guess one of the challenges I have as I get older is I tend to get very cynical and get very rigid. Any of you have that kind of a problem? Especially I have that problem when I'm driving a lot. "That stupid idiot! Look what he's done!" (Laughing) And I kind of do that under my breath. But the Lord put me on that freeway or in situations to test me, and I'm trying to remember that. "Okay, Lord. I just have to hand it all over to you" because I'm told to do how much? All things, all things without complaining or disputing. But so often, boy, do we not get caught up in something that doesn't please us, or we don't like this or that, and we begin to grumble and to complain.

Now we have a great example to follow - that is the example of Jesus. Peter says this, "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps, who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:21,23). So here Jesus was put into a very difficult situation. He was threatened, He was reviled and even crucified. So how did He respond? Did He complain? No! What did He do? He basically committed everything into the hands of the Father, basically saying, "Father, You see what's going on. You can take care of this. May Your will be done." And He left it at that. And we need to do the same thing. Let our heavenly Father be the Judge over all of our matters. Let Him be the One who determines the outcome and keep us from griping and complaining. In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Paul says, "In everything give thanks." How much? Everything. Right? Everything! Does that include

everything? Yeah. "In everything give thanks." You want to know the will of God? Well, you can know it right here, right? "For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." We should be the most thankful people on the planet. Right? Everything we look at, we see grace, God's goodness given to us. And we can be thankful. We can even be thankful for trials because we know that the Lord is the Author and the Finisher of our faith, and He's orchestrating a trial specifically for us. And so we can be thankful even in trials. In Colossians 3:17, Paul said, "And whatever you do in word or deed," (word or action) "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." So, the Lord has given us marching orders, has He not. Not grumbling, not complaining, but rather being thankful for all things.

Now, going back to the Israelites, their next stopping-off point is Rephidim, and we're told when they arrived there, "Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the LORD, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink" (Exodus 17:1). So, another crisis. Now, they've already seen some great miracles, right? You would think by this time these people would say, "We've seen our God do almost everything. We shouldn't complain at all because He has a solution. Somehow, some way, He'll give us water." But what happened? Well, here's Moses. And we're told (Exodus 17:3-4), "And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, 'Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?' So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, 'What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!' " So I'm thinking being a pastor is not always the greatest profession, you know? Here's Moses. Boy, oh boy, he's really being tested and tried. But we read further (Exodus 17:5-6), "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand your rod with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.' And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." Now kind of picture this. You have this huge, maybe granite, rock. And you watch Moses, and he goes up there, and he strikes that rock, and out of that solid piece of granite (or whatever it is) comes this huge, gushing current of water - enough water to feed maybe a million and a half people, plus all their livestock. Now wouldn't you come to the conclusion, "Our God can do everything and anything"? "He'll take care of us." Look at the demonstration here! But God had a purpose in all of that. We're told that "they drank of that spiritual

Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). So Jesus was right there with Moses, and He was the One that caused the water to come out of that rock. So this is a beautiful illustration of the type that we have in Jesus Christ. We notice in 1 Corinthians 10:4 that "that Rock was Christ." Now, keeping in view the many complaints that characterized the children of Israel, we must remember too that God will also permit us to go through difficult times in order to test our faith and love for Him. In every situation, we're given the following promise: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). So I often tell people, "What you're going through is not something that's beyond your ability, and we're told that God has promised an escape route out. So we need to look for that escape route because it's there. You just have to find it."

Going back to Exodus - as the people continue on with their journey, we're told in Exodus 17:8, "Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim." Now, these Amalekites were a group of desert nomads. They were known as the Amalekites, who were the descendants of Esau. Now we're told that they came up from behind the traveling Israelites, and they started attacking the weak and elderly people traveling at the back of the convoy. And so here they were, coming behind and attacking them, and we're told forty years later Moses reminded the people of this very incident, and he said how the Amalekites attacked the people while they were on their journey. So he said (in Deuteronomy 25:17-18), " 'Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God.' " Well, Amalek always is a type of the flesh, that old sin nature that you and I were born with. And the enemy always comes against us, trying to attack the flesh. When I was sharing the other night with the Christ & Cancer people, when people go through treatment and so forth, their immune system is hit very hard, they lose a lot of strength and energy, and they become weak. And so often, that's when the enemy really seeks to do great damage as he infiltrates their thoughts and minds and so forth. "God, it's not fair. Why am I going through this?" So he's always looking for those weak moments, when he can get in through the flesh. Now, again, the Amalekites were a type of the flesh, our old sin nature, and it is this sin nature that is vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy. Satan can only attack through the flesh. Our spiritual life, that part of us that is eternal, cannot be touched by the enemy because Paul said,

"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16). And we're told by John, in 1 John 4:4, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." If you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you have the Holy Spirit in you. He's God! Satan is no match for the Holy Spirit. That's why we need to walk in the Spirit all the time. Then we'll live that victorious life that Jesus died for us to have because "greater is He," the Holy Spirit in us, "than he who is in the world."

Well, there were many other trials that the children of Israel had to face (each one, of course, being a test), such as the golden calf incident at Sinai, as we read there in Exodus 32. And, as such, there were a total of ten rebellions that took place in the wilderness. Interesting. The same number of plagues that God poured out over the Egyptians. But the greatest trial that took place after hearing the reconnaissance report of the twelve spies that were sent to spy out the land, was when they were at the border of the land of Canaan, they believed those ten spies over the testimony of the two. And that was their greatest trial right there. Because of unbelief, that original generation that came out of Egypt was consigned to forty years of wandering in the wilderness, resulting in a life of no purpose. Now, I believe that this generation that came out of Egypt was saved in an Old-Testament sense. After all, by faith they had to slay that Passover lamb and apply that blood. And so they were under the blood. We're told in Hebrews 9:22, "without shedding of blood there is no remission" of sin. And so they were under the blood. But they disobeyed God by not believing Him, and, as a result, they were consigned to this forty years of wandering. Because of unbelief. Because they did not believe God's promise. Therefore they were not allowed to enter the Promised Land.

Well, through the years I've known of many folks who have spent their lives wandering in their own wilderness, all because they have not taken God at His Word. Or they failed to turn loose of the past. Some situation happened in the past that just left them bitter, and they hold on to that bitterness. And, as a result, their life is just miserable, and they complain, and they complain, and they complain because they can't turn loose of the past. They are saved because they are blood-bought, but they never got to experience that Spirit-filled victorious life that Jesus has promised for them to have.

Additionally, we're told that a second Passover was observed there at the base of Mount Sinai before proceeding on to Canaan. This is before their ultimate rebellion took place. But you know what? As you read through the account in Exodus, and also Numbers, there's no record of the people ever observing the required Passover - ever again - during those forty years of wandering. Moreover, we're told that there was no keeping of the law of circumcision because it's not until you get into Joshua in chapter 5 that the people once again kept that rite as recorded there in the book of Joshua.

Well, every believer is either enjoying the blessings of a Spirit-filled life or living carnally in the wilderness. That first generation of Israelites spent forty years walking in circles, having to live off of the provision of manna that was designed to be only a temporary provision. They came so close to entering that Promised Land, but they never made it. As I say, there are many believers today that are just like these Israelites of old. They occasionally maybe have some Bible study. They occasionally get to church. They show up at prayer meetings whenever they encounter some catastrophe. Such individuals the Bible calls carnal Christians. In the end, they miss out on the victorious Christian life that Jesus has provided. As I say, there are many like that, and, through the years of being a pastor, I have dealt with many people in that same kind of a situation. They absolutely are going nowhere. I believe in a sense they are saved, but they never get to experience the fruitful, abundant life that Jesus has promised.

Now we're told (1 Corinthians 3:12-15) that one day all believers will appear before Jesus in what is known as the judgment seat of Christ. And it is at that time that all believers' earthly works will be tried and judged. The result will either be gold, silver and precious stones or wood, hay and stubble. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). Now Paul, there in 1 Corinthians 3, will point out that those whose works turn out to be wood, hay and stubble will be saved, but they'll have no reward. And I'm thinking that should we face the Lord in a situation like that, it will be probably the greatest embarrassment of all, the greatest shame of all because we've come so short by not allowing Jesus to accomplish His work in and through our lives in bringing forth that fruit that would honor and glorify Him.

So, we come to this final question of application. Where are you? Are you in Canaan or the wilderness? Now, Canaan is a type as well. It's not a type of heaven. It's a type of that victorious Spirit-filled life that Jesus has provided for us, that life of great victory, that life of peace. When the children of Israel were told to cross the Jordan River, the LORD would repeatedly say to them, "I'll go before you. I'll fight your enemies for you, but you'll have to go into the land and possess the land." In fact, that first battle there at Jericho - what did the people do? All they did was march and blow trumpets, right? God fought the battle. And He does the same for us. But we have to be willing to be obedient and follow Him. So, as believers, we're either in Canaan enjoying that glorious life that Jesus died for us to have, that abundant life, or we're just wandering around in circles in the wilderness. And so we have to look at the application here and ask ourselves - where are we? Are we in Canaan or the wilderness?

Now, there's a third place as well. Before the children of Israel could leave Egypt, they had to slay that Passover lamb and apply that blood. For those who did not do that, of course, they lost their firstborn. But they would have lost any chance at any kind of salvation. Now, as we saw earlier, Jesus is our Passover. He shed His blood for us. And before we can get into Canaan, we have to apply His blood. And how do we do that? We're told, "For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). "Whoever." That's anybody. "Whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." You see, Jesus shed His blood and paid the price for our sin. Oh, we still sin as believers, but His sacrifice was perfect. He's not going to go back a second or third or fourth or fifth time. It was a perfect sacrifice. And He paid the price of our sin - our past sin, our present sin, and our future sin. And because He's paid that price, now He offers forgiveness to erase that debt of sin completely and forever. Have you gone to Jesus and applied His blood to your life? Have you gone to Him and, looking at the cross, asked Him to forgive you, telling Him that you want to be born again and brought into His kingdom? And maybe you've done that, but you're still struggling, maybe holding on to something from the past. I've known of so many people through the years where they went through some trauma, some terrible experience, and, as a result, they just get angry with God. They get mad at God. And I'll often say to them, "Okay, how does that help you? Being angry with God, what benefits does that give you?" Certainly none. Let God be God. "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose," (Romans 8:28) we're told. All things. Not some things. All things. So God puts us in the classroom, or He puts us in a situation in the wilderness where He wants to test our

love and our faith. How are you doing with those tests? This is a question I have to ask myself continually.

My goal, and it should be everyone's goal, and many of you have heard me say this - I want to one day finish well. I want to cross that finish line that the Lord has up ahead of me and finish well. Someday, I'll come before my Lord, and I want Him to say, "Well done, good and faithful servant.....enter into the joy of your Lord" (Matthew 25:21). Sin will make us short-sighted. It won't allow us to see that finish line. We'll only be living for the moment and not for the future. We need to live for the future every day. John would say, there in 1 John 3:3, "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." By having that hope constantly being stirred in our hearts, it will prompt us to live a holy and a pure life before the Lord so that one day we'll be pleasing in His sight.

Our heavenly Father, we thank You so much for giving us this amazing revelation of truth, all because of the love that You have for us. And even though we went back in time, many centuries, yet Father we see the experiences of these ancient Israelites to be lessons that we can apply to our lives today. Forgive us of those many times when we don't represent You to this world by grumbling and complaining because of our circumstance. And how I pray, Father, for us all that we might rise above those times and be those shining lights for the world to see, that we could be so very different. Every day we're confronted with the fact that we now live in an age and a world where there's a lot of grumbling and complaining. We hear protests taking place all over our nation today. And so we see, Lord, a cross section of our society and that place where You have placed us, and oh, how we could be really shining lights and represent You well before this very dark nation where we live; that the light of Jesus would shine through us. For people who are all around us, so blinded, so that through that light that they might be able to see, they might see Jesus in us. And Father I pray for anyone here this evening who has not given their life to You, who at this very moment are not sure where they stand before You, that they would take advantage of this opportunity to get things right before You, that they would come to Jesus, call upon His wonderful name, knowing that He is standing and waiting, giving forth that invitation, "Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, I will give You rest." So, Father, you see all of our hearts, you see our needs, you see that work that needs to be done. And I pray tonight that, with willing hearts, we will allow You to effect that work and that change that You want to bring about in our lives. In Jesus' name.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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