

## There's Only One Way To The Promised Land

**Job 23:8-10** Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

- Is this your heart's cry? You long to hear from God but all you sense is silence. In frustration, you remember the time you merely whispered His name and His presence was immediately there. Now in the stillness you want to shout, "God, where are You?" Welcome to the wilderness!
- You are in good company ... Moses, Joseph, David, Job, Jesus. The procession of travelers is long, for the wilderness is a necessary season in the life of every child of God. It cannot be bypassed, for the Promised Land cannot be reached without passing through the wilderness! **There's only one way to the Promised Land!** So, since we cannot avoid the wilderness, let's try to understand it.

**1 Chronicles 12:32** And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.

**Ecclesiastes 3:1** To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

**Luke 12:56** Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

- Jesus rebuked the multitudes because they looked for the wrong thing at the wrong time. A farmer must understand the purpose of the seasons in order for his crop to benefit fully from God's plan.
- Many Christians behave without wisdom when they enter the wilderness season; in constantly searching for an escape route, they unwittingly prolong their time in the wilderness. **Because there's only one way to the Promised Land!**
- The wilderness is not negative for those who obey God! God's purpose in leading Israel to the wilderness was to test, train and prepare them to be sanctified warriors. But instead, the Israelites erroneously perceived the wilderness as punishment, so they murmured, complained and lusted constantly. What was to have been a brief wilderness journey became a lifetime experience.

### 1. The wilderness is not a sign of God's disapproval.

**Luke 4:1** And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan (AFTER HIS BAPTISM), and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.

*A wilderness is not God's rejection of you but his preparation of you!*

### 2. God works in our lives all the way through the wilderness.

#### **DAYENU**

*(TRANSLATION: It would have been enough – OR – We couldn't have asked for more – OR – We could have died content)*

If He had brought us out from Egypt, and had not carried out judgments against them, DAYENU.

If He had carried out judgments against them, and not against their idols, DAYENU.

If He had destroyed their idols, and had not smitten their firstborn, DAYENU.

If He had smitten their firstborn, and had not given us their wealth, DAYENU.

If He had given us their wealth, and had not split the sea for us, DAYENU.

If He had split the sea for us, and had not taken us through it on dry land, DAYENU.

If He had taken us through the sea on dry land, and had not drowned our oppressors in it, DAYENU.

If He had drowned our oppressors in it, and had not supplied our needs in the desert for forty years, DAYENU.

If He had supplied our needs in the desert for forty years, and had not fed us the manna, DAYENU.

If He had fed us the manna, and had not given us the Sabbath, DAYENU.

If He had given us the Sabbath, and had not brought us before Mount Sinai, DAYENU.

If He had brought us before Mount Sinai, and had not given us the Law, DAYENU.

If He had given us the Law, and had not brought us into the land of Israel, DAYENU.

If He had brought us into the land of Israel, and had not built for us the Temple, DAYENU.

**Deuteronomy 8:2** 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 was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

### **All The Way My Savior Leads Me**

*Fanny (Frances) Jane Crosby, 1820-1915*

All the way my savior leads me; What have I to ask beside?  
Can I doubt His tender mercy, Who thro' life has been my guide?  
Heav'nly peace divinest comfort, Here by faith in Him to dwell!  
For I know whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well;  
For I know whate'er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well.

All the way my Savior leads me; Cheers each winding path I tread,  
Gives me grace for ev'ry trial, Feeds me with the living bread;  
Tho' my weary steps may falter, And my soul athirst may be,  
Gushing from the Rock before me, Lo! a spring of joy I see;  
Gushing from the Rock before me, Lo! a spring of joy I see.

All the way, my Savior leads me; Oh, the fullness of His love!  
Perfect rest to me is promised, In my Father's house above:  
When my spirit, clothed immortal, Wings its flight to realms of day,  
This my song thro' endless ages: Jesus led me all the way;  
This my song thro' endless ages: Jesus led me all the way.

**Lamentations 3:22-23** It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

**Psalm 103:1-5** Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

### **DAYENU!**

If He had walked with me through every day of my life, but let my friends all forsake me, DAYENU.

If He had built me a mansion in Heaven, but let my home here burn to the ground, DAYENU.

If He had given me His precious promises, but let me live in poverty all my life, DAYENU.

If He had saved my soul, but never healed my body, DAYENU.

If He had forgiven all my sin, but never blessed me again, DAYENU.

If He had filled me with the Holy Ghost, but never let me feel His presence ever again, DAYENU.

### **3. The wilderness is not a place of defeat to those who trust God.**

Under instruction from the Lord, Israel defeated the Amorites (Number 21), the Midianites (Numbers 31), and the people of Bashan (Numbers 21) while wandering in the wilderness. If God's purpose was for them to experience defeat, He wouldn't have told them to defend their position!

Just because God isn't giving you the miracle you want doesn't mean He is not working miracles on your behalf! And don't let your personal situation slow down what God wants to do in your church!

### **The Biggest Mathematical Miracle In The World**

- 3 million Israelites in the wilderness
- 1500 tons of food daily (2 freight trains, each a mile long)
- 4000 tons of firewood daily (a few more freight trains)
- 11,000,000 gallons of water daily (a freight train with tank cars 1800 miles long)
- to cross the Red Sea in one night required a space 3 miles wide so they could walk 5000 abreast)
- a campground 2/3 the size of Rhode Island every night
- and they were 40 years (14,610 days) in transit!

Israel murmured because God didn't give them what they wanted! **But in the wilderness, you receive what you NEED (daily bread), not what you WANT.** God sometimes only provides what you need to survive. We call this "LACK," but our wants are not needs! Neither should a season of "abundance" be viewed as God's "carte blanche"!

**Deuteronomy 8:3** 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 proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

Israel never missed a meal, but it was the same menu for 40 years! Their clothes and shoes never wore out, but their wardrobe was quite outdated after 40 years! And the scenery stayed the same every single day! That's how God tests us - we get only what our flesh NEEDS, not what it WANTS. They were HUNGRY because God had removed what they DESIRED. When they kept murmuring, He finally gave it to them, but allowed them to suffer the consequences.

**Psalm 106:13-15** They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel: But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

God still wants to know whether His people will seek His face (relationship) or just His hand (provision). If you seek only His hand, you may not recognize His face. Many people are happy as long as they get what they want from God, but upon entering dry times, the motive of their hearts is revealed. Anytime the focus is self, complaining begins. Paul understood this principle of “need vs. want.”

**Philippians 4:11-13** Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

There is a reason for your wilderness, which you perceive as the absence of His presence. God is preparing a new wineskin (you!) for a fresh move of His Spirit!

**Luke 5:37-39** And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

Wineskins in Jesus' day were made of sheepskin, which were flexible and pliable when the wine was first put in. They stretched easily and would yield without resistance. However, as the years went by, the atmosphere would absorb all the moisture out of the wineskin, leaving it brittle and hard. Now if the wine was poured out and new wine poured in, the skin could handle neither the weight of the new wine nor the fermentation process, because it was now rigid and brittle and could break easily. What they did was soak the skin in water for several days and then rub olive oil on it. That made it flexible and pliable again. But in order to rejuvenate the old wineskin, they had to pour out the old wine! That meant no wine in the vessel - no tangible presence of God! A wilderness! The reason God withdraws His presence is to cause you to seek Him, for seeking makes you flexible and pliable again, ready for a move of His Spirit!

No man who is used to the good taste of the old wine will immediately desire the new wine. Therefore, God allows us to go through a period of NO WINE! We then become very thirsty for the NEW WINE!

**Psalms 63:1-2** O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

**There's only one way to the Promised Land!** Through the wilderness!