

Life In The Wilderness

Introduction. When we think of the wilderness wanderings, mostly we think of the sins of Israel, but God's actions toward the Israelites were very upright. In Deuteronomy 8, Moses described life in the wilderness. This entire chapter is one long exhortation to obedience based upon God's mercy and goodness in His dealings with Israel.

One comforting facet of God is His reliability. God has not changed in all these many centuries (Malachi 3:6). He treated the Israelites with mercy and goodness, therefore we can expect the same living under this new dispensation (Hebrews 13:8).

Deuteronomy 8:1 sets the tone for the entire chapter. If the Israelites were obedient to God, He would bless them. Even though they were rebellious and stiff-necked, He continued to be merciful and compassionate. God's patience with Israel finally ended with their captivities, but He had blessed them all through their history.

I. ***It Was A Life Guided By God***

- A. Deuteronomy 8:2 states that God had led Israel in the wilderness. He led them by day with a pillar of cloud and by night with a pillar of fire so that they may travel at all hours (Exodus 13:21).
- B. How blessed is the divine guidance of God! We do not have this miraculous manifestation of pillars of cloud and fire today, but what we do have is the most sufficient guide man could ever have. We are now lead by God through His holy word, the Bible (Psalm 119:97, 105). Deuteronomy 8:3 states, "Man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord." Jesus used this very verse when Satan was tempting Him in the wilderness (Matthew 4:4).
- C. Romans 10:17 tells us that faith comes by hearing the word of God. For many today, this method is just too plain and unappealing. They would rather believe in the false notion that the Holy Spirit dwells directly in the heart. However, the Holy Spirit can only dwell in our hearts through the medium of the word of God.
- D. After the Lord lost some of His disciples because they would not accept His teaching, He asked the twelve if they wanted to leave too. Simon Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life" (John 6:68). These words of life will guide us to God (Psalm 119:9-10; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

II. ***It Was A Life Of Humility Before God***

- A. Deuteronomy 8:2 says that God led the children of Israel through the wilderness wanderings so that He might humble them. Anyone familiar with the story of the Israelites knows of their transgressions at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 32:1-35).
- B. Because of this sin, God was compelled to humble them. He had to put them into the position whereby they would allow God to hold first place in their hearts and minds. Oh, how we need humility! The Lord was the perfect demonstration of humility (Matthew 11:29; John 13:1-15; Philippians 2:5-11).
- C. How many problems in the church do you think are caused by a lack of humility? I bet if you were totally honest and thought of all the problems which had ever occurred in a congregation, the biggest majority would be tied to people wanting to have their own way. We need to be humble (James 4:6, 10).
- D. Someone once said, "Humility is a virtue that everyone preaches, no one practices, and yet everyone is content to hear. The master thinks it is good teaching for the servant to hear; the preacher thinks it is good teaching for the congregation to hear; and the congregation thinks it is good teaching for the preacher to hear!" Ultimately, God's humbling of His servants are for their good (Deuteronomy 8:16).

III. ***It Was A Life Sustained By God***

- A. The Lord had fed His people manna and gave them water in the wilderness so that they might survive (Deuteronomy 8:3, 15). The sustenance of their life was as miraculous as their salvation which God had so graciously provided.
- B. The Lord is just as determined to sustain His people today. In John 6:31-35, Jesus said He was the bread of life. This bread is not a physical loaf, but is the spiritual sustenance which redeems us from the bondage of sin (Ephesians 1:7-8) and promises us a crown of life in eternity for those who are faithful (Revelation 2:10).
- C. God has promised us long ago that there would be this provision in Christ and He has fulfilled His promises (Genesis 12:1-3; Hebrews 6:13-18). If we are the vilest of sinners but are willing to trust and obey, God will fulfill His promise in our lives and wipe away our sins.

IV. ***It Was A Life Of Hope In God***

- A. In Deuteronomy 8:7-9, Moses recites a description of the good land that lay before the Israelites. Their ancestors had murmured

and sinned against God all those years and kept them out of the promised land, but now it was time for them to remember God and His commandments (Deuteronomy 8:11). It was time for them to forget what lay behind and press on to what lies ahead.

- B. We must learn the same lesson. Our God is a God of hope (Romans 15:3). Our entire lives should be built upon hope in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. When this earthly pilgrimage is over, we shall receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls (1 Peter 1:3-9).
- C. In Paul's life, hope was perhaps his most forceful influence (Philippians 3:12-14). He had learned to conquer all of life's circumstances so that what remained was a pure hope in God. He even described the Christian's hope as an "anchor of the soul" and was "sure and steadfast" (Hebrews 6:19-20). This hope pierced the veil of heaven itself and stands as the fulfillment of a promise which God made long ago (Titus 1:1-3).

V. ***It Was A Life Of Praise To God***

- A. Deuteronomy 8:10 commands the Israelites to bless the Lord for the land He has given to them. The land of Canaan would fully satisfy their needs. When they enjoyed the harvest of the crop or the fruit of the vine, they would know it was from God and it must be to God that they direct their praise.
- B. The child of God who has been forgiven of sins and shown mercy and compassion must, above all others, give praise to God for His wonderful grace (Psalm 103:1-5; Hebrews 13:15).
- C. Those who are ungrateful for what they receive are abominable in the sight of God. Later in the Israelite's history when they turned away from God to serve idols, the prophets rebuked them because God had wonderfully provided for them, but to no avail (Hosea 13:4-6). When the Lord cleansed the ten lepers, only one turned back to praise God for what had been done (Luke 17:17-18). Everything is God's, and we owe it to Him to be grateful (Psalm 24:1).

VI. ***It Was A Life Empowered By God***

- A. Deuteronomy 8:18 states that they must remember God, and they were not to think or imagine that their prosperity had anything to do with their own merit. It was God's grace in keeping with His covenant that had provided for them and it is God's grace that will provide for us and make us what we are (1 Corinthians 15:10).
- B. Have you ever heard anyone say, "I want to be a Christian, but I have struggled with these sins and just cannot beat them?" No

wonder! The power lies, not within ourselves, but within Christ (Galatians 2:20). The secret to living soberly, righteously and godly (Titus 2:12) was found in subduing sinful desires by the law of Christ dwelling in the spirit or inner man (Romans 8:13).

- C. Romans 1:16 says that the gospel is the power of God for salvation. That means it has the power, as it dwells in our hearts, to change the sinner to a saint. A Christian life can be one of power, assurance and victory (John 16:33). Ephesians 3:16 says we are strengthened with might by His Spirit the inner man. As love for the Son of God grows, sin has less luster in our eyes. As we continue to concentrate on Christ, fewer matters in this world can distract us from walking with Him.

Conclusion. Everyday of our lives can have the same loving relationship that God had with Israel. But, Deuteronomy 8:11, 19-20 sternly warns about the necessity of obedience. If you are here and desire of this kind of life, you need to become a Christian. Obey the gospel today or come back to God if you have sinned. The Lord waits to bless you if you will obey.