

Lesson 28 - BITTER WATERS MADE SWEET - *Exodus 15:22-27*

(Exod. 15:1-21) - Moses praised God for delivering the people from the bondage of Egypt. This is the first recorded song (psalm) in the Bible, and it speaks of the glory and power of God. God the Holy Spirit inspired Moses to compose this song of worship as Moses was the deliverer of the nation and was a type of Christ, the Redeemer of His church (spiritual Israel). The people joined in with Moses as they were the persons delivered and typical of the spiritual Israel of God redeemed by Christ. We have seen how the physical deliverance celebrated by the people here bore a great resemblance to the eternal and spiritual redemption accomplished by Christ for His people. Christ, the Angel of the Lord, who went before the Israelites through the Red sea, and fought for them, is the principal Person concerned in it, and who is meant by the Lord throughout the whole of it, and to whom it is sung. And a song upon a similar occasion to this will be sung in the latter day upon the destruction of spiritual Egypt (antichrist) and is called "*the song of Moses*" (*Rev. 15:3*). The deliverance of the physical nation of Israel was all of God and none of it was accomplished by their strength or even their willingness. The salvation of spiritual Israel is all of God, and none of this eternal salvation is accomplished by our strength or our willingness. God is our strength, and He makes us willing in the day of His power.

(Exod. 15:22-23) - "*Shur*" was a desert where there was very little water. And what water they found was "*Marah*" which means "bitter." Recall in the book of Ruth how, upon her return from Moab to Bethlehem, Naomi, whose name means "pleasant," told her friends to call her Mara, which means "bitter." The waters of Marah were not fit to drink and could not quench their thirst. This is a picture of our natural state and habitation in this world as lost in our sins, spiritually depraved and dead. In a spiritual sense, this world is a dead and dry desert where there is no water and no life to save us and sustain us. This is where God brings us to in a spiritual sense to see our need of Christ for salvation and Who is the water of life. Apart from God's power and grace, we would die in this spiritual desert. We may look for water in different places (i.e. religion, materialism, etc.), but there is no water to be found in ourselves or in this world. The reason the Lord exposes our sinfulness and depravity and death is to bring us to Christ for salvation and eternal life.

(Exod. 15:24) - The reaction of the people here is typical of all of us in our natural, sinful, depraved, and spiritually dead state. Left to ourselves, we would always respond to such problems in unbelief as represented here by "*the people murmured against Moses.*" This was, in essence, complaining against God as Moses was God's appointed servant and leader of the people. Moses was only doing what God commanded him to do. This is a good lesson for all of us. If a minister of Christ preaches God's Word, and we complain against him for speaking that Word, we are complaining against God Himself. If one claims to be a minister of Christ but does not preach the Word of God, then we have every right to complain against him. But this was an act of unbelief on Israel's part. Whereas they should have simply cast themselves upon the mercy of God and trust Him to provide for them, they complained.

(Exod. 15:25a) - Moses did what the people should have done - "*He cried unto the LORD.*" This is where the Lord Himself brings all of His chosen people (spiritual Israel) for salvation. He brings us to the end of our ropes and causes us to cry out to Him for help. "*The LORD shewed him a tree*" - Trees are very significant in the Word of God. In *Genesis 2:9* we see the "*tree of life*" and the "*tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*" Christ is the true and only tree of life for His people. As our Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer, He died for us on the cross which is called a tree (*Gal. 3:13*). Christ Himself, and His people as they stand before

God in Him and are given life from Him, are described as “*a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper*” (Psalm 1:3). God’s people are “*called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified*” (Isa. 61:3). The “*tree of life*” in Revelation 22:2,14 is a symbol of Christ Who is the Creator and Giver of life to His people (John 14:6; 11:25; 1 John 5:11-12). This tree that God showed Moses is a picture of Christ Who is Himself the Tree of life for His people. Sin demands death; righteousness demands life. There is no life without Christ because without Him, there is only sin. Without Christ, there is no righteousness. But in Christ, God will not impute sin to His people. In Christ, God has imputed righteousness to His people, and from Christ, Who is their righteousness, God gives them life (Rom. 5:21).

Moses casting the tree into the waters is symbolic of Christ suffering and dying on the cross. The sweetness of Christ on the cross doing the work of a Redeemer is that which saves us from our sins and sustains us amid the experiences of life that are not so good. Out of the bitterness of His death comes the sweetness of righteousness and the sweetness of the Spirit in our new birth. Christ is the water of life for His people, and He said this to His audience as He spoke from the mount - “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled*” (Matt. 5:6). To thirst after the water of life is to thirst after righteousness which can only be found in the glorious Person and finished work of Christ as the Lord our Righteousness. This is a God-given thirst that can only be quenched by God-given faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ also said this to an adulterous woman at Jacob’s well in Samaria as recorded in John 4:1-29. He said it to the weary religionists upon leaving their religious celebration just as empty and thirsty for fulfillment as they were when they started - “*In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*” (John 7:37-38).

(Exod. 15:25b-26) - The Old Covenant law, which Moses was about to receive from the Lord and place upon the nation Israel, was a conditional covenant where God promised them blessings and prosperity as a nation conditioned upon their obedience to all the statutes and ordinances as well as the threat of cursing and punishment if they disobeyed God. Hereby God put them to the test. As we know from the recorded history of the nation under the Old Covenant, they failed miserably to obey God, and they were continually punished by God. However, according to His promise to Abraham and His purpose to bring the Messiah into the world through them, God kept them together until the time He had appointed. This covenant was indicative of the test that all of us have failed, having fallen by Adam into sin and death and having been born spiritually depraved and dead. This proves our own sinfulness and depravity, the impossibility of salvation by our works of the law, and our need of salvation by God’s free and sovereign grace based on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 9:31 –10:4). This is why the law was given (Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:19). Salvation comes to sinners only by the terms of the everlasting covenant of grace conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, the Lord reveals Himself as “*Jehovah-Rapha,*” the Lord Who heals. But His healing only comes through righteousness, and righteousness only comes to sinners through and by Christ (Psalm 103:2-14; Mal. 4:1-2).

(Exod. 15:27) - After the time of testing, God had a time of refreshing for the people of Israel. He knew exactly what they needed, and He knew when to test them and when to rest them.