



Exodus 15:22-27

# GRUMBLING IN THE WILDERNESS

*Can you believe it? I mean, they're saying, "Our God is the true God! Glorious, wonderful, majestic is His name! He's God forever and ever!" And, three days later—not three weeks later, but three days later—they are griping, grouching, complaining, murmuring, criticizing, carping, and finding fault... I want to remind you that they were where they were by the providence of God. Nothing had gone wrong when they got to Marah. They had not sinned. And, when they had got to Marah, God had not failed. They were there in the plan of God, the will of God, and the work of God... Do you know why God brought them to this place of bitterness? It was a place of test... When God gets ready to test you—He's not going to test you in the good times; because that's not a test... Anybody can shout in the sunshine, but can you sing in the shadows? That's the test. The test is not how you behave when it's victory all around. The test is how do you behave when God brings you to bitterness—when God brings you to Marah, where there's no water...*

—Adrian Rogers

Israel is a redeemed people. They have a new identity. They are no longer slaves in Egypt. God has redeemed them by the blood of the lamb and delivered them through the waters of the Red Sea. Now God takes them through the wilderness to teach them to rely upon Him. They are out of Egypt; now God must take Egypt out of them.



## WILDERNESS 101

- Instructor
- Prerequisite
- Textbook
- Tests
- Grades
- Objective

**Wilderness.** Hebrew, *midbar*, “uninhabited land, a desert.”

**Shur** (“wall”) is an arid desert land in the northern region of the Sinai Peninsula, to the east of Egypt.

**Marah.** Hebrew, “bitter” (cf. Gen 27:34; Job 3:20, 7:11, 10:1). In this case, it is perhaps brackish water.

*The exodus pilgrims did not anticipate hardship and what they immediately got rather took them by surprise.*

—J. Alec Motyer

*Their only recourse in a barren land is to trust God completely. And if the Bible teaches us anything about human nature, it is that total trust and obedience are rare even in the most godly person.*

—Peter Enns

*The discipline of the wilderness is needful to make us acquainted with God and with our own hearts, enable us to enter into a stronger relationship, and enlarge our capacity for the enjoyment of Canaan when we actually get there.*

—C. H. McIntosh

**1. God \_\_\_\_\_ us by His grace alone.**

The blood of the lamb points to our salvation in Christ.

The Red Sea miracle points to our identification with Christ.

**2. God \_\_\_\_\_ us by taking us through the wilderness.**

*Remember that the Lord your God led you on the entire journey these forty years in the wilderness, so that He might humble you and test you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands. (Deuteronomy 8:2)*

**3. God \_\_\_\_\_ us by leading us to bitter places.**

The wilderness was a place of great need.

Marah was a place of great \_\_\_\_\_.

**4. God \_\_\_\_\_ us by exposing our hearts.**

Israel praised God in their time of victory and blessing!

Israel \_\_\_\_\_ against Moses (and God) in their time of difficulty and suffering.

- Grumbling reveals our false expectations.
- Grumbling reveals our selfish motivations.
- Grumbling reveals our rebellious inclinations.

**5. God \_\_\_\_\_ us by giving us His Word.**

God's Word reveals His character—He is good!

God's Word reveals His commandments—for our good!

**6. God \_\_\_\_\_ us by showing us the tree.**

The tree is what makes the bitter waters sweet.

The Lord heals us physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

**7. God \_\_\_\_\_ us by bringing us to a place of rest.**

**Murmur.** Heb., *lun*, literally, “to lodge, stay the night; figuratively, to persist in a negative mindset, be stubborn, grumble, complain.”

*Beware of a faith that will not stand self-examination. If you dare not look into your own heart, it must be because there is something rotten there.*

—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-92)

*Disappointment is the gap between expectation and reality.*

—John Maxwell

*An unthankful, complaining spirit is an abiding sin against God, and a cause of almost continual unhappiness; and yet how common such a spirit is. —John Broadus (1827-95)*

*When you murmur under afflictive dispensations, this is a presuming to instruct God on how to deal with you, and to reprove Him as if He were in the wrong. Yea, there is a kind of implicit blasphemy in it.*

—Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

*A man who is complaining has no brightness or joy; no time for other people; he is taken up with the diseases of his own mind.*

—Oswald Chambers

*In the case of our trouble, the cross is a most effective sweetener.*

—Charles H. Spurgeon

*The wood that restores the sweetness to water is Christ.*

—Tertullian (AD 155-220)

**Heals.** Heb., *rapha*, “to mend, sew together; to make healthy again (in mind, body, soul, or spirit).”

*He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. —Ps 147:3*