Detours, Dead-Ends, and Dry Holes

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 13:17–22

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Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn, would you, to Exodus chapter 13—Exodus chapter 13. I want to speak to you today on this subject: "Detours, Dead-Ends, and Dry Holes." I am reading Exodus chapter 13 and verse 17: *"And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them"* (Exodus 13:17). We'll just stop right there. And in a moment we're going to read a whole lot more. But just keep your Bibles opened.

But notice the fact that God led them.

He leadeth me: O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught.
—JOSEPH H. GILMORE

He leadeth me. Aren't you glad that God does lead us? The Bible says: *"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God"* (Romans 8:14).

All the way my Savior leads me;
What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy,
Who through life has been my Guide?
—FANNY J. CROSBY

And we thank God for that, and we rejoice in that—that God leads us.

And yet, sometimes, friends, we find ourselves in the biggest messes. And we find

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ourselves on back roads. We find ourselves in dead-end alleys. We find ourselves in dry places. And we say, “Well, if God is leading us, then He doesn’t know how to read a map. Or else, I don’t know how to follow. Or, I must be out of His will, because, if God is leading me, how come I keep on ending up on detours and dead-ends and desert roads?” Well, we’re going to try to answer that today from the Word of God. We’re going to find out that God does lead us. And we’re on the King’s highway. And we’re on a journey to joy with Christ as our companion, and the Holy Spirit as our guide, and the Bible as our map. But yet many times it doesn’t turn out just exactly like we expect. We find a lot of unexpected things along the road of life, and it’s not, however, because we misread the map.

I. The Discipline of Detours

First of all, I want you to look here at the discipline of detours—the discipline of detours. *“And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: but God led the people about…”*—now, look at that; just underscore that phrase: “God led the people about.” That means that God led them in circles—*“God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt”* (Exodus 13:17–18).

Now the Bible tells us very clearly that God did not lead them the short way—a direct route—but God led them on a detour. God led them ’round about. And it wasn’t a mistake; it was a divine detour. And why did God lead them this way? Why didn’t God just say, as God was taking the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the land that flowed with milk and honey—into the Promised Land—why didn’t God just take the shortest route?

We say that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. Well, it may be the shortest distance, but it’s not always the best distance. And God has a purpose, many times, in His detours. And He tells us, very quickly and very plainly, why He did not lead them directly, in verse 17: *“And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt”* (Exodus 13:17). Now God knew that had He taken them the straight way they would have gone through Philistia. And if they had gone through Philistia, then they would have met the warlike Philistines. And when they saw the Philistines, they would have been frightened. And when they were frightened and their hearts were filled with fear, they would have turned around. They would have turned their heels, and they would have gone back to Egypt. They would have become

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dismayed. They would have become discouraged. And they would have become defeated. And so God didn't lead them that way.

Now God knew that they weren't ready. They were to battle. There was a war. And God has called us to a war—a holy war. *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers…against spiritual wickedness in high places"* (Ephesians 6:12). But I'm so glad that God knows what I'm ready for. And I'm so glad that God knows what you are ready for.

Now God has a land of blessing for you. And God has a place of fulfillment for you. And God has a job for you to do. And God has blessing upon blessing that He wants to give to you. And yet He may have you right now out in the wilderness, going 'round and 'round in circles. And you may think that you are out of the will of God. But you're not out of the will of God. God is leading you 'round about, because God knows that you're not quite ready for some of the things that He has in store for you. And so that winding road, that rocky road, that desert road, and that wilderness road that sometimes we find ourselves on does not mean that we're out of the will of God. God led them. This is the whole point: that God led them on a detour. God did not lead them on the straightest route.

Sometimes, folks, you can get there too quickly. I've seen these ninety-day wonders. They go up like a rocket and come down like a rock. They get out there, and they want it, and they want it now. But, you see, the reason that God led them in the wilderness was because it was God's boot camp. It was out there that He was going to toughen them. Notice where God led them. In verse 18, the Bible says, *"But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea"* (Exodus 13:18). Now, what was that like? It was a place of hardness; it was a place of drought; and it was a place of discipline. What was God doing with them out there? Well, God was just simply toughening them up. It was God's boot camp. It was God's training camp. And God was getting them ready.

Now, doubtless, they didn't understand it. They didn't know what was going on at that time. They didn't know all that God had in store for them. But they didn't have to know: it's enough that God knew. They had never seen the Philistines. Doubtless, they had never heard about the Philistines. They didn't know what was out there. God knew that they weren't quite ready. Maybe you've been asking God to give you a certain job, and you don't have it. Maybe you've been praying and asking God to give you a home. Maybe you've been praying about your date life, or the person you're going to marry. Maybe some of you are wanting to go to school. Maybe some of you are wanting to get into a ministry. Maybe some of you are wondering why you seem to be going around in circles. You're just not ready. God is never in a hurry. God called Moses, and to get Moses ready he spent forty years in the backside of the desert. God called Paul, and

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Paul wasn't ready. Paul went down to Arabia. And God was just simply getting them ready.

You know, that's a blessing to me, sometimes, because we all think we have to be achieving, and we have to be going in straight lines, or we are out of the will of God. Not necessarily so. The important thing is not that you know; the important thing is that God knows, and that you follow Him. Notice, in verse 21 of this same chapter, the Bible says, *"And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of cloud by night, from before the people"* (Exodus 13:21–22). That pillar of fire and that pillar of cloud represent the Holy Spirit. As they came out of Egypt, the Passover lamb represents the Lord Jesus Christ. And the pillar of fire and cloud represents the Holy Spirit to lead them. You see, after God redeems us, God sends His Holy Spirit to lead us. And Jesus said, "He, the Holy Spirit, will guide you" (John 16:13). And just as that pillar of cloud was their guidance in that wilderness, the Holy Spirit of God is my guidance in this wilderness. And the important thing, ladies and gentlemen, is not that I see where I'm going; the important thing is that, day by day, I have my eyes on the pillar of cloud, and, night by night, on the pillar of fire. Moment by moment, I need to walk in the Spirit.

Now it may be that you're out of the will of God. And it may be that you're going around in circles because you haven't read the map right and because you haven't listened to your guide. It may be that you're completely out of the will of God, and you're stumbling; and you're stumbling out around in some wilderness waste, and you've got no business being there. That may be. But I'm going to tell you something else. It may also be that you are perfectly in the will of God, and God knows exactly what He's doing with you, and you're still going around in circles. So, you see, it is your job just to make sure that you have your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ—that, moment by moment, there is that inner witness of that pillar of cloud and that pillar of fire.

And that's all you need to know. You don't need to know the rest, and you don't need to understand why it is that things don't seem to work out for you right now. God knows some things that you don't know. God sees some Philistines you don't see. God sees some weaknesses you don't see. And God knows some things that you may not know. So you just keep your eyes on Him and remember the discipline of divine detours. God had them in the wilderness for a purpose and in His boot camp to tighten them up and to strengthen them up.

All the way my Savior leads me,
Cheers each winding path I tread;
Gives me grace for every trial,
Feeds me with the living Bread.

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—FANNY J. CROSBY

II. The Dilemma of Dead-Ends

Now the second thing I want you to notice is not only the discipline of detours—He led them on a detour to discipline them, to help them to grow, and to toughen them up—but I want you to notice also the dilemma of dead-ends—the dilemma of dead-ends. Look, if you will, here in chapter 14 now, beginning in verse 8: *"And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness"* (Exodus 14:8–12).

Now, remember they are still being led of the Lord, and this time they come to something more aggravating than a detour. Now detours are aggravating. Nobody likes to get on a detour, a back road. But, friend, there is something worse than a detour: it's after you've been on a detour for a long time, and you come to a dead-end—amen? I mean, when the road just ends there, and there is nowhere to go, it is just a sheer dead-end. Now that's where these Israelites had come to now. And God is still leading them. There—on one side the mountains, and on the other side are the mountains, and in front is the Red Sea, and behind them comes Pharaoh with his sword glittering in the sun, and blood in his eye, and all of his armies, and all of his chariots—they were between the sword and the sea. They were boxed in; they were hemmed in. There was no way out that they could see.

And now they begin to blame Moses. And their aggravation with their detour turns from aggravation to desperation. "Moses, can't you read a map?" He read it, all right. He was following the Lord. They were not there by happenstance. It is very clear that God led them there. Look in chapter 14, if you will: *"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea"* (Exodus 14:1–2). That's exactly where God wanted them. God put them there. God led them there. And God did it for a purpose. God had a wonderful purpose. And what was the purpose? Look at verse 3: *"For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land"*—now, you see, God entangled

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them there. God put them in that dead-end, because He was baiting His hook. He was going to bring judgment on old Pharaoh, and He was using the Israelites to bait His hook. And—*"Pharaoh will say…They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in."* That is, they are at a dead-end, and God says, *"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his hosts; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so"* (Exodus 14:1–4). God had a purpose.

Now, let me tell you something else. In life you're going to come to some situations that are not just aggravating; you're going to come right up against it. And if you have not been right up against it, then you're going to come there. There is no home without its hush. And when God leads, God is going to lead you to a place of desperation time after time again. And you won't see any way out. I mean, there's no preacher who can give you a sermon that will tell you a way out. There is no book that is going to help you. You are just there, and there is no human way out. It is not a discipline; it is a dilemma: the dilemma of dead-ends. That's where they were.

I want to tell you something, friend. When you come to that place, there is still no panic in heaven: only plans, only plans. There has never been any panic in heaven—never! God knew exactly what He was doing. Now the Jews didn't know what God was doing. And the point I want to make is they weren't out of the will of God when they came to this dead-end. They were right in the will of God. It was God that led them there.

And why did God lead them there? So that the place of desperation would become the place of dependence; that we come to the place so that we see absolutely no way out, and then we have to cast ourselves completely, totally, upon the Lord. Look in chapter 14, and verse 13, and notice what God said to the children of Israel to do: *"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea"* (Exodus 14:13–16). Now God brought them to the place of desperation that He might bring them to the place of dependence.

What is the purpose of the dead-end in your life? When you come to the place—I mean, by the hand of God that God brings you there—what is the purpose of it? Well, there are four things that God told the Israelites that are true of you today. What does God want you to do?

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A. **Fear Not**

Number one: Fear not. Look in verse 13—look at it: *"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not"* (Exodus 14:13). You see, God will allow you to come to a place where there seems to be all kinds of things to fear, and then He says, "Fear not."

Ron Dunn has blessed my heart many times, but I think Ron never blessed my heart more than when I talked to him one night in a hotel room after one his sons committed suicide. Ron Dunn is a preacher. This boy had some mental problems. He had sort of a chemical hormonal imbalance, and there were some problems. And they'd worked with him and worked with him. But over the Thanksgiving holidays this boy died by his own hand. And I talked with Ron after that. Ron had been preaching victory in Jesus, and he'd been preaching how the Lord was sufficient. That is the message that Ron Dunn preaches. If he had just one message, then I would say it is that Christ is sufficient. And I talked with Ron in the late hours in a motel room, and he said, "Adrian, I've learned one thing: There is nothing to fear." He said, "The reason I know that is I believe I've met the worst the devil can do, and, Adrian, Jesus is still sufficient. Jesus is still sufficient. Now," he said, "had it been less, I would have said, 'Yes, Jesus is sufficient for this, but I don't know if He'll be sufficient for the ultimate.'" But, friend, I want to tell you that Jesus Christ is sufficient for the ultimate.

I don't know where you may come to, but you're going to come to the place. And God has to bring you to that place of desperation that you may learn that there is nothing to fear. Three hundred and sixty-five times in the Bible—one time for every day of the year—the Bible has said, "Fear thou not," or its equivalent. *"The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me"* (Hebrews 13:6). And so God brings you to this place of desperation, that He might bring you to this place of dependence, that He may say to you, "Fear not."

B. **Stand Still**

And then He says to you, "Stand still." Look, if you will, please, in verse 13: *"And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still…"* (Exodus 14:13). That is, it is out of your hands. Finally, there is nothing you can do. The Bible says, in Psalm 46, verse 10, *"Be still, and know that I am God"* (Psalm 46:10). And, oh, we hurry around. We're so busy manipulating, trying, conniving, scheming; but finally we come to a place where God hems us in: the sea here, the mountain here, the mountain there, and the devil behind. And there is no way out but up. Just stand still. *"Be still, and know that I am God."* We always think that we have to do something even if it's wrong, don't we?

Somebody talked about those hogs. You remember those 2,000 hogs, those demons that were driven out of that demon-possessed man and they went into a herd of swine? And the Bible says that the swine went into the sea and drowned (Mark 5:13).

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Do you remember that story in Mark 5? Someone imagines one of those hogs saying to the other hog, "Look, we're in a mess. But whatever we do, let's stay together and keep moving."

Now I think that's really the way human beings think today. We've got to do something—just do something. Sometimes God places us in a place where there is nothing we can do. There is no counsel we can go to. There is no banker to help. There is no doctor to help. There is no one to help us. God just says, *"Fear…not; stand still"*; *"Be still, and know that I am God."* And the place, the dead-end that He brings us to—I mean, just the dead-end, a dilemma—and then we just fear not and stand still.

C. See the Salvation of the Lord

And then, notice next: *"…and see the salvation of the LORD"* (Exodus 14:13). Now that doesn't mean to see it after it takes place. It hasn't taken place when he told them to see it. In other words, you, by the eye of faith, see what God is going to do. It means, stand still and watch God do it, because God didn't do it until they started moving again. It meant, stand still long enough for you to see what God is going to do before He does it. You see, we see things that are not, as though they are, that it might be so. There is just this time of faith where we just simply say, "I refuse to fear. I stop. I place myself, dear God, in your hands. And, God, if you don't do it, then it won't be done. And now, by faith, I see my way out, even when I don't see it."

D. God Shows Us the Way

All right. And then God shows us the way—the way that we've never seen before. Look in verse 15: *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward"* (Exodus 14:15). There is no contradiction here, where it says, on the one hand, "Stand still," and then, on the other hand, where it says, "Go forward." We have to come to that place of rest and confidence, where, by faith, we see God in action, and then, again, we move in a way that we've never seen before.

And notice what God did when God said to them, "Go forward," in verse 16: *"But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea"* (Exodus 14:16). Do you know what God did to that dead-end? He turned it into an eight-lane superhighway, and, dry-shod, they went through the Red Sea. God knows the way through the wilderness.

Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?
Got any mountains you can't tunnel through?
God specializes in things thought impossible
And does the things that others cannot do.
—OSCAR C. ELIASON

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"I am the Lord thy God. Is there anything too hard for me?" (Jeremiah 32:27). And that so-called impossibility is God's opportunity to display His glory and His might, if you are living in the Spirit, and if you have your eye on that pillar of cloud and that pillar of fire.

III. The Disappointment of Dry Holes

Now I want us to move on and think not only of the discipline of detours, and I want us not only to think about the dilemma of dead-ends, but I want us also to think about the disappointment of dry holes. Continue to read in chapter 15 this time, and look in verse 22: *"So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea…"*—now, notice that Moses, God's man, is still leading. They still haven't got lost. They still haven't misread the map. God is still leading, but notice now the strange way that He leads them now—*"Moses brought Israel from the Rea sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water"* (Exodus 15:22).

Detours, dead-ends, and dry holes. You think, "Brother, better throw this map away and get another one. All night long, we thought, at least we had a motel. Now we find a motel, and the one we found hasn't got running water." Here it is. They come to the end of the road now—at least, they are on the road—and they are bone-weary, and they come to this place. God hasn't sent them here because they've done wrong. This is not punishment when they come to this place of bitterness and barrenness. They are here by divine providence. God brought them here for a purpose.

You want to see what that purpose was? Well, continue to read: *"And when they came…"*—I'm reading in verse 23 now—*"And when they came to Marah they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah."* The word *marah* means, "bitter." *"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance,"*—and notice this phrase now; just underscore it—*"and there he proved them"* (Exodus 15:23–25). "There he proved them": literally, that means, "Therefore, he tested them."

You know, they make a new automobile, and they take the model of that automobile out to the test track—the proving ground—and they put it through rigors and the bumps. You've seen advertisements of them going around skids, and through water, and over bumps, and all of that—they call that the proving ground. That's exactly what this was for God's people: there, God was proving them. The reason why it was arid there was that God was testing them. God gave them a test, and they failed it miserably.

Incidentally, turn to Deuteronomy chapter 8 and verse 2, right there in the neighborhood, and you'll see, again, what God's plan was for them. Deuteronomy

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chapter 8 and verse 2: *"And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness,"*—now, watch—*"to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no"* (Deuteronomy 8:2). Now, you see, God knew exactly what He was doing. And when they came to this place in the wilderness where there was no water, it wasn't because God was mad at them. And it wasn't because they had sinned. And it wasn't because Moses was a bad leader. The devil didn't do it to them. It was perfectly normal and natural.

You are going to come to the same place, friend. If you follow the Lord, then you're going to find that your life is going to be one of detours, and dead-ends, and dry holes, because you're walking in the Spirit. Now that's quite a revelation, because so many times we say, "Well, what went wrong?" Nothing went wrong; not a thing in the world went wrong. God is on the throne, and He's leading you. And in this particular instance, when you come to the disappointment of a dry hole, God is giving you a test. And I pray to God that you won't fail it.

Now, how did Israel do when they came to their test? They failed it, and they failed it miserably. Now, look, if you will, please, in verse 24, and see how they failed the test. The Bible says, in Exodus 15, verse 24, "*And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?"* (Exodus 15:24). And they started to murmur against Moses. Now that's a remarkable thing, because the fifteenth chapter of Exodus is what we call "the Song of Moses." They'd just come through the Red Sea on that superhighway that we were talking about, and they were dancing, ecstatic with joy, and they were praising the Lord. And now, just three days later, they are murmuring, and they were complaining. I just declare, I believe that was the first Baptist church in the wilderness. There they were: just three days ago they had been singing the Moses Song, and now they are murmuring against Moses. Moses has gone, in three days, from hero to zero.

And I want you to learn this if you are a murmurer. When you come to a disappointment in life, when you come to a dry hole along the road, when there is no motel anywhere with hot and cold running water, and it just seems like life has done you dirty, I want you to notice, when you complain, what you're really doing. Exodus chapter 16 and verse 8—look at it. Moses says, in the last part of that verse, *"Your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD"* (Exodus 16:8)—one of the greatest lessons you can ever learn. You teenagers who are murmuring about your parents, God gave you those parents. People murmuring about their teacher, their pastor, or murmuring about their boss. You see, God gave them Moses, and they murmured against Moses. And so, if God gave them Moses, and they murmured against Moses, what they were really doing was murmuring against God. God leads you into a circumstance. And when

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God, somehow, in His wisdom, leads you to one of life's dry holes and to some of life's bitter waters, and you murmur and you complain, you are really murmuring against God.

I want to tell you something, friend. Murmuring is no little sin. Murmuring is a great sin. And God lists murmuring with idolatry and fornication. Just turn to 1 Corinthians 10 for just a moment—and we're almost finished this morning; but look, if you will, please, in 1 Corinthians 10, and I'm going to begin reading in verse 6, because God is speaking about these same people—to the Church. That is, He is speaking to you and to me. And the Bible says, *"Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents."* And now, notice verse 10: *"Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer"* (1 Corinthians 10:6–10).

Notice God lists murmuring with tempting Christ. God lists murmuring with fornication. God lists murmuring with idolatry. God listed murmuring with lusting. You see, why did they murmur when they came to this place? God was leading them. The pillar of cloud was there. The pillar of fire was there. They were being led of the Lord. Moses was there. The Word of God was there. Why did they murmur when they came to a place like this? It was a lack of faith, and it was also a lack of reason. God had just brought them through the Red Sea.

Now, folks, be reasonable. Would God have brought them through the Red Sea so wonderfully just to bring them to a place to let them die without water? I mean, would God do that? Had God so marvelously delivered them in order to destroy them? That doesn't make sense. Now I want to ask you a question. If Jesus Christ died for you on that cross and has saved you, do you think He saved you to abandon you? Do you? When you come to some place like that, do you think God brought you so far, that God did so much, that God had so much invested in you, that He did all of that for you, and after having brought you that far and having died for you, that now He's going to abandon you? Can't you understand that their murmuring was rooted in unbelief, and it was a terrible, horrible sin against God?

Well, there was no need for them to murmur. They couldn't see it. There was no water. The water that was there was bitter—you couldn't drink it. And as far as they were concerned, it was terrible. But I want you to notice what God did, again. Look, if you will, please, in verse 24—in Exodus 15, verse 24: *"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the LORD…"*—and there are always those two classes of people in the church: those who bellyache at the pastor, and those who know how to pray. And the people murmured against Moses. But

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Moses went to the Lord—*"And he cried unto the LORD;"*—now, watch—*"and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them"* (Exodus 15:24–25).

God showed Moses a tree, and the thing I want you to see is, the whole time they were murmuring. The whole time they were complaining that tree was there—the whole time, the whole time. God had already made provision. God already knew what He was going to do. There is no panic in heaven, only plans. God didn't create the tree; He showed the tree. It was already here. And that tree, of course, speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ that Jeremiah called the *"righteous Branch"* (Jeremiah 23:5). It speaks, of course, of Calvary, for the Bible says, in Peter, that Jesus died upon a tree (1 Peter 2:24). And there, God brought them to this place of dryness and this place of desperation that He might display to them by type, by picture, and by symbol, the sufficiency of Calvary and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Even in the barren places and even in the bitter places, Jesus is enough. Oh, He wants us to learn it. So many times, we come to the test where God wants to take us and He wants to prove us, and we come to some dry hole along the road of life—some place of barrenness, some place of bitterness. Oh, I pray to God that you won't fail the test.

You see, the amazing thing about this bunch of murmurers is this: that right over the hill—they couldn't see it, but they were following God's map—and right over the hill, not very far away, was a gorgeous, beautiful oasis. Look, if you will, please, in verse 27: *"And they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters"* (Exodus 15:27). I mean, one of the most beautiful oases that you could even imagine—and it was right over the hill. They couldn't see it.

Now there's somebody right here, you're camped right now by a dry hole, and the water that you can find is absolutely bitter. You're saying, "God has forsaken me." God hasn't forsaken you. God is proving you. You're not out of the will of God. God brought you there. It is right on the map. That's the route. That's exactly where God wants to bring you. Don't complain. Don't murmur. Calvary is sufficient for you. Right over the hill, God has an oasis. You can't see it, but God can see it.

Now, look. The important thing in life is not for you to know what God knows—you'll never know that. His ways are not your ways, and His thoughts are not your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8). The important thing for you in life is this: that you keep your eye on that pillar of cloud and that pillar of fire, which, translated out in New Testament times, is that you walk in the Spirit and that you keep your heart right with God. And if you go on a

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detour, praise God. If you come to a dead-end, praise God. If you come to a dry hole, praise God. My Lord knows the way through the wilderness. All you have to do is follow. Will you follow Him, and let Him have His way, and not complain, and not murmur?

Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine,
Nor ever murmur nor repine;
Content, whatever lot I see,
Since 'tis my God that leadeth me.

—JOSEPH H. GILMORE

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