

EXODUS 15

AT THE WATERS OF MARAH

The Hebrews' song of thanksgiving to the Lord after their miraculous deliverance of the Red Sea is the most ancient song recorded in the Bible. It is a holy song to the honor of God, exalting His name and celebrating His praise, without magnifying any human being in the least. But not only did it refer to the Hebrews' experience at the Red Sea, it also speaks of the final destruction of all the enemies of the Lord Jesus and His Church.

The Lord is a God of Almighty power, and woe to those who strive with Him! He is a God of matchless perfection; He is glorious in holiness. His holiness is seen in His hatred of sin, and in His wrath against obstinate sinners. It was manifested 3,500 years ago in the deliverance of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt; and even today, it is still demonstrated in His faithfulness to His own promises. He does great wonders – that is, things that are outside of the common course of nature. And He does these wondrous works for those who are so sinful and unworthy that they have no reason to expect them! He performs wonders of power and also wonders of grace; and in both, He is to be humbly adored.

How happy are the people whose God is the Lord! It is true that they have work to do, temptations to grapple with, and afflictions to bear; and indeed, they are weak in themselves. But *His* grace is their strength! They are often in sorrow; but in Him, they have comfort and song. Sin, death, and hell threaten them, just like the Egyptians threatened the Hebrews at the Red Sea; but Jesus is and will be their salvation!

As the Hebrews traveled from the Red Sea through the Wilderness of Shur, they had no water to drink. When they arrived at Marah after three days, they *did* have water; but it was so bitter that they could not drink it. The Lord sometimes embitters the things that we look to for fulfillment and satisfaction, so that our shortages and disappointments in these worldly things may drive us to Him, our Creator – in Whose favor, true comfort is to be found.

When the Hebrews found themselves in this distress, they began to fret and quarrel with Moses. Even true believers, in seasons of sharp affliction, will be tempted to distrust the Lord and murmur against Him. But in every trial, we should cast our care upon the Lord, and pour out our hearts before Him! We shall then find that a submissive will, a peaceful conscience, and the comforts of the Holy Spirit will render the bitterest trial tolerable, and even pleasant.

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *Moses and the Hebrews sing praises to the Lord for their deliverance – verses 1-22*
- ❖ *The bitter waters of Marah are made sweet – verses 23-26*
- ❖ *The Hebrews camp at Elim – verse 27*

Moses did what the people had neglected to do; he cried unto the Lord in prayer. And God graciously provided for them! He showed Moses a tree which he threw into the bitter waters, and then they were immediately made sweet. This tree is a picture of the cross of Jesus, which sweetens the bitter waters of affliction to all the Lord's children, enabling them to rejoice in tribulation.

While the Hebrews were at Marah, God made a promise of health and preservation to those among them who hearkened to His voice and listened to His commandments. The promise is expressed clearly. Our God is our Great Physician. If we are kept safe and healthy, it is He Who keeps us; and if we are healed from any sickness or disease, it is He Who heals us. He is our life and the length of our days! But let us not forget that we are kept from destruction and delivered from our enemies for a reason – namely, so that we may be the Lord's servants.

Lord, as we read the Hebrews' song of celebration for their deliverance from Pharaoh, we cannot help thinking about our far greater deliverance from sin and everlasting death! And shall not our souls join in the celebration of Your mercies? You brought Your people out of Egyptian bondage, and they sang of Your mercies at the Red Sea; and shall not we – whom You have brought out of nature's darkness, and out of the bondage of sin and Satan – shout even more loudly because of the salvation that we have enjoyed? O blessed Lord! You have indeed brought us out of the iron furnace, out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay; and You have set our feet upon a rock. And You have put a new song of praise in our mouth.

O Lord, grant us faith and grace so that we may never be cast down in unbelief, nor repine in the emptiness and unsatisfying nature of all earthly enjoyments.

Rather, may we always live upon You and Your fullness. Lead us onward to Canaan; and until the happy hour shall come when we shall be done with all things here below, enable us by faith to live upon our unchangeable God, amidst all the changing Providences that transpire in this world. Let faith give us a present enjoyment of the good things to come. Cause us to see Jesus and His love and faithfulness in everything! Amen.

