

Exodus 15:22–27

“Perishing or Paradise?”

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What is so significant about this event that Psalm 95 and Hebrews 3–4 look to it as a warning of the choice between heaven and hell? Pastor leads his family in today’s “Hopewell @Home” passage. Exodus 15:22–27 prepares us for the evening sermon on the coming Lord’s Day. In these six verses, the Holy Spirit teaches us that the Lord presented His people with the perishing that they deserved (as Egypt had perished) but also with the paradise that He offered them (as Elim exemplified).

Friday, February 25, 2022 ▫ Read Exodus 15:22–27

Questions from the Scripture text: Who brought whom from where into where (v22)? How long did they go? What didn’t they find? To where do they come in v23? What couldn’t they do? Why not? So, what did they call that place? What did the people do in response to whom (v24)? And what did he do (v25)? How did the Lord respond to him? And what did Moses do with the tree? What else did the Lord make for them? What four things did He say they must do (v26)? And if they did, what did He say He would not do? Why? To where do they come in v27? What do they find there? What do they do there?

We get introduced to something horrible in this passage, just three days after the glorious song with which this chapter began. The Hebrew word for ‘grumble’ appears for the first time in the Bible in v24. It is going to dominate chapters 15–17 and Numbers 14–16. Elsewhere, this word appears only once in Joshua 9:18. Grumbling is a great sin against God under any circumstance. The people may have assured themselves that their grumbling was “against Moses.” But, Moses was given to them by God. And every time we indulge in a grumbling spirit, it is not ultimately against whatever it is against which we tell ourselves that we are grumbling. Ultimately, all grumbling is against God.

Of course, the first use of the word is not the first instance of the sin. The people had already grumbled against Moses when pinned against the Red Sea in 14:11. There and here, the Lord responds with remarkable patience. “Yahweh showed him a tree” (v25). The Lord could have just made the waters sweet miraculously, but He gives His servant an opportunity to gain esteem in the Israelites’ eyes by making him the agent of the sweetening of the waters.

The sweet water doesn’t come “free,” however. It comes with a test (end of v25). All they have to do is walk with the Lord according to His Word, and He will heal them of everything (v26). The implied threat, however, is that if they are Egyptians in their conduct, then they will receive as the Egyptians did in their consequences.

The Lord, for His part, here calls Himself “Yahweh Who heals you” (end of v26). He is encouraging them to embrace Him as Savior, to walk according to His Word, and to enjoy His provision and protection. And He immediately brings them to a place where there is not just one well, but *twelve* wells in the wilderness. Isaac had been extraordinarily blessed to dig four wells in Genesis 26. Here, they obtain not four wells but twelve, and that without digging at all!

Our God has identified Himself to us as our Savior. We know that He Himself can never change, and the righteousness and sacrifice of Christ can never be undone. But will we embrace Him and His identity, or will we go from providence to providence, allowing our circumstances to dictate whether we respond with a grumbling spirit? Let us remember that one aspect of the Lord’s dealing with His people is His testing us. He puts us in circumstances to bring out of us whether there will be the contentment of faith or the grumbling of unbelief. Let us look to Him to give the faith and its contentment, lest what comes out be the bitterness of our old man and his grumbling.

In what situation right now are you tempted to grumble? How might it change your response to remember that the Lord gives such situations to His people to test what will come out of them? How can you know for sure that this situation is ultimately for your good?

Sample prayer: Lord, when Your people grumbled against You, an entire generation of them fell in the wilderness. But we are still quick to grumble when our experience turns difficult or bitter. Forgive us! Have mercy! Take away the grumbly hearts of our former nature, and give us the contented heart of Christ! Count His contentment for us as our righteousness, wipe away our guilt by His sacrifice, and make us to be good by giving us from His own goodness, we ask in His Name, AMEN!!

Suggested songs: ARP131 “My Heart Is Not Exalted, Lord” or TPH429 “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Exodus 15 verses 22 through 27. These are God's words. So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, Then they went out into the wilderness of shore and they went three days and the wilderness and found no altar.

Now when they came tomorrow they could not drink the waters of Mara for they were bitter.

Therefore the name of it was called Mara and the people complained against Moses saying, what shall we drink? So he cried out to Yahweh and Yahweh showed him a tree, let me cast it into the waters. The waters were made. Sweet There. He made a statute and an ordinance for them.

And there he tested them and he said if you diligently heed the voice of Yahweh you're not and do what is right in his sight. Give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes. I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians for.

I am Yahweh. Who heals you? Then they came to aim. Where there were 12 wells of water at 70 palm trees and so they camped there by the waters.

So far the reading of God's inspired and inerrant word.

One of the things that this passage makes plain to us as the Lord is making it plain to his people, is, how great is the sinfulness and rebellion and spiritual deadness of our state apart from grace. The six billion people without water. In the desert is a problem or maybe as few as two million and then they finally come to water.

But the water is undrinkable. They've seen undrinkable water before. Remember the first plague when the Nile was turned to blood and they had to dig non-nile related water in order to have something to drink. And so the Lord was reminding them what he had reminded them at Passover. And what he had reminded them of with the consecration of the firstborn is that it wasn't just the Egyptians who deserved the wrath of God, isn't.

It's not just even Israelites in the wilderness in Exodus 15, who deserve the breath of God, we deserve the wrath of God. We ought to die of thirst in the wilderness with only poisonous water to drink and yet God. And I don't think the early church fathers would be wronged.

In this case, there were some early church fathers Egyptian men in particular and God's. Providential irony, who thought every time you've saw a twig or a stick or a tree in the Old Testament, it meant the cross. But there is something here to the Lord. Healing the waters by the sake of a tree or by the use of a treat.

There's a picture. Isn't there? Wire tree and the Lord turning the waters from a threat of death. Like the plagues that Egypt had received and Israel deserved to a source of life for his people in the wilderness. And he tells them. You be mine and I'll be yours. And I will save you, I won't do to you what you deserve.

Like I did to the Egyptians and then he immediately gives them a picture of how wonderful and comfortable glorious. It is to belong to God. We brings them to a place called a limb and they find already dug. 12 wells of water. Now you remember the whole deal with Isaac and Gerrar and how miraculous it was that he dug four wells of water.

But here, the wells are dug in the wilderness and nobody else has occupying your claiming them. This is random wells hanging out in the wilderness, is almost like if you made like a wilderness wandering game and you were the, the game maker but also played, you put a cheat in where you knew where the 12 wells were and went there.

It's wonderful. 12. Wells one, one. Well for each drive and the 70 palm trees and so they would have shade and treats and water.

And you see the Lord basically creating Eden in the midst of the wilderness and he says you deserve Egypt. But by my grace, I'll give you Eden but even with that options are clearly set before them. We know what the result is of these people that they die in the wilderness because they go astray in their hearts and their hearts are hard against the Lord, like, at Mara, which takes its name from the bitter water and Maribel, which will hear about in a couple of passages.

And so we see that God is a God who gives paradise in the place of the hell that we deserve. But that we also need him to be to ask the God who gives us the grace to be spiritually alive. So that we can trust in Jesus, so that we belong to God by faith.

So, that Jesus is obedience will be all our righteousness as we belong to him. Through the faith that God has given us. It is a horrifying thing to see Israel in the wilderness. Hebrews, three and four picks up on Psalm. 95 referring back to the incident and urges us to hear the Word of God with faith.

But we also see and know and learn that only God can give that faith. So as we study his word and family worship times, and as you read His Word and your private worship as you hear his work and the public worship, especially be crying out, to God, to give you a believing heart that you would receive his word, and that it would be mixed with faith.

So that at last when you are done with your work and this world you will come into Eden and better than Eden better than a limb. And not come to Egypt. And what Egypt deserved, which is not just earthly plagues. But hell itself seek faith from God to receive his word and walk with him.

According to his word. Let's pray. We thank you. And praise you O God that you are. God, who is merciful to sinners for? We know what we deserve as the plagues of Egypt and the execution of the wilderness of generation remind us. And we know that our hearts are entirely like theirs except for whatever your grace does.

So give us that grace and give us faith and make us to receive your word. Meekly, make it for us, the implanted word, which is able to save our souls blessed to us. Even this time that you have given us to spend together in this portion of your word.

So that we by faith in Christ and by the grace in which you sanctify us and at last bring us holy into glory by that grace. We might come at last into the fullness of your paradise. Thank you. That this is offered to thieves on crosses and centers at breakfast tables.

We ask you to do it with joy in Jesus, through whom you have given us to ask, Amen.