

# THE WILDERNESS: THE TRAINING GROUND OF THE HEART

LUKE 4:1-15; DEUT. 8:2-3

## I. SERIES: DEVELOPING AN INNER LIFE IN GOD (EPH. 3:16-21)

*Ephesians 3:16-21 That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,<sup>17</sup> that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,<sup>18</sup> may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height --<sup>19</sup> to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.<sup>20</sup> Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,<sup>21</sup> to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

- A. In the days in which we live, it is necessary to develop an inner life in God. It has always been necessary, but all the more so as we approach the day of Jesus' return (2 Tim. 3:1; 2 Pet. 3:3).
- B. It is possible to seem alive on the outside, but totally lack an inner, secret life in God. It's possible to be known as the "prayer" church "community/fellowship" church and on the outside seem alive, but have no true reality of that on the inside.

*Matt. 23:27-28 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."<sup>28</sup> "Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.*

*1 Cor. 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?*

1. It's possible to decorate the outside with nice things. Things that make us feel better about ourselves. But what happens inside the temple is what counts.
2. Once you have an inward life, it will begin to show on the outside. There will be fruit that will demonstrate the life of the Spirit in you (Gal. 5:22-23; Matt. 15:11, 19-20).

*Matt. 15: 11, 19-20 Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man...<sup>19</sup> "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."<sup>20</sup> "These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."*

*Gal. 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

- C. It's like a healthy tree. It's strong, resilient, bears good fruit. During the winter, there may be no leaves, no fruit, etc.. seems like little activity from the outside. But if we look under the surface, there is a vast root system. This is where much of the tree's life occurs. Without the roots, the tree will wither and die.

Do you want to be alive on the inside? Do you want an inner life, a secret life in God? How do you develop and nurture it?

## II. THE WILDERNESS: THE TRAINING GROUND OF THE HEART (Luke 4:1-15; Deut 8:2-3)

### A. God is the One who leads us into the wilderness.

Temptation/Testing is the same word in the Bible. How is different? Jam 1:13 God never tempts us to sin or to fall. So in that sense, God never tempts us. But God often tests us. (Offer up son Isaac). Devil tempts you to bring the worst out of you (to sin). God tests you to bring the best out of you (draw you to Himself).

### B. **First test:** Israel was tested by God to see if she would trust and obey God.

*Exodus 16:4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.*

**The desert is the place where we have no choice but to trust in God and God alone. All the props are removed. There is no plan B. "if this doesn't work out, I'll.."**

### C. **2<sup>nd</sup> test.** -Israel did not worship the God who delivered them out of Egypt (Psa. 78:56-58)

**The desert is the place where you have to decide who's approval you are living for: God's approval of you or man's. In the desert, no one is listening to you. You are passé. You are a has been. You must choose whether you will live your life to hear the ultimate approval of God: Well done, good and faithful servant.**

### D. **3<sup>rd</sup> temptation/test:** Israel tested God at Massah where God provided water from the rock (instead of passing God's test) complaining and wanting the things of Egypt (Ex. 17:7).

## III. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE WILDERNESS? (DEUT. 8:2-3)

*Deut 8:2-3 "And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. <sup>3</sup> "So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.*

### A. **First purpose:** To humble you. If not humble, guaranteed to fall in the future.

### B. **Second purpose: To test you-**see what's in your heart. Will you keep His commandments?

There is nothing like trials to bring out true character. Hardship not only reveals, but also builds in character (James 1:2-4). Some lessons, can't learn in the classroom, only in the Refiner's Fire: forging, molding, shaping, stretching...

### C. **Third purpose: To teach you-**not to live on bread alone, but on every word...

The way of God is the wilderness. It has always been the wilderness. It is where God trains up all his choice servants. Often God leads us to the desert to protect us. Ex. 13:17-18

### D. In the end, what is all this for? -Deut 8:16 "So that in the end it might go well with you"