

God Makes Water Sweet; Establishes A Statute and Ordinance; Proves His People

Presentation by Sis Linda Pickens

2.1 Bitter Waters Made Sweet-15:25 “There He Proved Them”

When I searched the meaning of **statutes and ordinances**, I came to the conclusion the meanings were basically the same and can be interchangeable except, it depends on context. They both reveal God’s will and what it means to do good, seek justice and live according to His purpose. They are written laws, rules or regulations established by authority as a permanent rule of action, of sovereign power. But it seems the difference is in statutes apply to all whereas an ordinance applies to a particular location and situation. **Ex The Constitution** is a **statute**-the supreme law of the land that all abide by, but each state can have certain **ordinances** that govern them only as long as they don’t violate **The Constitution**. I hope I’m correct in my understanding of the difference. **Remember** for instance we obey the laws of the land as long as they don’t violate God’s Law.

Establish=to make or create

Proves= to test or try

The people grumbled after 3 days without water. God was testing them. He affirms/confirm/make known if the people obey His commandments, then He will be their healer. Faith in the time of desperation is indeed true faith.

Habakkuk 3:17-18

17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

In modern times, faith has been weakened in meaning so that some people use it to mean self-confidence. But in the Bible, true faith is confidence in God or Christ, not in oneself.

Israel now forgets all the plagues over Egypt and the miraculous opening of the Red Sea. Three days ago, they were singing the song of Moses with high faith and great joy and now they murmur at another sign of trouble.

Exodus 15:22-25

22 So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

Imagine a group of people hands on hip, frustration on their faces, bitterness in their hearts, pointing fingers at Moses, saying “you brought us 3 days in this desert and no water, only to bring us to this place, man we can’t drink this stuff” fast forward 2021 Memphis, TN people hands on hip, frustration on their faces, bitterness in their hearts, pointing fingers, a severe winter storm hits, pipes burst all over, the city told to not drink the water. Ecclesiastes 1:9 No new thing under the sun. I thought I’d throw this in to reflect on.

(As a general rule of thumb, a person can survive without water for about **3 days**.) Certain factor may affect the body’s need for water ex: diet, age or medical condition. **Dehydration** happens quickly, causing extreme thirst, **fatigue**, and ultimately, organ failure and death. So, looking at the Israelites state they were in dire straits= difficult or very bad situation. Plus, what happens next in v23.

23 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.

24 And the people murmured against Moses, saying, **what shall we drink?** Forgetfulness and lack of faith and trust

25 “And he/Moses cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him/Moses a tree, *which* when he/Moses had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he/God made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he/God proved them,” It does not say what kind of tree it was nor does it allude to a branch rather than a whole tree, nor a staff most familiar with Moses and miraculous events, it only says God showed Moses a tree which he/Moses cast into the water. When Israel came out of Egypt their hearts were bitter. **God knows the hearts of His people better than they know their hearts themselves. He sometimes puts us in circumstances that reveal our**

shortcomings to us. This He did to Israel, leading them for three days through a searing desert with no water only to bring them at last to a place with bitter water. God brought bitter people face to face with bitter water. We tend to think that circumstances cause us to become bitter, but this is not the case. Bitterness is a characteristic we develop. This can be seen easy enough in the lives of two different people faced with similar circumstances. Some people can go through a lot of trials and hardships and maintain a grateful and gracious spirit throughout. Others face similar trials only to become angry and embittered. In both cases the hardship revealed the heart. If we are filled with sweetness and something jostles us, then sweetness spills out. If we are filled with bitterness and we get jostled then bitterness goes everywhere.

Sometimes when bitterness spills out, we still don't see it for what it is.

Here are 3 helpful points to identify its characteristics:

First, bitterness differs from guilt in that guilt is how we feel when we realize we have wronged others, but bitterness is how we feel when we believe others have wronged us. Israel believed God and Moses had done them wrong by leading them out into the wilderness to die of thirst. Thus, bitter feelings result from incorrect perceptions as well as real offenses. It also shows us that bitterness can be directed at God as well as man. When we think it is all directed at man it is really directed at God.

Second, bitterness is personal. Great sins committed against humanity might appall/shock us, but they do not make us bitter. However, small offenses, "he doesn't pick his socks up off the floor," make us bitter. It is the nearness not the enormity of the sin that makes us bitter. This is why bitterness is usually felt toward those close to us like parents, siblings, spouse, neighbors etc. even brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Third, bitterness is into details, and it remembers everything. You have had thousands of conversations in your life, most of which you have forgotten. But there is one that took place years ago, and you remember every single word, how it was said and the tone of the voice. You know exactly what happened, which means, you are bitter. We remember every detail vividly. These things stay with us because bitterness doesn't want to go away. It wants to hang around and dominate our thinking till it chokes the life out of us. Ephesian 4:31 says Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: **Why, because bitterness festers over time. We may be able to suppress it for a while, but sooner or later something may trigger it** and then "OOPS THERE IT IS". That's why we should put it away and replace. How do we put it away, well I'll tell you, first of all recognize that bitterness is a sin and then exercise the whatsoevers of Philippians 4:8 whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Bitter becomes better bitter becomes sweet.

Two things occurred at Marah:

a. First, God made a "statute and ordinance." The people of Israel were to know from this day forward that God blesses and fulfills His promises to those who obey His commandments. The principle of the workings of God's grace and redemption are depicted here. Those who obey receive God's blessings. This has always been and always will be.

b. Secondly, God "proved" Israel on this occasion. They needed to understand that God is their great God, provider, deliverer, protector and He must be obeyed. When there was no water, the Lord blessed them with water, i.e., He took care of them. People must learn that God is on their side if only they would obey. Christians today need to learn to trust and obey God, come what may in this life. He will certainly care for us. Like the song says, "Be Not Dismayed Whate're Betided No Matter What May Be The Test; God will take care of you through everyday o'er all the way, He Will Take Care Of You."

God can make bitter to us that from which we want most, and often does so in the wilderness of this world, that our wants, and disappointments in the creature, may drive us to the Creator, in whose favour alone true comfort is to be had.

In this distress the people fretted and quarreled with Moses.

Hypocrites may show high affections, and appear earnest, but in the time of temptation they fall away, fret, distrust, and murmur. But in every trial, we should cast our care upon the Lord.

A submissive will, a peaceful conscience, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost, will render the bitterest trial tolerable and pleasant. Moses did what the people should have done and neglected to do; he cried unto the Lord.

Remember David said in Ps 121:1-2

1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

2 My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

That is what Israel should have been doing instead of murmuring and questioning Moses **"What shall we drink?"**

God provided graciously what they murmured for. He directed Moses to a tree Moses casted it into the waters, **at once**, the water was made sweet. Some may think this tree sweetened the bitter waters. **Remember** 2 Kings 2:19-22 A similar situation where the water was naught/bad, and Elisha ask for a new vessel with salt and he poured the salt water into the spring and made the water better. This was a teaching moment for Israel, God show them once again His power. The water was symbol of sin and the use of a new vessel cleansing. **v21** Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; so, it was here, with the bitter water, it wasn't the tree, it was the obedience of Moses and the power of God. The healing of the water was a symbol of deliverance from physical and spiritual evils. And there he proved **them**; the people of **Israel** and **Moses**; by these waters being first bitter and then sweetened, whereby he gave **them/Israel** a proof and specimen how it would be with them hereafter; that if they behaved ill they must expect the bitter waters of affliction, but, if otherwise, pleasant and good things: and, **"there he proved him" Moses**, his obedience and faith, by ordering him to cast in the tree he showed him. Moses didn't always obey **Remember** Numbers 20:8-11 when he smote the rock and was supposed to speak to it. By means of adversity/difficulty God tests us to see whether we are learning to trust Him. So, in times of trouble, distress and bitterness- **Remember** God will take care of you every day, all the way. He did it for Israel through all their grumbling, murmuring and complaining and He still does it for us.

The writings highlighted in red are a portion of an article from the La Vista Church of Christ in Omaha, Nebraska written by Lawrence Kelley. Permission was granted in advance to use and confirm by email reply from the minister of the church Bro Jeffrey W Hamilton. Other portions are from commentaries, searches and my own words.