

The Healing Tree



Life's Bitter Pool (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you on our theme for this week: "Life's Bitter Pool." This is based on an incident in the history of Israel. They had just been miraculously delivered out of Egypt and had started out on a long journey through the desert on route for the Promised Land. And then, as you will recall from our last two talks, they went for three days in the desert without water and when they came to the pool called Marah, they wanted to drink and they could not because the waters were bitter. And three million people grumbled. One man, Moses, prayed. The people who grumbled got nothing—the man who prayed got the answer.

And so I pointed out a number of lessons from that old story that's three thousand years old and more—but the lessons are still up-to-date and relevant for you and me today.

I'll just recapitulate some of those lessons that I've pointed out. First of all, great victories prepare us for great testings. The fact that we've had a great victory doesn't mean we'll never be tested. Rather it means we'll be better equipped for the next test.

Second, the Bitter Pool was in God's program. He had a purpose in bringing His people there. It was He who led them there. And that's true often in our lives. The Bitter Pool is part of God's program—He has a purpose.

Third, the question is not whether we'll experience testing, but only how we will respond to the testing. Fourth, in this case at the Bitter Pool, there were two alternative responses—the people grumbled, Moses prayed. The people who grumbled got nothing—the man who prayed got the answer.

The next principle, to Moses' prayer of faith God in turn responded with a new revelation of Himself. And that was God's purpose, to bring His people to the place where they could receive the revelation that He had for them. And I summed that up in that little phrase, "Man's disappointments are God's appointments."

Today I'm going to speak about the revelation that God had for His people there at the Bitter Pool. There were two aspects to the revelation. The first was the revelation of the healing tree, the second was the revelation of God the Healer. Today I'm going to speak about the first aspect of that

revelation—the healing tree.

Let's look back for a moment at the particular verse in Exodus 15 which speaks about that tree, Exodus 15:25:

> "Then he [Moses] cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree; and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet." (NASB)

So the solution to the problem was found there in that tree. Now that tree speaks of one of the main themes the entire Bible. It speaks of another tree that was raised, perhaps 2,400 years later, on a hill called Golgotha—the cross. Whenever you read in the Bible about a tree you should be alert to see if there is really a reference to the cross of Jesus. We need to understand the Hebrew use of the word "tree" which I touched on the other day. In the Hebrew language the word for "tree" is used for a tree when its growing, but it's still used for a tree after it's been cut down—when it's maybe just a long pole or some such thing—still referred to a tree. So a tree can also be a gibbet, a gallows or a cross.

Let's look at some of the examples. First of all in the book of Deuteronomy chapter 21, verses 22-23:

> "If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse." (NIV)

So there was a way of executing a person which was often followed, in the Old Testament, the person was hung on a tree. Sometime he was killed first and then hung on the tree and sometimes he was killed by hanging him on the tree. But the Law of Moses stated that no man must ever be left hanging on a tree overnight. Because anyone who hangs on a tree is a curse. And you will remember in the record of the crucifixion of Jesus, after Jesus had died on the cross the Jewish religious leaders went to Pontius Pilate and asked him that the body might be taken down because they did not want it to remain there over the following holy day. They did not want that curse displayed on a holy day.

Now Paul takes this ordinance of the Old Testament in the book of Deuteronomy and in the epistle to the Galatians he uses it to interpret the full significance of the death of Jesus on the cross. This is what Paul says in Galatians chapter 3, verses 13-14:

> "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.' [That's a quotation from the passage in Deuteronomy I just read.] He [that's Christ] redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit." (NIV)

So, you see in God's purpose of redemption Jesus was permitted to become a curse. He took the curse that was due to a lost fallen race—to our Adamic race. He became that curse that He might redeem us from that curse and that in place of the curse, we might inherit the blessing. And the evidence that Jesus became a curse for us was that He was hung on that tree on the cross. And so those who knew the word of God from the Old Testament knew that in that act Jesus, in the purpose of God, became a curse that we might receive the blessing.

So that's the exchange. Jesus became the curse that we might receive the blessing. That's like the waters of Marah. Jesus took the bitter that we might be able to drink the sweet. He took the curse that we might have the blessing. So when you think of the tree that was cast into the water, you want to think of the cross of Jesus and the fact that on that cross Jesus took the bitter curse that we might have the sweetness of the blessing. So that Moses casting that tree into the pool is an example or a pattern or a picture of you and me taking what was accomplished on our behalf on the cross and using it to make our Bitter Pool sweet.

I'd also like to read a passage in 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 24 where again the cross is referred to as a tree and the same truth is brought out.

> "He himself [that's Jesus] bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." (NIV)

Again, Jesus became sin that we might receive His righteousness. He was wounded that we might be healed. All that is brought out in the use of the word "tree" for the cross. It was on that "tree" that full healing was obtained for the whole human race. Spiritual healing from sin, physical healing from sickness, deliverance from the curse, the right to inherit the blessing—all that was accomplished through that tree, which is the cross. And so as you picture in your mind Moses casting the tree into the bitter water that it might be made sweet, then you can picture yourself taking the truth of the

cross, applying it in your life and turning your Bitter Pool into sweetness.

The healing and the deliverance that come from that tree, which is the cross—the cross of Jesus—must be applied in our lives by an act of faith. Just as Moses by an act of faith threw that tree into the bitter water, so we too have to exercise faith when we confront that Bitter Pool. Faith in what Jesus accomplished on the cross, and as it were metaphorically, take that tree and throw it into the Bitter Pool. That must be an act of faith to release that miracle-working power that's in the cross of Jesus Christ to make the bitter waters sweet.

And I want to suggest to you certain very simple practical steps that you can take in your life if you're confronted by the Bitter Pool to change that Bitter Pool into sweet. First of all recognize that the Bitter Pool is in God's program. God led you there. He knows all about it and He has the remedy. Second, let God deal with any defects in your character that have been exposed by the Bitter Pool. If you've grumbled when you should have prayed, bear in mind there's something in you that has to be dealt with by the Holy Spirit. Third, by faith accept what Jesus did for you on the cross. "His own self he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we might be dead to sin and live to righteousness, by whose wounds you were healed." Not you will be healed, but you were healed. As far as God's concerned it's already done. It's finished, it's accomplished.

And now listen, here's the fourth and a vital step. Begin to thank God for what Jesus has done on your behalf. Begin to receive by thanking Him. Whatever it is you need, forgiveness, healing (whether it's emotional or physical) release from resentment, bitterness, rebellion, confusion. You see thanking God in faith corresponds to throwing that tree into the water. the purest expression of faith that you and I are capable of is simply thanking God—not seeing any change, not waiting for the evidence—but believing what God says about the cross of Jesus and then beginning to thank Him for what was done on our behalf on the cross. Thanking Him releases that miracle-working power to change the bitter water to sweet.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll continue with this theme the bitter pool. My topic will be "The Lord Our Healer."

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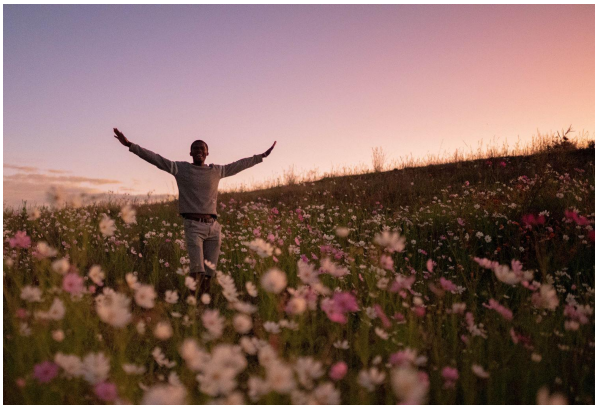

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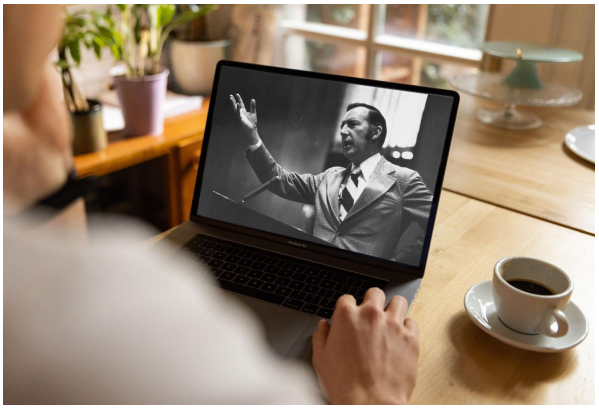

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