

Death Before Resurrection



Life's Bitter Pool (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we draw near to the close of another week. Our theme this week has been "Life's Bitter Pool." This has been based on the experience of the Israelites in the desert when they came to the pool of Marah and found the water too bitter to drink. You remember they had had that tremendous deliverance. They passed through the Red Sea as though on dry ground. Then they had gone out into the wilderness for three days, found no water, come to a pool, thought that they would be able to drink it, and then to their disappointment found that it was bitter and could not be drunk. And I've suggested to you that there's a Bitter Pool somewhere in the life of nearly everyone of us. A place of bitter disappointment where something that gleams and shines and seems so beautiful is not really what we thought it would be.

Then I suggested some examples that are common in our contemporary culture today—kinds of Bitter Pools that you and I may have faced or may have to face. A broken marriage, a business failure, a health breakdown, or disillusionment with a human leader. And yet we saw as we studied that incident in the history of Israel, that the Bitter Pool was in God's program for Israel. And I believe the same can be true in the life of each one of us. God permits us to come to the Bitter Pool because He had a purpose. Then when God's purpose is accomplished, the bitter through the supernatural word of God turns to sweet if we respond aright to God's dealings. It's so important that we respond aright.

Today I'm going to express this vital truth of our experience as a comprehensive principle that operates in every area of life. In fact, I would say that God has built this principle into the operation of the universe itself. There are two passages that I particularly have in mind that state the principles. The first is found in the Old Testament. The second which we will look at later is found in the New. First we'll look at the passage in the Old Testament. It's found in Hosea chapter 2, verses 14-16. This is a prophetic passage which I believe is coming into fulfillment in our day. It's the promise of God to His people, Israel, to restore them. To restore them to Himself, to restore them to the blessings that He has for them, to restore them to their land. And here in Hosea He describes the way that He's going to work out their

restoration. I want you to listen carefully because as so often, the way God does things is not the way you and I would expect Him to do things. And therefore we have to be, as it were, watchful or we'll miss what God is doing. This is what the Lord says concerning the restoration of Israel in Hosea 2:14-16:

> "Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her."

You see, sometimes God begins to allure us. That word is a rather mystical word. It contains the thought of somehow dealing with us in a way that we don't fully understand and yet we feel drawn. He says, "I will lead her into the desert." The desert is not normally the place of blessing, "and speak tenderly to her." Literally in Hebrew the Lord says, "I will speak to her heart." That's a very beautiful expression in Hebrew. You see it's not always possible for God to speak to our heart. Sometimes our heart is closed. Sometimes we are not responsive. So God has to work in our lives and bring about situations like bringing Israel into the desert where He can speak to our heart. Then this is what He says once He's gained her attention:

> "There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley or Achor a door of hope. [You need to know that in the Hebrew word 'Achor' means trouble.] I will make the Valley of Trouble a door of hope. [That phrase 'door of hope' in Hebrew is Petah Tikva and it's the name of one of the major suburbs of Tel Aviv today. But it's taken there from the passage in Hosea.] ...and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt."

And you notice we saw earlier in the story of the Bitter Pool how Miriam and all the women of Israel sang there on the shores of the Red Sea. God says I'm going to give her back a song. Maybe I'm talking to some right now who've lost the song. I think it's tragic when a Christian loses that song. You used to have a song in your heart. You used to praise the Lord so freely and spontaneously. And now there's a heaviness, there's a doubt, there's a kind of sense of being left out. God wants to give you back your song.

> "There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt. [And now we come to the purpose of God, to the revelation. Just as at the Bitter Pool, there's a revelation of Himself that God wants to give.] 'In that day,' declares the Lord, 'you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.'"" (NIV)

You see, under the old covenant, Israel's relationship to the Lord was a marriage relationship, but they knew Him as Baal as Master. It was a relationship not really based on heart commitment, on deep personal love. But God says when I restore you, you'll not come back on the same level of revelation, you'll come back on a higher revelation. You won't just call me, "my Master," you'll call me, "my husband." That's a very intimate word in Hebrew. "I'll show you myself in a new light. I'll show you myself as the one who loves you as a husband loves his wife." It's a revelation of love, of deep tenderness.

So you see God's purpose in dealing with Israel was to bring them to a new revelation of Himself. When I see in history all the infinite wisdom and patience of God He has expended in dealing with Israel and is still expending, I take tremendous courage in my own life. I think if God is so patient with a nation, then He can be that patient with me. And even if I do have to go through the Valley of Trouble, if I will continue, if I will persevere, not give up, not turn back, not grumble, not start to complain, then that Valley of Trouble will become for me, as for Israel, a Door of Hope. A door that leads me to a new and deeper and fuller revelation of the Lord. A revelation of His love and His compassion and His tenderness. You know sometimes it is only in seasons of grief that we can really appreciate compassion and tenderness.

So if it's the Bitter Pool, bear in mind that out of the Bitter Pool God is going to reveal Himself to you if you will let Him speak to your heart.

Now I want to illustrate the same principle of God's dealing from a passage in the New Testament in the writings of Paul—where Paul is writing in a very personal vein about experiences that he himself had gone through. Very hard difficult experiences. The passage is found in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verses 8-10:

> "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such deadly peril [literally it's from such a death] and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to

deliver us." (NIV)

There's a man speaking out of personal experience. He said, "We were under such pressure, we despaired of life. It was far beyond our ability to endure." Do you suppose that Paul was out of the will of God in that situation? There's no indication whatever. He was in the full will of God, he was doing the purpose of God, he was being used of God. And yet God permitted him to come into that situation of pressure where it seemed the very life was being pressed out of him.

Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever though, "I can't take another step." There's not one more ounce of pressure that I can endure. God, why are you permitting this?" Well, Paul and many other servants of the Lord have been through that before you. And there is a reason. God's reason is stated by Paul. "This happened that we might not rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead." See, God wants to bring us to a place where we're at the end of all confidence in ourself. We've reached the absolute limit of our own knowledge, our experience, our strength, our ability. We've entered into an experience of death and then out of that death, God supernaturally moves to bring us into a resurrection which is on a far higher level than we were living on before we experienced that death. You see, God always is leading us upwards. He's leading us onwards. But if He's going to bring us into a resurrection He has to bring us through a death.

I've experienced that in my own life. And I remember I cried out to God once and I said, "God, why do you only bless the things that first die and then are resurrected?" And I felt God gave me this simple answer. He said, "Because, when I'm allowed to resurrect something, I resurrect it in the form I want it to be in."

And so if you're going to go through an experience of death, remember there's a resurrection. Remember there's a new revelation of God. A deeper fuller knowledge of God, if you'll just hang on and trust Him and believe Him.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again next week at this same time Monday through Friday. Next week I'll be sharing with you on another helpful and inspiring theme from the Word of God.

My special offer this week is my book The Grace of Yielding. This book comes out of some very deep dealings of God in my own personal life. It will help you to a fuller understanding of the truths I'm sharing with you this week.

Also, my complete series of talks this week on "Life's Bitter Pool" is available in a single, carefully edited cassette.

Stay tuned for details.

Radio Program

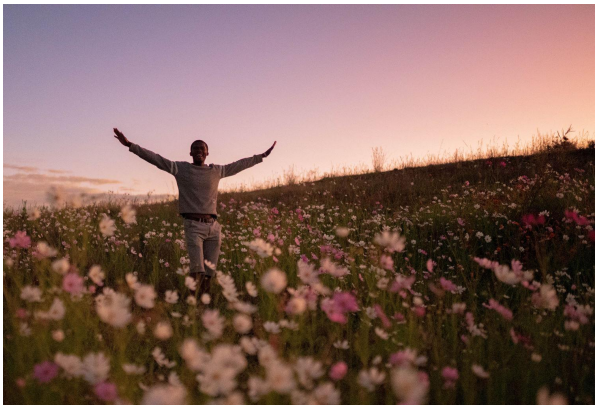
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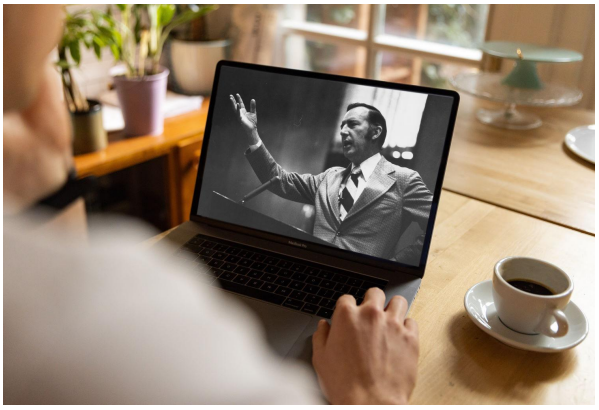
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