

Topic: WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE
Text: Exodus 33:21-23
Theme: “God is still in the midst of our wilderness experience”

Optional Introduction

- Life is sweet, but sometimes vicious.
- This is why 15% of the population of most developed countries suffers severe depression. It will be the second largest killer after heart disease by 2020.
- There many Christians today who have gone through spiritual depression called “wilderness experience.” When it strikes, the omnipresent God seems unreachable, or hiding behind a big rock somewhere.
- Here's what He said: *“There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.”* (Exodus 33:21-33 NIV)
- He lets us go through the challenges and pain of growing, but He is always there at the back to watch and catch us if we fall.

I. IT IS A PERIOD OF SPIRITUAL INACTIVITY

A. **Christians are fearful of wilderness experience (state of spiritual barrenness).**

1. Ideally, Christians always want to be in the midst of a dynamic worship or a big YES to all prayers.
2. No “sane” Christians desire for a low point in their life (wilderness experience).
3. It's a period of no revelation/no growth; instead of moving forward, it's moving backward.

B. **Bible heroes who went thru the wilderness experience:**

1. Abraham (almost) lost his son Isaac in Mt Moriah.

2. Moses lost his stature in Mt Sinai (tended animals). He was reared, educated, and trained to be the next Pharaoh of Egypt.
3. Nebuchadnezzar lost his sanity and his kingdom. He was the king of Babylon. (Daniel 4)
4. Job lost everything, but his wife.
5. Elijah lost his boldness and fled from Jezebel in fear for his own life. He was a mighty prophet who could pray for rain to stop and come, multiplied flour and oil, parted the Jordan River, called fire from heaven, and killed Baal's false prophets.
6. Jesus lost His status/dignity as God in Mt Calvary. (Philippians 2:6-8)

II. IT IS A PREPARATION FOR A GREATER GROWTH

A. *It removes our self-dependence.*

1. We sometimes depend on our own natural abilities, qualifications, qualities, skills, influences, etc.
2. Diamond: Its lustre, quality, and price depend on how it is cut. Diamonds are cut intricately for a greater value; Christians are cut (trials, discipline, persecutions) delicately for a greater growth.
3. Gold: In order to achieve 99.99% pure gold, it is purified through by electrolysis (passing electric current through a gold-solution).

B. *Bible heroes who were prepared for a greater growth:*

1. Moses was prepared in wilderness of Mt Sinai.
 - His life of 120 years: First 40 years, reared and trained to be the next Pharaoh of Egypt; second

40 years, trained in Mt Sinai; third 40 years, led the Hebrew people out of Egypt.

- God personally talked to Him, wrote the Ten Commandments with His own hands, and gave him one-on-one instructions.
2. Nebuchadnezzar was prepared to humble down before God in the wilderness. (Daniel 4:34)
 3. Paul was prepared for three years in Arabia before he started his ministry.
 - He also experienced the following: Received 39 lashes 5x; beaten with a rod 3x; stoned once; shipwrecked 3x; was in danger in the city and at sea; spent days and nights without sleep and food while ministering.

III. IT IS A PATH FOR A RICHER HARVEST

A. *It opens the floodgates of blessings.*

- The only remaining way when we reach the bottom is to go up. There is light at the end of the tunnel.

B. ***Bible heroes who were rewarded for richer harvest:***

1. Abraham became the "Father of Faith." (Genesis 22:15-18)
2. Job became richer twice as much.
3. Moses became the most humble prophet of all time.
 - Confronted and performed miracles before the Pharaoh.
 - Led thousands Israelites out of Egypt.
 - Divided the Red Sea.
 - Wrote the first five books of the Bible and a few Psalms.

4. Nebuchadnezzar was back to his palace with greater honour. (Daniel 4:36,37)
5. Paul became the champion of the Apostles.
 - Wrote 14 books out of the 27 New Testament books.
 - His own words became part of the Word of God. (1 Corinthians 7:25)
 - Got the revelations and special teachings (salvation by grace, circumcision of the heart, Rapture, etc.) directly from Jesus. (Galatians 1:12)
6. Jesus gained all power, authority, honour, and glory (Philippians 2:9-11)