

Without Trials, There is no Faith Growth; Without Faith, There is no Victory.

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It is not hard to grasp the understanding that if there were no darkness there would be no appreciation for light. If you never experience darkness what would you call light? You might not have known that something existed call light. This form of energy would have been constant at all times and taken for granted and certainly not have been so appreciated as it is now. Just like the antediluvian world which did not believe that would be a flood, because they never before saw rain. I can just imagine how Noah and his family members felt when they saw rain clouds gather. I can truly understand why it was so necessary for God to put the rainbow in the sky; a sign that is hardly remember for what it was originally intended. Every time they saw the rain clouds they saw the promise that God made; that he would not send another universal flood. Today that sign in the rainbow is, for most people, taken for granted; or is remembered for the myth associated with the pot of gold.

I can remember not so long ago; September 11, 2004; the experience of the aftermath of hurricane Ivan which ravaged the south coast of Jamaica: there was no electricity power for at least over a week, and what we had taken for granted was now truly missed. After a few days, the candles which were rationed at the supermarkets and stores in the pre-shopping rush, for many, had expired and the little life left in our flashlights were dim and used only in absolute necessity. Truly the public electricity supply was missed and when it was restored it was really appreciated.



Likewise, interestingly, I find in the same way we take a lot of spiritual things for granted, and sometimes only in a time of crisis we really come to value and appreciate the many blessings God has, in His love, designed for us.

Lessons of Faith from the Exodus

Take for instance the way God led the Children of Israel out of Egypt. We know that the Children of Israel dwelled in the land of Goshen; we read this in Gen. 45, versed 9-11.

9. "Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not:

10. **And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen**, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:"



And also in chapter 46: 28 we read:

“And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto **Goshen**; and they came into **the land of Goshen.**”

So the children of Israel settled and resided in the land of Goshen in the Country Egypt. But when the time was right and God saw the affliction of Israel’s children he sent Moses to lead them with a strong arm out of Egypt; back to the Land of Canaan from whence they came. I would like to point out a pattern in the way God led them so we may see the blessings, that He provided for them and for us today, in all the challenges they met during their exodus.

Let us examine the map above which shows the traditional route of the Exodus. I hope you can see clearly there in Egypt, the land of Goshen at the beginning of the red line which is to the left of the Red Sea. God could have led them away from the Red Sea and the desert, on solid ground; in fact they were heading that direction but God told Moses to turn back from that direction and go and camp beside the sea. Read with me in Exo 14:1 and Chapter 13:17, 18.

14:1. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2. Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baalzephon: before it shall ye encamp by the sea.

13:17. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt:

18. But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt.

How interesting! None of these people, except perhaps Moses alone, seem to have known or understood the purposes of God. For at the first sign of war they murmured against God through Moses, saying that he had carried them out into the dessert to have them killed. “And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? (Exo 14:10, 11.) Although they left Egypt harnessed or armed, they knew they could not face Pharaoh physically. But after all the miracles God had performed for them, most readers would think that these people would have had begun to have some amount of trust in their awesome God. After all, the miracles that God did against Pharaoh was not only just to punish him, but to start building courage and trust in the hearts of His people.

So God led them into a situation where there was no way out. At this point everything was humanly impossible. They could not go through the dessert unless there were enough camels and chariots for everyone and they could not go over the sea unless they had a huge ship or several boats. In any case, the Egyptians, who were supremely equipped, were pursuing rapidly; distance was enclosing and they would eventually overtake them. This I must confess, just thinking about it, must have indeed, been a trial; even to those who trusted and definitely a crisis to those who had but little faith. But God understands Humanity and He knows our frame. So what did He do? He broke the suspense and did something again to encourage them in hope and trust. He caused the pillar of cloud to go behind the camp of Israel; between them and the Egyptians. It became a light for Israel but darkness for the Egyptians, all night, while God prepared the way of escape. (See Exo 14:19, 20). Here again God sought to teach His people a lesson of trust. He did not leave them in suspense too long; He provided for them yet another token of His love and ability to care for His own. God is not limited in the miracles that He can perform. He could have had the Red Sea divided before they reached there. But He wanted to lead them to the point where they could no longer depend on themselves, but learn to trust Him. Even though He had this great victory in store for them, He used the pillar of cloud miracle to test them and to build up their faith and trust in Him.

While there are many lessons to be drawn from this story, I want to focus your attention on mainly just one. The most important lesson He intended to teach Israel; the one which is not often highlighted

enough when the story of the Exodus is told; more often when we tell this story, we focus on the power and miracles of God, but not enough on the lesson taught of **Trust and Faith in God**.

“And Moses said unto the people, **Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD**, which he will show to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.” (*Exo 14:13-16*).

As we have seen in Exo 13:17, 18, God did not lead the Children of Israel through the easy path via the land of the Philistines, because their heart would faint at the first sign of trouble and they would run back to Egypt. How soon after was the word of God proven as always; true? Listen to what they said when they saw Pharaoh’s army pursuing. “Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. (*Exo 14:12*). Had they gone the way of the Philistine and met with any resistance from them, they would have retreated to Egypt instantly; but God had them cornered; not the Egyptians. **God had them cornered by circumstances which required Him to do something so He could teach them a higher grade lesson in trust and faith.** They have had so far, 13 lessons of faith and this was the 14th. They saw the 11 miracles; one sign plus ten other signs with plagues in Egypt; they saw the pillar of Cloud by day and the pillar of Fire by night. They had just seen the cloud going between them and the Egyptians in the night and now they were about to see the parting of the Red Sea. **In every miracle and sign were lessons of Trust and Faith.**

Trust builds Faith. If you trust someone you will have faith in his word. If your spouse with whom you have lived with for, let’s say fifteen years; whom you have grown to trust over this time, told you on their dying day that he/she had hidden a sack of diamonds in a man hole, worth ten million dollars, I am sure you would not doubt for a moment even if it were All Fools Day. But if a stranger told you that on any other day you would have second thought I am sure. However if an untrustworthy and unstable person told you the same thing, you might be afraid to go and look, lest you feel stupid after having gone and found nothing. The point is, when you have gained trust in someone, then you will have faith in their words; their words are, to you, facts even without the visual evidence. **This is the true meaning of faith; believing God even when you do not see the evidence with the physical senses; knowing it is a fact because He said so and He cannot lie.**

It was clearly Gods purpose to teach the Children of Israel to trust Him; they knew of the God of their fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but they did not know him in that personal way as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob knew Him. “And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH (*the self-Existent or Eternal*)¹ was I not known to them.” (*Exo 6:2, 3*) Maybe “God Almighty” had become a byword as the phrase “Jesus Christ!” is today; a word to exclaim when you are frightened or frustrated; a two word phrase that was not just taken for granted, but used carelessly. I heard a story on “Unshackled” some time ago of man who visited a church service and went back home and told his wife that he heard the preacher cursed a few times. Well his wife, somewhat surprised, asked him,

“What did the preacher really said?”

“Well he said ‘Jesus Christ’”. He replied. To this man the phrase ‘Jesus Christ’ was a curse word. And he must have been surprised that a preacher of God could use those words. That was all the knowledge he had of Jesus Christ, because that was the careless way it was used in his circles.

God wanted Israel to know Him in a personal and different way. Four hundred years of slavery had taken a toll on their perspective of God the Almighty and that phrase was not so meaningful to most of them and hopeful to the hearts of but a few. Except for a select few, they believed there was little hope of ever coming out of slavery; to them, the God of their fathers had forsaken them. Notice their attitude; at the first sign of trouble they are ready to go back and be slaves. So God had to teach them like little children, the

¹ Strong’s Concordance 3068

lessons of trust; first with little signs and then successively bigger ones to follow. Notice how the magicians counterfeited the first few plagues, interestingly adding even to their own discomfit successively; and then they were powerless; it was now out of their leagues.

Sep by step, with each lesson augmenting the knowledge and power of JEHOVAH, and at every stage, Israel was to learn to trust in His Love and Power to save. **The difficulties and trials were given them as aids to help them appreciate the blessings of God through a relationship of trust.**

Thirst then Hunger then Thirst

After crossing the Red Sea, The Children travelled three days in the desert of Shur and found no water. Then they came to Murah but they could not drink the water there because it was bitter. The word Murah means bitter and so the place was called Murah. Here again they are showing that they still don't trust Moses nor Jehovah. They murmured again and were ready to go back into slavery to serve the Egyptians. But God who is Teacher of all teachers is patient and caring. He knows the lessons are hard and He has the answers waiting. He commanded Moses to cut a tree and throw it into the water. Not only was it not bitter anymore; it was sweet. Then God led them to Elim, where there were twelve wells and seventy palm trees.

Again God led them into the wilderness of Sin by the pillar of cloud in the day and the pillar of fire in the night. This desert was near an Egyptian town called Sin (I have no idea why it is so called). You see this Wilderness of Sin was the mid point between the fertile Elim and a place where God wanted to give them, what may be the greatest manifestation of His power, His love and to summarize it, a transcript of His character. Mount Sinai, the giving of the laws. But before they are to reach to this height of His revelation they are brought to the test again. Just before this it was bitter water; now there was no food in sight. And what did they do? If you have not read or heard this story before, you might have guessed what happened next; that they trusted the God who hailed down plagues upon the Egyptians, parted the Red Sea so that they walked on dry ground, drowned their enemies in the same sea, and made bitter water sweet, then praised Him and asked for some food. If that is what you guessed, then were wrong. A month and a half after the miraculous deliverance from bondage with more miracles and blessings and lessons of trust, faith and love, and with the constant evidence of the Cloud by day and the Fire by night, it seemed the murmuring only got worse. They were even now attributing their bondage to the Lords doings, for here they are saying "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full;" (*Exo 16:3*). Here is the suggestion that it would be better to have been at the mercy of God, having them in slavery, than to be following this defected half Egyptian magician prince called Moses, who claims to be sent by a god named Jehovah, whom they never heard of. In other words, God dealt better with them by keeping them enslaved in Egypt, than what this Moses had now brought them into. No wonder the signs and miracles had no lasting effects on them. They were not convinced that they were being led by the Hand of God. So God had to show and teach them some hard lessons; lessons after lessons which would climax into an awesome revelation of Himself; His character and His love.

Therefore, God gave them Quails for meat in the evening and rained Manna from heaven in the morning. How patient is our God! This is yet another test for His people; another lesson to learn of Him. "Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, **that I may prove them**, whether they will walk in my law, or no." (*Verse 4*) God uses this opportunity to remind and teach Israel about the Sabbath and to try their faith in Him to provide everyday. First he sent the quails in the evening just as he said He would; then He gave them manna in the morning. But before He did all that, He told them that He would only send it for six days and every man should collect only enough for his daily needs; but on the sixth day, which was the day before the Sabbath, they should collect twice as much; enough for two days supply for there would not be any on the Sabbath day. (See *Exo16:1-34*)

Here is a test which many who are called Christians are given often and so often fail. The first test was: would God keep his promise and send this thing tomorrow? Maybe not, so let me gather enough for three days supply; there is plenty of it now! Just as this fool which Jesus spoke of in his parable; “And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” (*Luke 12:18, 19*). Hoarding the blessings which God intended for the day; not because it was wrong to conserve and be moderate and not be wasteful; Jesus taught us not to be wasteful; in his instructions after feeding the five thousand he told them to gather all the fragments and they gathered 12 baskets full. But because of trust in self rather than faith in God some will store up for the morrow. So some of them (children of Israel), who believed not, provoked the Lord and stored up extra for the next day and it bred worms and stank.

The second test was: maybe it was not God who really sent us this thing; maybe a natural phenomenon uncured and it will come naturally tomorrow and everyday; at least maybe for a season. After all it came Sunday, Monday and Tuesday and everyday up until today Friday. Why should I listen to this Moses and bother to pickup extra today? So, on the Sabbath, the seventh day, those unbelieving ones, who were probably the same ones who tried to hoard it in the week and did not want the stinking, wormy experience again, did not bother to collect enough for two days on the sixth day; they went out to look for the heavenly bread on the Sabbath. Interestingly, man would rather attribute a good phenomenon to natural causes rather than to a miracle of love and grace from God. The question here is; can God provide for our needs everyday? Will He provide for us when we obey his commandments? How many are they which have, in trials and hard times, turned away from obeying God’s command to keep the Sabbath holy and take jobs which require them to work on the Sabbath. It is clearly a lack of faith in God’s ability and His goodwill to provide for them that leads them in this pathway of insubordination. There is no difference between, those who give-in thus to the pressures of modern life today, and those among the Children of Israel who went out on the Sabbath day looking for manna. Surely a God who can work such miracles, including the birth, life and sacrificial death of His only begotten Son, for our sake, can provide the very basic necessities of life; food and water; in fact he promised just that. “And ye shall serve the LORD your God, and he shall bless thy bread, and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee.” (*Exo 23:25*)

So the children of Israel ate manna all the years they spent in the wilderness; forty years did they eat it. Can you imagine every morning for forty years, you wake up you find a plate of food waiting outside your dwellings no matter where you camped? I suppose for many it became common place after such a long time. But for many in Israel it did not take long. If for everyday you are conscious that God is providing your daily ration miraculously and one day you find yourself without water; what would you do? Well I suppose not many people in Israel were conscious of that, for here is what they did: “And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? Wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?” (*Exo 17:1, 2*)

I want to highlight something before I make this next point. Today we have neither Moses nor the outstanding prophet Elijah. But we have Jesus Christ whom the Father hath commanded us to hear. “Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED; HEAR YE HIM. (*Mat 17:4, 5*). The word “hear” used is translated from the Greek word “akouo”; which means “to give audience to” or simply to “listen to”. Peter in his mind equated Jesus with the prophets Moses and Elijah, but God made a distinction visibly and audibly. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; **HEAR YE HIM.**” “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his

Son"... (*Heb. 1:1, 2*) If we can't hear Him then how will we hear God the Father whom no man has seen and live?

My point is: Jesus said "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (*Mat 6:31-33*). These are the words of Jesus and the Father said we are to "Hear Him". In other words listen to Him; believe Him.

As the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness (desert) of Sin, they are again faced with the serious problem of "no water". The average person can live without water for three days thereafter he will most likely die of dehydration. But he will only last this long under normal environmental circumstances; such as normal temperature, humidity and no extra physical activity. Of course the person must be fasting or he could get water from the fluids in the foods he might eat. But imagine the children of Israel, travelling several miles a day; some on foot; some on camels. Some having children and infants, and some nursing mothers too; some sickly and lame; some aged and weak; and all they can behold as far as their faithless eyes can see are the mirages of the dry parched Desert land. But I suppose most of them had carried some of the sweet water from Murah which God provided enough of for the journey; so it was probably not as bad as it might appear or it could have been worse than we may perceive.

By the time they reached Rephidim, their supply was either out or running low. Yet they were not there by mere circumstances nor did they run there in a panic or in frantic desperation. It was God who led them there. Read again in Exodus 17:1. "And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, **according to the commandment of the LORD**, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. How soon they had forgotten the mighty power of God. They had not long finished singing the victory song and now they are chiding Moses and are ready to stone him for that which God had commanded him.

Before it was bitter water; then He made it sweet; then there was not food; He sent quails and manner; now there is no water in sight. I would say there was substantial evidence of a pattern immersing here of God's sustaining ability. But paradoxically another pattern was also clearly being established here too; unbelief. I must conclude at this point that those who murmured must have philosophized that none of these phenomena could be attributed to God; I am sure that the manna did not stop coming; how else could someone lose faith in someone who provided for them everyday unceasingly and did not believe that this "Being" could provide one of the base necessities of life; water. Yet there are so many blessings from God we receive daily and taken for granted and when faced with simpler needs we are distraught and express faithlessness and worry. We take these blessings for granted even while they are still evident; forgetting the source from whence they came. Yes we should always count our blessings and have faith, for it is impossible to please God without faith; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

The next miracle is one of the most compounded lessons to be taught in the history of the exodus; the striking of the rock at Horeb. "And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go, Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." (*Exo 17:7, 6*) Oh what a mighty saviour we have in Jesus! We serve a God that not only can, but will make water to come forth from a dry rock when His children are thirsty. Herein is foreshadowed the Rock of our salvation which was to be stricken for our sin that the water of life may flow; that we may drink freely; if we believe with the kind of faith that will move us to drink. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, (*Feast of Tabernacle*) Jesus stood and cried, saying, **If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.** (*John 7:37, 38*). Yes Jesus is able to make rivers to flow out of small stones like you and me.

The Feast of Tabernacle was a statue God commanded in Israel to be celebrated as a reminder of the experience their fathers had when they were led out of Egypt; the way they lived in booths made of palm

and other tree branches. In this festival they were to make similar booths from the bough of palm and other trees and dwell in them for seven days. (See Lev.23:34-44) So here Jesus, who is the substance of the shadow, is identifying himself as **the Rock** symbolized at Horeb; the Rock which is to be stricken for our sake, so we may drink of that water of life freely. But earlier Jesus, at the well of Jacob, had told the woman of Samaria this: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. ...Whosoever drinketh of this (physical) water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:10, 13, 14) *Italics supplied.*

From the Mount of God

The children of Israel are now camped at Horeb where there is now plenty of water from the rock which Moses struck in the presence of the people. Now Horeb is to the north at the foot of Mount Sinai. And Mount Sinai is also known as Mount Horeb. This is where Amalek attacked the people of God. Joshua led the battle in defence of Israel and when Moses lifted up his hand toward heaven, Israel prevailed, and when he held down his hand Amalek prevailed. So when Aaron and Hur observed that, they sat Moses down on a stone and held up his hands towards heaven and Israel discomfited them with the sword until sunset. This was evidence of the leading power of God, but greater signs were yet to come.

In Exodus chapter 19, God told Moses to prepare the people for the most awesome manifestation of the presence of God in the exodus of the children of Israel. They were to prepare to meet with God. We read: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai. (Exo 19:9-11) God is about to reveal to them visibly, verbally, and literarily (in writing), His character and ways in which they may obtain His character. However take note of the emphasis God made in verse 9. "...that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever". That is what God wanted for Israel first and foremost. He wants faith in Him; in His leadership; His love; His salvation. Yet as we read on we will see that that did not go well with the people; they were not ready to receive such a close revelation of Jehovah.

"And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice." (Exo 19:16-19). And what did the children of Israel do? "And the people stood afar off..." "And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die." (Exo 20:19) Contrast that with what Moses did! "...and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was. (Exo 20:21). Why was Moses able to approach the Lord while the rest of Israel drew back? In preparing the people to meet with God, Moses was instructed to put a boarder around the foot of the mountain so that no one; not even an animal should come to the mountain; not even to touch it or it should be killed. (verse 12). But in verse 19 and 20 we read: "And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount: and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount; and Moses went up". (Exo 19:19-20) Moses was able to touch the mountain, step up unto the

mountain and went up and met there with God. But before that Moses spoke to God and He answered. That was evidence of the faith which Moses had in the One which He knew and trusted. Let me submit that faith was the difference, for without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. It was clearly unbelief, which kept the children of Israel, separated, and distanced from God, and God wanted, so much, to change that. Sin, you might say, is what kept them separated and that is true, but can there be an end of sin without the saving power of God? The answer is clearly no, and neither can anyone receive this saving power except he comes to God by faith. So unbelief is inseparable from sin. In fact unbelief is the catalyst for sin; it is the ingredient which makes sin possible and increases sin. That was Satan's first attack on Eve. Did God say so and so? He first insinuated doubt in her mind about the truthfulness of God's words. First there is unbelief then followed by acts of sin. The opposite is true; faith is the catalyst of righteousness. First we believe then comes the miraculous power of the victorious everlasting righteous life.

Running away from God

Moses was a man like the rest of men subject to like passions and was born and shaped in sin and iniquity; in other words he was a sinner and had the same need as every man; the need of a saviour. Yet he was allowed to speak to God face to face and dared to go up unto the mountain of Sinai while the presence of God smoked and shook it; while no other; not even an animal dared to approach.

Mount Sinai was the place where Moses first encountered the presences of God in the "Burning Bush" which burned without having been consumed. (See Exo 3:1-7). It was called the mountain of God. I don't know whether it was so called before his first experience or from thereafter, but I am almost certain that Moses recognised that name or named it so from that point onward, because he referred so to it the book of Exodus which he wrote. Moses had enough evidence to believe this was the mount of God and his faith was strengthened by the experiences he had from the burning bush until that which was current. It was the same Jehovah which had sent him to free these people from bondage in the presence of a series of awesome miracles, and then instructed him and led them to the place where he met Him first; Mount Sinai; the mount of God. If Moses did not have faith in the beginning, he might have run away like the prophet Jonah. Moses' faith and willingness to obey brought him close to God in many ways.

However close Moses got to the Lord, it was He that sought him from the beginning. It was God who called to him from the burning bush and invited him up into the smoking mountain. It is clearly evident from the reaction of the children of Israel that sinners do not naturally seek after God; they are afraid and run away. This was the first reaction of Adam and Eve after they sinned; they hid themselves among the trees in the Garden. (See Gen 3:8). Every step a sinner makes towards God is in response to the pulling of His love and mercy; and yet every step made is an enactment of a measure of faith. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (*1 John 4:10*). "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation **through faith** in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;..." (*Rom 3:23-25*)

The word propitiate has this definition in the Webster's Meridian: To cause to become favourably inclined; win or regain the goodwill of; appease or conciliate. Now who is appeasing whom? The word appears 3 times in the New Testament from the Greek words 'hilasterion' (once) and 'hilasmos' (twice), and in all 3 occurrences it refers to Jesus Christ as being the propitiation for our sins. In other words, Jesus Christ is the appeaser; the conciliator of God for our benefit. God is making peace with us through Christ Jesus. He is, through His only begotten Son, winning our trust and confidence in Him as our loving, caring, merciful and forgiving Father. And sending His only begotten Son to be the required sacrifice by way of a shameful death is telling us how serious and sincere He really is. Interestingly the other occurrence of the

word 'hilasterion' is found in Hebrews 9:5, where it is translated 'mercyseat'. What does that tell you about our God and our High Priest?

So while we are sinners running away from God our Father, He is seeking to make peace with us through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ who stands at His mercyseat, offering his salvation in love and mercy to us who will believe and accept. "For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment..." (Ezek 34:11, 12, 16)

How beautifully connected is the word of God. This is what God was doing for Israel as nation throughout their entire history right up until the cross. This is what God is doing for everyone from the cross until now. Every painful experience Israel endured was in preparation to receive the epitome of blessing; salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

From the mount of Sinai, God gave His laws. First the Ten Commandments, then rules about His altar, and then He gave them civil laws how they are to be governed among themselves. Then He called Moses up into the mount and showed him the sanctuary and gave him the laws of the services of the sanctuary.

The first laws which were given are more than just a set of moral code of conduct; they are in fact a summary of the character of God. The Ten Commandments were a clear indication of the separation sin had made between God and man. In the reconciliation of Israel, God wanted them to have His character, and they were to be enlightened by, and be educated in, what His character is; to have a clear knowledge of who He is and what they should become. This was certainly a challenge for Israel and they took the challenge, but not properly understanding it. ("And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, **All that the LORD hath spoken we will do...** Exo 19:7-8). This is not hard to relate to since many including myself, for a long time misunderstood it and there are many today who still do not understand it. Israel took the challenge to obey the Ten Commandments (which were in the purposes of God) in an attempt to obtain the character of Jehovah.

However, obedience to these laws was not the primary purpose for which God gave them. It was to highlight the character of God and show Israel their true need of His righteousness; to contrast His everlasting righteousness with their sinful depraved and condemned life. The apostle Paul put it this way: "Moreover the law entered, that the offence (or sin) might abound..." "...that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." (*Rom 5:20, 7:13*). In revealing the Law, God desired not only to show Israel and all mankind, how far they had fallen, but that they were helplessly incapable of attaining to the standard of His righteous character by their own efforts; no sinful human attempt to fulfil this requirement was possible and all such efforts were vain and only led to corrupt religions.

But God did not leave Israel there to be despondent; He showed them, through the sanctuary, that by faith in the slain Lamb of God, they could receive the righteous character of God freely. Was this really possible? Was Israel disposed to the same grace through faith as we now have? It was possible for their father Abraham, for so said the scripture that Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him as righteousness. (See *Rom 4:3*). Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." Elijah was translated without seeing death (see *2Kings 2:11*); surely he was not counted worthy by his own works of the law, but by faith, as even by faith he performed miracles in the name and power of Jehovah. Not only was it possible but it actually happened that many were saved; but only through faith in the promised Lamb of God. Moses was saved by faith; he evidently knew what faith in God was. But he understood the promise and by faith received the righteousness of God. "Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (*John 1:45*) Moses in his last words in his second writing to the children of Israel prophesied of Jesus in these words: "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst

of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him. (*Duet 18:15-19*)

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;” (*Heb 1:1, 2 NKJV*) One day, Jesus took with Him Peter, James and his brother John up into a high mountain. While they were there Jesus was transfigured (changed to a glorified form) in their very presence; His face shone as the sun and His clothes became as white light. Then Moses and Elijah appeared unto them speaking to Jesus. Peter, being the verbose spokesman, said: "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." But while he was still speaking a cloud covered them and the voice of God the Father said: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (See *Mat 17:1-5*). God did not wait until Peter finished his sentence. He cut into his speech and told him and his fellows that what was necessary was to listen to my beloved son Jesus. In other words God is saying; this is the prophet whom I told Moses and Elijah about, which I promised I will raise up from among your brethren, and even though He is like Moses, **LISTEN TO HIM!** I am not speaking exclusively through Moses and the prophets anymore; I am speaking through Him. His words are My words.

So we are not come to a mountain burning with fire and smoking and thundering and shaking with blackness, at which even Moses trembled, and the people stood afar off, but we have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to **Jesus the Mediator** of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. (See *Heb 12:22-24*). We are not come to the earthly sanctuary but to the heavenly sanctuary in which Jesus is our High Priest. Neither do we come with a sacrifice liken to that of Abel; the blood of animals but with the blood of Jesus the slain Lamb of God and resurrected King Priest; who presently intercedes for us.

In His dealings with the children of Israel, from the Exodus until the coming of the Messiah Jesus Christ, God has shown his long suffering, mercy, tender care and love for His people. What was the one main thing God wanted to teach Israel; why He took them through all this? It is the key object now as it was then; it was the lesson of faith in God; faith in His care; faith in His love and even more so faith in His salvation through the righteousness of Jesus Christ; in his death and resurrection. He was teaching simple lessons which, in all generations to come, would prepare his people to receive His salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every trial you face today is Gods way of preparing you to receive His salvation. Every blessing, though sometimes disguised, is toward this end. So He leads all of us who He loves through trying challenges that we may learn to trust Him. By trusting we believe and by believing our faith takes hold of His promises resulting in obedience, and righteousness is accounted unto us as it was unto Enoch, Abraham Moses and Elijah. “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” (*Gal 3:6*) “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” (*Rom 4:13*) “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (*Rom 4:5*).

How do we increase our faith?

Trials are God’s way of investing our measure of faith. Let me rephrase that! Trials are God’s investment plan for our measure of faith. God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. Therefore no one

is excusable in this regard. Trials and hardship were introduced by God the moment that man sinned, and each is an opportunity to invest and increase that measure of faith. Adam was told that cursed was the ground **for his sake** and by the sweat of his face he shall eat bread. It is popularly believed that the phrase **“for your sake”** meant because of your fault. But I believe it meant for your benefit. By hardships and trials, God intended to teach man to seek the only way to life though the channel of salvation He has provided in Christ Jesus by faith. It was unbelief that led Eve to sin and this is the portal by which we may return to God.

Every challenge, every trial, and every test that God plans and creates, He with it also plans and creates a victorious solution. In Christ, with every trial, victory awaits. What do we then, have to fear? Are we like the children of Israel who never seem to learn to trust; even a few days after experiencing the miracles and power of the mighty hand of God? Are there no miracles in your life? If that is so maybe it is that you are not following by faith the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night. If so, then it is time you look up! For it was Christ in the cloud and the fire. (*See Num. 12:5*) God is speaking through Him today to everyone who will listen. You can see and hear Him in the sunshine, the rain, the thunders, in the clouds, in the air that we breathe, in the energy we find to go about each day. Are you listening?

If you have not yet come to know of the goodness of God’s mercy and love through Jesus, or your life as a Christian has been one of dryness and emptiness, you need to look for the signs God has been giving you; unnoticed; in the things he has provided for you daily, the manna the sweet water and the cool water from the rock, the quails, the cloud by day and the fire by night, even the trials and hard challenges you now face. Then and only then will you learn to trust Him and your faith will abound. Then you will drink of the water of the Rock of our salvation and eat of the manna sent down of God. Then you will believe He wants to give you the righteous life of His only Begotten Son to dwell in you.

“I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world... .. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.” (*John 6:48-58*)

If you can not believe in the miracles of God in providing for your daily needs (manna and water), if you are one of those who think that these are natural phenomena; cause and effects of man’s efforts and doings, how then will you believe the miracle of salvation, and receive and be satisfied with the spiritual manna and drink of the springs of living water from the Rock fountain of Jesus Christ our saviour? The scripture is so intricately connected and truly cannot be broken. The reason for this is that there is really one theme in the bible; salvation through faith in Christ. Hence the lessons given to the children of Israel during the exodus in every symbol, type and statue, foreshadows salvation through **Faith in Christ Jesus**. The rod of Moses, The pillar of cloud and of fire, the rock at Horeb, the water from the rock, the manna, the priest, the showbread, the lamb or blood sacrifices, and the brazen serpent which was lifted up; all these and more are symbols of Christ in His work and plan in saving Adam’s race.

As it was for the children of Israel a course to prepare them to understand the only way of salvation, so is it for us today. **Every trial and hardship is an opportunity and an opening for a miracle of grace**. We are blessed with an advantage; though we did not see the miracles in Egypt or the smoking mountain as they did, we are privilege to look back at the antitype of which they that believed looked for and hoped for; of which not all understood. We have Calvary and the Cross as history, and even more, their lessons; their experiences and their mistakes to learn from. We, from this vantage point, can see through faith, the substance rather than the shadow which they saw. We have read and seen the power of the Holy Spirit of God in the lives of many who, even facing death, overcame sin and rejoiced in His righteousness. We now

have a high priest who is Jesus Christ Himself, who is moved and touched by our infirmities. One who understands our frame; for he lived as one of us; amongst us. This high priest not only dwells in the temple above, but will, by our faith and submission, now live in our temple; even our bodies. "... a holy temple in the Lord in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.". "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?" (*Eph 2:21-22*), (*1 Cor 6:19*)

This is the blessing Israel as a nation missed and did not understand. It was a mystery to them; in fact it was indeed a mystery to the world. "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; **which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:** (*Col 1:27*) But God did not intend that it should be hidden from His people Israel back then or from us today. Many of the patriarchs understood, believed and look forward and rejoiced.

Our Response

How we respond to trials determine whether we profit or we lose; whether we increase or decrease; whether we murmur or we praise; whether we sing or we sigh; whether we bring Him glory or shame; whether we let our light shine or put it under a bushelbasket. How do we compare with the children of Israel? If we hold onto that measure of faith we already have and trust in God's goodwill (in all sense of the word 'goodwill'), our faith will increase in the most trying of crises, and as He, in His own time, reveals the results victoriously our faith will abound.

Nothing happens to the believing child of God by accident; his life is one of providence and is determined and ordered by the will and purposes of the Almighty, Loving Father. If you believe this and trust His goodwill for you, then great is your faith. Henceforth, in every trial that approaches, you will see in it coming at you, the blessings of God's grace made possible through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ His only begotten Son.

You may receive the blessings God has for you today; if you believe.

My prayer is towards this end.

Abdiel
(Ayon Baxter)