



THE BIRDCAGE

Lesson 3 for July 16, 2022

A caged bird can be taught a new melody by covering its cage. In the dark, the bird can focus and learns to sing the new melody.

Sometimes God allows us to be taken to “covered cages” where we cannot see anything beyond the difficulties around us. Let’s study how and why this happens.



How are we tested?

- ▶ Led to a dead end
- ▶ Tested when in need
- ▶ Exposed to temptation



Why are we tested?

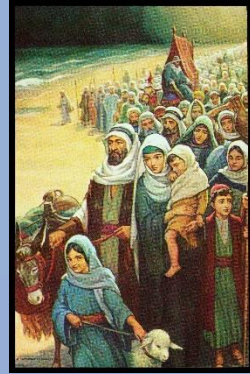
- ▶ To strengthen our faith
- ▶ To strengthen our confidence

LED TO A DEAD END

"For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.'" (Exodus 14:3)

God delivered Israel from Egypt, but He didn't want to follow an easy path because "they might change their minds and return to Egypt." (Ex. 13:17 NIV)

He led them to a dead end instead. They were surrounded by mountains and the sea ahead (Ex. 14:3). Why?



To show His saving power (Ex. 14:13)

As a proof for the unbelievers (Ex. 14:18)

And what about the people of Israel? They also had something to learn. They needed to believe that God was with them, and that He could save them from any circumstance or issue they would face.

We should submit our mind and heart to God, especially in times of hardship. We must be willing to let Him teach us (Exodus 14:31).



TESTED WHEN IN NEED

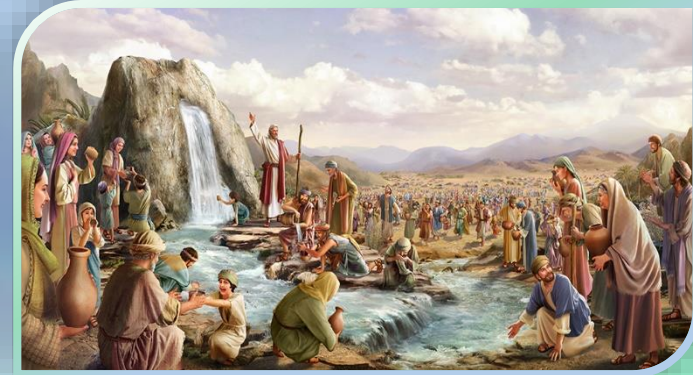
"Is the Lord among us or not?" (Exodus 17:7)



After the crossing of the Red Sea, God led Israel to dry lands. When they were out of water, they found some in Marah. But that water was not drinkable (Ex. 15:22-23).

After making the water drinkable, God led them to a dry place again. Some thought God wanted to kill them with thirst! (Ex. 17:1-3)

Shouldn't Christians expect God to supply our basic needs (Lk. 12:29-30)?

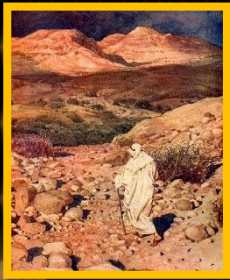


God wanted them to realize their current situation, and to remember that He was always taking care of them. They had to understand they needed God, that they could do nothing without Him (Jn. 15:5).



“In mercy to us, He does not always place us in the easiest places; for if He did, in our self-sufficiency we would forget that the Lord is our helper in time of necessity [...] disappointment and trial are permitted to come upon us that we may realize our own helplessness, and learn to call upon the Lord for aid, as a child, when hungry and thirsty, calls upon its earthly father.”

E. G. W. (Reflecting Christ, December 5)



EXPOSED TO TEMPTATION

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.” (Matthew 4:1)

Sometimes we're tempted by our own “evil desire” (James 1:14 NIV). Other times, God puts us in a place or situation where we may be tempted.

In the second case, God is testing us. He's putting us in a “crucible” to purify us (or to burn if we give in to the temptation).

In those situations, we must cling to God's promises (1Co. 10:13) and face the temptation like Jesus did (Lk. 4:1-13).

What if we fail the test? Then we must remember that we have a Savior if we fall.



TO STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH

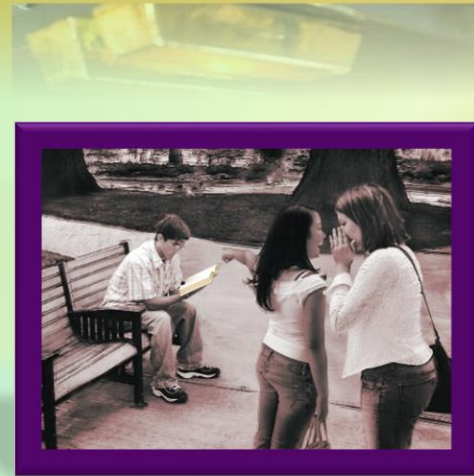
"that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:7)



Peter addressed "the exiles" (1P. 1:1), those who walk this Earth remembering that we are "sojourners and pilgrims" here (1P. 2:11). Those who long for "a better, that is, a heavenly country." (Hebrews 11:16)

We are a minority, and we're often mocked and persecuted. God allows it to strengthen our faith.

How do trials strengthen our faith?



They help us to keep our faith focused on the goal

They help us to trust God every step of the way

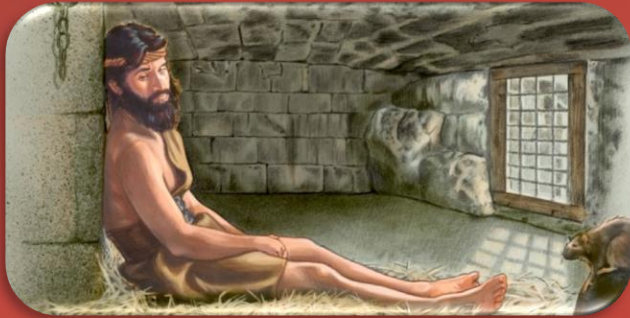
They let the Lord clean everything in us that's an obstacle in our walk of faith



TO STRENGTHEN OUR CONFIDENCE

“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded.” (Hebrews 10:35 NIV)

John the Baptist was imprisoned for defending the truth. It looked like God had forgotten him. How could you keep your confidence in God in a situation like that?



By faith. Remembering God's promises. Trusting Him and everything He has written in His Word.

Proverbs 3:1

Don't forget the Law

Proverbs 3:5

Trust God

Proverbs 3:7

Get away from evil

Proverbs 3:12

God loves you

Jeremiah 29:13

Seek God with all your heart

Romans 8:28

Everything will work together for good

2 Corinthians 12:9

God strengthens you

Hebrews 13:5

God will never forsake you

“Do not look upon trial as something strange, but as the means by which we are to be purified and strengthened [...]

In the future life we shall understand things that here greatly perplex us. We shall realize how strong a helper we had and how angels of God were commissioned to guard us as we followed the counsel of the Word of God.”

E. G. W. (In Heavenly Places, September 7)