

Tempting God

Sermon #0865

Study given by W. D. Frazee—October 27, 1961

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" 1 Corinthians 10:11.

Moffatt translates it:

"It was written down for the purpose of instructing us whose lot has been cast in the closing hours of the world" 1 Corinthians 10:11 (Moffatt's Translation).

So what has been written in the preceding verses is written especially for us.

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer" verses 1-10.

All these things happened for the purpose of instructing us whose lot has been cast in the closing hours of the world. If these stories have been written down for that purpose, would it be a good thing for us to study them and apply the lessons to our own experience? In light of what we have just read, would you expect we might have some experiences similar to the ones they had? It is rather meaningless unless that is so.

There will be some things happen that will give you and me a chance to make the same failures they made unless we learn the lessons.

There is much in these eleven verses we might study, but the part I am especially impressed with is in verses nine and ten . When we think of temptation we usually think of the Devil tempting men. But what is spoken of here is men tempting Christ. We are warned not to do it. It is one of the things Israel did that we are not to do.

I suppose we have a clearer idea of what it means to murmur than it does to tempt Christ. We pretty well understand murmuring, complaining, finding fault, telling things we do not like and cannot bear, etc. Well, they did those things, and we are not to do them. These are two of the things they failed on that you and I must succeed on.

I would like to study particularly this thing of tempting Christ. The children of Israel had the sanctuary among them for nearly forty years. They had the sanctuary among them when these experiences were going on. They actually saw the sacrifices being slain. They knew blood was being sprinkled within the veil. They saw the cloud of glory above the sanctuary. And in spite of all that, they tempted Christ on occasion. My point is, it takes more than talking about the sanctuary to develop a Christian character. Let no one miss the point. It takes something more than having the sanctuary among us to overcome some of these so-called little sins like murmuring and complaining.

It is true that had they fully grasped all that was involved in the sanctuary service they would have succeeded instead of failed. But I repeat, it is possible to have the sanctuary among us and know what is going on as far as being able to recite the facts, and still miss the victory the sanctuary is designed to give.

Keep that in mind. And with it, notice that it takes some very practical experiences to develop the characters that God can put His seal on. Not just doctrinal experiences. Not just theoretical. Not just theological. Not just those lessons which are called spiritual. It takes some very practical lessons to develop characters God can put His seal on.

So our study will be practical, and as practical studies are, this study may come close to home. I trust it will. May God give His Holy Spirit as we look at what happened to Israel.

"All these things happened to them for ensamples." Phillips translates it, "An illustration of the way God works."

Through Isaiah the Lord tells us that His ways are not our ways, and His thoughts are not our thoughts. One of the great problems of the children of Israel is that they were always figuring out the way things should be. Sure enough, it worked out some other way, and they were disappointed. It is a wonderful thing when you and I can learn to follow the cloud whether it leads through the sea or through the desert, glad that God is at the head.

I have directed your attention to these twin thoughts of tempting Christ and murmuring. I would like to have you notice how the Children of Israel tempted Him

and why they murmured. We will begin with Exodus 14. That's where this exodus begins. That is where this journey starts.

They left the land of Goshen and proceeded toward the land of Canaan, but God did not lead them direct. As you study and get acquainted with the route they followed you can see that God led them in a way that seemed out of the way. It is a very interesting thing. If you look at your Bible map and see the land of Goshen, you can see that if they had proceeded directly from Goshen to the land of Canaan they would have missed the Red Sea altogether.

It would have been the sensible thing to do. It would have shown a little forethought, a little planning. But after several days journey they found themselves with the Red Sea before them. And they went out of their way to get there. A person looking at it would think they would have had troubles enough without going out of their way to get into trouble.

How did they happen to get to the Red Sea anyway? Well, they were following the cloud. The pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. It was the cloud that led them. Mark this essential lesson: God may lead sometimes in a way that looks to us unnecessarily troublesome.

I can fancy the children of Israel as they look out and see the Egyptians approaching with the Red Sea in front of them saying, Look here, this is altogether unnecessary. If we had only taken a direct route we would have been out of Egypt by this time, and we would not have had any water in front of us. What is the matter?

If we had been back there in the exodus movement I think we would have heard that remark frequently. Perhaps you are caught in a traffic jam. You find yourself among a lot of cars. You look ahead as far as you can see and there are cars. People are putting their heads out the windows. What is the matter anyway? What is the hold up? Horns begin to sound. It is a very natural human trait.

So the children of Israel began to raise questions. A few of them cried to the Lord, but more of them began to complain to Moses.

"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?" Exodus 14:11, 12.

Quite sarcastic, weren't they? Who did they say took them out of Egypt? Moses. Here they are a few days out of Egypt and they wish they were back in Egypt. And the very man that God sent to bring them out of Egypt and carry them to Canaan is blamed for it, and he is told he should have left them alone where they were.

Moses cried to the Lord and stilled the people. He told them what to do and they finally did it. They got through the Red Sea. It was a wonderful deliverance, a wonderful experience. Think of it. By the next day they were over the Red Sea and not one of them drowned. They didn't even have to get wet. And what happened to

their enemies? They were all dead. God took the very problem that confronted them and used it as a highway of escape for them and a grave for their enemies.

Who but God could do that? And I suppose when it was over they said, Well, I guess it wasn't so bad that we went out of our way after all. We got rid of all our enemies. So they sang a song of praise to God. You can read it in Exodus 15. It is a wonderful song of praise to God.

But I want you to notice that the chapter is not through until there is another problem.

"So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" Exodus 15:22-24.

At the Red Sea they had too much water, and here they did not have any that was not bitter. So they murmured. I suppose before we get too proud about the matter we had better ask ourselves how many of us have ever gone three days without water. I don't know whether they had anything to drink, but at least they had traveled three days without finding any water.

We are told that as Moses saw the cloud moving in the direction of Marah his heart sank. He had been through those hills with his sheep. He knew the country. When he heard the cry for water ring out through the ranks it didn't make Moses enthusiastic. He knew what they would find. It is disappointing to a person to be thirsty and find water, and then find it wasn't fit to drink. Hope deferred makes the heart sick (Proverbs 13:2). In other words, they had a tremendous problem, and the thing to solve it was worse than nothing.

Those who have traveled in that country say some of those bitter springs are so terrible that no animal will touch the water. The children of Israel could not drink the waters of Marah. Notice their reaction. They murmured. The same program as at the Red Sea. And they murmured against Moses. "What shall we drink." In other words, Moses, what are you going to do about it?

What did Moses do about it? He cried to the Lord just as he did at the Red Sea. Do you see beginning to develop the difference between Moses and the people? The people cried to Moses, and Moses cried to the Lord. Do you think the Lord would have been glad if the people would have cried to Him? Yes.

God showed Moses the solution. God showed him a tree, and had him cut it down and cast it in the water. It made the water sweet, and it made the people sweet. They were all happy. They praised the Lord, and an atmosphere of peace and harmony took over the camp. Now let's go to the next chapter.

"And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, 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; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger" Exodus 16:1-3.

Who did the people say had brought them out there? Moses and Aaron. Think of it. You have hatched a terrible plot. You have come down to Egypt and somehow pulled the wool over our eyes and got us and our families out here, and you are intending to kill us all with hunger. Then you will have all we have.

Just how they expected Moses and Aaron to survive the starvation I don't know. But murmuring oftentimes is very unreasonable and illogical, even though it may be based upon reality.

It was a fact that they had gotten out into a place where there wasn't anything to eat. They had not actually suffered from lack of food yet, but they were afraid they were going to. They could see nothing in sight to feed them. The supplies taken from Egypt were running out fast, and they asked Moses what he was going to do about it.

Did God have a remedy? Yes. It came from the sky. Manna rained down to feed them. That went on for forty years. A wonderful program. Think of it. Every morning manna from heaven.

Of course, when the children of Israel got the manna it stopped the murmuring on that point for awhile. But they got tired of it and wanted something different (Numbers 11). It would be interesting to study what it was they were hunting for, but that isn't our subject. The point is that on this occasion who did they blame for it? Moses. But God solved the problem.

Well, we have seen the people murmuring and blaming Moses in chapter fourteen. They are murmuring and blaming Moses in chapter fifteen. They are murmuring and blaming Moses in chapter sixteen. Let's go to chapter seventeen.

"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?" Exodus 17:1,2.

Oh my friends, here is the key. It is written down for us who live in the closing hours not to tempt Christ as they tempted Him. How did they tempt God? By murmuring and blaming their troubles on Moses, they proved God, and put Him to the test.

"And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. 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" verses 3-6.

Oh, the patience of God. To feed a faithless people. To give drink to people who murmur and complain.

"And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?" verse 7.

We are told we are not to tempt the Lord as they did. When we blame human beings for our problems and look to human beings to solve our problems, could it be we need to learn some of these lessons Israel had to learn? Oh, yes. And I repeat, no mere study of the sanctuary will take the place of those practical lessons.

Suppose the children of Israel had not met the Red Sea. Suppose the Egyptians had not come after them. Suppose they had water and food every day. Do you think any of this murmuring would have taken place? Perhaps not. God purposely allowed circumstances to develop that brought out what was in their hearts.

Instead of patting ourselves on the back I think we ought to seriously examine ourselves on this point. God hasn't been able so far to trust us with this measure of a test. Am I correct?

How many of you here ever went three days without water? How many of you here were in a place where unless God had rained bread out of heaven you would have starved to death? How many of you here were ever at a place where unless God had worked a miracle and brought water out of a rock you would have died from thirst?

Now the next question I want to ask you is one I will not ask you to raise your hands on. In spite of the fact that you have never had experiences so difficult, how many of you have found something to murmur about? You are glad I didn't ask you to raise your hands on that one, aren't you?

Do you see what I mean? Instead of thinking we are better than Israel, we ought to reflect that perhaps it has not taken very much to bring out the murmuring and unbelief in us, and our disposition is to charge our troubles to human beings instead of looking to the Lord as the one who is guiding our lives.

I think it would be a wonderful thing when our experience develops to the place where we can take on some of the trials the children of Israel had. Do you think there will be any time when the remnant will have the experience of having to look to God in miraculous ways to supply bread and water, and deliverance from enemies? Oh, yes.

How will we get ready for that? The way we will get ready for it is by learning the lesson that instead of blaming them on people, the trials and difficulties and disappointments that come day by day are of God's appointment.

In case after case the disposition of the children of Israel was to look to Moses. And after all, if Moses was the one, probably Moses should be held responsible for seeing they had something to eat. All summed up in saying, Moses, what are you going to do about it anyway? And Moses, thank the Lord, recognized that the real leader of Israel was God.

As I said awhile ago, I trust this will be very practical for us all. We all have problems. That is in God's appointment. And usually human beings figure into them as they did back there. Whenever you and I come to a problem and blame somebody, we are failing just as Israel failed.

Somebody says, But what if they are to blame?

The question is, who led you out of Egypt, Moses or Christ? That is the whole question. Who is leading you? Is Moses leading you, or is Christ leading you. If you are following Moses, then you can blame Moses. If you are following Christ, you will not blame Him, will you? I hope not. He knows what He is doing.

Moses might make mistakes. In fact, he did once in those forty years. But Jesus never makes a mistake.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" Romans 8:28.

"Some are always fearing, and borrowing trouble. Every day they are surrounded with the tokens of God's love; every day they are enjoying the bounties of His providence; but they overlook these present blessings. Their minds are continually dwelling upon something

disagreeable, which they fear may come; or some difficulty may really exist, which, though small, blinds their eyes to the many things that demand gratitude. The difficulties they encounter, instead of driving them to God, the only source of their help, separate them from Him, because they awaken unrest and repining" *Steps to Christ*, pages 121,122.

Every difficulty you and I have can either draw us closer to God or separate us from Him. It just depends upon what we do about it. If we murmur and complain it separates us from Him. If we get down like Moses and seek the Lord, then the very trial draws us closer to Him. If on these occasions we blame somebody else, then we get separated from God. Instead we must say, Dear Lord, you led me into this thing. Lead me through. What is your program, Lord? Until I know I will stand still and not get fretful or fractious. I will rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.

We are told concerning those who go through the time of trouble that they will have to have learned the lesson of a faith that can endure weariness and delay and hunger; a faith that will not faint those severely tried.

How do you suppose people get a faith that can endure delay? By experiencing delays. What is delay anyway? I get up in the morning and think that today is the day that letter is coming that is going to solve my problems. I know it is coming today. I go and ask, Any letter for me today?

No letter for you.

Oh my, that is awful. I come back tomorrow. Any letter for me today?

Yes. But I open it, and instead of a check it is a bill. Some more delay.

What was it God promised Abraham when He took Abraham out of his home and put him over in the land of Canaan? He was going to be a father of many nations, and through him the world would be blessed. Abraham had how many children? None. And every year that went by made it more improbable from any human standpoint.

Abraham finally had the son of promise. Paul tells us that Abraham obtained the promise after he had patiently endured (Hebrews 6:15). Oh, for the faith of Abraham. Was it days or weeks or months he waited. It was decades.

I pray tonight that every one of us shall learn in the little things of life to recognize God is our leader, and not to tempt Christ saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" The sorriest thing I can think of in this world is the person who does not know if he is being led of God or not.

That was Israel's problem. They were always raising the question afresh, Was it God who led us out of Egypt or not? We thought it was when we got through the Red Sea, but you can see now He isn't leading us. Look at this bitter water. God wouldn't do that. So instead of measuring the water by God's assurance, they

measured God's leadership by the water. Backwards. God wouldn't do this and that.

Be very careful how you figure out what God would or would not do, for God has done some very strange things down through the history of the world, and He has some strange things yet to do. It would be best to cling by faith as little children to His promises:

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. He knoweth the way that I take, and when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" Job 13:15.

"In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" Proverbs 3:6.

This is why the children of Israel had to stay forty years in the wilderness. This is it.

We have been in the desert more than forty years, haven't we? Yes. And I repeat, it will take something more than merely talking about the sanctuary to get us out of the desert. It will take a practical experience in trusting God when human beings are right there ready to be blamed. Then is the time for men and women of faith to cry to God.

From time to time people counsel with me about coming to Wildwood. There are times I feel constrained to look them in the face and say frankly, "Dear people, do not come to Wildwood if you can possibly do anything else."

What do I mean by that? I mean if God will let you be somewhere else, be somewhere else, because if you come here you are going to have trials; you are going to have problems; you are going to have difficulties. People are not going to move fast enough to suit you, or maybe some are going to move too fast. You may have a problem of too much water like the Red Sea, or no water at all like at Rephidim. You are going to have all kinds of problems. And if God has some other place He will let you be, you had better be where He wants you.

Of course, the same thing could be said of anywhere else in the world. But if you come here because you are sure God has put you here, no matter what trial or problem you run into you will not blame some human being and say they got you into this, and what are they going to do about it?

You will look to God. You will say, Dear Lord, You put me here. I didn't know what I was getting into, but You did. Now Lord, what do You want me to do? What lesson do you want me to learn? Is it the first lesson at the Red Sea? stand still and see the salvation of God. Or is it the second lesson at the Red Sea? speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward. Right into the midst of the waves.

Sometimes we need to learn the first lesson before we are ready to take the second one. It is a good thing to get through the first grade reader before you start the second grade reader. Stand still and see the salvation of God. Then the voice of God speaks, Go forward.

There is a beautiful picture in the Psalms. I like to think it is going to be fulfilled here in this world as a prelude to the glorious kingdom above:

"That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth;
that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished
after the similitude of a palace: That our garners may be
full, affording all manner of store: that our sheep may
bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:
That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no
breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in
our streets" Psalm 144:12-14.

Would you like to live in a place like that? Would you really? You can. Let there be no complaining in our streets. Happy is that people who is in such a case. Yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord. Happy are the people who know it was not Moses who led them out.

What is the beginning of the ten commandments? "I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." It is a very denial of the voice of God speaking from Sinai to charge our difficulties and problems upon other poor human beings like ourselves, laden with infirmities.

My dear friends, if we say yes, they made mistakes, and if they would only do differently then I wouldn't have these problems. Likely so. But do you know what would happen if they would do differently and not make any problems for you? God would probably move you someplace where people would. Believe me, that is true. One way or another you are going to have the problems that will reveal to you and the on looking universe whether you are following Christ or Moses; whether it is God who is in your thoughts or some human being.

Let's be very practical about this. If you go downtown and hire out to a man to dig a ditch or set type, to bake bread or cut garments, to tend a cash register or stoke a furnace, you expect him to pay you at the end of the day or the end of the week or the end of the month. That's reasonable.

Who are you working for? Are you literally working for Christ? Do you know that in a practical business way?

You remember the story in Matthew chapter twenty the parable of the laborers. The master of the vineyard went out in the morning to hire laborers and agreed with them for a certain sum, and through the day again and again he went. Finally at the eleventh hour he found some idle, and told them to go into the vineyard and whatsoever is right he will give them.

They went trusting. Did they come out all right? Who paid them? The one who hired them. I will tell you frankly, and I mean it literally. I am not hiring anybody. One good practical reason is that I do not have the money to pay them. I think it is

misrepresentation to hire somebody when you don't have the money to pay them. Don't you think so? I do.

I am so glad to encourage people to go to heaven's employment agency and see the sign on the door which says, "Men wanted," and answer the call. But be sure you look full in the face of Jesus when you sign up, and hear His assurance, "Go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you."

If some cynical human being steps up to you and says, Oh yes, that is just a lot of talk to make a slave out of you, remember we have read from the book of Exodus that again and again those poor, unbelieving people charged that Moses had led them out there in the desert to make merchandise of them. And if you have any idea that is so, just don't go. Don't go unless you know that God is calling you into a certain work. Don't go because you will run into problems that will send you running back to Egypt fast.

It is a wonderful thing that those poor Israelites, in spite of their doubt and unbelief, at least thanked God they never got back to Egypt. Isn't that encouraging? And some of us who have trials in our spirits, trials of courage, trials of faith, can't we thank God that He has kept us from going back to Egypt?

Praise the Lord. He brought us out that He might bring us in. He begins the work that He may finish it.

Who hired you? If man hired you, then go to man and say, Moses, what are you going to do about it? But if God hired you, then down on your knees with every problem and say, Dear Lord, I need something. Lord, you promised to give me so much a day or so much a week. You promised to give me everything I need. That could be a big order, but that's what the order is.

"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" Philippians 4:19.

Somebody says, Suppose you get sick. Then what are they going to do about it? What is Moses going to do about it when you get out into the desert and run out of water and food? What plans does Moses and his committee have for looking after you out there? You had better be careful. You had better be very careful.

You need one of two things. You either need a foolproof plan that you know is going to give you water and food all the way, or else you need to know that God is leading, and you are going with Him. You need one or the other. I don't have one, but praise His name I have the other. And these things were written down for the purpose of instructing us whose lot has been cast in the closing hours of the world.

Precious Lord, with all our hearts we thank Thee tonight for the great flood of light streaming down the ages, focused upon this last generation. We are sorry we have ever murmured as Israel murmured. We are sorry we have ever tempted God as they tempted Him saying, Is the Lord among us or not? But Lord, we are poor weak flesh as they were. We are children of the dust as they were. We are so glad

to know that out of those people You finally developed those who went across Jordan, and in mighty power subdued strongholds and glorified Thy name.

So today we see in Thy poor, weak, faltering people a movement that shall yet plant the banner of Thy faith on the eternal heights, and sing the song of victory on Mount Zion. Oh Lord, give us courage for our brethren and courage for ourselves; courage in Christ that He which has called us is faithful and is able to do it.

May we cease to look to human beings to solve our problems material or spiritual. May we be thankful for all the help we can get from one another, but oh, may we reach our hands by faith within the veil whither the Forerunner is entered for us, even Jesus who ever lives to make intercession for us. May we develop an experience that will enable us to stand alone in the crisis of the ages. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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