

Exodus: God's Great Rescue

God is the Goal



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Exodus 13:17-22

This weekend I got to finally mark off one of those New Year's resolutions that I had made back in January. Do you remember those resolutions that you made the first of the year? One of mine was running the Murray Half Marathon. So I made it, I wrote it down, and it is on the background of my computer so that every time I walk by my computer it shows: "Murray Half Marathon" along with some other goals. Yesterday was the Murray Half Marathon so I got to mark that goal off. But instead of marking it complete, I actually put the word, "failure," on it because the Murray Half Marathon happened but I didn't happen in the Murray Half Marathon. I missed it. I didn't complete it. So, one of my goals has failed here in April. Now, I don't blame myself completely because a couple months ago a church called me and wanted me to come and do their Disciple Now weekend and it was actually the same date as the Murray Half Marathon. So, I am thinking... *okay, Lord, you don't want me to run a half marathon. I get it. I will stop training and I will go preach your Word because that is more beneficial.* So, I just threw it to the wayside. Well, the next week they

called back and said they had a change of plans and they were going to reschedule. I still took it as a sign that I should not run the Murray Half Marathon so I just stopped running. So it was not completely my fault, but mainly my fault.

So yesterday, there was a lot of excitement around Murray. Many of you accomplished a lot of exciting things, but for me there was sort of a pity party to a large extent. I was actually in a tractor cab because my granddad called me to go farm. I was actually really glad he did because my wife and the boys were going to the finish of the Murray Half Marathon because my father-in-law, who is a few years older than me, ran the Murray Half Marathon and finished the Murray Half Marathon. Then, my sister-in-law ran the half marathon and finished the half marathon, who we actually found out during that she was carrying a baby. So, I have my father-in-law who is a little bit older, my sister-in-law who ran it with a baby, and here I am not running the Murray Half Marathon, I was just getting these pictures in the cab of the tractor of their celebration. Social media was just going nuts with pictures of people completing the Murray Half Marathon. It is such an amazing feat. What I have noticed about the Murray Half Marathon or any marathon is that there is a real, clear goal. There is a real, clear finish line. The goal is to finish the 13.1 miles, or if you run a full marathon, it is 26.2 miles. You know the finish line, you know the goal, and when you cross it, it is over; you don't keep running. Right? You have reached the goal and probably for any of you who actually ran it, you probably didn't get up this morning and go for a run. No, you ate a donut this morning. You were able to check the box until next year because there is a real, clear finish; there is a goal. The goal is to end and to cross the finish line. Now you are done.

So as I was thinking about this real clear finish line, this real clear goal, it dawned on me that as we get to this part of the text in Exodus we are actually completing one of the sections of Exodus. We are actually completing chapters 1 through the middle of 13, which is a section. This section is God's great rescue. It is God getting Israel out of Egypt. Now, we are going to have a new section that we are going to enter into, but as I

was thinking through that, I was thinking for Israel and maybe for us reading, it might seem like they have crossed the finish line, that they have completed the goal. You remember what God did, right? They go into slavery, God raises up Moses, He sends them to Pharaoh, there are ten plagues, and there has been all of this drama, toil, and labor. Now, they finally crossed out of Egypt, they finally did it, they are coming out with gold medallions. They are finally free now and it seems like that is the end; it is over. The book of Exodus is complete at chapter 13, no more text, no more chapters. It is done. God completed what He wanted to do with the people. As I was thinking about that, as tempted as we are to think we have crossed the finish line, the reality is we have not crossed the finish line. We have not reached the goal because here is what I really want you to see this morning: the goal for the people of Israel was not salvation. I really want you to take that to heart for yourself. The goal of your life is not salvation. That is really important part but it is not the goal. The goal of Israel was not getting them out of Egypt; the goal for Israel was always God. God is the goal! I don't know if you can feel the sense that we are out of Egypt, but for the past few weeks we had posters up of the pyramids, and Crider asked me this morning, "Where are the posters of the pyramids?" They are gone! They are in the background. We are not in Egypt anymore. We are free people. Now we are going into a wilderness, but it's going to be better than slavery. So we are going out, but we have not reached the finish line. The goal was not salvation and the goal is not going to be Canaan, as some of us might think. Your goal is not salvation, your goal is not Heaven; the goal always has been and always will be God. God has rescued you for Himself so that you would see Him, know Him, and live under His presence. His goal for you is HIM, and we are going to see that in this short, little text. We are going to see the God who redeems is also the God who leads and the God who is with. It is a big important note. We are not crossing the finish line. We are just beginning this new journey with the Lord.

Scripture

"When Pharaoh let the people go, God didn't lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said,

"Lest the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt." But God led the people around by the way of the wilderness toward the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle. Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for Joseph had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones with you from here." And they moved on from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night didn't depart from before the people."

When Pharaoh let the people go, they went to Canaan and set up their lives. They got jobs. They pursued education. They did sports. They built retirement. They did what they wanted to do because they are free people and they could do whatever they wanted. That is what the verses say, right? The whole point of God's rescue was for them to be free and to go live as free people. So God said... *Congratulations, you are out! No more Pharaoh, no more leader, no more dictator, just go do whatever you want because I have blessed you now with freedom. Go be free and happy!* That is NOT what the text says, is it? No! Immediately after it says when Pharaoh let the people go, "**GOD**..." Right here, God is at the very center stage of their supposed finish line. They crossed the 'finish line' and then they realize they just started the marathon; they had just crossed the start! This is maybe not what they expected. They were expecting to cross it, go to Canaan, and everything was going to be great. But then God shows up and we see what God is doing is not just saving a people, but He is redeeming a people for Himself so that He can lead them, guide them, and be with them. He does this so that they can see His glory and live in His presence forevermore. That is the goal. The goal is God, not salvation, not Heaven; it is God.

I want to pause for a moment because I think for some of us we can also get this a little mixed up. For some of us we think the goal is salvation. For instance, if your view is the reason God did all of what He did was to save you then that will affect, let's say, the way you parent. If you are a parent who believes salvation is the goal, then when it comes to your kids' spiritual life it will be all about getting them saved. You will take them to church, take them to VBS, and ship them off to camp because you want them to have that moment, that experience, and get baptized because once they do that their spiritual life is the finish line. They get the gold medal and then they can go to college, get a career, live their life, and then do whatever they want to do because they have reached that point. They have completed the goal. So, all of your parenting will be driven around trying to get them to the right place and to get them to make the right decision, then you can kind of be like now we can do all of the things that we really wanted to do. But if you are a parent and you realize salvation is not just the goal, that it is actually getting your kids to see the glory of God and living in a relationship with Him, seeing who He is, what He is doing, and living before the face of God—it will not just be about trying to get them to make a decision. You will actually read the Bible to your kids because it is not just taking them somewhere and doing something; it is wanting them to see the glory of Christ. Where is the glory of Christ found? It is in the Scriptures. So you are going to read the Scriptures to your children and you will talk about the Lord to your children. When you see creation, you can connect it and ask them, 'Do you know who created that? It is God! Let me tell you about Him. Let me tell you about how He is moving in my life because I want you to see Him, live under Him, and be about His glory.' See, you will parent in a way where salvation is only the beginning of you discipling your kids to see the beauty and the wonder of who God is. There is this whole different reality of not just trying to get them to do something, but trying to get them to see someone. You are trying to get them to see the glory of God.

So I just want to ask, when it comes to the Lord, what is your view? Is the whole thing—the cross, the incarnation, the resurrection—is all of that just about saving you from sin? That is a big part of it, but if it is JUST that,

then now that you are saved you will just go live your life waiting to die and see Jesus. That is not what God has in store for you. He died and rose again so that He could be with you and you could be with Him and live the rest of your life in His presence for His glory. THAT is the point of salvation. Salvation is not the goal. It is a means to the goal, which is God. That is what salvation is; it is for God. But see, even as adults, we can be in the mindset of maybe salvation is not the goal, but Heaven is. So the reason you got saved was so that you could go to Heaven because you don't want to go to Hell. You know Hell is a really bad place and Heaven is going to be better than that. So you said a prayer, walked an aisle, or did something because the goal is to go somewhere when you die.

I want you all to see that in this text, the point of God rescuing Egypt out of Israel was not just to get them somewhere. He is not saying let's go and try to get you to a land. No, the point was to get them somewhere so that they would be with Him, they would know Him, and they would live for His glory. So if you are a believer, you are not waiting on Heaven, Heaven has come to you! God is with you right now, and in every moment of your life, you can live under His presence and for His glory, living every step with God. The point of your salvation, the reason Jesus Christ bled, died, and rose again was not just to get you to a different place. The whole point was to get you back to the Father, because the Father is who you were created for and the Father is who desperately need. So the whole point is to connect you to God. The moment you become a believer you start living under His presence and for His glory. You enjoy God the rest of your life. Heaven is not only just a better experience of that. You don't start then; you start right now.

1. God Leads

So, the first point we are going to see in this text is that God leads. We see in this text that God does not say you are free, go live a happy life. No, God begins to lead and He begins to lead in a way that the people might not assume He would have led them in. So, if you are asking the question, okay, I have been saved, what is next? It is God leads you. That is what is next. So, if I am a Christian, what do I do next? You are led by God.

2. Faith Follows

Secondly, faith follows. If you have really been redeemed your life should be one of following after the Lord, following His direction and leadership for your life. It is not I am saved and now I go to Heaven. No, it is now I am saved and I get God so I am going to walk with Him because He leads me and He is with me.

Those are the two really big points. Now, let's just see how that plays out here in this text. The first thing it says is that God *didn't* lead them by the way of the Philistines. What does that mean? Why would God not lead them by the way of the Philistines? What even is the way of the Philistines? That is kind of lost on us today. The way of the Philistines is the short way. It even says that in the text in verse 17 when it says, "...although it was near." That is the logical way. It was the way they would have picked for themselves. They have just gone out of Egypt and they know they are supposed to be in the land of Canaan. To get from Egypt to Canaan there was one way that was absolutely straight. You just went straight across and bordered the ocean. So you could have felt the breeze of the ocean, seen lobster stands, and it experienced a lot of commerce. That was the short way that would have taken them about two weeks. That was one way to go to Canaan.

So, you can imagine Moses, as he comes out, if he was left to lead himself where he would go. He knows he is supposed to be in Canaan, so, where is he supposed to go? Well, it is kind of like here is a big road sign and the road sign basically says straight ahead Canaan or, to the right, nowhere. That would be the big sign he would see when looking for directions. He would say... *ok, we can go straight to Canaan or we can go right to nowhere. It just says wilderness and it looks like no one has been there in a long time.*

So, here is Moses, he is looking at the directions and he has his map. And, maybe he stopped by a gas station because when you don't know where to go you stop at a gas station. So, I can imagine Moses and the Israelites

stopping at a gas station and asking... *hey, we have been in slavery for about 400 years. So, we have not really gotten out much. We really don't know where the restaurants and the cool places to go are. We are trying to get to Canaan so could you tell us how to get there?*

The gas station clerk would have said... *yeah, just keep driving straight. You cannot miss it. Don't pull off into the ocean. Just keep going straight and it will take you about two weeks. It is straight that way.*

So, you have all of the people of Israel saying... *ok, we are going to Canaan. It is straight that way.*

All of the logic tells them to go straight, but then it says, "God didn't lead them by the way of the Philistines although it was near." BECAUSE it was closer God says don't go that way. Now, that is really confusing to us. Why would God not want them to go the short way? That seems like the easy way, right? It seems like the best way.

But, do you know what I have learned? The short way is not always the best way. Have you ever noticed that?

For instance, as an example, me, Matt, Chris Allen, and Nick went to Louisville this weekend for the gospel. It was awesome! We had three days of hearing some of our favorite preachers preach. It is like a preacher's dream! Some of you are thinking... *wow, you had more than one sermon in a week? Why would you do that?* That would have been me before but now it is exactly what I want to do. We got all of these free books and it just a nerd pastor's dream vacation.

So, here we are. We are going to this conference and in order to save a little money we decided to stay at my in laws condo which is about 10 miles outside of Louisville in a place called Norton Commons. It is a place with a really cool atmosphere. So, we decided to stay there and we were going to commute back and forth to the convention center.

We are at the convention center and we have heard preaching all day. Matt, our wonderful worship leader, decides to be our driver. We were calling him dad all week and we would be like... *dad, come on. Get us home.* So, he is driving the van. We get in, Nick and I get in the back, and Chris Allen is in the passenger's seat. I give him the address to Norton Commons and he is on his way.

Nick and I are just sitting there talking about what has been going on, what we are seeing, what books we are going to read, and just all kinds of nerd pastor talk in the back. It has been 20 minutes and we are not there yet but I know that we should be there. So I look around and I notice I can still almost see the Yum! Center. We are still down in the heart of the city in traffic. We cannot go and we are in a traffic jam.

I look around and I can see to the left the interstate that we are supposed to be on because I have gone to Norton Commons a lot of times from the Yum! Center. I know that we are supposed to be up there but we are done here. Immediately I say to Matt, "Matt, what are you doing?" Then, Matt responds to me while holding up his phone, "I am just doing what she is telling me!" Because that is how we get anywhere we want to go, right? You push in the address and Siri tells you where to go. You don't really think about it.

She is saying go right. So, I say, "ok, Matt. She is telling you wrong and I need you to take a left and get on the interstate because that is the best way."

He says, "well, Siri is telling me this way."

Me: "Yeah... because Siri is on the shortest way which probably is this way if we are on a skateboard, but you need to go the best way which is the interstate so that we can go a little bit faster."

So, Matt gets out of the line, we get on the interstate, and we are there in about 10 minutes.

See, we were on the shortest way. And, in our minds, the shortest way is always the best way, but in this case the shortest way was NOT the best way. The shortest way was the WORST way because what Matt didn't know and what Siri, in all of her knowledge, didn't know is there is construction like crazy in Louisville. They are building 48 bridges to go across the river and it is a little crazy. She didn't know that, he didn't know that, but I knew that and I knew that we needed to be up there on the interstate. So, I wanted to go the long way because the long way was actually the best way.

So, God does not take them the short way. Instead he takes them the way of the wilderness because yes, the way of the wilderness was going to be longer- about 40 years longer- but it is going to be the best way. Now, why is that? Well, God tells us- *I don't take you this way because if I did you are going to change your mind when you see war and you will go back to slavery.*

See, what happens is the Israelites probably didn't realize that the way of the Philistines, the short and easy way, had these fortified cities all along them. So, the Egyptians had military forts and the Philistines had military forts. So here is what would have happened, all of the Israelites would have come out singing, dancing, and excited, but then they would have seen the warriors of Egypt or the warriors of the Philistines (they tend to be tall) and thought... *oh, we don't need to go there. We need to go back. We need to go back to Pharoah because being a slave is better than being dead.* That is what they would have assumed if they went directly to the straight way.

Now, you have to be thinking how I am thinking. They just saw God do the 10 plagues. I am thinking... *really, a military base?* I would go knock on the door. *Umm.... can I have the commander come out? Watch this! Ok, God, do something to them!* I would have no fear because God is on our side!

But, you know, as I begin to think about Israel's relationship with God at this point, Israel had seen God do mighty works, but they had not really seen God yet. If you notice, Moses saw God in the burning bush. His physical presence manifestation, Moses saw it so he was willing to go wherever because he saw God. But, these people, they saw his power, they saw the plagues, but they had not really seen his presence yet. So, when they got to the city they would know God could do things, but they don't really know God. They would have automatically turned and went back because they didn't really know God yet.

So, what God is going to do is he is going to take them a different way because what he knows is that they don't just need to see his power, they need to see him. They need to behold his presence. They need him to show up in a cloud, they need him to show up in fire, the visible manifestation of his presence. God needs to be WITH them. Not only lead them, but actually BE WITH them.

So we see that he didn't take them the easy way. Then, the next verse goes on and says this, "But God led the people around..." we get to that word "around" and we know this is not the best way... "by the way of the wilderness towards the Red Sea. And the people of Israel went up out of the land of Egypt equipped for battle." So they went the other way.

Here is the sign:

Canaan straight ahead > 2 weeks ... or... Left > Nowhere > 40 years

Ok, God which way do you want us to go to?

God: Take a left.

Are you sure, God? Two weeks seems a lot better than 40 years. And it seems like nobody has even went down that path before and I am not sure where we are even going.

God: No I want you to go in the wilderness because the wilderness is where I am leading you.

I think this idea of God not choosing the short way, but God taking them through the wilderness reveals a lot of things about what God wants for the people. God is not just into a destination for the people. No, God does not want them to just go the short way and get there. God wants them to be into him. God wants them to see who he is and what he has done. And he knows that is going to take the way of the wilderness.

Just think about the first thing we will see next week in the Red Sea. If they went the short way, the enemy could have just run away. God takes them down to the wilderness and pens them between a sea and Pharaoh. They cannot run. All they can do is trust God and cry out for his glory to be revealed...and God shows up and shows out. God reveals who he is. He leads them to trust him more but he has to pen them in the first time so that they would understand that and then walk with him through the wilderness.

So, God leads them to the wilderness because it is not just about a destination. It really is about a journey with him. God wanted to be their God. He wanted them to see who he was and what he had done for them. He wanted them to see his presence. I think if God would have taken them the short way, maybe they could have made it to the military bases, and when they would have gotten to Canaan after two weeks, they would have set up shop and been all about themselves in Canaan. *We have arrived. We got here! We received the goal! The goal was a place!* But instead, God led them through the wilderness to show the goal was not a place, it was not a land; the goal was God. And it was only through the wilderness, through squeezing them a little bit that they would see that God is who they needed, not a place, not a rescue. Who they needed ultimately over both of those things was God. So he led them the long way so that they could see who God was. Some of you right now are in the wilderness. You feel like you know you should be there. You feel like God is leading you there. But you are just in this waiting season and you don't know where

you are at. You know, one thing that I love about the wilderness is that in the wilderness you cannot use a map. You have to use a guide. They are in the wilderness. There are no trails here or trails there. No, they are just in the wilderness. So, they didn't need a map. They needed a guide. They had to have God with them in the wilderness leading them. They could not just trust their own intuitions or their own ability to walk straight down the way of the Philistines. They had to trust in God to lead them. They had to trust... *Where are you God? Show up so that I can walk and take the next step.* Their eyes were not on signs and their eyes were not on land; their eyes were on God the whole time. They were not looking at road markers; they were looking at God. *Ok... has the cloud moved yet? It did? Ok, I need to move. I don't know where we are going, but I have God and I am ok with that.*

That was the message that the Israelites were supposed to get in the wilderness. And some of you guys are there! I am looking at the college crowd. I remember being in college and feeling like I was in the wilderness... *I don't know what job I am going to have. I am about to graduate and no interns are calling. I don't know what I am going to do. I am single, I want to be married, but I don't even have a girlfriend. So, that is going to be a little while. So, what do I do now?* I think the point of the wilderness is not to just look and think when am I going to get there, but it is remembering where is God at because he is teaching me and leading me in the wilderness. He wants me to see him. Some of us in this church are praying for something to happen and it has not happened. We are wondering why has it not happened yet? What is going on? Maybe it is because God has you in the wilderness so you would not just get the answered prayer and then rejoice in that, but that you would see God and rejoice in him so that when you got the thing it would not be an idol it would be a gift. God knows what he is doing. And here is one of the big things that the wilderness really teaches us: we choose the path we think we need, but God knows what we need more than we do. God said no...detour for forty years because what you need is a wilderness experience. What you need is to come with me and see who I am.

See, we are always like quick is better. We want quick and fast because quick and fast is always better. The interstate is always better. The microwave is always better. Fast food is always better. We are always on a run. But if you really think about it, quick is really rarely ever actually better. When you have leftovers, yes it is quick to put them in the microwave and heat them up, but it is usually mushy and loses heat really quickly. It is just not as good as if you preheat the oven, let the stove get to temperature, put it in, and watch it bake for 15 minutes. When you pull it out, it can actually taste better than it did the first time because you did it a little bit longer. Usually we like quickness, but typically, things that take longer end up being better. For instance, if you know me then you know that I like to drink coffee. I enjoy coffee. I used to have a blade grinder. It was electric, you plugged in it, and then you poured the beans in the grinder. There was a little button on it and you would push it, it would take five seconds, and the blade just disintegrated the beans. You would get the grounds, put them in the coffee maker, and make coffee. That is how I made coffee for years. Not long ago my mom bought me a hand burr grinder for my birthday. Now, I have been wanting this little baby for a little while. There is a difference between the hand burr grinder and what I had before. The blade grinder was electric, you pushed the button, and two little blades chopped through the beans so that you could make a cup of coffee. This thing though has no blades; there is no cutting. Instead, there are stones inside. When the beans go down, by gravity, the stones crush the beans then grind the beans until they fall down. So, you are thinking what is the big difference. Well, there is a big difference. The blades go fast and can burn the grounds. It just chops them up. What happens in the burr grinder is that it actually crushes them and all of the flavor of the bean gets out. It is about 40% more flavor. That is actually a huge difference in the flavor and quality of the beans, but you have to use the burr grinder for a while- like five or six minutes. Before it was five seconds, now it is five minutes, so the burr grinder is kind of like an arm workout. I always grind up the beans before I go to bed, so this is usually a 10:00 pm or 10:30 pm project. By that time, I am tired and I am ready to go bed, Katie is already in bed, and I have a decision. Do I take five seconds, chop them up, and be done? Or, do you take five to six minutes

when everyone else is already in bed and grind the beans? Now, most of the time I grab the electric grinder, take five seconds, and I am done. But about 40% of the time, I will grab the burr grinder and I will go round and round and round. For five or six minutes, I will slowly grind the beans when I want to be brushing my teeth and getting in bed. You know, the difference is not noticeable that night at all. Do you know when all of the difference is noticed? It is when I wake up about 5:45 AM or 6:00 AM, unscrew the grinder, pour the grinds into the filter, and hit go on the coffee maker. About five minutes later, there is all the difference in the world. That cup of coffee makes all of the difference in the world. It was not the quick way, it was not the easy way—it was the slow way, it was the grinding way, it was the laborious way. It was not the way of the Philistines; it was the way of the wilderness. It took a while, but when I got to the cup of coffee there was so much more there.

I think when we talk about God and going to the wilderness, God is not concerned with the speed of how you get to where he wants you to be. God is concerned with who you are when you get there. He is not concerned with hitting a button and doing it fast or using the microwave. He is really into long, slow cooking and very slow grinding because he wants all of the flavor to come out. He wants you to be like him when you get to where you are going. He wants you to see who he is. He wants you to live in his presence. That is why God takes us to the wilderness sometimes. Some of you are in the wilderness right now and thinking why does God have me here. Well, there are at least four things the wilderness can actually increase in your life.

Number 1: Prayer

Think about prayer. If you pray for something and you get it, then you stop praying for it. If you pray and you don't get it, what do you do? You pray some more and you pray some more. Through prayer, God is drawing you to himself. And, through more prayer, God is drawing you to himself. You have not gotten the thing yet, but you are getting more of God. Sometimes God withholds prayers so you don't get the thing and then

move on, but so that you would get the thing and you get God at the same time. So, in the wilderness sometimes it increases our prayer.

Number 2: Trust

It also increases our trust. When you have to wait, you have to continue to trust. It flexes that trust muscle and when you flex your trust muscle, it gets stronger and stronger and stronger. Then, when you finally get it and it finally happens, your trust muscles are that much stronger so the next time you will trust the Lord.

Number 3: Hunger and thirst

I think it also increases your hunger and your thirst. Think about it. The way of the Philistines would have had hotdog stands all along the way. It was the easy way. It would have had bottled water. It was probably \$4.50 because it is touristy, but there was bottled water! What about the wilderness...I am thirsty...I am hungry... what do I do? God... we are hungry and we are thirsty. It was usually a complaint, but they still had to go to God. They could not go anywhere else. What did God give them? He gave them manna that represented Christ. He gave them water that represented Christ. He gave them Jesus when they were hungry and thirsty for him.

Number 4: Joy

It increases joy when you are in the wilderness because you don't get the thing you think you want or you don't go to the place that you think you are supposed to be at and enjoy it. But, instead, when you get there you have God and you are enjoying God. You are living in his presence for his glory.

The wilderness is all about God. The whole work that Jesus did on the cross was about God. It was not about salvation or Heaven; it was about

GOD. Those two things are about God. So, your life as a Christian is about God, not anything else.

We have seen that God leads us, faith follows, and then lastly God is with us. He does not just lead us, but he is with us. Notice what happens. When we talk about these bones of Joseph, there is a promise with those bones that God will visit you. What happens? God visits them. He shows up in a cloud over them and a pillar of fire by night. God's manifested glory in presence with his people leading them where they need to go. God does not just give us a map and say good luck. He comes as a guide. His very presence leads us where we need to go in the wilderness because we don't really know where we are supposed to step. So, we have to look to God. Some of us think if we could just have that, if we could have a cloud over us it would be so cool! It would be like... *Who am I supposed to marry?* Cloud: *Here she is!* Or... *Where should I go to school? Where should I go to work? Who should I share with? What house should I buy? What should I do tomorrow?* That would be really easy. We would all follow God. We envy the Israelites because they had God in such a visible way. But, yet, I would say the Israelites would be the ones to envy us because we don't just have God hovering over us in a cloud, we have God IN US through the Holy Spirit. God the Spirit is in us! The very presence of God that showed up in a burning bush, that showed up in a cloud is now in us! We have the very presence of God within us. Galatians would say, how do you know what to do in the wilderness—WALK BY THE SPIRIT. God has given you the spirit so walk by the spirit. So, if you are wondering where to go, walk by the Spirit. God is in you.

How does that work? How do I follow God in me? God in you uses his word to lead you. That is why the Scriptures say in Psalm 119 the word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. In other words, the word shows you where to go, but you cannot just take the word because it will lead you to legalism or religion. You can only take the word through the Spirit to lead you to the glory of God. You walk in the Spirit through his word and you may wander around in the wilderness for a while, but the whole time you are seeing and beholding the glory of God. So I think for us, let's not

worry so much about where we are going, when we are going to get there, or what the future is like. Let's enjoy where we are. Maybe you are in a wilderness right now and you are thinking why am I here? And God is just waving...*Because of me. Because I want you to see me, because I want you to see who I am. Because if you got everything you wanted on this earth, it would not be enough. What you need is me. If you got to Canaan and you didn't have me you would not be satisfied. What you need is a wilderness where I show up and show out and I reveal to you who I am. In the wilderness, you and I get to fellowship together.* You get to see God's presence and that is what you desperately need. It is God.

So, we see that the exodus was not the finish line. The exodus was just the beginning. Your salvation was not the finish line. Heaven is not the finish line. God is the finish line. God is the goal. What we need is God. That is why God redeems us. That is why God is going to live with us forever in new Heaven and Earth because he is there. The whole point, the whole end of your Christian life is God. Don't miss that. No matter where you are at—maybe you are on the short path and you are almost there, maybe you have arrived wherever God wants you to be, or maybe you are in the wilderness right now—what do you do? You look to God. You enjoy him and his presence leading you forever by his Spirit through his word. So, I just want to command you. Take up your Bibles, read the Scriptures, and let the Spirit speak to you and lead you to see and behold the beauty of Christ and his presence because then when you get to where you are going you will be who he wants you to be and that is in the very image of his Son, Jesus Christ. That is the end goal. The end goal always has been and always will be Jesus.