

Sweet Out of Bitter

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 24 September 2023

Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0 : 00] Take your Bibles again and turn to Exodus 15. Genesis, Exodus. Ought to be a quick find.

Exodus 15. I'm going to begin reading at verse 22, so it's the last section in chapter 15. But this story immediately follows God's dramatic rescue in chapter 14, when the Egyptians had the Israelites pinned up against the Red Sea, and God parted the waters.

That was chapter 14. Chapter 15 gives us the song that they sang. And kids, you know that song.

The horse and rider thrown into the sea.

And right after that song, we come to our text this morning. Exodus 15, beginning at verse 22. Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went into the desert of Shur.

For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter.

[1 : 25] That is why the place is called Marah. So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, What are we to drink? Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood.

He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the Lord made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them.

He said, Where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees.

And they camped there near the water. How good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity.

Amen. That's what we experienced at the General Assembly this past week down in Greenville, South Carolina. Thank you for your prayers for us. The Lord heard and answered those prayers in great blessing.

[2 : 58] We were both encouraged and challenged. And we always need both of those things, don't we? But we saw that our King Jesus is on the move all around the world.

He is building his church as he promised to do. He's extending his kingdom. And we came away just with a sense of wonder and thankfulness that we belong to that kingdom, that we have a part in the labors of extending the gospel and the glory of our Savior.

Well, we're breaking away from our series on prayer, the Lord's Prayer. We'll return, Lord willing, in two weeks. But the week was short.

And this was a message I had taken to France. And I want to share it with you this morning. Our God is the Lord of history.

He planned it. He controls it. And he brings it to pass just as he had planned. And it's remarkable to think that he had things happen to the people of God 3,500 years ago in order to teach us today.

[4 : 27] That it happened to them for us. That's exactly what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10, 11.

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us on whom the end of the ages have come.

And so believing that to be true, we're just diving in to look at one test that the Lord put his people through 3,500 years ago. And we're wanting to draw four lessons from it for us.

So the test, it's in the passage that was just read for us from Exodus 15. And I do want you to try to put yourself into the sandals of the Israelites.

You had just witnessed God's ten miraculous plagues on your enemies, bringing you out of 400 years of slavery in Egypt.

And then, as Stan just mentioned, the great deliverance at the Red Sea when there was no way out and our God, who is the God who makes a way through the sea, did just that and split the waters that you might go through and saw this amazing thing of water standing up that you might pass through on dry land.

[5 : 46] And as soon as you were through, the waters closed in on your enemies. And then you sang the song of Moses, rejoicing in the great deliverance that God had given you in bringing you out of Egypt and looking forward to the promise that he would lead you all the way into the promised land.

Probably no people in all of history had seen more amazing things done for them than these Jews. And yet here they are, just three days later, into their journey through the desert, and without finding water, they grow desperate and begin grumbling.

Now, to be fair, we need to appreciate the seriousness of their test. It was no small thing to have two million people and all their flocks and herds in the heat of desert and no water to hydrate them. Houston, we have a problem. It's not a small one. It's a large one. But then, this isn't the first problem, is it?

[7 : 00] They'd been in trouble just three days before in Egypt and saw what God had done in the ten plagues. They had been in trouble at the Red Sea.

And had he not provided for them? And will he not provide for them here? After all, his name is Jehovah Jireh.

The Lord will provide. And he had promised not just to bring them out of Egypt, but to take them all the way into the promised land. So here they are at a place called Marah.

And a shout of joy goes up from those in the front of this long caravan of two million people and their flocks. And those up front, see, there's water.

And the shout goes up, water, water. And they might have hastened their pace. But it wasn't long before another shout went up.

[8 : 05] Oh, no. The water's bitter. So bitter we can't drink it. And that's why that place was called Marah.

Because Marah means bitter. Say it with me. Marah. Marah. And what does it mean? Bitter. That's important to this passage. And indeed to many other passages in Scripture, as we'll see.

So bitter grumbling now breaks out against Moses saying, What are we to drink? Four lessons that we can learn from this test of Israel.

The first is that God leads his people into trials to test their faith. God leads his people into trials. It wasn't by accident that they came thirsty to the bitter waters of Marah. It wasn't because Moses took a right-hand turn when he should have taken a left-hand turn.

[9 : 10] No, you remember how they were being led? By the cloud of God's presence? Cloud by day, fire by night? It was the Lord himself, their God, who led them thirsty to this place of water that was bitter.

1,500 years later, God by his Spirit led his own Son after his baptism. Where? Into a desert. For what? To be tested. Tried. And tempted. Tested by God. Tempted by the devil.

And those two things happen at the same time in Jesus' life. And in your life and mine. We're being tempted by the devil. Pulled down to not trust God.

And the very same event is a test from God to draw us to him in greater faith. And there we find Jesus triumphing and passing the test, whereas Israel in the desert flunks the test.

[10 : 23] So Jehovah Jireh faithfully provides for his people. Amen? Amen. He's provided for you. He's provided for me. But he often does it in a way that tests our faith.

That tests our obedience. That tests our contentment. He leads us into situations that are far beyond our abilities. Into situations that are out of our control.

With no resources of our own to meet the challenge. Two million people. All their flocks. That's more than they could manage. And precisely so.

That's the kind of test the Lord gives us. Things that will expose our weakness. Things that will make us feel our inadequacy. And our utter dependence upon God's help intervening.

And so God is ever needing to empty us. That he might fill us. Empty us of self-dependence. That we will look and lean on him.

[11 : 31] That we'll trust in the Lord with all of our hearts. And not lean on our own understanding. As Proverbs 3, 5, and 6 tell us. So he's out to teach us in these trials.

That though it is too much for us. It's not too much for him. In fact it's quite simple for God. In fact one of the places refers to what happened at the Red Sea. Is that it was just a blast of air from God's nostrils.

That split the waters. And here we see it's just the tossing of a piece of wood. Into the water that turned the bitter water sweet. So God then is the one who leads us into trials. And he does so to test our faith. Will we trust the Lord? Will we follow him? Trusting that he knows the way?

Will we obey him? Will we be content to wait on him? Trusting his timing? So James tells us in James 1.

[12:35] Consider it pure joy my brothers. Whenever you face trials of many kinds. Why? It's because of what you know. Because you know that the testing of your faith.

You see trials are testing your faith. And you know that the testing of your faith develops what? Perseverance. And perseverance must finish its work.

So we're in this for the long haul brothers and sisters. We're going all the way to heaven. That's going to take a faith that perseveres to the end. Our Lord Jesus said.

Time is coming when the love of many will grow cold. But those who endure to the end will be saved. And only those.

If we're going to make it to heaven. We need a faith that will persevere to the end. It's been reported that 40% of professing evangelicals never made it back to church after the pandemic was over.

[13:44] The love of the many is growing cold. But only those who persevere to the end will be saved. Faith. So.

We need. A persevering faith. Faith's like a muscle. To be strengthened it must be called into exercise.

Some of you have been through surgeries where you've been in bed maybe so long that you can hardly stand up when you finally get going again. Why? Those muscles haven't been used so long.

No. In order to be strengthened faith must be brought into exercise.

There must be some resistance. There must be something to push against and to grow. And so our trouble is we want the muscle of faith without the hard exercise of faith.

It's often that way in physical things. We want the strength of a physical body without the exercise required to give us that body.

[14:49] We want manageable trials. We want the kind of trials that don't require faith's exercise. But God knows he needs to bring us into situations where we have just one place to look.

And that's to him. And to exercise that faith. And to lean on him. So we need faith to make it to the end of the journey. Is it not a kindness then of God to lead us into the gymnasium of trials?

To give our faith a workout? To strengthen our faith that we might persevere to the end? It's God then who leads us into trials to test and strengthen our faith.

Second lesson. Sometimes these tests just show up unannounced. Have you found that? When I was a boy, every now and then, a high-pitched siren would come on the radio or TV.

And then this announcement. This is a test. For the next 60 seconds, this station will be conducting a test of the emergency broadcasting system. This is only a test.

[16:04] Remember those? Meant to be a system whereby it could warn us of nuclear war or some great disaster or weather problem. But they were very careful to let us know.

This isn't the real. This is just a test. So, chill. But God's tests just show up in our lives unannounced.

They don't come telling us, this is a test, Christian. Realize what's happening. I think of John 6. And Jesus is taking his disciples away to spend some time alone.

And as they're alone in a remote place, they look up. And here's a crowd coming toward them.

5,000 men plus women and children. And Jesus turns to Philip and said, Philip, where are we going to get bread to feed all these people?

And John, the apostle John, was there. And looking back on that later, he inserts into his gospel in John 6.6, Jesus asked this only to test him.

[17:11] For he already had in mind what he was going to do. So, Jesus asked him, where are you going to get bread for all these people? The question was to test his faith.

But Jesus didn't tell him it was a test. It just arrived unannounced in the middle of their day with people showing up unexpectedly. Do you ever have intrusions into your calendar?

What you had on the to-do list today and suddenly something shows up. It could be something as small as a car that won't start. A flat tire. A child.

Someone that says something that irritates you. A test. Or it could be something as large as a report back from the doctor that you have cancer.

It could be a financial collapse. It could be anything. But there it is. You walked into it blind.

Unannounced. Without any preparation, you find yourself chin deep into a test of your faith.

[18:21] God knows it's a test. Often we don't realize it. Perhaps until later. Well, it was that way here at Marah for the Israelites.

Three days without water. And suddenly, water! Oh. But it's too bitter to even drink. And before they even thought of it being a test, they found grumbling words tumbling out of their mouths, saying to Moses, What are we to drink?

The unannounced nature of these tests. But the third lesson is that trials put nothing into us. They only bring out of us what is already there.

These tests and trials do not introduce anything new into our hearts. They only bring out what's there. Like a pan of water that you put on the heat.

And it looks clean. It doesn't seem to be bad water. But after a while, the impurities rise to the top. And there's a thin scum on the top of the water.

[19:26] The heat did not put anything into that water. It simply brought to the surface what was already there. And so it was with the Israelites here. The bitter water didn't put anything into their hearts.

It just revealed what was there. The bitter water revealed bitter hearts. Perhaps bitter spirits that they didn't even realize were there came out in that test.

And so with us, bitter circumstances put nothing new into us but only reveal what was already there. Bitterness of thoughts and emotions and words and complaints.

And we can learn from this test that a bitter heart often comes out in bitter words. Grumbling accusations.

I've got to find somebody to blame for this. I didn't ask for this. Well, who's to blame? Moses, you're the one that led us out here. And they grumbled against him.

[20:31] Even though it was the Lord, remember, who led them right to the bitter waters of Marah. Grumbling children. Grumbling parents.

Grumbling husbands and wives and church members and citizens. Often betray a bitter heart towards God. Towards God. Examine your heart by examining your speech.

You know what Jesus says? That what comes out of here has come out of here. That out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.

The mouth is just an overflow valve of what's in the heart. Now, this wasn't the first time the Israelites grumbled, and you know that it won't be their last.

But just three days earlier, when the Egyptian army was hemming them in against the sea, they did not sing, Be not dismayed, what air be tied, God will take care of you.

[21:37] No, this is what they said to Moses. Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us out into the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt?

Didn't we say to you in Egypt, leave us alone? Let us serve the Egyptians? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert.

And that becomes their theme song. As you know, if you've read through the account of Exodus and Numbers, the theme song that they keep returning to whenever they come into bitter circumstances, it's that song that comes out over and over and over again.

The bitter trials expose their bitter hearts. Now, to be sure, once they saw the Egyptian corpses washing up on the shore, after the trial was over and the test of faith was done, oh, then they quickly changed their tune, didn't they?

Then they feared the Lord and put their trust in him and in Moses, his servant, chapter 14 and 31 of Exodus. But when Psalm 106 rehearses this part of their history, we see what God thought of it.

[22:56] It says, when they were in trouble, they gave no thought. There they are, hemmed in. And when they were in that trouble, they gave no thought to God's many miracles done on their behalf.

Rather, they rebelled at the Red Sea. Yet, yet. Praise God for the yet. Yet he saved them for his namesake.

Then they believed his promise, his promises, and sang his praise. So on this side of the Red Sea, rebelling against God, forgetting all of his goodness, complaining and murmuring with bitter complaint.

After the trial was over, singing the praises of God and Moses who led them through. The proper response to the testing of our faith is to remember God's past words.

He has been Jehovah Jireh to me. His promise is to believe them that he will be good to me in this situation. And so, to sing his praises on the near side of the Red Sea.

[24 : 05] As we're going through the trouble, to praise him for his promises, his faithful provision to us. You know, it's far more glorifying and pleasing to God to be praising him in the midst of our trial than when the trial is completely done.

The Israelites, once again, at Marah, here they are. They're not trusting God.

They're not remembering his mercies three days earlier and forever in their history. They're rather grumbling against his servant.

And then we read in verse 25, Moses cried out to the Lord. They cry out grumbling to Moses.

Moses cried out to the Lord. And the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water and the water became sweet.

It was just that easy. What's impossible to you is easy to God. So that brings us to the fourth lesson. And it's this one I want to camp a little longer on.

[25 : 10] And it's just this, that the Lord knows how to bring sweet out of bitter. These tests of faith often take the form of bitter things, distasteful things, unpleasant things, things we went gone from us.

I wonder, do you have any bitter in your life right now? Bitter circumstances. It would be safe for me to assume, yes, you all do.

Proverbs 14, 10. Each heart knows its own bitterness. You have yours, I have mine. But the challenge to our faith is this, to not let our bitter circumstances embitter our hearts.

To somehow trace the bitter circumstance back and deny the goodness of God to us. The Lord is the one who's mixing our cup.

There's your cup. Here's mine, there's yours. And the Lord is the one who mixes bitter and sweet into your cup. Just the right proportion, at just the right time, it's bitter and sweet.

[26 : 33] Isn't that your life? None of us have all bitter. None of us have all sweet. It's the mix.

And not only is he the one mixing this drink, he knows how to bring sweet out of the bitter. And he shows us that at the waters of Mara.

So what I'd like to propose is that this is not just an isolated event in Israel's desert journey. But it's more than that.

It's a reoccurring theme that we find in the Bible. It's a repeated pattern that we find that's meant to teach us that he is indeed the one in control of our bitter and sweet and can bring sweet out of bitter.

So let's notice that in other places. We think of Job right away, I trust, losing his ten children, his wealth, his health, and the comfort of his supposed friends. That's a lot of bitter heaped on top of each other.

[27 : 39] And he starts out well, not sinning against God and what he said, but later he charges God foolishly, saying, God has denied me justice. He's made me taste bitterness of soul.

Now, to be sure, it was a most bitter pill to swallow. But it's better to swallow a bitter pill than to chew it, don't you think?

John Flavel, the Puritan, says, affliction is a pill which being wrapped up in patience and quiet submission may be easily swallowed.

But discontent chews the pill and so embitters the soul. There's enough bitter in our afflictions. That's why they're called bitter.

Bitter circumstances. But we needlessly increase our bitterness when instead of quiet, trustful submission to God's will in our life, we chafe against the difficult yoke, we complain and wallow in self-pity, that's chewing the pill in discontented unbelief.

[29 : 01] Rather, we're to say with confident trust, whatever my God ordains is right, wholly his will abideth.

Whatever my God ordains is right, though now this cup in drinking may bitter seem to my faint heart, I take it all unshrinking. I take it all unshrinking. My God is true, each morn anew.

Sweet comfort, yet shall fill my heart, and pain and sorrow shall depart. What tastes bitter now in our cup will lead to sweet comfort in God's due time.

Though he brings grief, he will show compassion. So great is his unfailing love. Weeping may endure for the night, but joy is coming in the morning.

And so Job repents of his bitter words. We find that later in the book. And James 5.11 reminds us, well, you've heard of the patience and perseverance of Job, and you've seen what the Lord finally brought about, that the Lord is full of pity and tender mercy.

[30 : 18] You saw the bitterness of his circumstance. You even saw his heart turning bitter against God. But you saw what the Lord finally brought about after he brought Job to repentance.

And Job begins to see clearly again. What did he bring about? Well, the end of the book, tells us that he blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first.

You know, Job lived another 140 years. And that under God's sweet blessings. So hold on, afflicted saints. Yes, it's bitter.

But God knows how to bring sweet out of bitter. Now, I think this pattern, this way of God dealing with us is seen most clearly in the woman Naomi.

You remember, Naomi was the mother-in-law of Ruth. We find it in the Old Testament book of Ruth. The name, now this is important, the name Naomi means pleasant.

[31 : 22] Okay? Say Naomi. Naomi. What does it mean? Pleasant. Pleasant. She's married to a man from Bethlehem.

And then a bitter trial comes into their lives. There's famine. Probably God's judgment upon the nation during this time of the judges when there was no king in Israel.

But it hit them. And so, they took their two sons and they lived for a while in a foreign country of Moab. And while they were there, Naomi's husband died.

More bitter. And then two sons got married and both of them died. More bitter. Bitter circumstances. Leaving Naomi with two Moabite daughters-in-law with these bitter circumstances piling up. Then she hears that the Lord has provided, Jehovah Jireh has provided food back in Bethlehem, back in Israel.

[32 : 25] And she decides to return there. And she urged her daughters-in-law to return home to their families. But Ruth stuck with Naomi.

And when they arrived back in Bethlehem, it says the whole town was stirred because of them. And the women exclaimed, can this be Naomi? Maybe it was in her countenance that it wasn't the Naomi we remember, but it is.

Can this really be Naomi? Naomi? What does Naomi mean? Pleasant. And she told the ladies of Bethlehem, don't call me Naomi.

Call me Mara. What does Mara mean? Bitter. Don't call me pleasant. Call me bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty.

Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me. The Almighty has brought misfortune against me. Poor, poor Naomi. Do you sense she's not swallowing the bitter pill in quiet, trustful submission, but she's chewing the pill a bit with a bitter heart.

[33 : 44] But what we learn in the book of Ruth is that God is better than she is bitter. And by the end of the book, he has brought sweetness out of her bitter.

Because this daughter-in-law, Ruth, that she never would have had had it not been for the bitter famine, and had it not been for the bitter death of her husband, and all that had happened, this daughter-in-law, Ruth, proved to be better to her than seven sons.

Yes, bitter thing to lose her two sons, but she proved to be better than, that's the text of Scripture, better than seven sons. Because when Ruth married Boaz, what did she have?

God had raised up for her a kinsman redeemer. A kinsman redeemer was one who came in to carry the burden for her. Here she is, going into her old age, there's no social security, there's no system to uphold her.

Ah, but she has a kinsman, a rich, wealthy, Boaz. And not only that, to rescue her from her desperate condition, but from that union of Boaz and Ruth came a grandson, or came a son, yes, a grandson, no, no, I've got it backwards, came a son who was the grandfather of King David, of whose line the Messiah came, who was the true kinsman redeemer, who would rescue her from the bitterness of sin in hell.

[35 : 19] And so, Naomi, with all of her bitter circumstances, finds in the end that God is able to bring sweetness out of her bitter.

and so with you, brothers and sisters. You may see no light at the end of the tunnel. It's so dark and bitter. Patiently wait.

Quiet, trustful submission to what God has planned for you. And the last chapter of your story has not been written yet, has it? The weeping endures for the night.

Joy comes in the morning. And what a morning that will be, that eternal day. It's almost morning when the Lord will bring sweetness out of your bitter forever and ever, beauty out of ashes, gladness out of mourning, praise out of despair, gladness and joy will overtake you, and sorrow and sighing will flee away forever.

You see the same thing for you young people. Take the life of Joseph. He's a teenager. There was a lot of bitter in his life from the hatred of his brothers wanting to murder him and just settling to sell him into slavery.

[36 : 36] And so Joseph spends the 13 best years of a young man's life as a slave or a prisoner. Take your pick. Which would you like? It's bitter or bitter.

There is down in Egypt, far away from his doting father, one bitter disappointment after another. He's serving so faithfully to his master that he will not abuse his wife.

And so for it he gets accused falsely and ends up in prison and so on it goes. But Joseph refused to let it embitter his soul.

You see it wherever he goes. The Lord was with him and he becomes a blessing to others whether it's Potiphar and his family or the jailer and all the prisoners in jail.

He's not bitter. No, he's a blessing to people. God used him to save many lives even those of his own family didn't he?

[37 : 42] As he rose to the top and was the prime minister of Egypt and he saves his family of whom came who? The Messiah.

And blessing has come to us here today because God preserved his people and how did he do that? He did it through the bitter circumstances of Joseph.

When a son was born to him in Egypt he named him Manasseh. Here we are another name and Manasseh means forget and he named him forget not because he was forgetful son but because God made me forget all my trouble.

You know a time is coming when you will be able to say the same. You'll forget all about your trouble as you're enjoying the presence of the Lord with one sweet surprise after another.

Sorrow and sighing will flee away. Yes our God is able to bring such sweetness that we forget our bitter troubles.

[38 : 53] So take your situation to him pour out your heart to him trust him wait for him expect good from him you too will once again taste the sweetness after bitter in God's due time.

You can see the same pattern in Hannah and the bitterness of her soul over her barrenness and how God brought sweetness in Samuel's birth out of that. The weeping prophet Jeremiah complaining that God has filled me with bitter herbs I well remember the bitterness in the gall but how due to God's unfailing love his new mercies every morning how God brought sweetness again to Israel and so on the pattern you see the pattern of God's people of bitter things happening and yet God bringing sweet things out of the bitterness it's the pattern I dare say it's the stamp of all God's people and it's because that was the stamp of our Savior he is the pattern and we're being made after him and who had more bitter in his life than the Lord Jesus we'll get to that in a moment but like him we too are being made then into his image

Adoniram Judson was the first foreign missionary to be sent out from America he went to Burma modern day Myanmar we've been praying much for Myanmar and after his wife died he wrote to another missionary laboring with them there in Burma Sarah Boardman who just lost her husband whom he would later marry four years later but he writes to her you are now drinking the bitter cup whose dregs I am somewhat acquainted with and though for some time you have been aware of its approach I venture to say that it is far bitterer than you expected I can assure you that months and months of heart-rending anguish are before you yet take the bitter cup with both hands and sit down to your feast you will soon learn a secret there's sweetness at the bottom and what is that sweetness it's sweeter fellowship with your savior who comes to comfort you in your bitter circumstance to keep your heart from growing bitter and you will find that sweetness where you least expected to find it in the bitter cup of your widowhood

Johnny Erickson taught it you're familiar with her testimony how she dove into a shallow pond as a teenage girl very healthy girl beautiful girl and suddenly finds herself a quadriplegic for the next 50

years of her life she's still living in a wheelchair and in great pain she knows bitter much bitter wanted to die but she now has a worldwide ministry spreading the love and the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world where did that come from well that came out of bitter people have been converted eternal lives change their destiny forever sweetness out of out of bitter and I saw a reel of her and she was saying what it's going to be like when she meets the savior and she says I see myself standing there that's new because we get a new body when we'll see the Lord in that last day and he's there she's here and the wheelchair is between them and she says Lord before you send that thing to hell I want to thank you for bringing it into my life because it was in that chair that I came to know you in a way I never otherwise would have and it is so sweet that she would not trade it for 70 years of health that's sweetness you see sweetness that that came out of the bitter and then there was the Lord Jesus the archetype of this this pattern in which we his people in one way or another to one degree or another are having this stamp upon our life of bitter things and yet God bringing about sweetness from it Jesus knew bitter a man of sorrows acquainted with grief despised and rejected as we saw in Psalm 22 by those he came to save hated misunderstood falsely accused forsaken by his own but that was nothing compared to the bitter cup that the father put in his hand to drink you remember how he spoke of it in [43 : 55] Gethsemane that just the thought of drinking that cup caused Jesus to stagger scripture says he began to be deeply distressed and troubled he who had just said to his disciples let nothing trouble you don't be afraid he is troubled and he said my soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death and he pleads three times father if it be possible take this cup from me nevertheless not my will but yours be done there was no other way for salvation to come to us except that he drank the bitter cup and so just hours later we find him on the cross drinking the bitter cup you say what was in that cup that made it so bitter it was the wrath of God the white hot anger of God his hatred for sin that

Jesus felt wave after wave pounding upon him as he was stretched out on the cross it was hell that came to Calvary that day your hell and my hell that we would have and should have suffered for all eternity and it's concentrated and it's poured down upon the heart of our Savior as he's drinking this bitter cup and he drinks it down to the bitter dregs till he can finally say it's finished finished oh bless God for that word finished that means there's no more curse there's no more bitterness bitter wrath of God for us to bear for all eternity because he drained the cup of the bitter cup for us he drank the bitter cup of God's wrath for me that I might drink what the sweet cup of salvation at Mara the bitter water in the desert was made sweet by a piece of wood at Golgotha my bitter eternity was made sweet by a different kind of wood by a cross of wood upon which the prince of glory died dear believer that's what his bitter cross has won for us sweet forgiveness sweet adoption sweet reconciliation I go from enemy to friend of God forever and ever sweet savior whom I one day meet face to face and worship with unsinning heart as I peer before him without fault and with great joy in an eternity of all sweet and no bitter but until then we have the bitter mixed with the sweet so let's take our bitter to the wood of the cross let's take it to Calvary and let's see what our savior has done that we might be tasting sweetness unmixed with bitter forever and ever there was wrath in his bitter cup that there might be no wrath in our bitter cups yes he pours bitter but no wrath of God bitter circumstance yes but no bitter wrath of God in our cup Jesus took it all so brothers and sisters this is the one who's with us in our bitter trials he's been through it he knows where we are he's been here and he's the one who daily bears our burdens we don't have a high priest who's unable to sympathize who doesn't understand what we're going through because he was tempted and tested in every way like we are so that he he knows exactly the kind of grace and mercy we need to help us in our tests of faith and temptations from the devil then bring your bitter griefs to Jesus got to get to Jesus get to sweet Jesus to fellowship with him trust in him at all times his mercy is great his grace is free and his loving kindness it's better than life it's better than health Johnny says and in fellowship within he brings sweet into our bitter lost sinner friend you've not yet surrendered in faith and repentance to Jesus Christ you're still going your own way with your back toward God still content to live without the only Savior breaking his laws spurning his gospel it's not for me not now that means you still have the same bitterness we have in this life but you don't have the sweet Savior to go through your bitterness and if you continue outside of Christ a day is coming when you will have all bitter without any sweet the torments of weeping and gnashing your teeth as Jesus describes it all bitter for all eternity so let the bitterness in your life now hear it as the voice of the

[49 : 29] Savior saying turn to me come to me I'll save you from eternal bitterness and if your bitterness now your troubles now chase you to Jesus and throw yourself upon him that bitter trial will have done its work in bringing you to him and the sweetness that's to be found in him receive Jesus today as your Lord and Savior and all salvation in him is yours taste and see that the Lord is good and you will one day taste pure sweet with no bitter let's pray together father thank you that you're the Lord of history and you controlled the events of these two million Jews in the desert and brought them to the bitter waters of Mara to teach us lessons today in 1923 and we see that we're a lot like those Jews and we see that you're still the same God testing our faith wanting to exercise it and strengthen it because you know we need to endure to the end thank you for your kindness and giving us what we don't want bitter trials that do throw us upon you and we learn what sweetness is found in our Savior and we pray we praise you for your patience forgive our our complaining forgive our our unbelief that we would think for the moment that somehow we know better than you and this isn't something you can work for good but thank you that you're so committed to us that you will do us good even when it's not the good that we would like and we thank you that that goodness is extended to everyone here that you are so good that you will save anyone who comes to you and throws themselves upon your mercy do it here do it in every place that your gospel is gone today for the glory of our Savior we pray in his name amen