

NEW BETHEL PROGRESSIVE
MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Following God's Will In the Wilderness

Deuteronomy 8:2

And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

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Introduction: Nowadays, due to advanced technology, when we want to drive from one location to another it is much easier than in previous years. This is because of the utilization of the Global Positioning System (GPS). If we follow its directions, it’s unlikely that we’ll get lost. In the same way, if we faithfully follow God’s will, we won’t get lost no matter what situation we are encountering. Today, we are going to read about the journey of the nation of Israel through the wilderness. As we study this verse, let us remember His will is the only way to complete happiness.

Person

(“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee”)

Here we see the person. The person is the Lord. This verse was written by **Moses** during the final weeks of his life as the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land. The words “thou shalt” show that when we follow God’s will, there is a **requirement** and the requirement is to remember He is the one leading our lives. Why is God making such a requirement? This is because when we remember, it puts the focus on Him and not us. This will also enable us to be joyful and keep us focused in all types of situations. Just like the focus button on the camera removes all fuzziness and unwanted objects out of the picture, focusing (remembering) on God who is leading us causes us to see the **situation** clearly. This was true of Paul and Silas while they were in prison and of David throughout the Psalms (**Psalm 23:2-3**) (**Psalm 27:13-14**). We should remember the Person (the Lord) on a daily basis. Let us not fit Him into our schedule, but **build** our schedule around Him (**Psalm 61:8**).

Place

(“these forty years in the wilderness,”)

The text teaches us that we need to follow God’s will no **matter** where He takes us (wilderness). We can be successfully in this place when we realize our problems are short-term (“forty years”- temporary), but His **presence** is Long-Term (**Hebrews 13:5**). Wilderness means a wild and uncultivated region, similar to a forest or desert, inhabited only by wild animals. This tells us that life in the wilderness was not easy. Sometimes the Christian walk is not easy because we are fighting the flesh, the world, and the devil (**Galatians 5:16-17**) (**Ephesians 6:12**).

It was only a few days journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, but it took them 40 yrs. Their **attitude** is what kept them in the wilderness for that period of time. Like the Israelites, some of us may be making our journey longer than it has to be simply because we do not understand how important it is to be faithful, steadfast, undergo tests, and the power of the words that come out of our mouths. Let us remind ourselves that adversity brings **tenacity**. If we find ourselves complaining and whining, then we need to get a new mindset (**Philippians 4:8**).

Purpose

“to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or not.”

Here we see the purpose is to build our character (*“humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart”*) and to better our conduct (*“whether you would keep His commandments or not”*). Just like a **photograph** is developed in the dark, Godly character is developed in the dark as we go through trials. To succeed in our difficulties, we need to understand our purpose. *What is our purpose?* (**Isaiah 43:7**). Our purpose is to bring glory to God. *What does that mean?* Glory means honor, praise, distinction and **fame**. It means whatever we do, it should be with the aim to lift Christ’s name. His glory takes place when we allow God to work in us and through us. However, we have to make ourselves available to Him. God is like a surgeon who removes the bad, diseased, and useless things in our body that does not bring Him glory (**John 15:2**). The text tells us that God wanted to “humble” and “test” the Israelites. In the wilderness, there are tests that we have to pass on our way to the Promised Land. How do you test something? By putting pressure on it. This is similar to buying furniture for our house. Before buying, **we carefully look it over. We are trying to see what it is made of, how resilient the fabric is to dirt and whether the frame is sturdy.** This is the same way God tests us to build our character. One of the things that measure our **spiritual** maturity as Christians is how we behave during hard times. An immature Christian’s walk is based on the circumstances that surround him/her. They act like a yo-yo. If things are going well, they are up, but if things are not going well, then they are down. The more stable we become the more God can trust us with things, people, His plan, etc. We need to pray like David when he said “test my heart” (**Psalms 139:23**). One step on the other side of our test could be a promotion and a breakthrough for us. Our faith does not control our circumstances, but it does keep us **stable** during our circumstances (**1 Corinthians 15:58**). Faith is not when we understand, it is when we do not understand, but we still trust God (**Hebrews 11:6**). As Christians, we have to believe His will for our lives will never lead us where His grace cannot keep us!