

Isaiah 43:16-21

What makes a desert, a desert? And what makes a sea, a sea? It's water. In the first it's the lack of it, and in the second it's the abundance of it. You don't find water in the desert--not much, that is. And in a sea, all you have is water. They're complete opposites. There is no dry land in a sea, but in a desert, all there is, is dry land.

Except when God has something to do with it. When His people were leaving Egypt, they came to a halt against the mighty waters of the Red Sea. But God did the impossible. He "*made a way in the sea,*" is how Isaiah puts it, "*a path in the mighty waters.*" He put the one thing in the sea that seas do not have--dry land, and the people walked across. And when they were in the desert dying of thirst, which is how they put it, God put the one thing in the desert that deserts do not have--rivers of water, and the people could drink.

God does the impossible, but that is not what we expect Him to do. When His people had their backs up against the mighty waters of the Red Sea with the army of Pharaoh in hot pursuit, they panicked. They cried out in fear. They even became angry with God and Moses for leading them into this impossible situation. There was no way out. Pharaoh's army behind them, the Red Sea in front of them...they knew they were about to die. But you know the story. God told Moses to tell the people that they should go forward. And He opened, for them, a path of dry land through the sea.

Yet, not many days later, again the people did not expect God to do the impossible. They were thirsty. There was no water in the dry desert. Again they panicked. Again they became angry. They knew, once again, they were about to die. But God told Moses to strike a rock with his staff, and streams of water came flowing out.

When God does the impossible, it's for one reason, and for one reason only...to deliver His people. And because you are His people, as much as the Israelites were in the Old Testament, you should expect God to do the impossible for you. God, today, still opens for us paths of dry land in the sea. And He still puts, for us, streams of water in the desert. At different times in our life we are backed up against the mighty waters of the sea, and our enemy is bearing down upon us. Let me give you an example which took place in the life of Dale Rutherford. He was in a difficult situation. Heart disease, like Pharaoh's army, was catching up with him. But he had nowhere to go because he had so many other health problems. He was backed up against the mighty waters, and he was in distress. He was struggling even to breathe in the hospital. But God opened for him a path through the sea. He allowed Dale to fall asleep in Jesus, and his Savior carried him into heaven.

The path that God opens is not always the same one. For some who have cancer, or other serious illnesses bearing down upon them like Pharaoh's army, God opens a path through the sea, and it is a path of recovery. For some who are pursued by an army of bills which seem impossible for them to pay, God opens a path through the sea, and it's a friend or a relative providing help in time of need.

And then there are times in our life when we struggle as in a desert. And we thirst, thirst for someone to care, to love us; thirst for a friend because we feel alone. We may ache with thirst for others, loved ones who need help, who need the Lord in their life, but they are unwilling to admit it. We may thirst for mercy because of guilt over our sins. We may thirst for God's love because we feel so far away from Him.

In a desert, water is life. And since Jesus is life--there is no true life apart from Him--the words of Jesus are streams of living water in the deserts of our lives. As God brought water out of a rock in the desert, so out of the font, He brought forth the water of baptism, and your thirsting soul was quenched with life in Jesus Christ. But in a desert, no one can drink once and then walk away from it. We need water for the rest of our life, or we will die. And so God brought His living words to you as Mom and Dad read Bible stories to you, as you were taught in Sunday School and in Dayschool, as your pastor taught you and gave you the water of life from the pulpit and from the altar. Unless a Christian is bound and determined to die in the desert by refusing to drink the living water of God's Word...it is truly a miracle, God doing the impossible--He keeps us alive in Christ through streams of living water. And when you are drinking the streams of water God provides, you are not alone, you are not without love, there is no sin that can ruin you with guilt...Jesus is taking care of you.

What He did for us seems impossible to believe, but God did the impossible. Jesus entered your desert and mine. He covered Himself with our flesh and He carried the burden of our guilt. And although He Himself is the water of life, He refused to drink. He did not quench His thirst, for He came to serve, not to be served. He had no place to lay His head. He prayed, not for Himself, but for us. He went many times without food because He is the food for our souls. He cried, "*I thirst!*" from the cross because He had entered our desert and spent all that He had, even His very life, in order that you and I may freely drink of Him.

And when Pharaoh's army was bearing down upon Him as Pilate sentenced Him to die, and as the Roman soldiers nailed Him to a cross, God opened no path for Him through the sea. Rather, He let Him suffer. He let Him endure the agony, the punishments of hell so that in Him, the path to heaven is now open for you.

No matter where you are in life...up against the mighty waters, or dying of thirst in the desert...you have a Savior. Jesus has already been there for you. Jesus has taken your burdens, your guilt, your sins...God forgives you. Jesus is your path through the mighty waters. And Jesus is living water for you in the desert of your life. No matter how impossible your life becomes, there is a way for you to go. God does the impossible for you in Jesus. Amen.