

# Wilderness

## The School of the Prophet

By Michael Clark

You see when one is truly dead to self and alive to Him, there is no offense taken when your word is rejected and no pride generated when it is received. There is only one way that I know that God can work so great a death in an individual and that is through tribulation and wilderness.

Today we see many fledgling prophets trying to set the house of God in order, often creating disorder instead. I spent a couple of years in this category, standing in churches, "warning them" and being rejected. Rejection led to anger, and suppressed anger led to bitterness. Bitterness led to unforgiveness and pride. What started out as a gift given to a lowly believer, turned into the festering, stinking sore of pride. James wrote:

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (James 4:4-6, NKJV)

This is the story of how God dealt with me in His wilderness.



One day in 1980 I was praying and seeking the Lord for direction on what He wanted me to say in my church home meeting, He showed me a vision of myself standing on a pedestal in a white robe with all the people in my home group on their knees around the bottom of the pedestal giving glory to God. As each word of praise went upward to heaven and passed me by, I reached out and grabbed it and tucked it in my robe next to my heart. After seeing this I cried out, "Oh God! Is this what I am doing to you? If it is, then Lord kill it!"

The gift in me was releasing praises to God, but in my immaturity and desire to be

recognized as valid I had sought to be exalted above others and thereby invalidated the gift He had given me.

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Shortly after I prayed that prayer of death, God started answering it. First He asked me, "Michael, if I cease to move by my Spirit in your meetings, will you try to fake it?" I said, "No Lord, you quit and I quit." The next day two of the key families in the group called me and told me that they were not coming to the meetings any more. I blessed them and told them that I thought the Lord was telling me that I was to shut it down. The following meeting I announced to the group that it was the last meeting that we would be coming to, but that they were free to continue without us. They had one more meeting and it died.

Next, the church that I was affiliated with was split by a prophetic holiness cult. As the leaders of this group called me in on the carpet and tried to rein me in and get me under their authority, I refused and came under attack and curses by them. My response was to say to them, "I have had all this fun with you Christians I can stand. I'm out of here! I'm heading for Midian on the back side of the desert. I'll see you in about 40 years!" The leader said a most curious thing, "Michael, it need not take that long."

After that meeting I was mad at the Church and mad at God. The next thing I knew His clear voice, which spoke to me so often, ceased to be heard. The scriptures that had so nourished me seemed dead and dried up. I could not find meaningful fellowship with any other Christians. My prayers seemed to fall off the edge of my lip and hit the floor. I felt so alone and betrayed.

Then the Sabeen raiding parties started coming in ([Job 1:15](#)). I could not find work anywhere! I had three journeyman licenses in my billfold and was sure that I would always have a "meal ticket," but no way! I had been cut off from my supply. I was too proud to accept unemployment, and we (my family of six) were reduced to gleaning food from muddy farm fields and diving in supermarket dumpsters at night

for food. Some days I was so depressed I just laid in bed, curled up in a fetal position.

About this time, my wife was near the end of her rope. She prayed one day, "God this school for prophets is very hard. Why do I have to audit all the classes?" The Lord spoke to her clearly, "You are not auditing the classes. You are a matriculated student." She saw me through my wilderness and now she is in her own wilderness, being purified by God.

Finally when we were just about to get a third month behind on our home mortgage and the banker was about to foreclose, I found work. It was humbling to accept a job opportunity through my Mormon uncle, but it was work. The job was an electrician position on Akutan Island in Alaska's Aleutian chain, a treeless, wind-swept volcanic rock on the edge of the Arctic Ocean. Now I was in a literal wilderness as well as a spiritual one, and my family was not allowed to come.

I was cut off, dying inside, missing my family, but most of all missing my Lord. At one point in my tenure on that rock, sitting on my bunk in my depression I watched my consciousness get up out of my body and head for the door as if to say, "I can't stand to live with you anymore, I'm leaving." I cried out to Jesus to please hold me together long enough to get me back home to my family again. He did.

From that point on it was a very slow and gradual ramp up out of that terrible pit, but for the next ten years He kept drawing me to Him with invisible cords, but not enough that I could perceive it. I spent 14 years in all in that spiritual wilderness.

I had a significant encounter with Him in 1990 at a men's' retreat in Idaho. The pastor had another brother and myself stand in the midst of the men and explained to them that God had called us to the prophetic and that He had us in a time of wilderness, asking them to pray for us. The next day I confessed to the men and to God that I had been mad at God for letting Christians attack me and for taking away from me all things that were spiritual for all those years. I confessed that I had sinned by judging God and His church and asked for forgiveness. That started the "big thaw" in my spiritual winter. Things were finally coming back into perspective, "He is God, I'm a sinner," not the other way around.

In 1991 I had my first real Holy Ghost encounter with God in eleven years. I was at a Vineyard conference and His presence came down on me with such intensity that I could hardly breathe. I was back at the Motel between meetings, sitting on the floor in the laundry room between two washing machines reading the book of Jonah. All of a sudden He filled the room! The book of Jonah came alive! Every word was jumping off the page and straight into my heart.

There were more encounters with Him and more testings and trials at the hands of Christians after that, but I kept "short accounts" and had learned to forgive and keep seeking His face in each one. I had determined that I was tired of a diet of, as my friend called it, "roast pastor." I was not accepted with open arms back into church ministries for I still saw things from that prophetic perspective, but I didn't make it my duty to set all of them "right," either.

Jesus said of the Pharisees, "[They are blind guides leading the blind. Leave them alone, they will fall into the ditch.](#)" Sometimes, the best cure for a disease is to let it run its course. When one is on his back in a ditch, it might just be the first time that he has ever looked up and become humbled enough to seek help! Saul the persecutor of the Church found this out. "[All good gifts come DOWN from the Father of lights.](#)" God opposes the proud and lifts up the humble.

Well, I said all that to say this... You who are called to be prophets, study the scriptures and see the common thread of wilderness in the lives of God's prophets and invite His mighty humbling hand to prove your heart in His crucible of affliction, that He might truly use you as His purified instrument. Even after this period of wilderness, called by some "the dark night of the soul," I find that He continues to work His death in me as I continue to follow Him and speak His words. As Paul said, "[So then death is working in us, but life in you.](#)" (2 Corinthians 4:12, NKJV)

The servant is not greater than the Master.

[When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice \[came\] from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. \(Matt. 3:16 to 4:1\)](#)

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