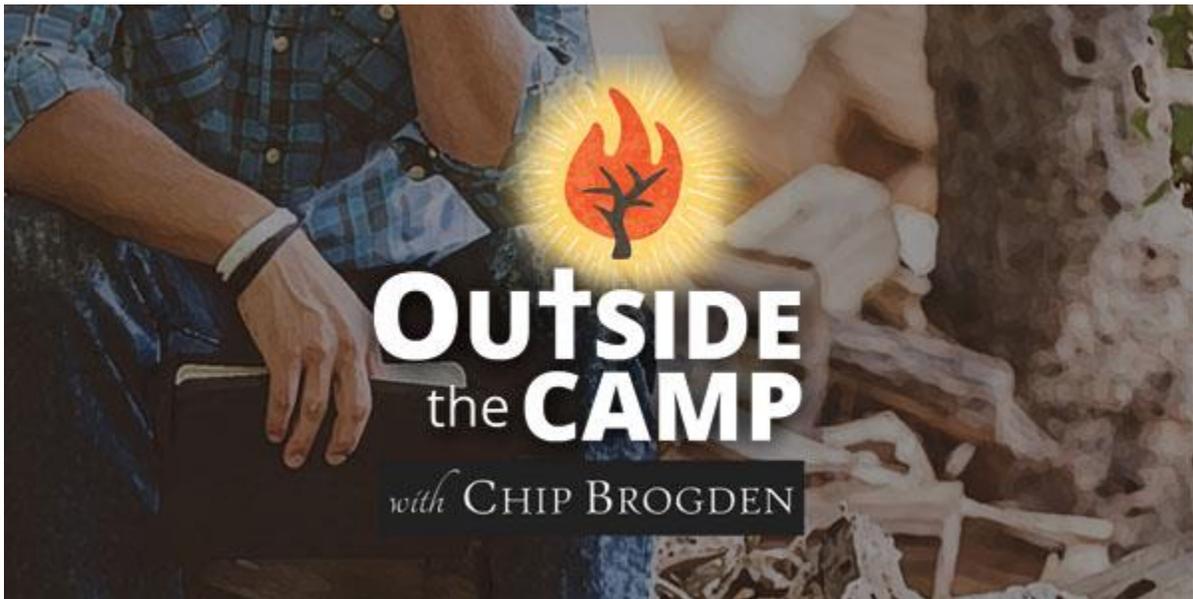


TRANSCRIPT

OUTSIDE THE CAMP WITH CHIP BROGDEN



EPISODE 10: The Spiritual Importance of the Wilderness (Part 2)

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ANNOUNCER: Welcome to this edition of Outside the Camp with author and teacher Chip Brogden. Helping you discover the freedom and joy of a Christ-centered faith that is based on relationship, not religion. And now, with today's message, here's Chip Brogden.

CHIP: It's a wonderful day to be outside the camp with Jesus, bearing His reproach, getting over our religious addiction, and learning about the spiritual importance of the wilderness. We've been looking at John the Baptist, tracing the spiritual history of someone Jesus once referred to as the greatest prophet of them all. It's interesting that Jesus would say John the Baptist is the greatest, even though John never did any

miracles, never gave any personal words of prophecy, he wasn't going around sharing dreams and visions. He doesn't "fit the suit" of what we tend to think a prophet is all about.

Now, all these things happened as an example for us. When we look at Palestinian Judaism in the first century and compared it to Christianity of our time, and we see many similarities that are prophetically significant. The most important takeaway, I believe, is that Judaism created a religious system that actually prevented them from recognizing their Messiah. That spirit of religion is so strong that to this very day the Jewish people do not accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah or as the Son of God. Messianic Jews that do believe in Jesus are a minority within a minority. Similarly, I believe that Christians have created a religious system that not only fails to recognize Jesus but also leads people away from the simplicity of Christ.

So in Matthew 3 we learn more about John the Baptist. John represents the spiritual journey of a person who is going outside the camp, outside of organized religion, and discovering the simplicity of Christ. John the Baptist had a profound revelation of Christ, and with that revelation came the realization that the religious system of Judaism could not be reformed or revived, but would have to be repudiated.

Let's go back to Matthew chapter 3 right now and resume the live teaching on the spiritual importance of the wilderness.

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Repudiation means I'm not trying to *reform* the system and fix it; I'm not trying to pray that God *revives* it, brings it back to life, and pours out His Spirit on a bunch of tombs filled with dead men's bones. The only real answer is to *repudiate* the system: to come

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John saw it, but he had a choice. He could have stayed there, followed in his father's footsteps, been a priest, been right there in the center of religious activity where you would expect. "If God has given you a ministry, God has given you a word, you're filled with the Holy Spirit, God's going to *use you in a mighty way!* And He's going to do it right *here* as a *priest* in the center of Jewish culture, Jewish religion!" And John is the man of the hour! But at some point, something happens and we see that John *repudiated* the system, he *repudiated* his position as a priest, and we see him out in the wilderness.

We see that Saul, on the road to Damascus, after he had a vision of Jesus and was arrested there on the road to Damascus, he had that great revelation of Christ; and he says, "After that, I went away into Arabia." Into the desert. Why? Because you've got to get *away* from that religious center of activity, and you've got to get out into the desert. You've got to get out into the wilderness so that you can be *reduced* to Christ so that you can be *stripped* of the flesh and *stripped* of religion, and get over that religious addiction and see things from an outside perspective that you can't see when you are still there in the system.

John had to *leave* the priesthood, and get away from Jerusalem, and get away from the temple, and get away from his family, and get away from his friends. Just like God had to call Abraham. He says, “I’m calling you to go to a country, to go to a place that I will show you. You’ve never been there before, but you’ve got to get up and you’ve got to leave your family and your friends behind and come out. Come out! Come out! And go into the land I’m going to show you. I will bless those who bless you; I will curse those who curse you; and all the nations will be blessed because of you.” That was the first “called out” – *ek-caleo* - the first *ekklesia*, the first called-out man. But he had to leave his family. Leave what was familiar. Leave his friends. Just like John had to leave his father, leave his mother, leave the priesthood, leave a bright future, get away from the temple, get away from Jerusalem, and go out into the *desert* so that you can *see and hear* correctly. With discernment.

With *distance* comes *discernment*. When you're too close to the situation, too close to the people, too close to the person, you don't have good discernment. You need distance, and distance gives you discernment to clearly see and hear. And this is why so many people don't understand what I'm saying: because they're still in Jerusalem trying to justify the priesthood. They're still in their church trying to convince *me* - and I'm the wrong person to convince; you don't have to convince me. Who am I? But they're trying to convince me that somehow *their* church is different. Somehow *their* church is the exception to God's rule. God says, “Come out of her My people, so that you don't partake in her sins and so that you don't suffer the same judgment that's coming upon her.” So, you don't have to justify it to me’ you have to explain to the Lord why *you* are the exception to the rule; why *your* church is different from every other church. Well see, the reality, the truth is, your church isn't any different - and you're no different. But the issue is you can't see clearly so long as you are in the situation. You've got to get out of that situation before you can look back on it clearly.

And it's just like a woman who is in an abusive relationship with a man. She loves him, she loves him, she loves him. He beats her, he beats her, he beats her. And she won't leave. He cries big crocodile tears and says he'll never do it again; she takes him back and before you know it, it happens again. She can't understand the situation she's in because she's been in it for so long. She can no longer see it for what it really is.

Spiritually speaking, the same thing happens. You get caught up in your ministry, caught up in your church, you've never spent any time in the desert, you've never spent any time in the wilderness. And what do people do? As soon as they come out of an institutional church, they stop going to church someplace, and say, "You know, I really believe God's called me out of church. I hear what you're saying brother, I've got to come out of Babylon!" They come out of Babylon, and the next week they're asking me, "Do you know where I can go to meet somebody? Do you know where there's a gathering? Do you know where there's a fellowship of like-minded people?" They haven't got enough time and distance and space *apart* from the religious system and they're still going through the motions of religion. All this momentum has been going on for so many years. They've been indoctrinated that you can't be a Christian unless you are connected with other Christians, and the only way to be connected with other Christians is to have a meeting. So they go from one meeting to the next, and they meet in a house instead of meeting in a church building - and they think they've come out of Babylon! But they haven't.

John had to leave the priesthood. He had to get away from Jerusalem. He didn't just leave the temple and then start a meeting in his home - that's not getting away. That's not far enough. John had to *leave* the priesthood, get *away* from Jerusalem go out into the wilderness, *way* out there in the desert, to clearly see and speak the Word of God.

Here's point #2: *All those people there, they had to leave Jerusalem too, if they wanted to hear and to see the word of God.* Those people had to *leave* Jerusalem; they had to come out of Jerusalem. See, it says, “Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him.” They didn't say, “Well brother, you've really got a strong, powerful word there, talking about ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.’ Why don't you come deliver a talk to our group here in Jerusalem?” See, I used to do that. I used to go to these different groups, and these different house churches, and these different... you know, whatever they were. And I would bring the word to them, and you know. Did it make a difference? I'm sure it touched individual people. But I could go into churches; I could go into different places and bring this message, and bring this word. But the reality is, when I do that, I am just one of another long line of preachers and teachers who come through, tickle their ears with teachings, and then when they hear the truth they don't even recognize it; and I'm just another person coming and going, another ship passing in the night. They just sit there, and this steady stream of preachers and teachers comes through and tells them things, but they never put it into practice.

So I think it's very interesting that the people - in order to hear the Word of God - they had to *leave* Jerusalem, turn their back on the temple, turn their back on the Pharisees and Sadducees and all the teachers of religion, and go out and find this raving lunatic out in the wilderness, to see and to hear the Word of God.

You know I could go on and on with that but thirdly: *There was a price to be paid.* That's my point. It was a hot, dirty, inconvenient and out-of-the-way place to go. But I'm saying there's a price to be paid. I'm really impressed - I really am - when we do a live teaching and someone is logged in from France, or someone is logged in from Scotland, or someone is logged in from South America - or not *South America*, but *South Africa* - or some other place at the globe, whatever time I'm doing it in; and I know it's like 1:00

in the morning, 2:00 in the morning, 4:00 in the morning wherever they are. And I'm impressed by that. That impresses me. That says that you're hungry and you're thirsty for the Word of God. Because for every one person who does that, I'll get ten emails from people saying they can't. They can't do it; it's just too late. They're too tired. Or they have to get up early the next morning.

Hey, all I'm saying is: for us to go deeper into the things of the Spirit, to not just *survive* but to *thrive* in the Last Days, we've just got to do what we've got to do. We've got to get over it. We've got to move on. We've got to get past ourselves, past this idea that everything's got to be convenient, delivered to me on demand, at my convenience. There's a price to be paid. And if they wanted to hear John the Baptist they had to go hear him in person. There was a price to be paid. And there's a price you and I will have to pay in order to obtain the truth; and then, to be able to live the truth, and speak the truth with conviction. There's a price to be paid. It's not always going to be *convenient*, handed to you on a silver platter.

So they had to get out of their comfort zone. I know that's a cliché but it's very apropos. We have to press on. We have to press on towards the upward call of God in Christ. It's going to be difficult. It's going to be hard. If you go outside the camp to be with Jesus you'll bear His reproach. Jesus said if they reject Me they'll reject you, if they hear Me they'll hear you; but there's a price to be paid.

So I think that's pretty clear. What's the spiritual importance of the wilderness, anyway? Well, in the wilderness we are *decreased*, and Christ is *increased*. John 3:30 - it's the greatest (I believe) seven words in the whole Bible; because it sums up everything that God has done, everything that God is doing, and everything that God will do. And who summed it up in seven words? John the Baptist! John 3:30 says, "He must increase but I must decrease." So it's in the wilderness that Christ is increased in us, and as Christ is

increased in us, we are decreased. With more of Him there is less of me. And that's the purpose of the wilderness: it's to reduce you to Christ.

When you come out of Babylon and you go into the wilderness, you realize that there's a great big hole in your heart and in your life and in your mind. Christ is supposed to be in that void but that void has been filled in with church; it's been filled in with ministry; it's been filled up with religiosity and with hypocrisy. And when you get into the desert, all of that gets stripped away, and stripped away, and stripped away, and you are reduced and reduced and reduced to nothing but Jesus. It was Corrie Ten Boom who said that when Jesus is all you have then Jesus is all you need.¹

And the other big insight that I've had just this week, and I shared with people on my Facebook page: When we learn to receive from the Lord all the things we're trying to get from people, *that's* the secret of living and walking in the wilderness. *That's* the secret to spiritual satisfaction: to be satisfied with Christ. So the challenge is, people are not satisfied with Jesus. They come out of church, they have a big void in their heart where a church used to be, immediately they go look for another church, or they look for a house church, or they look for a group or a fellowship. And they're looking to other *people* to give them what they need instead of looking to the Lord to be *all* they need. Well, that's the purpose of the wilderness. The purpose of the wilderness is to get you to that point. And once you learn how to receive from the Lord all the things that you're trying to get from people right now (and being frustrated and disappointed), once you learn to get them all from the Lord, then He can trust you – [He can] bring people into your life and you're not a drain anymore. You're not trying to please man anymore, you can just love people, you can speak the truth in love, you can really be a light and a vessel of honor for Christ to speak through and to use in a powerful way. But you're getting what you need

¹ The actual quote commonly attributed to Corrie Ten Boom is, “You may never know that Jesus is all you need, until Jesus is all you have.”

from the *Lord* - you're not constantly looking for other people to give you support, to give you advice, to give you reinforcement, to give you encouragement, to tell you you're not such a bad person, to give you acceptance. You can get *all* of that from the Lord. Go to Him and, you see, you've got that already in Him. You *are* "accepted in the Beloved." You can have that confidence. And so long as you are pleasing Him it really doesn't matter if you please anybody else. There's just such freedom and liberty in getting what you need *from the Lord* and not from other people. And once you are free from having to get things from other people, now you can truly serve. Now you can truly love.

So it's in the wilderness that you learn these things. Periods of isolation. Periods of loneliness. Periods of being alone. Hey, at least we have a connection here through the website and on social media and so forth. But that should not - don't allow that to - diminish the work of God in your life and take away from the spiritual importance of you being in the wilderness, so that you can be decreased and Christ can be increased.

So as we continue on to the *prophetic significance* of the wilderness In Matthew 3, beginning in verse 7. So check this out: "But when he [John the Baptist] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! [In other words, you snakes!] Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore, bear fruits worthy of repentance. And do not think to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our Father!" For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore, every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He Who is coming after me is mightier than I, Whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire; and His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor and gather His wheat into the barn, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.'"

Now this is what John is saying to the Pharisees and the Sadducees. These are the religious leaders of the day. And so it's interesting - point #1 - that *John rejected the religious folks who just came to check things out*. That's what they did. And that's what happens. They come and check me out, they come and check you out. They want to see what's going on. They want to see this thing - what's happening - for reasons that will become clear later on, as we get further into it. But John rejected them. He saw right through it. He says you're a bunch of snakes. Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

“Well, what is this wrath to come, anyway? Where did this come from? Everything's been going good. For the last four hundred years we have rebuilt and reestablished our nation. We've got a beautiful temple here. We're doing pretty good. We've come a long ways. Yeah, the Romans are here, and that's kind of a pain; but at least we have our own nation again. We have our temple, and the Romans let us kind of do what we want to do, within reason. Things are going pretty good!”

Yeah, things are going great! The problem is you're a bunch of dead men walking around in whitewashed tombs! That's the problem. Yeah, things are going great! Except spiritually you're dead! Things are going great. You're prospering – except you're not going to recognize the *Messiah* when He appears! Yes, things are going great! Except, “You draw near to God with your mouth, and you honor Him with your lips, but your *hearts* are *far* from Him!”

Oh yeah, things are going great. “You bunch of snakes. Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? So I'll tell you what - if you're really serious about joining us out here in the wilderness and preparing a place for the Lord, preparing the way of the Lord, let's see the fruit. Bring forth some fruit worthy of repentance!”

See, what was the fruit that John had? Well, the fruit that John brought forth is: he repudiated everything in Jerusalem and he went out into the desert to do God's will. The Pharisees and the Sadducees, they didn't repudiate anything; they're still very much a part of it, but they're trying to corral this and bring it back into Jerusalem, lest it get too far out of hand. And John says, "No, I don't think you're sincere. If you are sincere, then bring forth fruits worthy of repentance."

Once again there's a cost involved. You can't have one foot in Jerusalem and have one foot in the wilderness and avoid the wrath to come. Just like I try to tell people, you can't have one foot in the church and one foot in the wilderness and think that, at just at the last minute, you're going to pull your foot out and avoid the judgment that's coming. There's a reason why Jesus says, "Remember Lot's wife." Remember Lot's wife. Do you remember Lot's wife? Do you remember what happened her? They were called out as well, called out of Sodom; but she looked back.

You say, "You're scaring me brother!" Well, you need to be scared. This is scary stuff. John says there's wrath to come. And he says you can't even say to yourselves, "Well, we have Abraham as our father!" What does that mean? It means, "We are children of Abraham; we are the chosen people! We're God's chosen people; we're the Jews! God's going to save us. He's going to deliver us. The wrath is coming on the *Romans*, the wrath is coming on the *Gentiles*!" John says, "No, the wrath is coming on *you*. And don't even try to say that the wrath won't come to you because you have Abraham as your father. God can raise up children of Abraham from these very stones!"

In the same way I hear people every day saying that God will never judge this nation because we are a Christian nation. Or, just because someone joined a church once, prayed the sinner's prayer once (and never did a thing in the world after that), that somehow they're going to be miraculously saved from tribulation, from the wrath to

come. I'm just telling you what Scripture says. "We have Abraham as our father!" What were they saying? "We're Jews, we're God's chosen people, in case you haven't heard!" It's the same thing I hear today – "We're Christians, or we're believers in Jesus, we love Jesus with all of our heart!" Well, bring forth the fruits of repentance. Produce some fruit. Let's *see* something besides words.

And the interesting thing here - point #3 - is that *John uses the same prophetic parables as Jesus*. The same illustrations. And we've already covered many of them in previous teachings. Matthew 5, 6 and 7 - the Sermon on the Mount; especially Matthew 7, where Jesus is talking about good and bad fruit; true and false prophets; the wise man who built his house on the rock is the one who heard the word and did it. In the Kingdom *parables* that I call Kingdom *prophecies* (because I interpret His parables as prophecies) He talks about the wheat and tares; separating, not Sinners from Saints, but separating Hypocrites from Holy - the Hypocrites from the from the true Holy - those who are truly righteous from those who are just going around saying, "Lord, Lord! We did all these things in Your Name!" And He says, "I don't know who you are."

My point is: John uses the exact same prophetic parables and examples as Jesus did. He talks about good and bad fruit. He talks about separating the wheat from the chaff. It's the same message!

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That's a sobering word, and a very important warning to those of us who are still a little too comfortable, a little too satisfied, a little too content, with things the way they are. The wilderness has a way of teaching you things that you can't learn by sitting in a classroom, or listening to preaching, or reading books, or attending church services. It is in the desert place, in the wilderness, outside the camp, where we learn how to prepare a place for the Lord in our heart.

Well, there is a lot more to see here in Matthew 3, but we'll have to come back to that next time. Until then, this is Chip Brogden, reminding you that this is the day that the Lord has made, so make it a good day; and remember that greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world!

ANNOUNCER: You've been listening to Outside the Camp with author and teacher Chip Brogden. We hope you enjoyed today's broadcast and found it helpful and encouraging. If you'd like to get additional teachings, audio recordings, books and other Christ-centered resources to help you grow spiritually, visit us online at ChipBrogden.com. Outside the Camp is made possible by the prayers and financial support of listeners like you. Until next time, on behalf of Chip Brogden, I'm Kathy Smith, reminding you that you can do all things through Christ Who strengthens you!