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According to Webster's New World Dictionary, a wilderness is a land of barren emptiness. Uninhabitable wasteland. Have you ever found yourself wandering in a wasteland of life, separated from friends and family, without hope or joy, with no one to whom you can turn or resort for comfort and support? Perhaps you have been driven to the Wilderness by the rejection of those whom you love; or, perhaps, you have taken flight there of your own accord. At those moments of desolation, on whom shall you call? When there is no imaginable means of improvement or escape, to which power will you appeal for succour? There is a Sovereign upon whose throne we may appeal for mercy, for refreshment, for salvation. His riches are beyond measure and His armies are peerless and always victorious.

In Genesis, Chapter 16, Hagar is ill-treated by her mistress, Sarai, and flees into the Wilderness. She gave little thought to how she would survive the draught and famine of the Wilderness. She simply fled there to escape the reality which oppressed her poor soul. We are told in verse 7 of this chapter, ***"And the Angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the Wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur".*** Isn't it amazing how often Angels appear at the time of greatest need! The angel told Hagar to return to the place where her living would be provided. Angels always give good advice.

The following verses from Genesis 21 relate another experience that Hagar had in the Wilderness:

9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. 10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. 11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.

12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. 13 And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed. 14 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. 15 And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. 16 And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bow shot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.

17 And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. 19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink. 20 And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. (Genesis 21 9-20)

On her first excursion, Hagar had fled to escape her own problems; but now, Hagar is driven away by the father of her child. What pain this must have inflicted upon the heart of this young woman. After a time, the water which Abraham had given her was expended. Her son, Ishmael, was near death from thirst. Hagar could not bear to witness the agonizing death of her son, so she left him under a bush and retired some distance away. She was at her ropes end. There was no hope for a traveler in the Wilderness who had neither water nor ration upon which to subsist. What could she do? How could she bear the burden which was too great for her frail frame?

Hagar had little faith that God would save her, but her innocent child cried



unto God - and God heard the voice of the lad. Because of the voice of the child, the Angel of God called to Hagar from out of the very midst of Heaven. We are told that Hagar's eyes were opened and she saw a fountain of water!

Even in our Wilderness, God has placed wells of water. Oftentimes, because of blindness resulting from a shortage of faith, we see not the wells - only the burning sands. But if our faith can arise even in the face of hopelessness, our eyes may be opened to the Water of Life which

abounds in the Wilderness to those who love God.

Perhaps you are one forlorn and wandering hopelessly in the Wilderness; without direction, without sustenance, without pity, and without vision. But God is listening. God is watching. He is ready to call to you from out of the midst of Heaven: "Friend, what aileth thee?" If we pour out our heart's desire to Him, He will in due time open our eyes to these Fountains in the Wilderness. He appeals to us in the last chapter of the Holy Bible: "And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely."