***Deuteronomy 8:2-4 And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. 4Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.***

All of us have struggles in life. If each person told past and current struggles, we’d all have a deeper appreciation of our brothers and sisters. We’d make it a point to call, encourage, lift up. We’d realize that everyone is dealing with something. Everyone has a wilderness they are facing right now. Romans 5:3-4 *And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character hope.* Tribulation teaches us, builds us, refines us, directs us, humbles us, and unites us. ***God refines His children in the cauldron of challenge, not in the easy chair of comfort.*** It was true in Moses’ time… and it’s true today. If we want to do something great in God, we must leave the comfort of the place we know now.

In our scripture this morning, verse 2 says - *And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.* Moses is speaking with the Children of Israel, God’s chosen people. He’s calling to remembrance the Exodus and the journey that took should have taken days, but instead took forty years. Why did they wander so long? Fear, Faithlessness, Pride, Rebellion, Serving Self. Why do we wander in our own personal wilderness so long, locked in our struggles? Same reasons… same reasons.

Moses reminds Israel that God led them all the way with a purpose. God never allows purposeless suffering. Never allow Satan to speak into your mind that your struggles have no purpose. God led the Children of Israel and He leads us, not part of the way, not some of the way, but all of the way. Why? First, to humble us. In order to do great things in God, we must first see who God is clearly. We must desperately seek our God on High, while we are bowed low in surrendered in obedience.

Second, to test us. Literally, to prove. All ministry for God is a test. To commit and last two days or two weeks does not prove anything. Many start the journey. Few finish. Many begin to build without first considering the cost. God knows. The question is always: do we?

Third, to know ourselves. God used the time in the wilderness to allow the nation of Israel to reveal where they placed their faith. Day one – God is my Rock. Day 20 – God is my Rock. Day 365 – God may be my Rock, but I’m getting winded. Day 7305? Day 14610? Whether 40 days, 40 weeks, 40 months, or 40 years pass, God uses wilderness wanderings, struggles to reveal our hearts – not to Him, but to ourselves. In what is our confidence?

Verse 3 *So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.* God allowed them to hunger and provided in an unexpected way. Having to cry out to God for the basics enhances humility. Knowing that, without God, your children will go hungry, your lights will go off, the gas will run out – brings a new level of dependence on God. America has lost the desperation for God! Self-reliance is sin. It is easier for a large animal to slip through the eye of a needle than for a man or a woman suffering from self-reliance to find God. When God humbles us to the point that we see God is all we have, we are able to clearly see that God is all we need.

Verse 4 *Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years.* Now Moses reminds them of an observable proof. Deuteronomy 29:5 says *And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet.* 40 years and clothes did not wear out. 40 years of walking and sandals didn’t fall apart, feet didn’t swell. God does the same today. God honors sacrifice. God blesses ministry. He is our God of all things. Many have stories of how God provided in tough times. Many more have stories of how He sustained in tough times. God does not forget His children in the wilderness. He has not forgotten you. He leads you, He sustains you, He loves you, even as He teaches, chastens, and proves you.

This week, let’s consider the struggles, the wilderness wanderings we have in our lives. Let’s consider how we’re viewing them. Do we see God in them? Do we see His leading, His provision, His sustaining? Do we see the ministry opportunities within the struggles? Remember, *God refines His children in the cauldron of challenge, not in the easy chair of comfort.* God is seeking humble servants who know their own hearts, stay true to their ministries, and keep His commandments. He will lead, He will provide, He will sustain – but we must believe and follow. Seek to become desperate for God again – Desperately seeking Him in Spirit will one day deliver us from our wilderness wanderings.