

When Life Tastes Bitter

Ever wondered what the world's nastiest drink is? Well, pull up a chair; I'm about to tell you.

If you have the opportunity to go to Atlanta, Georgia, take time to visit [The World of Coca-Cola](#). It's a well-done interactive museum. The last stop is the "Taste It" exhibit where you can sample the gazillion flavors the company bottles all over the world. Some are quite tasty, some are unusual, and some are ... well, there's Beverly



If you're with friends who've been there before or have traveled to Italy where Beverly is made, they may try to steer you toward this drink.

"Hey, Bob, try this. (snicker, snicker) You'll like it. (smirk.)"

If they do this, you need new friends.

Beverly is bitter. Very bitter. Bitterly bitter. Italians used it as an *aperitif*, a drink before dinner to aid digestion. (My digestion is fine, thank you.) Maybe it's my American sensibilities, but I do not go out of my way to find something bitter to drink.

But sometimes life hands me bitter things to drink anyway. It happens to all of us.

- A relationship gone south
- An ER visit turns into far more than an ER visit
- A job we don't like
- Someone turns on us
- Loss of income
- Uncertainty. *What's going to happen now?*

In those moments, we can do one of two things:

1. Complain to God.
2. Trust God.

The first one's easy—and it comes so naturally.

In Exodus 15, the Israelites were thirsty, but water was in sight. The water, however, was bitter. Who knows, maybe it was a Middle Eastern form of Beverly. In that moment, they chose Door #1: they chose to complain.

What is sadly funny to me in this account is that, just three days earlier, God had miraculously parted the Red Sea and rescued them from the Egyptians. Three days! One of God's most spectacular miracles and rescues, and they forgot it in less time than it takes for me to get around to taking the trash out.

What follows was just—OK, this is just my opinion—weird.

"Then Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink" (Ex. 15:25).

That's it? No spectacular waving of the staff? No miraculous stirring of the water? Just a chunk of wood?

There was nothing special about that wood. In fact, it may have been the complete ordinariness of it that made this so miraculous. A piece of wood was God's way of reminding the people that the power lies with Him. He was with them. He had always been with them. He was with them when the water was bitter. And He was with them now.

God then declared, "I am the Lord, who heals you" (v. 26). Healing carries the idea of restoration. Just as God healed—restored—the water, He restored His people. He spared them from all the bitterness the Egyptians faced: He was with them, and He would continue to restore them.

God still works this way. He used another piece of wood to heal and restore us: the cross of Christ.



When we've made life bitter through our own waywardness and sin, the cross of Christ heals and restores us.

When life becomes bitter through no fault of our own, it is still the cross that heals and restores us. We come to the cross with trust in Him. He is with us, He walks with us through the bitterness, and He will restore us.

"He himself bore our sins' in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed'" (1 Pet. 2:24).