

Christ the Smitten Rock

CHRIST OUR ROCK (Part 2): CHRIST THE SMITTEN ROCK.

The background for this title of Christ is found in Exodus 17 which describes God's response to Israel's second "NO WATER" experience. In Exodus 14 Israel was delivered THROUGH THE WATER. In Exodus 15 they were tested first with NO WATER and then BITTER WATER. Paul reminds us that these Old Testament events "happened to Israel as examples and were written down as warnings for us" (1Cor 10:11-note) "to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures (OT) we might have HOPE (not a "hope so," but a "hope sure," an absolute assurance that God will do good to us in the future)." So as we look briefly at these OT events which prefigure Jesus as our Smitten Rock, "may the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in HOPE by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Ro 15:13-note).

EXODUS 15:22-26: After Israel had experienced the "mountain top" triumph of divine deliverance through the Red Sea, "they traveled for three days in the desert without finding water." (v22-note). Isn't this so often our experience, that times of great testing so often follow times of great triumph? And so it behooves us to "be as watchful after victory ("Red Sea experiences") as before the battle!" (A. Bonar) With throats parched, Israel "came to Marah (means "Bitter"), but they not drink its water because it was bitter." (v23-note) Spurgeon writes that "The relief which seemed so near was snatched away: the cup was dashed from their lips" and so they "grumbled against Moses" (v24-note), who recorded that it was "there God TESTED them!" (v25-note). Spurgeon adds "what a sudden change from the sound of the timbrel (Ex 15:1-note) to the voice of grumbling! Such are the changes of our OUTWARD conditions and of our INWARD feelings, so fickle and so mutable is man. What is there that can be RESTED upon in this mortal life?" Our only sure REST in this life is Christ, "the Rock of our Refuge" (Ps 94:22-note), "the Rock that is higher" than we are (Ps 61:2-note), the One Who will bring us "up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, and set (our) feet upon a Rock making (our) footsteps firm." (Ps 40:2-note). As David rhetorically asked "Who but our God is a SOLID ROCK?" (2Sa 22:32) And so when Israel was TESTED they failed to REST on the Solid Rock, refusing to trust in Jehovah's promise of His presence, His power and His provision. Instead of giving thanks in everything (1Th 5:18-note), they grumbled. They refused to believe the truth that the more an "oak of righteousness" (Isa 61:3-note) is shaken by the winds, the more deeply are its roots driven into the Rock Who is Christ. How often I am like Israel when tested!

Exodus 15 also teaches that God TESTS us, not because He does not know us, but because we don't know ourselves, for we are prone to forget that our "heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick." (Jer 17:9-note) Such trials are important to our spiritual growth, for as someone once said, the gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials. As Spurgeon said Israel would not have had need for "wilderness WITHOUT if there had not been 'wilderness' WITHIN, nor would there have been a DROUGHT OF WATER for their mouths if the Lord had not seen a DROUGHT OF GRACE in their souls. We are fine birds till our feathers are ruffled and then what a poor figure we cut! We are very apt to talk more about our bitters than our sweets; and that is a serious fault. It were well if we have fewer murmuring words for our sorrows, and more songs of thanksgiving for our blessings (Ps 145:10-note)." Indeed, as Calvin said it is "in the darkness of our miseries, that the grace of God shines most brightly."

God allows tests to make us better, not bitter. He knows that we always learn more from our TRIALS than from our TRIUMPHS. And so He TESTS us to encourage our spiritual growth and bring out the best in us, while the devil TEMPTS us to bring out the worst in us and to encourage spiritual immaturity. Wiersbe adds that "The attitude that we take toward our difficulties determines which direction life will go, for what life does to us depends on what life finds in us. If we trust God and obey His Word, we'll pass the test and grow; but if in unbelief we complain and disobey the Lord, we'll fail the test and remain immature (Jas 1:12-note)." At Marah despite Israel's grumbling (failing the test, remaining immature), God in His great mercy (not giving them what they deserved) and grace (giving them what they did not deserve) quenched their thirst by "making bitter water sweet" even revealing Himself by a new Name, JEHOVAH RAPHA, the LORD our Healer (Ex 15:25-26-note). "Oh yes, there are many virtues and many blessings in the bitter waters of Marah! Often have we found it true that 'Sweet are the uses of adversity' for there are some of our graces which would never be discovered if it were not for our trials." (CHS)

EXODUS 17 (see commentary on Exodus 17): In Exodus 17, as Israel "camped at Rephidim (means "Rest"!), there (again) was NO WATER to drink" (v1-note) causing them to quarrel and grumble against Moses, prompting Moses to ask "Why do you TEST the Lord?" (v2-3-note) Instead of crying out TO God, they cried out AGAINST God! Do we ever cry out AGAINST rather than TO God? Spurgeon writes that their testing of God "was the proof of their imperfection: they were impatient and unbelieving. Haven't we too often fallen into the same sin? Brethren, let your conscience answer!" And remember that we TEST the Lord "when we openly and

unbelievably question His ability or defy His authority by what we say or do. We deliberately adopt a disobedient posture and dare God to do anything about it. We never solve our problems by blaming others (Israel blamed Moses and ultimately God). Israel's real problem was unbelief and a desire to go back to the old life (Ex 16:3-[note](#)). REMEMBER! Every OBSTACLE we meet is an OPPORTUNITY for TESTING ourselves and TRUSTING our Lord, for going FORWARD or going BACKWARD." (Wiersbe) I am convicted...Is that how I view the obstacles God allows in my life?

"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff ("the staff of God" Ex 17:9-[note](#)) with which you struck the Nile (Ex 7:20-21-[note](#)), and go. "Behold, I will stand before you (Note: God Himself stood on the Rock! ~ His glory cloud or Shekinah) there on the ROCK at Horeb (means "barren"); and you shall STRIKE THE ROCK, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." (vv 5-6-[note](#)) R C Sproul explains that "Moses lifts the ROD OF JUDGMENT (as evidenced by bringing death to fish in the waters of the Nile, Ex 7:20-21-[note](#), and Pharaoh's army drowning in the Red Sea, Ex 14:16, 21-28-[note](#)) and strikes the ROCK on which GOD STANDS and with which He is symbolically identified. God is not guilty, but He bears the judgment!"

In the NT, Paul explains that the SMITTEN ROCK was "a SPIRITUAL ROCK which followed Israel; and the ROCK WAS CHRIST." (1Cor 10:4-[note](#)) Fanny Crosby pictured this NT fulfillment of the OT picture of Messiah our Rock, writing "Though my weary steps may falter, And my soul a-thirst may be, Gushing from the ROCK before me, Lo! A Spring of joy I see." Amen!

Just as life giving waters flowed from the rock smitten by Moses to quench the thirst of a multitude, the smiting of the rock prefigured the life giving waters that flowed from Christ's pierced side (Jn 19:34-[note](#)), providing "LIVING WATER" to many, the Rock Himself declaring that "whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." (Jn 4:10, 14-[note](#)). All who drink of this water may joyfully sing "I've got a river of life flowin' out of me. Makes the lame to walk and the blind to see. Opens prison doors, sets the captives free. I've got a river of life flowin' out of me. Spring up Oh Well. Within my soul. Spring up Oh Well And make me whole. Spring up Oh Well And give to me That life abundantly." (P. Wickham) At the termination of the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus cried out saying "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of LIVING WATER.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, Whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (Jn 7:37-39-[note](#)) John MacArthur comments that "The impartation of the Holy Spirit is the Source of spiritual and eternal life," for as Jesus said "It is the Spirit Who gives life; the flesh profits nothing." (Jn 6:63-[note](#)).

Adrian Rogers writes that "Jesus, the Rock of ages, was smitten for us; and, because Jesus was smitten for us, out of His riven side, came forth water. And, that water represents the Holy Spirit, which is the water of life."

G Campbell Morgan adds the exhortation that "The Church must drink of that Rock-water, flowing clear as the Holy Spirit of Pentecost; for only thereby will she be able to cope with her spiritual foes. DRINK, ye thirsty souls, DRINK, yea, DRINK abundantly and deeply, for Amalek (a picture of our fallen flesh in Ex 17:8-[note](#)) will be upon you to-morrow; but he will have no power at all against those who have cleansed themselves in the healing streams of the blood and have learned to drink of the living water." Let it be so dear Lord. Amen.

And so when Christ our Rock was smitten on Calvary, living water was made freely available. All who are thirsty and drink from the Rock of our Salvation receive eternal life and "rivers of living water" which pictures the indwelling Holy Spirit and the supernatural life He enables. How fitting that Paul describes the Holy Spirit as the One Whom the Father "POURED OUT upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior." (Titus 3:6-note, cp Isa 44:3-[note](#), Joel 2:28-29-[note](#))

In sum we see that there could be no Pentecost without Calvary, no living, gushing waters without the smiting of our Rock Christ Jesus. And so in both the Old and the New Testament we see God's great and gracious invitation to drink from Christ the Smitten Rock. Isaiah writes "Ho! Every one who thirsts, come to the waters." (Isa 55:1-[note](#)) John closes with a similar invitation "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." (Revelation 22:17-[note](#))

Are you thirsty?

The words of Horatius Bonar's hymn beautifully testify of Christ our Smitten Rock and the Living Waters that flowed forth His pierced side on Calvary's Cross...

I HEARD THE VOICE OF JESUS SAY

"Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one

Stoop down and drink and live."
I came to Jesus and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

Here is Michael Card's Great Version of ["I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say"](#)