

Moses Striking the Rock

Dore Woodcut
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Exodus 17:1-7

See in depth commentary on Exodus 17

(Links go to Hebrew definitions)

1 "Then [all](#) the [congregation](#) of the [sons](#) of [Israel journeyed](#) by [stages](#) from the [wilderness](#) of [Sin](#), [according](#) to the [command](#) of the [LORD](#), and [camped](#) at [Rephidim](#), and [there](#) was [no water](#) for the [people](#) to [drink](#).

2 Therefore the [people quarreled](#) with [Moses](#) and [said](#), "[Give](#) us [water](#) that we may [drink](#)." And [Moses said](#) to them, "[Why](#) do you [quarrel](#) with me? [Why](#) do you [test](#) the [LORD](#)?"

3 But the [people thirsted there](#) for [water](#); and they [grumbled against Moses](#) and [said](#), "[Why](#), [now](#), have you [brought](#) us up from [Egypt](#), to [kill](#) us and our [children](#) and our [livestock](#) with [thirst](#)?"

4 So [Moses cried](#) out to the [LORD](#), [saying](#), "[What](#) shall I [do](#) to [this people](#)? A [little more](#) and they will [stone](#) me."

5 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](#) with [which](#) you [struck](#) the [Nile](#), and [go](#)."

6 "[Behold](#), I will [stand before](#) you [there](#) on the [rock](#) at [Horeb](#); 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](#).

7 He [named](#) * the [place Massah](#) and [Meribah because](#) of the [quarrel](#) of the [sons](#) of [Israel](#), and [because](#) they [tested](#) the [LORD](#), [saying](#), "Is the [LORD among](#) us, [or](#) not?" (Exodus 17:1-7)

DEVOTIONALS RELATED TO EXODUS 17:1-7

James Smith [THE SMITTEN ROCK. Exodus 17:1-7.](#)

Paul says, "That Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). So the type is clear. This was a rock in a wilderness, Christ is a rock in a weary land (Isaiah 32:2). A rock speaks of shelter, safety, durability, strength. A careful examination of this portion reveals—

I. A Condition of Desperate Need.

1. They Dwelt in a Barren Place. "There was no water" (v. 1). This world of itself can never supply the wants of a human soul. All its cisterns are broken. Separated from the Cross of Christ, our abode is in "waste places." The rebellious dwell in a dry land (Psalm 68:6).

2. Their Souls were Thirsty. "The people thirsted" (v. 3). When the thirst came the barrenness of the land was felt. When the Spirit of conviction and dearth takes possession of the soul, then the emptiness of the world's pleasure wells is realized. This water of satisfaction cannot be got by digging) such work is worthless. Blessed are they that thirst after righteousness.

II. An Unexpected Source of Supply. "There shall come out water" (v. 6).

1. It Came from a Rock. Worldly wisdom could not by searching find out this method. Men can more easily expect fire from a rock. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth" (John 1:46). My ways are not as your ways, says the Lord (Isaiah 55:8).

2. It Came from a God-possessed Rock. "I will stand upon the rock" (v. 6). Pause and think of this. How very suggestive of the great Incarnation. God was in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19). The rock in Horeb of itself could

do nothing, but God in the rock could do anything. The rock represents the human nature of the Lord Jesus, God on the rock, His divine power and Godhead. The source of our salvation is in God, the channel of communication is Jesus. He is "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

III. An Unlikely Means Used.

1. The Rock was to be Smitten. "You shall smite the rock" (v. 6). This thought never originated in the heart of man, that salvation could be brought forth by smiting the anointed of God. "But He was wounded for our transgressions, with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). The sword must awake against the man that was God's fellow. Oh, worship the Lord!

2. The Rock was to be Smitten with a Rod. "Your rod, with which you smote the river, take in your hand" (v. 5). This was the rod of judgment that turned the river into blood, and the sign of God's authority and power. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief" (Isaiah 53:10). Concerning the sufferings of Christ we may truly say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23).

IV. A Merciful Provision Made.

1. The Supply was Abundant. "The waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed" (Psalm 78:18-20). "They did all drink the same spiritual drink." When Christ, our Rock, was smitten, "forthwith came there out blood and water," emblems of a full salvation, atonement, and cleansing. "We have redemption through His blood," and cleansing through the washing of the Word. "Whoever will may come and take of the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

2. The Supply was Free. "He, every one that thirsts, come you" (Isaiah 55:1). It was "without money and without price." Thirst is the only condition, but it is indispensable to the enjoyment of the God-given waters of salvation. The apostle declares that the spiritual rock "followed them." The Salvation of God in Christ is not only perfect in its character, but continuous in its application. The power of His atoning blood still follows the generations of men. Let us thank God that this saving rock has followed us. It is following you—drink and live!

Exodus 17:1-3 Give 'Em A Brake -

Where highway construction is taking place, a sign frequently will be posted that reads, "Give 'Em a Brake." This has a double message: one is to slow down, and the other is to spare the workers from injuries caused by carelessness. Highway workers do their job under hazardous conditions and we need to give them a "brake."

The same sign could have been posted outside the tents of Aaron and Moses. Time after time the people of Israel rushed into judgment against their leaders until finally, here at Rephidim, they were ready to stone Moses to death (v. 4). Only God's intervention prevented a tragedy. Without question, these people needed to give Moses a break.

This sign would fit equally well in front of the homes of many pastors and other church leaders. A study by Leadership Journal and Christianity Today, Inc., found that 22.8 percent of pastors have been fired or forced to leave their churches at least once in their career, and one in four of these has experienced this more than once. Sixty-two percent of the discharged pastors said the church that let them go was a "repeat offender" and had fired at least one previous pastor. Isn't it time we gave a break to those called of God to lead His church?

Be very careful when tempted to be critical of your pastor or other church leaders. You may find yourself not only opposing them but God as well. Slow down before passing judgment, sincerely check your motives, and make sure there is a sound, biblical reason for your complaint and not simply a personality issue. More often than not, what you need to do is "give 'em a brake."

Pastors need your grace, not your gripes. Theodore Epp - Back to the Bible (Used with permission)

Today in the Word - He humbled you . . . to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. - Deuteronomy 8:3

TODAY IN THE WORD

The most recent version of Apple's iPhone supports software that can do much more than make and receive calls. One feature is its ability to recognize any song, sung either by the original artist or a cover band, and display the album cover on its screen. For instance, you might be walking through a store, and your iPhone can identify the songs playing on the store's speaker system.

We don't need an iPhone to recognize the refrain at the beginning of Exodus 17. It's the tune of "Woe is Me!" by the band called the Israelites. It sounds like a funeral dirge played in a minor key. In this variation, the Israelites were thirsty and convinced they were about to die.

As He's done from the very beginning of the book of Exodus, God deliberately seems to bring His people face to face with hardship. When He first commissioned Moses to lead the people out of Egypt and Moses made his plea before Pharaoh for the freedom of the Israelites, their slavery instantly worsened. When they were finally freed, God led them on an indirect route out of Egypt and even commanded them to turn back, inciting the Egyptians to chase them down. And now, as they journeyed through the wilderness, they set up camp (at God's command) at Rephidim, the most unlikely of sites. There was no water, and they were completely vulnerable to the enemy.

God wanted the Israelites to discover that they could depend on Him, not their own ingenuity or sufficiency. Without the thirst and hunger, without being attacked by enemies, they would never have learned that their daily bread came from God, and that God alone was their protection.

The staff, used by Moses to strike the rock at Horeb and used in battle against the Amalekites, was a symbol of the presence of God with His people. The answer to the question, "Is the Lord among us or not?" was a definitive "yes!"

TODAY ALONG THE WAY

God commanded Moses to record the events of their journey through the wilderness, in part because these stories would be sources of instruction and encouragement to us even today. Do you journal regularly? Sometimes, the act of writing and then rereading about our own personal journey can illuminate the patterns of how God is at work. If only the Israelites had seen the pattern of hardship on their journey and understood that it was never a time to despair but to expect God's deliverance!

A Bad Habit Exodus 17:7

Most people have a bad habit or two. Some habits are just irritating, such as talking too much or too fast. Others are much more serious.

Consider, for example, the bad habit developed by the people of ancient Israel. They had just been delivered from slavery (Exodus 14:30), and they ought to have been thankful. Instead, they started to complain to Moses and Aaron, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt!" (16:3).

We read in Exodus 17 that their complaining escalated into a quarrel. In reality, their complaint was with God, but they picked a fight with Moses because he was the leader. They said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" (v.3). The people even began questioning if God was really with them (v.7). Yet He always met their needs.

If we're honest, we would have to admit that we sometimes complain when God isn't coming through for us the way we want. We accuse Him of being absent or disinterested. But when our heart is concerned with God's purposes rather than our own, we will be patient and trust Him to provide all that we need. Then we won't develop the bad habit of complaining.

By Albert Lee

Those Christians who with thankful hearts
Praise God throughout the day
Won't tend to grumble and complain
When things don't go their way. —Branon

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Desert Pete Exodus 17:1-7

In the 1960s, the Kingston Trio released a song called "Desert Pete." The ballad tells of a thirsty cowboy who is crossing the desert and finds a hand pump. Next to it, Desert Pete has left a note urging the reader not to drink from the jar hidden there but to use its contents to prime the pump.

The cowboy resists the temptation to drink and uses the water as the note instructs. In reward for his obedience, he receives an abundance of cold, satisfying water. Had he not acted in faith, he would have had only a jar of unsatisfying, warm water to drink.

This reminds me of Israel's journey through the wilderness. When their thirst became overwhelming (Ex. 17:1-7), Moses sought the Lord. He was told to strike the rock of Horeb with his staff. Moses believed and obeyed, and water gushed from the stone.

Sadly, Israel would not consistently follow Moses' example of faith. Ultimately, "the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith" (Heb. 4:2).

Sometimes life can seem like an arid desert. But God can quench our spiritual thirst in the most unlikely circumstances. When by faith we believe the promises of God's Word, we can experience rivers of living water and grace for our daily needs.

By Dennis Fisher

Today's Reflection

Drink deep of God's goodness, His faithfulness too,
Leave no room for doubting and fear;
His Word is the water of life pure and true,
Refreshing and cooling and clear. —Hess

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Fellow Workers

We are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building. —1 Corinthians 3:9

Today's Scripture: Exodus 17:1-6

When it came time for Moses to strike the rock in the desert to get water for the thirsty Israelites, his part was very small—just strike the rock. Anyone in Israel could have done it. The main thing was what God was doing in the heart of the earth to provide a bountiful river of water.

But the two worked together: Moses before the people; God in the hidden depths of the earth. Moses and God were fellow workers.

There are always two agents in every fruitful work: willing workers and a faithful God. The human part is to do whatever God has asked us to do—strike the rock. God's work is to make the water flow.

Was Moses weighed down with anxiety that day as he approached the rock, thinking that he might fail? I doubt it. He had only to follow the Lord in obedience. God had promised to do the rest. And Moses had seen God work mighty miracles in the past.

Are you anxious about the task God has given you to do today? Do you believe that everything depends on you? Just strike the rock. God is working in secret to pour out rivers of water for every man, woman, and child. And when living waters begin to flow, praise Him.

Just do your part and He'll do His.

By David H. Roper

Today's Reflection

As a fellow worker with the Lord,
Do the work He's given you today;
You will find His blessings all outpoured—
He will do His part if you obey. —Hess

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Exodus 17:5-6 Water From the Rock -

The importance of water can never be underestimated. Sixty percent of a lean, adult body is composed of water. A person can fast from food for 40 days or longer, but the human body can go only for about 7 days without water even under ideal circumstances.

It's no wonder, then, that the Israelites were getting desperate. The wilderness was far from ideal. It was a hot, desert-like stretch of land dotted with huge rocks but little vegetation. Without water they would quickly perish. So God instructed Moses to strike a rock, and out of this flinty hardness flowed sufficient water to meet the needs of all the people and their livestock.

The Bible writers later saw this rock as a symbol of Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). In the midst of a sin-parched life, Christ offers a well of living water that never runs dry, no matter how often we drink from it.

Have you received Christ as your Savior? If not, trust Jesus today and you will never thirst again. If you want eternal water, come to Jesus who said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

Exodus 17:6 - F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

I will stand before thee upon the rock in Horeb, and thou shalt smite the rock.

Here is a beautiful example of the co-operation between God and his servants in providing for the needs of his people. Clearly the smiting of the rock was a very small item in this incident, the main consideration was what God was doing in the heart of the earth. But the two wrought together: Moses in the eyes of the people, God in hidden depths. Similarly we are fellow-workers with God.

One of the greatest revelations that can come to any Christian worker is the realization that in every act of Christian ministry there are two agents, God and man: that God does not need to be implored to help us, but wants us to help Him; that our part is the very unimportant and subsidiary one of smiting the rock, whilst his is the Divine and all important part of making the waters flow.

Did Moses go to the rock that day weighted with care, his brow furrowed with the anxiety of furnishing a river of which his people might drink? Certainly not; he had only to smite: God would do all the rest, and had pledged Himself to it. So, Christian worker, you have been worrying as though the whole weight of God's inheritance were upon you, but you are greatly mistaken; smiting is very easy work.

In every congregation and religious gathering the Holy Spirit is present, eager to glorify Christ, and to pour out rivers of living water for thirsty men; believe this. See that you are spiritually in a right condition, that He may be able to ally you with Himself. Keep reckoning on Him to do his share; and when the river is flowing, be sure not to take the praise.

"We are workers together with God."

Exodus 17:1-7 Life to All Who Drink

The water flowing from the rock indicates the provision for life. The psalmist said, "Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed" (Ps. 78:20).

The smitten rock pointed to the smitten Christ who paid the penalty of sin. The gushing streams of water picture the gracious supply of life through the Holy Spirit.

God smote His Son and raised Him from the dead, thereby sending forth the life-giving stream, but man must come and drink.

Although Jesus Christ has paid the penalty of sin for all (1 John 2:2), only those who personally receive Him as Saviour have forgiveness of sin and eternal life (John 1:12; 5:24).

When God provides, He provides abundantly. When God provided water for the Israelites, the psalmist said, "He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river" (Ps. 105:41).

Concerning the life that the Lord Jesus Christ provides, He said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

This coincides with the way Jesus compared the Spirit to the abundance of running water (John 4:14; 7:37,38). So the rock in the wilderness prefigured Jesus Christ.

"But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" ([John 4:14](#)). Theodore Epp - [Back to the Bible](#) (Used with permission)

Problems Within And Problems Without (Exodus 17:1-16) BY STEVEN J COLE

A standing joke among pastors is that the ministry would be great if it weren't for the people! But, of course, the ministry is people. Since all people are fallen sinners and even the saints are not perfectly sanctified, if you've got people, you've got problems. And since Satan is opposed to Christ's church, we can expect problems from within and problems from without.

In Exodus 17, Moses has to deal with problems from both fronts. Within the camp, the people quarreled with him because of no

water. Their anger was so severe that Moses was concerned that they might even stone him (v. 4)! As if the internal problems were not enough, Amalek came from without and fought against Israel. In other words, "Welcome to the ministry, Moses!" This chapter teaches us that ...

God's people and His leaders should drink from Christ to deal with problems from within and problems from without.

1. God's people and God's leaders should drink from Christ to deal with problems from within (Exod. 17:1-7).

The people's grumbling against Moses is similar to the incident in Numbers 20:1-13, but there are enough differences to conclude that they are not the same. In both incidents, the people grumbled about no water and the place was named Meribah ("quarrel"). In both places, God gave the people water from the rock through Moses' action. But, Exodus 17 occurs near the beginning of Israel's time in the wilderness; Numbers 20 occurs near the end of the forty years. In Exodus 17, the Lord commanded Moses to strike the rock with his staff and Moses obeyed. In Numbers 20 the Lord told Moses to speak to the rock, but in his anger with the people, he struck the rock. Because he disobeyed, the Lord prohibited Moses from leading Israel into the Promised Land.

There are four lessons here for God's people and His leaders:

A. God's people should be on guard against an evil, unbelieving heart that grumbles against God's dealings with them.

If the problem of grumbling sounds vaguely familiar, it's because we've already met it in Exodus 14, 15, and 16. These stories are repeated because we need to learn their lessons! As we've seen, grumbling is not a minor sin. In 1 Corinthians 10:10, Paul says that because of Israel's grumbling, some were destroyed by the destroyer. Then he warns (1 Cor. 10:11), "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come."

The first thing we need to recognize here is that the Lord directly led Israel to Rephidim ("resting place") where there was no water. Verse 1 states that they journeyed "according to the command of the Lord." They weren't lost! So you have to ask, "Why did God directly lead Israel to another place of no water?" The answer is: For the same reason He brings us into places of need: so that we will call upon Him in our weakness and He will be glorified when He delivers us. The Lord says (Ps. 50:15), "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me." So if you're in a place of trouble, before you do anything else, call upon the Lord. If you've been grumbling, confess that to the Lord and ask Him to be glorified through the trial that you're in.

This incident of Israel's grumbling at Massah ("test") and Meribah ("quarrel") is mentioned in Psalm 95:7-11:

Today, if you would hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
As in the day of Massah in the wilderness,
"When your fathers tested Me,
They tried Me, though they had seen My work.
"For forty years I loathed that generation,
And said they are a people who err in their heart,
And they do not know My ways.
"Therefore I swore in My anger,
Truly they shall not enter into My rest."

Hebrews 3:7-11 cites those verses and adds (Heb. 3:12), "Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God." Grumbling stems from "an evil, unbelieving heart." Unbelief tests or tries the Lord (Exod. 17:7; Ps. 95:9). In spite of His many mercies, when problems arise, unbelief challenges God by asking (Exod. 17:7), "Is the Lord among us, or not?" In other words, unbelief asks, "If God is really here and cares about me, how can He let this happen?" Unbelief doubts God's sovereignty, His power, His wisdom, and His love. It removes God from His rightful place as judge and puts Him on trial, while I judge Him, questioning His ways of dealing with me! It stems from the pride of thinking that I know better than God what would be best for me. Be on guard against grumbling against the Lord!

B. God's people should be on guard against grumbling against God's leaders.

Grumbling against the Lord often comes out as grumbling against spiritual leaders who are seeking to direct you to the place of God's blessing. Even though Moses was one of the greatest leaders in history, the grumblers accused him of bringing them and their children into the wilderness to kill them (v. 3)! Actually, in obedience to the Lord he was trying to lead them to a land flowing with milk and honey.

Even the greatest Christian leaders do not share Moses' intimacy with God or his leadership gifts. But even so, Hebrews 13:17 exhorts the church, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you." Paul commanded Titus (2:15), "These

things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.” He instructed Timothy (1 Tim. 5:17), “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” “Double honor” refers both to respect and financial support (see v. 18) for those who preach the Word. But you can’t be in submission to a leader or honor him while at the same time you’re grumbling about him to others. Often, if people don’t like God’s message, they express it by attacking His messenger.

This does not mean that you can’t voice concerns about a church leader or a church problem. Paul goes on to tell Timothy how to deal with a sinning elder (1 Tim. 5:19-20): “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses. Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.”

If your complaint is something other than a sin issue, then after praying about it and checking your attitude, go directly to the leader and share your concerns. If he doesn’t listen and it’s an important enough matter, take two or three with you and try again. But don’t go in anger just to vent. Don’t question the leader’s motives, as Israel here accused Moses of trying to kill them (Exod. 17:3). Your aim should be to glorify God by helping the leader and the church. But be careful, because as Moses pointed out (v. 2), by quarreling with him, the Israelites were really testing the Lord.

C. God’s leaders should take every problem from within to the Lord and rely on His sufficiency to deal with it.

Moses instantly recognized his own inadequacy to provide water in the desert for two million people, so he cried out to the Lord (v. 4). Even if our problem is not that big, we should immediately recognize with Paul (2 Cor. 3:5), “Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God.” As F. B. Meyer observed (Moses [Christian Literature Crusade], p. 103), “And when we have reached the end of self, we have got to the beginning of God.”

Moses’ staff (v. 5) was the symbol of God’s power. It was the same staff with which he had struck the Nile and divided the Red Sea. He will use it again to help the Israelite army prevail against Amalek (v. 9). It showed both the elders and the people that the power was not in Moses, but came from the Lord. Moses was just the man whom God used.

God instructed Moses not to go it alone, but to take with him some of the elders of Israel (v. 5). We’re not told whether the elders were trusting God along with Moses or griping along with the people, but the text emphasizes twice that Moses did this miracle with the elders (vv. 5, 6). God’s purpose may have been to teach the elders to trust in His sufficiency, to teach the people that Moses was not acting by himself, and to protect Moses from being killed.

The New Testament teaches that the local church is to be governed by a plurality of elders, also called pastors or overseers (Acts 14:23; 15:2; 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). It should never be a one-man show. When there is a problem, the elders should come together in prayer, seeking God’s wisdom through His Word, and then act together for the good of the church. It should be evident that they are relying on the Lord’s sufficiency, not on human methods or schemes.

D. God’s gracious provision to deal with His people’s problems is to give them Christ, who is water from the rock.

God’s provision of water from the rock demonstrates His grace toward His grumbling people. In Exodus 16:3-4, when the people complained about no food in the wilderness, without rebuke God graciously promised to rain bread from heaven on them. Here, again without rebuke, He instructs Moses to strike the rock so that water would come out to satisfy the people’s thirst. His grace was rebuke enough for their grumbling. When the Lord told Moses (v. 6) that He would stand before him on the rock, we don’t know whether the entire congregation saw a visible manifestation of the Lord or not, but if they did, it was a further rebuke of their challenge (v. 7), “Is the Lord among us, or not?” But either way, the water suddenly gushing from a rock in that barren desert was gracious proof that the Lord was in fact among them.

In 1 Corinthians 10:4, Paul makes a surprising comment on this incident: “and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.” He means that the rock that supplied the living water for Israel was a type of Christ, who provides living water for all who thirst and ask Him for it (John 4:10-14). When he says that the rock followed them, I think Paul was using a manner of speaking to say that Christ went with Israel through the desert and that at His word, any rock became a fountain of water to satisfy their thirst. Just as the manna was spiritual in that it came from God and taught a spiritual lesson, so the rock was spiritual in that at God’s word, it brought forth abundant water and also showed the sustenance and refreshment that we find in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But the rock did not bring forth water until Moses struck it in obedience to God’s command. In the same way, Christ provided the living water of salvation only by being struck down for us at the Father’s command. Isaiah 53:4-6 wonderfully prophesied of Jesus:

Surely our griefs He Himself bore,
And our sorrows He carried;
Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken,

Smitten of God, and afflicted.
But He was pierced through for our transgressions,
He was crushed for our iniquities;
The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him,
And by His scourging we are healed.
All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all
To fall on Him.

At the very end of the Bible is this wonderful invitation (Rev. 22:17), "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." Are you spiritually thirsty? Three times the Spirit and the bride (the church) invite you to come to Jesus, the water of life. And, it applies also to the church and her leaders who are dealing with problems in the church: Come and drink more deeply from Jesus, our Rock who provides abundant living water for thirsty souls!

Thus, God's people and God's leaders should drink from Christ to deal with problems from within (Exod. 17:1-7).

2. God's people and God's leaders should drink from Christ to deal with problems from without (Exod. 17:8-16).

It was only after God supplied Israel's need for water from the rock that they then had to face their first enemy from without, a desert tribe called Amalek. Until now, God has done everything for Israel: He struck the Egyptians with the ten plagues; He divided the Red Sea; He destroyed Pharaoh's army in the sea. He graciously has provided both water and food in the barren desert. All of this pictures our salvation, in which God does it all. We receive salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, apart from works, so that no one may boast (Eph. 2:8-9).

But now, having received God's salvation, Israel faces an external enemy and they have to take up the sword and fight. This pictures our sanctification, where we must fight the enemy through the power of the Holy Spirit. As Paul stated (Phil. 2:12-13), "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." In other words, we are passive in our salvation, which comes from God's sovereign grace alone; but we must be active in our sanctification, relying on the Lord as we use the means He has provided. There are lessons here both for God's people and for His leaders:

A. God's people and His leaders must fight the world, the flesh, and the devil, which seek to destroy them.

Amalek was a grandson of Esau through a concubine of his son Eliphaz (Gen. 36:12). Esau was a worldly man who despised his birthright for a bowl of stew. He succeeded in the world, but he didn't know the God of his fathers. Centuries after Moses, God commanded Israel's first king, Saul, to destroy Amalek because of this attack on Israel in the wilderness (1 Sam. 15:2-3). But Saul compromised, sparing Agag, the Amalekite king, and some of the best sheep and oxen. Because of Saul's disobedience, God removed him as king and replaced him with David.

Later, some Amalekites raided Ziklag, taking captive the families of David and his men (1 Sam. 30). He was able by God's direction to slaughter many of them and recover their families and belongings. But the Amalekites plagued Israel even into Hezekiah's time, three centuries after David. And three centuries after that, Haman, a descendant of the Amalekite King Agag, attempted to annihilate the Jews in Esther's time. So they were perpetual enemies of Israel (Jud. 6:33; Ps. 83:4, 7).

Several devotional writers say that Amalek represents the flesh that believers must constantly battle. They may be right, but since the flesh is an enemy from within and Amalek was an enemy from without, I think that Amalek represents our broader threefold enemy: the world, the flesh, and the devil. We're engaged in perpetual spiritual warfare against these enemies of our souls. If you compromise with such aggressive enemies, they will eventually dominate your life and destroy you. First, Israel had to drink from the rock, which is Christ. But then, they had to take up their swords and actively fight this enemy. The point is, the Christian life is not an easy stroll in the park; it's a daily battle against powerful forces of evil that threaten to destroy us. How do we fight the battle?

B. God's leaders and God's people fight by prayer, by using means in the battle, and by remembering God's perpetual opposition to the enemy.

1) GOD'S LEADERS AND GOD'S PEOPLE FIGHT BY PRAYER.

Some object to the interpretation of Moses' uplifted hand holding his staff as prayer, since the text does not say that he was praying. True, but his staff represented God's authority and strength. By holding it up, Moses was clearly appealing to God for His help in the battle. When he held it up, Israel prevailed. When he let it down, Amalek prevailed. So it seems to be a picture of prevailing prayer

that lays hold of God's strength.

This interpretation may be supported by a difficult phrase in verse 16. The NASB translates, "The Lord has sworn," but the literal translation is, "a hand upon the throne of the Lord." The difficulty is, "Whose hand is upon the throne?" If it is the Lord's hand, then He is raising His hand to swear perpetual battle against His enemy, represented by Amalek. It could refer to Amalek's hand against the Lord's throne. But more likely, it is Moses' hand, which pictures his hand lifted to God's throne in prayer (see Philip Ryken, Exodus [Crossway], p. 461.) This view fits with Ephesians 6, where after describing our need to put on the full armor of God to do battle against the spiritual forces of darkness, Paul adds (Eph. 6:18), "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints." We prevail against the world, the flesh, and the devil through prayer that lays hold of God's riches in Christ.

2) GOD'S LEADERS AND GOD'S PEOPLE FIGHT BY USING MEANS IN THE BATTLE.

Moses prayed, but Joshua had to choose men and go out and fight with their swords against this enemy. This is the first mention of Moses' successor, Joshua, in the Bible. Under his leadership, Israel would conquer the Canaanites. In the same way, we must pray, but also we must use the means that God has given us for spiritual victory (Eph. 6:14-17): girding our loins with truth; putting on the breastplate of righteousness; having shod our feet with the gospel of peace; taking up the shield of faith; taking the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. There are other means, also, such as worship and fellowship with others in the body of Christ. The point is, you can't win most battles against our spiritual enemy by prayer alone; also, you must fight, using the means that God has provided.

3) GOD'S LEADERS AND GOD'S PEOPLE FIGHT BY REMEMBERING GOD'S PERPETUAL OPPOSITION TO THE ENEMY.

God directed Moses to write in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua that He would utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Then Moses built an altar and named it, "The Lord is My Banner." It was to remind Israel, "The Lord will have war against Amalek from generation to generation." And it was to remind them of how He provided victory in this first battle. A banner is a military insignia raised on a pole during the battle. As long as it's still flying, the soldiers know that the battle is not lost (Ryken, p. 466). The Lord Himself was Israel's banner.

Jesus Christ and His cross are our banner. He was lifted up to die for our sins. He was raised up in victory over the enemy of our souls (John 12:31; Col. 2:15). When we fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil, we can look to Christ crucified and know that we can conquer in His mighty name.

Conclusion

Someone has said, "The only person with all his problems behind him is probably a school bus driver." If a church has people, it will have problems. But whatever the problems, whether from within or without, we also have Christ, the living water, always available to us in this wilderness. He promised the sinful woman at the well (John 4:14), "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." Make sure that you stay hydrated! Drink often from Jesus, the living water!

Application Questions

- How can you address a legitimate problem in the church without falling into the sin of grumbling?
- When do a leader's imperfections call for correction rather than just letting them slide?
- What sorts of problems come from the world? The flesh? The devil? Do we need to determine the source to fight these problems?
- Discuss with a friend: In salvation, we are passive, but in sanctification, we must be active. Use biblical support.

Related Resources:

- [Why was Moses not allowed to enter the Promised Land?](#) - Gotquestions
- [Problems Within And Problems Without \(Exodus 17:1-16\)](#) - Seven Cole
- [The Grumbling of Men and the Grace of God \(Exodus 17:1-7](#) - Bob Deffinbaugh
- [Exodus 17:1-7 The Waters of Quarreling](#) - J Ligon Duncan
- [Exodus 17:8-16 Commentary](#) verse by verse
- [Youtube story - Moses Strikes the Rock](#)