

Exodus 17

Exodus 17:1-3

*Then all the congregation of the children of Israel set out on their journey from the Wilderness of Sin, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped in Rephidim; **but there was no water for the people to drink.** Therefore the people **contended** with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink." So Moses said to them, "Why do you **contend** with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?" And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"*

Rephidim means resting place and is one of the stops Israel made on the way to Sinai where the law was given. They will face two very unexpected events at their rest stop. First they will run out of water and second they will be attacked by a hidden enemy.

"There was no water for the people to drink."

They had faced a similar problem before. Last time there was plenty of water but it was contaminated and undrinkable. God miraculously healed the water with a tree. This time water be supernaturally provided by striking a Rock.

The details:

The cloud began to move and Israel broke camp en route to Sinai. Because of the number of people they would be dependent upon regular stops for hydration. They made their way towards a place called Rephidim or the resting place, hoping their needs would be met. Upon arriving they found that there was no water and began immediately to contend with Moses.

Exodus 17:2

*Therefore the people **contended** with Moses, and said, "Give us water, that we may drink." So Moses said to them, "Why do you contend with me? Why do you tempt the Lord?"*

Contend - to toss or grapple. They were ready to fight and even brave enough to confront the one whose rod had parted the Red Sea. (17:4 - they want to stone me)

The situation they faced was designed by God to incite their emotions. God led them to Rephidim knowing

there would be no water. He is seeking to stir something up in them and perhaps even to stir them to contention. The problem is not that their emotions are stirred the problem is they spend their energies on the wrong efforts or choose to fight the wrong battle.

It is very common for our situations to excite our emotions. Sadly, like Israel we often respond by complaining about God and looking for others to meet our needs. There is an important lesson here for us.

James 5:16

*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The **effective, fervent** prayer of a righteous man avails much.*

Effective - energo - power working.

We often release the energy that is designed to fuel prayer by spending it on all the wrong things

They complained, we call it venting

Proverbs 29:11

*A fool vents all his feelings,
But a wise man holds them back.*

Sometimes we spend our energies seeking the aid of others

Psalms 118:8

*It is better to trust in the Lord
Than to put confidence in man.*

Psalms 146:3

*Do not put your trust in princes,
Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no
help.*

Proverbs 11:28

*He who trusts in his riches will fall,
But the righteous will flourish like foliage.*

Even the Assyrians counseled Israel as to the folly of trusting in man

2 Kings 18:21

Now look! You are trusting in the staff of this broken reed, Egypt, on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who trust in him.

Our difficulties should create in us a drive to fight, but we need to fight in the arena of prayer not to complain or seek people to meet the need that only God can

Difficulties are the fuel that should drive us to pray!

Does prayer work?

Moses hears from God and is given an improbable solution to an impossible problem.

Exodus 17:4

So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!" *And the Lord said to Moses, "Go on before the people, and take with you some of the elders of Israel. Also take in your hand **your rod** with which you struck the river, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock in 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.*

The materials needed to provide water for 2 million people and their flocks in the midst of the desert were:

- A stick - that which Moses already had
- A rock - of which there was no shortage in the wilderness

Elsewhere we read of the effectiveness of God's method

Psalms 78:15-16 - referring to the "marvelous things" God did for Israel in the wilderness

*He split the rocks in the wilderness,
And gave them drink in **abundance** like the depths.
He also brought **streams** out of the rock,
And caused **waters to run down like rivers**.*

Psalms 78:20

*Behold, He struck the rock,
So that the waters **gushed** out,*

*And the **streams overflowed**.
Can He give bread also?
Can He provide meat for His people?"*

Psalms 105:41
*He opened the rock, and **water gushed** out;
It ran in the dry places **like a river**.*

Psalms 114:8
*Who turned the rock into a **pool of water**,
The flint into **a fountain of waters**.*

There is great benefit in taking a look at this whole psalm as it poetically portrays the work God did for Israel in the wild

What's in a name

Exodus 17:7
*So he called the name of the place **Massah and Meribah**, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"*

Massah - tempted
Meribah - contention

Of all the possible names Moses could have chosen he decides to reflect upon the failing of the people instead of the miraculous provision of God.

Another Rock with a different solution

38 years later Israel will once again be in the wilderness and short of water. Having not learned from those who went before them, they will contend with Moses and threaten his life. Moses will once again seek the Lord on behalf of the people and be instructed to speak to the rock and water will be provided. Perhaps driven by the recent loss of his sister, perhaps never having gotten over the incident recorded in Exodus 17, instead of speaking to the rock, Moses screamed at the people and struck the rock. Water was provided but Moses was chastened by the Lord and restricted from entering into Canaan.

While we cannot be certain of Moses' motivation this passage does at least imply the danger of bitterness. Harbor in

unforgiveness toward others will lead to sin against the Lord and personal suffering

The significance of the story

Obviously this is a clear lesson of the provision of God. This is a reoccurring theme in Exodus. No matter what obstacle they face, God will provide for His people. This was seen in Passover, Red Sea, Mara, Manna and again here. It is the same lesson Jesus taught His disciples over and over again. They fed 5,000 with 5 loaves and two fish, 4,000 with similar provision, they found money in fish and were sent out with nothing more than a nap sack

But there is another lesson here. One that Paul wants to be certain we see

1 Corinthians 10:4

and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

Christ is the Rock from whom flows rivers of living water

John 4:13-14

Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but 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."

As water was poured out at the temple during the feast of Tabernacles Jesus lifted His voice and declared:

John 7:37-39

*On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and **cried** out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him **come** to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

This is not just a promise but an invitation. Christ with a bellowing voice that rose above the crowds called for all to come and receive Him

If water was to come from the rock it would need to be struck, just as if living water is to be provided Christ He must be crucified.

Paul explained that the message of salvation would seem foolish to those who did not believe. They may wonder how faith in a man who lived 2,000 years ago can impact your life today or provide what is lacking to face eternity. It is important to note that the methods of God are always counterintuitive. As he provided water gushing from a rock He will provide torrents of living water to flow from the life of all who believe in Him

Later Moses was rebuked for striking the rock a second time. Jesus was crucified once for all. There is no need for further sacrifice for sin. He paid it all!

All that we need to do if we desire living water or a fresh work of the spirit of God in us is to ask.

Exodus 17:8

Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim.

A second event is recorded at Rephidim, remember this means rest. First they had no water, now they are attacked by an enemy. Neither of these seem worthy of the name - rest

Who were the Amalekites?

Amalek was the grandson of Esau

Genesis 36:10-12

These were the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, and Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau. And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.

Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These were the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.

38 years after this event, Moses commented again on Amalek

Attacked the weak and weary in the rear

Deuteronomy 25:17-19

*“Remember what **Amalek** did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and **attacked** your rear ranks, all the **stragglers** at your rear, when you were **tired and weary**; and he did not fear God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from your enemies all around, in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance, that you will blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. You shall not forget.*

Amalek continued to be a problem for Israel

- Eglon will combine forces with Amalek and defeat Israel making them their slaves

Judges 3:13-14

Then he gathered to himself the people of Ammon and Amalek, went and defeated Israel, and took possession of the City of Palms. So the children of Israel served Eglon king of Moab eighteen years.

- Deborah sung about the problem of Amalek

Judges 5:14

From Ephraim were those whose roots were in Amalek.
After you, Benjamin, with your peoples,
From Machir rulers came down,
And from Zebulun those who bear the recruiter's staff.

- Gideon was oppressed by Amalek

Judges 6:3

So it was, whenever Israel had sown, Midianites would come up; also Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them.

- Saul was sent to utterly defeat Amalek, but he failed to obey

1sam 15

This ultimately cost him his life as he was killed by an Amalekite

2 Samuel 1:8-10

And he said to me, 'Who are you?' So I answered him, 'I am an **Amalekite**.' He said to me again, 'Please stand over me and kill me, for anguish has come upon me, but my life still remains in me.' So I stood over him and killed him, because I was sure that he could not live after he had fallen. And I took the crown that was on his head and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them here to my lord."

- David fought them

1 Samuel 30:1

Now it happened, when David and his men came to Ziklag, on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the South and Ziklag, attacked Ziklag and burned it with fire,

Here we find Amalek attacking Israel unprovoked. It may be they want to take back what Israel had received from Egypt. They attacked the weak, the weary and the stragglers, but all the camp was in danger

The Solution:

Exodus 17:9-10

And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

This is the first Biblical reference to **Joshua**. Before we know anything else about him we learn he was a leader and a soldier. He led the men of Israel in defensive battle against the Amalekites.

The source of strength for this battle will not be the gifted leadership ability of Joshua or the strength of Israel's fighting force. The victory will be won because of the intercession of Moses, Aaron and Hur

Exodus 17:11-13

And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

What a beautiful picture of how victory is wrought in. The kingdom of God

One man prays, another man supports and others engage in the battle

Exodus 17:14-16

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner; for he said, "Because the Lord has sworn: the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."

Because of the actions of Amalek they serve as a picture of the work of the flesh.

- Amalek attacked unprovoked
- Amalek will continue to attack throughout Israel's history
- Amalek attacked the stragglers
- Amalek attacked the weary
- Amalek attacked when Israel could have been enjoying rest

Israel responded to the attack with 3 primary weapons

1. **Prayer** - the main message of the text

2. **The sword**, prayer alone will not win us victory. Prayer was never meant to work alone. Prayer has power when it is coupled with the word

3. **Fellowship** - Joshua did not battle alone and Moses did not pray alone

The Bible explains the battle we have with the flesh

- Wars against spirit
- Is unquenchable desire
- Cannot be reasoned with
- If we feed it we will be defeated by it
- Must be crucified
- The weapons against it are the same as they were for Israel; prayer, word, fellowship and fighting

God's solution is to **eradicate** it not to reform it. If we want to win the battle with the lusts of the flesh we must put it to death not resurrect its desires

Exodus 17:14

*Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will **utterly blot out** the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."*

Galatians 2:20

*I have been **crucified** with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Galatians 5:24

***24** And those who are Christ's have **crucified** the flesh with its passions and desires.*

Paul also gives instruction regarding how to be victorious in the battle against the flesh

Galatians 5:16

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Rather than expending all our energies in defense against the flesh we should spend them on walking in the Spirit or listening to the Lord and doing what He says. He wants you to succeed and will speak to you and guide you so you don't end up defeated by your flesh.

The chapter ends with an altar and a banner. Israel was to march unreserved the banner of the Lord. Their colors were YHWY and they must learn to battle for what matters to Him in the way he fights

