

"Trials at Rephidim"

Exodus 17

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by C.W. Powell

Please have your Bibles open to Exodus 17.

I. "1 And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. 2 Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?"

A. There is a good thing here: "They journeyed at the commandment of the Lord."

1. How could it be bad for them if they followed the Lord? It shows how hard their hearts were.

2. If you are in a hard spot:

a) You are either there because of disobedience or obedience. If disobedience, then you must repent and find the way of obedience.

b) If by obedience, then the trial is from God and you are to bear it patiently.

c) Either way, you must not blame God. Their murmuring showed their unbelief either way; murmuring is always sinful and wicked and it means that you either are not taking responsibility for your own disobedience, or you are complaining about the way God has led you—frightful sins either way.

B. There were two things sinful in Israel:

1. Their murmuring. You will hear me make this application over and over as we go through this history in Israel, for this was one of their most blatant and wicked sins. 1Cor. 10:6-12:

"6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit

fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” (1Co 10:6-12)

a. It is a great sin to murmur against God, as if you are wiser than God.

b. It is a great sin to murmur against the servants of God, as if you are wiser than God.

c. Murmuring is implicitly a condemnation of self: you are either refusing to take responsibility for your actions, or you are admitting that you are not walking in faith in the providence of God.

d. In this passage Murmuring is included with the sins of Lusting after evil things; Idolatry, Fornication, and tempting Christ. When you find murmuring and complaining you will also find all their other sins, for the bitter heart reveals itself.

2. Their tempting of God. This means putting God to the test. How many times does God have to reassure these hard-hearted people that He loves them and takes care of them. It is a wicked and adulterous generation that seeks after a sign. The people of God, who have the spirit, are satisfied with the bare promise of God. God sent the manna every morning, except on the Sabbath; how much reassurance did they need?

3. Christ died for you? How much reassurance do you need that God is your friend, that He loves you, and that He will take care of you and bring you safe to glory?

4. Jesus: Matt. 4:1-4

“5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, 6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” (Mt 4:5-7)

a) Prove it, God. “If you be the Son of God”

b) The eternal word of God didn’t need angels to verify the favor of God.</DL

II. And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? 4 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. 5 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. 6 Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. 7 And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

A. Moses was in some fear for his life; this shows that true prayer is often mixed with unworthy things. But God had mercy upon Moses and upon the people of God.

B. The unworthy and vicious attack upon Moses: as if he intended evil to Israel. This is the mark of unworthy minds—they attribute the most evil things against the ministers of Christ. What a vicious slander this was.

C. Go on, Moses: trust me, and go out, even if it appears that you are putting yourself in jeopardy.

1. Only the elders beheld the miracle: God would humble the people; they were unworthy to behold the glory of God.

2. Moses is reminded of the power of God in the use of the rod before.

3. A certain picture of Christ, as Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 10:

“1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” (1Co 10:1-5)

4. This means, then, that Israel is a figure of the church. Not absolute identity, but the relationship of type to antitype. As David is a figure of

Christ; and Aaron a figure of Christ. But the type is not identical with the antitype. David is not Christ; and Aaron is not Christ, but both pass away when the reality or antitype appears. This rock is a figure of Christ, but not Christ Himself.

5. Christ was smitten once to provide the water of life for the church. This is a powerful figure.

6. Moses gave the name of contention and tempting, to remind Israel forever of these terrible sins. Tempting God always leads to contention and strife. It is true that Israel did not realize that their murmuring was tempting God, but Moses discerned the true nature of their belly-aching, which was caused by their desires not being immediately gratified. "Moses and Aaron, you have not lived up to our expectations; hence, you are unworthy of our support. In fact, it may be necessary for you to be stoned."

7. We come to church and expect to be made to feel good. You don't do that, preacher. You preach too much about sin, especially when you do exposition, for there is so much in the Bible about that, but it makes us feel uncomfortable. We want to be encouraged.

III. 8 Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. 9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. 10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. 11 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

A. Amalek was the grandson of Esau, and the enmity between Jacob and Esau was of long history and continues to this day.

B. God brought Israel to war, maybe to cure their murmuring; people at war have no time to sit around and gripe.

C. There was to be continual war with Amalek for God would never make peace with Amalek.

D. God would show Israel, that God had not abandoned Moses because of their wicked murmuring, but made their very success depended upon the man that they had so recently despised and threatened. God will always vindicates His ministers and bring spiritual woes upon those who despise them.

1. Moses' arms were tired. Do you think you could hold your hands up all day to ensure the success of the war?

2. See the humility of Aaron and Hur. They were content to hold up the hands of Moses. They knew whom God had chosen. Their job was to hold up the hands of Moses, on this day. Maybe God was anticipating the coming rebellion and murmuring of Aaron and Miriam, and even now humbling Aaron in preparation.

3. You may not be able to ensure the success of the armies of the Lord; but you can hold up the arms of those whom God is blessing in the warfare. In effect, it was the arms of Aaron and Hur that ensured the victory, for God did not give Moses the extraordinary strength, but supplied the strength through the ordinary strength of Aaron and Hur.

4. Ministers are extraordinarily weak and frail, and nobody knows this better than a faithful minister of the Gospel. He, above all, knows the importance of the Aaron's and Hur's, for he knows that he cannot prevail by his own strength.

5. So, Aaron and Hur not only supplied strength for the arms of Moses, but also supplied strength for the armies of Israel. Wow! Think of that!! What extraordinary results came from the humility and service of these two men of God: Aaron and Hur. God bless them. They upheld the hands of Moses, who invoked by prayer the power of God symbolized by the rod of God, who supplied Israel power to win the battle. No doubt Aaron and Hur joined their minds and hearts with the prayers of Moses.

IV. 13 And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. 14 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.

A. There would never be peace with Amalek. God had utterly forsaken them. "Esau have I hated," is the word of the Lord.

B. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

V. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: 16 For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Ex 17:1-16)

A. The enemies of God were weak because the arms of the Lord are strong, symbolized by the rod of God in the hands of Moses.

B. We are to remember the great deeds of the Lord; God would memorialize this event as instructive to us, to whom the ends of the world are come. He is the same today against our enemies of sin, unbelief, despair as He was against Amalek. Exodus includes the account of Moses and we have just read the memorial that he wrote.

C. History is very important for the people of God, as God witnesses here. Christianity is the mother of history and the great histories are those of Christians.

D. The altar was built, not to be an idol, but to be a reminder that they had prevailed by the power of God. The war was God's war, not the war of Israel. "The Lord is my Banner" Jehovah is a man of war, as Moses sang, and Israel must remember that it is always in the power of God that good things come to them, including victory over their enemies.

Amen and Amen
God bless you.