

CHRIST, THE SOLID ROCK!

(Scripture: Exodus 17:1-7)

Introduction: This chapter is one of my favorite portions of the Bible. Bible says, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God! In this chapter, there are two great stories. If you hear it properly, you will really understand what faith is. They are just short stories but it teaches us so much about faith. Let us hear these words properly so that we will not make the same mistake!

Exodus 17:1, 2.

1Then 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. 2Therefore 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?"

Must have been a long journey from Elim to Wilderness of Sin, and now to Rephidim. The Israelites journeyed by stages. Our life is also filled with stages. We move from middle school to high school, from high school to college, from college to career job, from career job, to marriage and family! Some stages may be very tough, but yet move forward with the presence of God! Every stage has its own trials and tribulations.

All the water supply they had from Elim must have been over. People were very thirsty and exhausted. When we are too tired, that is when we will start getting angry and upset. They went and asked Moses, instead of asking the Lord. Moses asked them point blank, why do you quarrel with me? In other word, what can I do? Am I God to provide you? Go ask Him. But he didn't say that way. He instead warned them that they are testing the Lord by demonstrating lack of faith. God has brought us this far. Will He not save us now? Even if He does not save us, why cannot we accept that death as God's will? Is it not death also part of God's plan in our lives? Did He not call them out? Did He not lead them through mighty miracles? Are we not in the will of God when we follow Him? So if we die according to His will, why complain and quarrel? We sing "Have thine own way Lord," but we don't want His will!

Exodus 17:3, 4.

3But 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?" 4So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me."

Now the Israelites were very hostile toward Moses! Just put yourself in Moses' shoes! Arrogant fellows coming close to Moses and screaming at his face, wagging fingers at him. People crying everywhere and using all kinds of foul language toward Moses. Women spitting everywhere when they see Moses! They were so angry, and now they were ready to throw stones at him! Moses came running to the Lord. He could have done this much earlier. He asked the Lord, what shall I do now? They are ready to stone me?

Exodus 17:5-7.

5Then 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. 7He 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?"

Lord told Moses to take some elders with him, and take his staff also. The staff became more like the finger of God for Moses. God said that He will be at the meeting place before Moses could get here! God will be at our meeting place on Sundays before we come here. Let us also hurry and come to church because He has always something important to say! We come to church to meet God and His Son Jesus Christ through His Holy Spirit!

God said, He will be at Horeb, which must be only few miles from Rephidim. Horeb and Mt Sinai seems to be one and the same.

God told Moses, you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.”

We must pay attention to God’s Word. When He says strike the rock, we must strike! Later on we will see Moses’ attitude toward God, and his disobedience concerning this matter. In that incident, God told Moses to speak to the rock, but Moses went and hit the rock out of excessive anger. We can see this disobedience in our modern churches also! God says, believe first, and then be baptized. But some of us say, we will baptize first, and then believe! We must pay attention to specific detail of God’s Word.

Here God gives a promise. You shall strike the rock, and water will come out. We need to hear God’s promise, and act on it. Jesus says, if you believe in me, as the Scripture says, out of the belly shall flow the rivers of living water! Many of us we do not believe in Jesus as we should. If we do, we will have this tremendous experience of the Holy Spirit, and out of the belly will flow abundant love, joy, peace will flow! Our negative, unforgiving angry spirit will turn into positive, energetic spirit, which will proclaim boldly that we can do all things through Christ. We will walk with confidence. The reason we are not getting it because we don’t believe in Jesus’ words as we should!

Moses did exactly what God told him to do before the elders. God deliberately made these elders see this miracle because they were supposed to stand together with Moses when crisis comes. But they did not do that. They turned against Moses as though it was all Moses’ fault. They had yet to see the bigger picture. It was God who called them out of Egypt. It was God who made them come out of Egypt. It was God who chose to march them through dessert, and not Moses. It was God who provided Manna, and not Moses! They had no excuse. They could not say, we don’t see the leading of God. The pillar of cloud, and pillar of fire were right in front of them leading! God was the one leading, and not Moses. They were actually quarreling with a God, and not with Moses. The elders needed to understand that.

The miracle happened as God promised. Water gushed out of the rock! Just imagine, if God can bring water out of hard rock, why can’t He bring more water from existing wells? If we pray in faith, He will provide abundant water. He has given enough water all these years. Will He not help us in future? This goes with our financial need, our career need, our health need. He has lead us so far. Will He not in future? What makes us think that this present situation is different? Trust in Him all times.

Moses gave two names for that place; Massah, a place of trial, and Meribah, a place of strife or contention! Because they questioned if the Lord was present among them or not. The pillar of fire was right there in front of their eyes. Still they wondered if God is present! We make the same mistake. When we face hardship and trial, we start wondering if God is present or not. Is He sleeping? Has He taken vacation? Does He care at all? Is He deaf that He cannot hear us anymore? Let us not do that. Keep quiet and drink the cup of suffering. Strengthen your faith in those times keeping your eyes on the promises of God. Just be still and wait on the Lord. Never contend with God without hope, without faith, without love for Him!

Now let us move to the second story, which actually supports my teaching about faith!

Exodus 17:8-10.

8Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim.

9So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand."

10Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

Who are these Amalekites? They are actually Esau's son's concubine's children. They were basically illegitimate generation of Esau. They were probably threatened by Israelites presence. They started the war against vulnerable people for no reason. Instead of bringing water, they brought sharp swords to kill them. Probably they wanted to confiscate the water falls that came from the rock?

Moses told Joshua to gather all Israelites for war against Amalekites. This was the first war for Israelites. There must have been lot of fear in their hearts. Moses told them that he will stand with the mighty staff of God on the mountain. The staff was not just ordinary staff anymore. So many miracles were done through that. Moses called it the staff of God. I would like to call that the rod of faith. Moses went up with Aaron and Hur to the mountain top while Joshua started to fight.

Exodus 17:11-13.

11So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed.

12But Moses' hands were heavy. Then 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 one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set.

13So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Something interesting happened. When Moses raised his hands, the Israelites prevailed. (I am sure, the hands were raised with the staff! Unfortunately that crucial detail is omitted!). But when Moses let his hands down, Amalekites prevailed! Here we can see the parallel with prayers offered through faith! The hands symbolizes our prayers. But the staff or the rod of God in our hands symbolize our strong faith in God. When we lift up the hands of prayers through faith, we see victory. But when we slack off, things start falling apart! We must steady the hands of faith toward God and pray with faith.

Moses became weary of lifting his hands always. They made Moses sit on a stone, and Aaron and Hur on each side held on each side and steadied his hands until sun set! We may get tired of praying for something alone. We need prayer warriors to support our hands of prayers through faith! Prayers of a righteous person avails much. But it is not just praying. You may fast and pray. You may pray for twenty hours a day. That does not matter. What matters is the prayers offered through unwavering faith, by ourselves, and our supportive friends.

Faith alone is not sufficient. It must be followed by tremendous works also! Joshua did the works part. He crushed the enemies and annihilated them with his sword.

Exodus 17:14-16.

14Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven."

15Moses built an altar and named it The LORD is My Banner;

16and he said, "The LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation."

Lord promised that He will blot out the memory of Amalekites from under heaven. Why God wanted to root them out totally? The only reason I could find is the reason from this incident. They unnecessarily came out to fight against the vulnerable, innocent people in the dessert. Moses built an altar and named it the Lord is my banner! Yehovah Nissi! Yes, of course, our Lord and Savior is our banner! He is our rock of salvation. He is our protection. In the name of Jesus, we have victory! Trust Him at all times. Even if God wants us to come to Him through death, let us trust Him, and commit our spirit to Him joyfully.

Conclusion:

1. We must thirst for God. When we cannot find Him, we must cry unto Him for help.
2. We must come to Christ our rock. He will give us the Living water to drink. Let us eat of His Word, and drink of His cleansing blood.
3. Life will be full of battles, but we overcome through faith in Christ!
4. Jesus Christ is our banner! In His name we conquer every battle.
5. Let us memorialize His salvation Acts. Forget not all His blessings.
6. Without faith, no one will have fellowship with God! Prayers without faith is no good. Also, faith without works is no good either. Prayers with Faith working through our actions is the ultimate Rod of God that brings victory.
7. Journey of life will have various stages and it may be full of trials and tribulation. Only through faith you can overcome.

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