

Series: Exodus
Title: Our Journey
Text: Exodus 17: 1-7
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Exodus 17: 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? 3: 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?

The children of Israel journeying through the wilderness on their way to Canaan is a picture of God's Israel—his elect church—as we pass through this wilderness on our way to heavenly Canaan.

There are three things we see in this passage that teach us about our journey.

GOD LEADS US

Exodus 17: 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:...

The children of Israel moved only “according to the commandment of the LORD.” That means they only moved when the LORD moved them.

Numbers 9: 18: At the commandment of the LORD the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the LORD they pitched: as long as the Cloud abode upon the tabernacle they rested in their tents. 19: And when the Cloud tarried long upon the tabernacle many days, then the children of Israel kept the charge of the LORD, and journeyed not. 20: And *so* it was, when the Cloud was a few days upon the tabernacle; according to the commandment of the LORD they abode in their tents, and according to the commandment of the LORD they journeyed. 21: And *so* it was, when the cloud abode from even unto the morning, and the Cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed: whether *it was* by day or by night that the Cloud was taken up, they journeyed. 22: Or *whether it were* two days, or a month, or a year, that the Cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents, and journeyed not: but when it was taken up, they journeyed. 23: At the commandment of the LORD they rested in the tents, and at the commandment of the LORD they journeyed: they kept the charge of the LORD, at the commandment of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

Believer, learn that it is God who leads us every step through this wilderness. God leads his people by Christ his Son, the Head of the church. We see this in the Pillar of Cloud and Fire that lead the children of Israel. And Christ uses the pastor he has provided as he used Moses. It is because Christ leads us by the preaching

of the gospel, as well as by his all-powerful providential hand. It is by God's sovereign wisdom and power that we move and that we stand still.

Therefore, understand, when we come into trouble, it is God our Savior who led us there just as he led them to Rephidim where there was no water—"according to the commandment of the LORD, [thet] pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink."

We have seen a pattern of this in the way the LORD led the children of Israel. It was the LORD who led them into Egypt where they became Pharaoh's bondmen—the same LORD led them out. It was the LORD that led them to camp between Migdol and the Red Sea where they were became trapped before Pharaoh's army—the same LORD led them across on dry ground, destroyed their enemies, and put a song on their lips. It was the LORD who led them to the bitter waters of Marah—the same LORD led them to the tree which made the bitterwaters sweet. It was the LORD who led them to the wilderness of Sin (thorns) where they hungered—the same Hand gave them manna from heaven and Sabbath rest.

Brethren, do you see the pattern? The night comes then the day. But night is sure to return. "*In the world, ye shall have tribulation.*" Yet, the same gracious hand is leading us through the night as leads us through the day. God is always leading his elect for our good.

Arthur Pink said, "the first thing to realize in *every* circumstance and situation where faith is tested, is, that the Lord Himself has *brought us* there! If this be apprehended, it will not be so difficult for us to trust Him to *sustain* us while we remain there."

Never despise the chastening hand of the LORD. He is teaching us that this wilderness is not our home. He uses the trial to wean us from it. And by leading us to all these different troubles that we cannot overcome, he is teaching us that it is by Christ's hand alone that we are saved! "*Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" "*We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*"

OUR SINFUL SELF

Exodus 17: 2: Wherefore the people did chide [strive] 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? 3: 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?

Again, we see that it is our sinful self that we need to be saved from. After all this time, after all that Moses had suffered for their sakes, they showed a total distrust, even suspicion of Moses, as if Moses were hiding water from them. Again, they accused Moses of bringing them out of Egypt to kill them. But murmuring against Moses they were really tempting the LORD—"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?*" (v7)

Bear in mind, that very morning they ate manna that God provided them from heaven! Then this quickly they said, "*Is the LORD among us, or not?*" They had seen the LORD provide a passover lamb for them by which he ransomed them from bondage. The children of Israel were witnesses to God providing them deliverance from Pharaoh and his army. They had seen God provide the tree to sweeten the waters at Marah, provide the manna and sabbath rest. All this the LORD did just for them and no one else. Still they questioned, "*Is the LORD among us, or not?*"

Believer, that is you and me. This is an example of our sinful flesh. Will a believer do that? This morning we hear the gospel and feast upon Christ the Bread that God himself has given. But sometimes we hardly get out the door, and at the least trouble, we act like we never ever tasted the Lord's grace!

God has put in every *true believer* a new spirit in the new birth where *Christ abideth!* That new man is created in righteousness and holiness by Christ Jesus our Righteousness, our Sanctification, after his image. And all our good fruit—*faith, love, mercy, longsuffering*—is produced by Christ by the Holy Spirit. But there is still an old man in us that is of Adam: and all our sinful fruit is of us from our old man of sin. The apostle Paul was a regenerated believer when he spoke of himself as a sinner in the present tense.

Romans 7: 18: For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth [right now] no good thing.

Romans 7: 24: O wretched man that I am!

1 Timothy 1: 15: This *is* a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

JC Philpot said, "*Temptation is to the corruptions of the heart, what fire is to stubble.*"

Brethren, for you and I who profess to be born of God, let us ask this about ourselves, "Do I put on the new man *only* when I come here? Then put on my old man when I head out the door?" If that is the case,

Ephesians 4: 20: ye have not so learned Christ; 21: If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22: That ye put off concerning the former [conduct] the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23: And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; 24: And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness

What does Christ mean when he teaches us to put off the old man with his conduct and put on the new?

Ephesians 4: 31: Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. 1: Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; 2: And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

For a true child of God, the gospel is not just something we hear preached. Christ is not just a system of doctrine we use to debate. The gospel is not just the word we hear in this place. God's word goes with us, abiding in our hearts every day of the week. It is the living word! Christ is our Life!

Do we receive admonitions and warnings from brethren like Moses gave them? Do we receive those admonitions as what they are? Admonitions and warnings from a brother in Christ, especially our pastors, is the love of a brother who wants the best for us. Though they treated Moses with utter contempt, by God's love bringing Moses to this end, Moses showed them God-given love by telling them the truth—"*Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?*" That word of correction was the most loving thing Moses could do for them. And understand, that was not Moses speaking of himself to them; that was Christ rebuking God's elect among them through Moses.

Brethren never forget that God speaks to us through our brethren! Never refuse personal exhortation or rebuke from a brother in Christ. It is love. If I get too high-minded for that then I am in darkness for sure because I am refusing to hear God speak to me! I have said this many times to you and I will say it again: a

believer proves he is taught of God and needs not that any man teach him, when he is content for God to teach him through a man.

God recorded this about the children of Israel to teach his people today—you and me. The Spirit of God says,

1 Corinthians 10: 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. 13: There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man:

The devil would love for me to exalt myself by thinking, “*My brethren can’t admonish me because they have never suffered so severe a trial as I am suffering.*” If anyone knew about that trap, it was the apostle Peter. After his great trial, he taught us what he learned,

1 Peter 5: 8: Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. 10: But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

That is what Paul is saying here in 1 Corinthians 10:

1 Corinthians 10: 12: Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. 13: There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

God will use his earthen vessel to turn us from self to that Way of escape the same as he used Moses to turn the children of Israel—the same as he used the apostle Peter and Paul. Christ is the Way. No matter how uncommon our trial may be, Christ was “*in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*” So let us hear our brethren’s reproof and admonition as the love of brethren who want what is best for us and let us flee to Christ.

THE WAY OF ESCAPE

Exodus 17: 4: And Moses cried unto the LORD,...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.

That Rock is Christ.

1 Corinthians 10: 1: Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers...4:...did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

Next time, we are going to look at the Smitten Rock more fully. For now, get this: in every trial, God’s purpose is to show us our sin and weakness, to turn us from self, and to teach us again that Christ is our Rock, our Salvation, “*that we might be partakers of his holiness.*” (Heb 12: 10)

Every trial is God's chastening hand keeping his child sanctified from self and this world into Christ our All! We see this in each trial they have faced.

Their first trial was Egyptian bondage—Adam's fall brought us all into the bondage of sin, like Egypt's bondage. The purpose for which God brought them into Egyptian bondage was to show God's elect our inability to save ourselves and to exalt Christ our Passover by whose blood we are redeemed from the curse of the law. That is why God purposed for Adam to fall and plunge the whole human race into sin. If the first trial for man was to turn us from our sinful self and exalt Christ then we know every other lesser trial is for the same purpose.

Their second trial was at the Red Sea—they went out of Egypt with a high hand. So God brought them to be trapped before Pharaoh to bring them down. Through the trial, God showed them their total inability then God made them sing his praises for delivering them and destroying their enemies. That is what God does in every trial we face.

Their third trial was at Marah—God showed them their dryness and bitterness by leaving them to themselves which resulted in murmuring against God and his servant. But through that trial, God turned them from self when he revealed to them the sweetening tree. That tree pictured Christ who bore the cross. He makes the bitter-waters sweet for God's chosen. That is the purpose of our trials.

The fourth trial was the wilderness of Sin—God himself said the manna and sabbath day was to prove who would obey him. The gospel is the trial of all trials, the test of all tests. It declares that the work of God is to believe on Christ the Bread from heaven. The gospel declares Christ is the Sabbath Rest for the believer. Through the gospel trial, God proves who obey God. The gospel-trial makes those who are obedient repent from our will and works and believe on Christ our Bread. And all who believe on Christ live by faith, not by works, resting in Christ our Sabbath every day of the week. This is the trial that proves who are God's and who are not.

This fifth trial was here in Rephidim—God showed them how soon they would murmur. By this he was turning them from self to Christ the Rock. Christ was smitten by the law of God and satisfied justice for his people. Therefore, through his blood, Christ sends the promised, Holy Spirit, the Living Water, who brings us to faith in Christ, making the believer never thirst again.

So we see that every trial for the believer brings us to the feet of Christ where we confess our sins and cast all our care on him. God says,

Hebrews 3: 8: Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years...12: Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13: But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14: For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

Amen!