

**Exodus 17:1-7** All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. **2** Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to 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 the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" **4** So Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." **5** And the Lord said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the 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 shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. **7** And he called the name of the place Massah<sup>1</sup> and Meribah,<sup>2</sup> because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

Today's passage is about Israel's grumbling against God for the third time and the issue is lack of water again. They suffered with this issue at Ch.15 and at ch.16 for lack of food and now suffering with lack of water is back. All the congregation of Israel arrived a place called Rephidim. How did they get to hostile a place like this anyways? V.1 says they came to this place 'according to the commandment of the Lord'. Did you hear that? They did not get here because they got lost on their ways. They obeyed the commandment of the Lord and the result was not a oasis but a desert with no water once again.

Even on the path of obedience, sometimes a suffering comes. And in this life, it could be a repetitive suffering. Just because you have suffered it once before and have overcome by the grace of God, that does not mean that it will never come back to us. We can be healed from a physical disease or sickness by God's grace but it can come back again in the future. Financial difficulties too. But when trouble comes back or a disease, that does not mean the favor of God has departed from us nor God is angry with us. Even on the path of obeying God's Will, it can come back.

The reason is this; because they are still living in the wilderness. Obviously, lacking water is the constant reality of the wilderness life. Matter fact, it is a desert! Just like that, facing troubles and sufferings in this world is an obvious thing, including the repetition of same sufferings. It reminds us that the world is not a perfect place, but corrupted by sin and broken. We are not living in the promised land, land flowing with milk and honey. Forget about milk and honey, not even water is enough in a wilderness. Then why are we expecting abundance of milk and honey in the wilderness? In this life?

## **We Must See the Big Picture that We Are on the Way to the Promised Kingdom.**

Listen to what Israel says here. It is important. 'Why did you bring us up here? to kill us with thirst?' I understand that they were thirsty. However, does it make sense that God brought them up from the Egypt with signs and wonders, parting the Red Sea, defeating the Egyptian army, leading them with pillars of fire and clouds, feeding them with mana, all these miracles in order to let them die in the wilderness with thirst? To see the miserable death of His own people? If that was His intention, why didn't He do that last time when they suffer with lack of water?

They are not making sense. They are not looking at the bigger picture. They are so near sighted. Stop focusing on the small portion of the picture right in front of you. Step back and look at the bigger picture! What God is intending to do! They forgot about the destination God is leading them to! In fact, they are not even interested in the bigger picture. That is why beyond their physical thirst, the joy and hope are dry in their soul, but burning with bitterness.

God was leading them to the promised land of Canaan as he has promised to their forefathers, to make them as a great nation of His own people. God is enduring all their faithlessness and grumbling in order to give the promise land! Indeed, to accomplish the redemption through the Messiah for the world.

Listen carefully. We must see the big picture of God. Otherwise, we think God wants us to suffer. He does like to give us what we want. No! See the big picture how He did the wonders of Jesus, giving His Son on the cross and raising Him up from the dead, to make a covenant with us, in order to give us the kingdom of God, flowing of the living water, trees of life are on the each side of the river, bearing fruits abundantly, and its leaves are for the healing of nations. It is where filled with joy and thanksgiving, never sadness, never pain, never suffering again, no death nor famine. The road is shinier than crystal, better than gold or silver. Nothing in this world can compare. More than all, where we will be with Jesus, seeing Him face to face. God will be the light to us with deep communion with the Holy Spirit.

If we are not looking at that picture, we think what I am going through right now is everything there. If this is it, then there is no thankfulness but grumbling and bitterness because I think this is all that there is.

Too many churches in the modern day forgot to preach about the promised Kingdom of God. As if it is a fairytale or a myth, they do not want to discuss that with modern 'intellectual' people. Instead of preaching on the hope of the glory of that Kingdom, they are giving sermons on how we can have a maximum life, fulfilling our potentials here, success and prosperity even to our children's generation, if we believe Jesus right. It kills our souls and let people to bow down at the god of fertility like the ancient days.

Many so called 'Christians' are so focused on maximizing their lives here and now, and they lost the sight to maximize the glory in the coming Kingdom. Have you ever thought about that Kingdom this week? How often do you think and look up for that promised coming Kingdom? What you do everyday and the reason why you do it, does it have a relevancy with that Kingdom?

**Philippians 3:19** Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.

Their belly, what to eat and what to drink, is their god, their idol. Their minds set on earthly things. Please, do not set your hope in this kingdom. This is a passing place. Lift up your eyes and engage the Kingdom of God. Kingdom of Jesus! How many time does the Bible teach us about it! How often the prophets prophesied and Jesus taught us about the Kingdom! So that, even though our feet are on this earth, but our eyes may be up in the Heaven.

**Phil 4:11-14** Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. **12** I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. **13** I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

When our eyes are set on that kingdom, we learn the secret to be content with what we have, because the life I am living is not everything. Even if I don't have a lot, it's ok. When I am at buffet, I don't have to pile up food on my first plate to the max. I can just bring little bit on my first plate. I become so generous at buffet even if all my friends take a lot of food from my plate. I would be mad if that happens at a restaurant because what I have on my plate is everything. But when I know that I can get more later, I am content and I become so generous. Our eyes on the Kingdom helps us to be content beyond the circumstances. This is powerful. That's the power Paul is talking about here, I can do all things through him who strengthens me. We do not fear anything.

## **Repetition of Suffering is to Bear the Fruit of Holy Spirit in Maturity.**

Also, verse 7 says that Israel's grumbling is nothing else but testing God to see 'Is the Lord among us' or not. They have witnessed and experienced many miracles but they are still faithless. What more do they have to see or experience to believe that the Lord is with them? Starting with the miracle of staff turning into a snake, and from turning water into blood to the striking of the firstborns of Egypt, all 10 signs and wonders, parting the Red Sea, they have witnessed great miracles of God. Even on that day they are complaining for water, in that morning they probably experienced the Manna and looking right at the pillars of fire and clouds. What more do they need so that they may change their hearts and say, 'Let's pray to the Lord for He will provide us with water!'

This is the same stubbornness we saw with Pharaoh. King Pharaoh hardened his heart even after many experiences of the power of God. Just like that, Israel hardened their hearts. Just like the Pharaoh, they are testing God.

Hear me. Experiencing a miracle is not what changes us. Some people speak as if in order to be a true believer, you must have some sort of a special supernatural experience. And they call those experiences 'the work of Holy Spirit' and it sounds like that's required to be a true Christian. But what if a person listens to the message of the Gospel, believing in heart, true repenting of sin, and trusting in Jesus, is he not a believer yet, just because he did not have the 'special experience'?

The true miracle experience is that hardened and stubborn sinners like us have come to a faith, believing that the Lord has died for a sinner like me, and rose again from the dead to save a person like me! This (Bible) becomes believable! Our hearts nothing better than Pharaoh or Israelites are now broken and soften and faith was born, blossom like a flower in us. Just like Peter says in the Bible, 'You have not seen Jesus but believe in Him, you do not see Him now, but you love Him with unspeakable joy.'

People always complaining, always focusing on what I do not have, so ignorant of the Kingdom of God now can see the invisible Kingdom in faith. We are to be content, filled with thanksgiving, not because something is going better than before right now but thankful of our given situation. And even if our lives get harder, thanksgiving and praise come out from somewhere within us. The faith is unshakable. This is the true experience of the work of Holy Spirit. It is not something like rolling over, falling back down, etc.

This kind of faith, love toward the Lord and to each other, forgiving, patience, hope beyond the circumstances, thanksgiving and praises, these are not what a sinner can produce by himself. A pine tree can never produce a sweet apple. Simply, it doesn't come out from it. We see those fruits in us because we are united to Jesus. He is bearing within us. All the time, when Holy Spirit works, He leaves a trace, which is His fruit. True repentance is the work of the H.S. and that repentance bears those fruits in that person's life. What are those? love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self control, gentleness, patience.

Is there repetition of suffering in your life? Then it is time to learn now. The suffering is repetitive in order for us to bear the fruit of the H. S. in maturity. They are designed to bear these fruits in the person, to be like Jesus. Remember; the repetitive suffering of Israel meant to produce and blossom their faith in the Lord as His people.

## They Drank from the Spiritual Rock and the Rock was Christ.

Today's incident is a very important incident.

4 So Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me."

People are about to stone Moses. In fact, this is not against Moses, as we know, this grumbling and stoning is against God. Since they cannot do to invisible God, they are doing it to Moses. What does the Lord say to Moses? Look carefully.

5. And the Lord said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the 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 shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

'Wow, Moses struck the rock and water came out! He did not dig the ground to find water.' This is not something that we can just move on like that. God said to strike the rock with what? The staff with which struck the Nile. It is the staff of God, stretching over the Red Sea to part it. This staff is the symbol of God's salvation. With the symbol of salvation it was to strike the rock. However, it was more than striking a rock. Look carefully v.6. Who is standing on the rock?

This was taking place at the mountain of Horeb where God called Moses for the first time in the burning bush. On that Holy mountain, the Lord was standing on the rock in front of the people and the staff of Salvation struck the rock and the water flowed from it for the grumbling people.

**1 Cor. 10:4** and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ.

People were angry and outrageous because they did not like what they are seeing. The angry crowd seemed like they were about to stone Jesus and the judgment was taking its place. In grumbling and complains, they cried out 'crucify him!' The sinless one, Jesus who loved them so much. He did good to them, cried with them, rejoiced with them, performed many miracles before their eyes, fed more than 5000 with food, healed sick, set free demon possessed, but they put Jesus on the rock of Judgment.

This word 'strike' comes out many times in Exodus. God struck that Pharaoh and Egypt, their firstborn and the army as a judgment. Now, God did not strike down this unfaithful, ungrateful people but himself.

We are ungrateful, never content with what we have, willing to bow down before the idol of fertility to fill our belly. But the Lord struck His only Son who obeyed the Father till the end. He was broken on the cross and poured out water and blood, flowing down like a river. With the blood and water flowing from the Cross, we quench our thirst and wash our shame and dirty sins.

**Isaiah 55:1** "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

**John 7:37-38** Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. **38** Whoever believes in me, as<sup>6</sup> the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

He cries out to us. What are you thirst for? It is in Jesus! Jesus poured out the H.S. within us and the power and joy of the Spirit ever flowing within us!

**Rev. 7:17** For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

When you thirst for something, come to Jesus through prayer and lift up your eyes to that kingdom. Then somewhere deep inside of you satisfaction and thanksgiving in Jesus will flow out because His Spirit is working in you.