

THE SUSTAINING ROCK

Text: Exodus 17:1-7

Key Word: Sustaining

Key Thought: God Is Able to Care for Us No Matter What Surrounds us

An old woodsman gives this advice about catching a porcupine:
“Watch for the slapping tail as you dash in and drop a large washtub over him. The washtub will give you something to sit on while you ponder your next move.”

“Bits and Pieces”
September 1989

Have you ever reached a point in life where you are not so sure of your next move? It seems like whatever you do will get you into trouble? You hope that just sitting on the problem for a while will make it go away. Yet you realize that it will only create another problem.

Here is a Picture That Often Depicts Our Lives.

I. WE MARCH FORWARD WITH ENTHUSIASTIC MOMENTUM (Exodus 17:1)

II. WE STOP ADVANCING DUE TO MURMURING (Exodus 17:2-4)

III. WE STAND IN AWE OF GOD’S MIRACLES (Exodus 17:5-7)

I. WE MARCH FORWARD WITH ENTHUSIASTIC MOMENTUM (Exodus 17:1)

I believe that this is just the way the Children of Israel felt as they made their way through the wilderness in hope of reaching the promised land. It was a new page in their book of life; a new opportunity to get away from past problems. It was a time to set new and challenging goals of life.

It’s important to leave the past in the past. Hope is vital for a vibrant relationship with God. The last thing that entered the minds of the Children of Israel when they left Egypt was a desert. They were anticipating their Promised Land. A land flowing with milk and honey. Like a child in Sunday School once said, “*It sounds a little sticky to me.*” Anyone traveling into the Desert of Sin soon realized that their enthusiasm to serve God and follow Him depleted rapidly.

Just a few chapters earlier we are told that the Children of Israel marched out armed for battle (Exodus 13:18); marched out boldly (Exodus 14:8). What happened to change this kind of boldness totally around? How can a whole nation face such an abrupt change in such a short period of time. **It was because they faced something they weren’t prepared for.** They were taken back by the unexpected. **They lost their sight of God in the midst of their difficulties.**

**I. WE MARCH FORWARD WITH ENTHUSIASTIC MOMENTUM (Exodus 17:1)
(Contd.)**

God Ain't Dead!

*** I am not a connoisseur of great art, but from time to time a painting or picture will really speak a clear, strong message to me. Some time ago I saw a picture of an old burned-out mountain shack. All that remained was the chimney . . . the charred debris of what had been that family's sole possession. In front of this destroyed home stood an old grandfather-looking man dressed only in his underclothes with a small boy clutching a pair of patched overalls. It was evident that the child was crying.

Beneath the picture were the words which the artist felt the old man was speaking to the boy. They were simple words, yet they presented a profound theology and philosophy of life. Those words were, "**Hush child, God ain't dead!**"

"That vivid picture of that burned-out mountain shack, that old man, the weeping child, and those words 'God ain't dead' keep returning to my mind. Instead of it being a reminder of the despair of life, it has come to be a reminder of hope! I need reminders that there is hope in this world.

In the midst of all of life's troubles and failures, I need mental pictures to remind me that all is not lost as long as God is alive and in control of His world. ***

James DeLoach
Associate Pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Houston
quoted in "*When God Was Taken Captive*,"
W. Aldrich, Multnomah, 1989, p. 24.

Have you felt like your life is like the Children of Israel "**traveling from place to place**" but never seeming to get anywhere? Did you start out in your Christian life with an enthusiasm that has been depleted because of the difficulties you've faced? Have you ever wondered why God would lead you into such trying circumstances?

Rephidim was the most fertile part of the peninsula, well watered with a Palm tree grove stretching for miles along the valley - but NOT this time. When the Israelites arrived to this place of oasis refreshment, they discovered that the streams had dried up. The sight of the Palm trees and Tamarisks (of better days) gave no relief to their fiery crucible.

Have you been camping at "**Rephidim**" long enough without any water? The word "**Rephidim**" means "**rests.**" But how can you rest when you become overwhelmed by hurtful expectations (a loss of job; marital problems; broken relationships; health issues etc.).

II. WE STOP ADVANCING DUE TO MURMURING (Exodus 17:2-4)

They reached a point early in their trek into this fiery ordeal where they realized that they had reached their wits end. The biggest problem was NOT that they stopped advancing. It is rather what they did when they stopped.

We've all been here before. In fact, we often try to convince God that once is enough. According to Numbers 33:12-14 we find that the Children of Israel encamped twice between the desert of Sin and Rephidim. The desert Wadis often determined the travel plans of those who made their trek through the desert.

It is one thing to stop because of difficulties but it is another to stop because of an un-managed personal attitude. We will all have times in our lives when the streams that we expect to restore/refresh us become dried up. It is then that we truly know what we're made of. It is like gold that releases its impurities when placed into a fiery oven so it can be skimmed off.

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

7. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

I Peter 1:6,7

God often stops us dead in our tracks EARLY in our "desert experiences" to help us see just what kind of condition our faith and worship to Him really is in. We must understand before we enter into intense problems where we stand before God.

"Today, if you hear his voice,

8. do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah (quarreling or murmuring or strife), as you did that day at Massah (testing; temptation) in the desert,

9. where your fathers tested and tried me, though they had seen what I did.

10. For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, 'They are a people whose hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways.'

11. So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'"

Psalms 95:7-11

II. WE STOP ADVANCING DUE TO MURMURING (Exodus 17:2-4)(Contd.)

*“Do not **test the LORD your God** as you did at Massah.”*

Deuteronomy 6:16

** A monk joined a monastery and took a vow of silence. After the first 10 years his superior called him in and asked, *“Do you have anything to say?”*
The monk replied, *“Food bad.”*
After another 10 years the monk again had opportunity to voice his thoughts.
He said, *“Bed hard”*
Another 10 years went by and again he was called in before his superior. When asked if he had anything to say, he responded, *“I quit.”*
“It doesn’t surprise me a bit. You’ve done nothing but complain ever since you got here.” **

Source Unknown

III. WE STAND IN AWE OF GOD’S MIRACLES (Exodus 17:5-7)

It doesn’t matter what conditions we find ourselves in, God is still able to care for us. He often does it in spite of our ungodly attitude. Doesn’t it surprise you that God would supply water for a people who were ready to stone their leader whom God called and appointed? I wouldn’t suggest that we ever continue to push the line against what we know is God’s will.

Notice the attitude of Moses. He humbly cried out to the LORD. He was told not to smite the rebels, but the rock; not to bring a stream of blood from the breast of the offenders, but a stream of water from the granite cliffs. God answered Moses’s prayer in an abundant manner. This was no trickling stream. But rather a gushing forth of water from a miraculous source.

*“He split the rocks in the desert and gave them water as abundant as the seas;
16. he brought streams out of a rocky crag and made water flow down like rivers.”*

Psalm 78:15,16

“He opened the rock, and water gushed out; like a river it flowed in the desert.”

Psalm 105:41

III. WE STAND IN AWE OF GOD'S MIRACLES (Exodus 17:5-7) (Contd.)

During adversities we should not think that God is absent or we would be saying to Him that He was a liar and His promises couldn't be trusted. None of us deserve the grace of God but that doesn't mean that we go out of our way to stir up His anger toward us.

If we look into the New Testament we begin to understand how incredible this miracle really was. It helps us to understand why there was such an abundance of water even for those who had displeased the Lord. **The answer is in the fact that when God gives of Himself to us any amount of Himself will seem over abundant.**

*“They all ate the same spiritual food
4. and drank the same spiritual drink; **for they
drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied
them, and that rock was Christ.**”*

I Corinthians 10:3,4

When God performs a miracle before our eyes we must understand that if He wasn't included in the miracle, there would be no miracle. It is not only **FROM Him** but it is also **OF Him. When we stand in awe of God's miracles, we are really standing in awe of God Himself.** We should never focus on the miracle unless we are seeing God in the miracle. **Don't chase after the THINGS God can do. Deeply desire God Himself.**

*“From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee,
when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock
that is higher than I.”*

Psalms 61:2

What are you dying of thirst for? Is it **something** or **Someone**? **Is it a miracle or a miraculous God?** When you walk through life and find yourself disappointed with God or whoever, don't allow yourself to enter into a state of murmuring and complaining. Be on your guard not to chase after a miracle and forsake the One Who makes miracles come to pass. Only God can keep us from falling as we inch our way across the tight walk line of life.

*** Many people have heard of the outstanding exploits of Blondin, the tightrope walker. Blondin amused and amazed thousands of people as he made his way over Niagara Falls on a slender rope stretched from shore to shore. He never faltered or failed.

But Blondin had a secret. As he made his way over the rope, he would keep his eyes fixed on a large silver star which he had erected at the far end. **The star was the center of his attention and guided him to the other side.** ***

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Date: Mar 10/24

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: I Stand in Awe - G

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Exodus 13:18; 14:8

II. WE STOP ADVANCING DUE TO MURMURING (Exodus 17:2-4) - *Numbers 33:12-14;*

I Peter 1:6,7; Psalm 95:7-11; Deuteronomy 6:16

III. WE STAND IN AWE OF GOD'S MIRACLES (Exodus 17:5-7) - *Psalm 78:15,16; Psalm*

105:41; I Corinthians 10:3,4; Psalm 61:2