

## Camping with God – 4

Intro

The children of Israel were learning important lessons:

- Red Sea crossing

**1. Experience and Celebrate God’s deliverances in your life.**

- At Marah water was bitter

**2. Trust God to provide for you in His way and time.**

- After a month they started receiving Manna

**3. Believe and Obey God’s Word.**

Today’s Lesson:

**4. Acknowledge and practice the presence of God.**

No matter what challenges we face in life we must respond in such a way that honors God as our present help in times of trouble.

He is with us and He will help us.

Ex. 17:1-7

At this point Israel has journeyed to a place called Rephidim.

This is a short distance from Sinai (the next stop) which Israel would arrive at three months after the exodus from Egypt. About 2 ½ months have passed.

<sup>1</sup>“Then 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.” (Ex. 17:1)

- Israel was brought to Rephidim – “Rest”

Instead of palm trees and fresh springs of water,

they arrived at “dry gulch,” or the “Death Valley” of the Sinai.

Expecting to find rest in their long journey they finally come to Rephidim.

Problem: No Water! – “Some resting place...”

After all they have gone through, by this time shouldn’t they have just a little faith?

When Expectations are matched with a lack of faith the result is grumbling!

<sup>2</sup>“Therefore 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?’

<sup>3</sup>But 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?’”

(Ex. 17: 2-3)

The last time this happened was at Elim, in which a similar response took place,  
In 16:2-3

2 The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

3 The sons of Israel said to them, “Would that we had died by the LORD’S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

Rephidim becomes a special place which they renamed Massah, or Meribah, the place of testing, after Israel’s response:

Verse:2

And Moses said to them,

‘Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?’

- He renamed Rephidim to Massah and Meribah.
  - o Massah – *test*
  - o Meribah – *quarrel*

**Testing God** always involves looking at our circumstances and questioning whether God is doing a good job at providing for us.

- Beyond grumbling, a lynch mob.

Verse 2 uses the word quarrel [heb. Rib – the word us used in the name ‘Meribah’ and carries with it a legal context meaning “to bring suit” (Mic. 6:1 – “plead your case,”).

The move to stone Moses (:4) is the execution of a judicial sentence for treason. – unless Moses provides water.  
– This makes Moses’ concern a legal matter, so to speak.

<sup>4</sup>So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying,  
‘What shall I do to this people?  
A little more and they will stone me.’

Moses wrote that they were actually testing the Lord, [verses 5-7]

Then 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. 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. He 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?”

(Ex. 17:5-7)

It wasn’t Moses who was going to be put on trial, it was God.  
God is being accused of abandoning Israel to die of thirst in the desert.  
The people want a trial – God will give them one.

There seems to be a display:  
Moses with the rod of God in hand; accompanied by the elders of Israel.  
The elders would be the witnesses to the nation.

God says, “I will stand before you.”  
God takes the place of the accused, standing on the rock.  
Song of Moses: God is the rock.  
Ps. 78:35 “God was their rock”  
Ps. 95:1 God is “the rock of their salvation”

**Horeb** -

“I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb.”  
Horeb is the other name by which Mount Sinai is known.

**Strike the Rock**

Rod of judgment – God is not guilty but bears the judgment

- like Christ who bore our sins.

1 Cor. 10:4

“And all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them and the rock was Christ.”

And **water** comes from the rock.  
The water was life.

Jesus stood up on the great day of the feast [Booths], crying out, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’...” (John 7:37-39).

**The Israelites’ inexcusable attitude** becomes clear ...

“They tested the LORD saying, ‘Is the LORD among us or not?’”

Faith is the refusal to panic

**Israel’s lack of faith.**

To doubt God’s *presence* among them was outrageously unfaithful. His presence was obviously manifest at all times.

Being led by a pillar of fire by night, and cloud cover by day  
- they moved when it moved.

Previous year of miracles in the form of plagues upon Egypt.  
- Resulting in their freedom.

Walking through the divided Red Sea on dry land,  
Resulting in the destruction of the Egyptian army.

Miraculous daily provisions of water and manna.

The people’s questioning God’s presence must be seen as nothing other than a contempt of the Lord’s leadership over them.”

Final testing at Rephidim resulting in God’s faithful provision despite their flagrant grumbling and testing God.

George Sweeting wrote,

The apostolic church faced mountainous problems with complete confidence in God. *“God is able”* was their password into pagan territory. Only a fool would have attempted in human strength what they did. Ancient Israel met defeat at Kadesh-Barnea because the people doubted God’s ability to see them through. They forgot too soon. The miracle of the Red Sea, the provision of the manna, all faded from their minds, as they considered their own weakness. Problems? Yes, they had problems. Every one of us – at our own point of greatest weakness – has a magnificent chance to display God’s power. *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Rom. 8:31).

How can we avoid grumbling like the children of Israel?

**1) Note Specific Warnings:**

*“Let us not try the Lord, as some of them did...Nor grumble, as some of them did...Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”* (1 Cor. 10:9-11)

*“Take care brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.”* (Heb. 3:12)

**2) Realize the roots of grumbling.**

*“Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked me.”* (Heb. 3:15).

Grumbling is disobedience that comes from unbelief  
– a lack of faith in the faithfulness of God.

**3) Recognize the fruit of grumbling.**

*“For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.”*

(Heb. 3:16-19).

Imagine a child coming to his mother, who is busily preparing dinner, and saying, *“Why don’t you ever make meals for us? We’re gonna die! Is that why you gave birth to us, so you could starve us in this pathetic hovel of a home?”*

How would a normal mom respond to such a child?

Israel’s grumbling is accusing God of not taking care of them,

not protecting them and not being with them, Why?

What they didn't know...God was using the difficulties to reveal problems in them.

God was testing them.

"A faith that hasn't been tested can't be trusted." Adrian Rogers

There really are no "respectable sins." All sins are sin.

When we are tempted to complain and loose faith (grumbling),

Remember that God can handle any problems we face.

Let's pray about each of them and then watch in faith for what He does.

Today's Lesson:

- **Acknowledge and practice the presence of God.**

When we complain and grumble, we are not responding in faith.

Oswald Chambers wrote,

"Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time."