

- ***Read Exodus 17:1-7*** We are only a chapter removed from the great song that Moses and the people sang before their mighty God who had done so much for them. Sadly, there is already trouble in paradise...at least in the eyes of the people there is. The people are not able to find any water to drink, and they go before Moses and grumble before Him and God concerning their need for water. Moses approaches the Lord to figure out what He would have Moses to do because Moses fears for his life. He's scared that these people are going to stone him. God instructs Moses to take the staff that he has had with him since Egypt and stand before the rock which is at Horeb and strike it with the staff. God says that in doing so, water would flow from the rock. Of course, what God said would happen did happen, and the people had water.
- Fast forward to **Numbers 20:1-13**. One place I read estimated that this account is approximately 37 years after the happening of **Exodus 17**. Once again, the people find themselves without water and they assemble themselves against Moses and Aaron. This would have been the younger generation that was actually going to be allowed to enter into the promised land. Different generation....same old result of them complaining against God, Moses, and Aaron. Again, God speaks to Moses concerning how he should get some water, but this time instead of telling Moses to strike the rock, God tells Moses to speak to the rock. Sadly, Moses decides to strike the rock. Not only did he strike it once, but he strikes it twice. God is greatly displeased with Moses's unbelief and he is denied entry into the promised land, as well.
- This story is one that is familiar to us, but it is always good to read back over these familiar stories and see what lessons we can learn from them. This evening, I would like to consider 4 lessons from the rock that we can learn and keep in mind as we strive to be good servants of God on a day to day basis.

I. Be thankful for the patience of God.

- A. By **Exodus 17**, we already have 4 different accounts of Israel complaining and grumbling against Moses and the Lord. This instance in **Exodus 17** is the 5th such time recorded that they grumbled against God, and sadly...it is far from the last time that they would do so.
- B. Approximately 14 times, we have a record of Israel grumbling and complaining against God. They complain about the food, the water, the conditions, and just about anything else possible. Anyone else would have just written this people off and probably completely destroyed them, but our God is patient and he stuck with them. This doesn't mean that He just ignored their complaining. He took action and punished them from time to time, but God stuck with them and eventually the people made it and they obtained the land of promise that God had given to Abraham their forefather.
- C. These people should have been thanking their lucky stars that they served a patient God. He put up with far more from them than He should have. We might shake our heads at them and think about just how bad they were, but honestly we are no better. We might not be constant complainers, but we fail God far too often, as well. We must be as equally thankful for the patience of God.
- D. Thankfully, we serve a Savior who sympathizes with our weaknesses. (**Heb. 4:15**) This might be part of the reason that He is so patient with us. He was in the flesh. He knows the type of temptations we face. He knows just how difficult life can be at times with Satan constantly after us. Yet, He overcame and he still expects us to do the same. He expects us to overcome, but hHe doesn't strike us dead when we do fail. Thank God for the patience of Jesus.
- E. In the same way, our Heavenly Father is patient with us. (**II Pet. 3:9**) Our God loves us so much that He is patient with us. His desire is that we all come to repentance. He wants us to do what is right and serve Him in all that we do. For this reason, He continually offers patience and forgiveness to us. May we truly appreciate the patience of our God. He gives us far more patience than we deserve.

II. Strive to be patient with those who are not patient.

- A. In our second account of Moses striking the rock, we find Moses seemingly at his wits in with the people, and when they complain yet again....Moses doesn't respond to well. After speaking to the Lord, Moses gathers the people and gives them the what for and basically chews them out. If it ended right there then things might have been ok, but it seems as if Moses allowed his emotions to get the best of him, and then he goes out and does something stupid. (**Num. 20:9-11**)
- B. It can be a real temptation for us to make bad decisions because other people are not patient or doing as they ought to. This was already a tough situation for Moses because they had been wandering for a long time. Add on top of that that this is the 13th recorded time that Moses is dealing with a complaining people. And then add on top of that that his sister has just died. Put all of this tougher and we can probably understand why Moses reacted poorly, but that still doesn't excuse his losing of his patience and acting foolishly. We need to keep in mind that it is incredibly important that we keep our patience even when others around us don't.

- C. There will be times when other people, in our families, at work, at school, on the ball field, or anywhere don't act appropriately. They might be impatient. They might be complainers. They might treat us poorly. Yet, it is our responsibility to keep our calm and composure and not allow those types of people to push us to doing things that we are not supposed to do.
- D. One of the many fruits of the Spirit is patience. **(Gal. 5:22-26)** Our God expects for us to exemplify patience in our lives...even with those who might push us to not want to be patient. If we allow ourselves to become impatient then things will just continue to go from a bad situation to a worse situation. Look at how things turned out for Moses. He couldn't enter the land because he allowed his poor judgement to take over in the middle of a tough situation. **(Num. 20:12)**

III. Don't take God's credit.

- A. Something subtle that stood out to me and really struck me about Moses's words to the people the second time around is found in **Numbers 20:10**. Moses says, "Listen now, you rebels; shall **WE** bring water for you out of this rock." I don't know if this was Moses's intent...but I get the impression that Moses was taking at least a little credit for what God had done. For a moment at least, Moses lost sight of who was behind all of the great things that had been done for the people of Israel.
- B. From the beginning, it was God who had made all of these things take place. He had sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh. He had caused the plagues to take place. He had parted the sea. He defeated the army of Pharaoh. God provided the food and direction. God provided the water. Yet...Moses, again probably losing his patience with the people, stood up and tried to stand in the place of God and acted foolishly.
- C. We must remember to not take credit for all the good that God is doing for us in this life. He is the provider of every good thing. He is the one that authored salvation. He is the one who planned for all of these things to work for our good. We must always acknowledge His goodness and give Him credit for all things. May we remember the words of Jesus from **Matthew 23:12**, "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."
- D. If that doesn't encourage us to give God credit for all things then check and see how things turned out for kings Nebuchadnezzar **(Daniel 4)** and Herod **(Acts 12:23)** who tried to take God's credit and glory.

IV. Obey God's instructions.

- A. The punishment for Moses not following God's instructions was that he was not able to enter into the promised land. Moses had labored with leading these people for decades...yet, he was able to see the fruit of his great labor because he didn't follow God's instructions. The punishment might seem harsh considering the infraction, but the lesson should ring loud and clear to us...follow and obey God's instructions, or bad things will happen for us.
- B. There are many reasons why we might not obey or follow God's instructions for any particular thing.
 - A. We might not know how God wants things done. I think Apollos would fall into this category. Yet, once he heard what was correct, he changed his ways. **(Acts 18:24-28)**
 - B. Maybe God's way just doesn't seem like the way I would do something....do I decide to do this thing a different way.
 - C. Or it might just be that I don't think God's way is the most effect way to get something done. So I instead decide to do it a different way.
 - D. No matter the reason, God's way is the right and best way. We simply need to trust and obey Him.
- C. "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." **(Prov. 14:12)**
- D. His thoughts are far higher than ours. We simply need to trust in Him and do His will. **(Isa. 55:8,9)**

It's very sad for a strong leader like Moses to never get to experience the glory that was the promised land. You would hope that all of his hard work would be cashed in, but a moment of weakness and foolishness did him in. The things of the Old Testament were written for our learning so that we might be able to learn from the failures and successes of others and be able to be pleasing to God. May God help us to remember these things and walk well before Him in all things as faithful servants.