

God Can Overcome Your Problems

Exodus 17:1-7

A couple of years ago, I was teaching in the upper grades of a small Christian school in our city. The one student had an interesting story. As an older student, she was doing well and liked being at school. As I got to know her, I learned when she was young, reading was very hard, almost impossible. When she was young, the words did not stay still on the page, and many times, she would see letters and words backwards. Even at her age, she could still write exactly reversed.

As her teacher, I would not have guessed she had such a struggle to arrive where she was. It was difficult, but she persevered. Then after she graduated, can you guess what she did? She went on to help students who had similar challenges with reading. She understands and is very qualified to speak into the lives of students who struggle like she did.

This story is a small picture of what God can do and wants to do with each of us. Most of us have a hard area of life. Paul calls it a “thorn in the flesh.” An area of weakness or difficulty we would rather not have. It is God’s desire to use trial to show His strength. Paul understood this and accepted the difficulty; my former student used her difficulty to help others. The challenge is for us to go through our “thorn in the flesh” depending on God, not whining and complaining to Him.

In today’s lesson, the children of Israel had a difficulty; unfortunately, they quickly turned to whining and complaining. The story is found in Exodus 17, and we will listen to Pastor J. Mark teach us more about a God Who can overcome our problems.

It is wonderful how God provides solutions to our problems. He is able to overcome what to us seem to be insurmountable difficulties, impossible situations.

I have learned that difficulties provide opportunities. If we had no difficulties, we would never, never rely upon God. We would never test our strength. We would never know what we could do if there were no difficulties. So, difficulties provide opportunities.

Ever since the days of Adam, when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, we have had problems that affect our daily lives. The LORD told Adam then that he would need to live by the sweat of his face. He would have to work hard to stay alive. So, the problems of our existence are a part of our being human.

Yet, in our humanity and its difficulties, God has not forsaken us. God has been with us. Even those who deny Him are objects of His care, for the sun rises on the evil and the good, and God sends rain on

the just and the unjust. So, God has not forsaken us even though we do have problems and difficulties of existence.

The most serious moment for the people of God is when they begin to challenge and question His wisdom. That is what happened in this Scripture in Exodus 17:1-7.

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 began to question the wisdom of God in bringing them out there into the wilderness. They needed to learn that GOD CAN OVERCOME YOUR PROBLEMS.

I invite you to trace with me the STAGES of Israel's situation until God overcame their problem so that you can trust Him as you face difficult experiences.

We note the first stage is,

Their Difficulty

The Scripture tells us they made this journey according to the commandment of the LORD. They were following the direction of the LORD, but the LORD's way is not always easy. When they came to

Rephidim, they found that there was no water there. Yet they had come there in the direction of the LORD. The people of Israel were traveling with flocks and herds. They all must have water. In the heat of the Sinai Peninsula, it is not surprising that they were thirsty. But keep this in mind, when you follow the LORD's way, it will not always be easy.

But in their difficulty, the LORD's people were not always patient. Since they were in the LORD's way and they were the LORD's people, the LORD would take care of them. But they were not patient. They began to strive with Moses and chide him. They said, "Give us water that we may drink." They demanded water. It was with them an immediate requirement. I find that human need often determines our drives. We want what we want, and we want it now. That was their difficulty. They were not patient.

The LORD's servant was not always responsible, so Moses returned the question and said, "Why do you strive with me? Why are you putting the LORD to the test?" He understood that the LORD's people going in the LORD's way would be taken care of by the LORD. But their difficulty was that they couldn't see that; they were not trusting God.

Do your difficulties overwhelm you? Are you overcome by them? Do the problems seem to be more than you can solve? The LORD wants you to trust Him. Without the difficulty of no water, there would have been no opportunity for them to trust fully in God.

The second stage that we trace is,

Their Discontent

They had a burning thirst. The Bible tells us the people thirsted there for water. It would be natural in the hot desert sun to dry out quickly. It was natural for them to be thirsty. Most likely, the more they talked about it, the worse they felt. The more they argued with Moses, the more demanding they became. But when we magnify our problem, our discontent grows. It was so with Israel.

They then made an outrageous charge against Moses. They said to him, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to kill us and our children and cattle with thirst?" Well, you won't die overnight if you don't have water. Earlier in their journey, when they felt hunger pangs, they said to Moses, "You brought us out in the wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." Now they said, "You brought us out of Egypt to kill us with thirst." Somehow, they could not reconcile themselves to their situation. Discontent increased and flourished. The more they thought about it, the worse they felt and the worse they reacted toward Moses.

Moses was at his wit's end; he didn't know what to do, so he went to the LORD. He prayed and cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do? What shall I do?" Moses was a good example for us because he

turned to the LORD when he faced a problem. The LORD does not need to be the last resort. He can be the first resort when we are in trouble. Moses turned to the LORD. That is a good thing to do. He asked the question, "What shall I do for these people?"

The situation was very serious because they were about to stone Moses. Even though it was he who led them out of the land of bondage into this land on the way to the land of promise, they were about to stone him - about to do away with him. Their physical thirst and their discontent had distorted their reasoning.

Discontentment often leads people to make rash and unfounded statements. They blamed Moses for something for which he was not responsible and wouldn't have thought of doing. It was not his intention to bring the people of God out into the wilderness to let them die there. Moses had an eye to the Promised Land, and he was expecting that they would all stay together until they got there. But their discontentment almost disrupted the plan.

Then the third stage is,

Their Deliverance

The LORD heard and answered Moses. I want you to see what He told him to do. He said, "Take your place as leader. Don't fear. Go before the people and take the elders with you as witnesses. Let them stand beside you there in Horeb. But you are the leader, so you take your place and your rod with which you smote the river in Egypt. Now take that miracle-working rod and take your place." That's good advice.

Many leaders today have turned away from their place and their instruments of power. God ordered Moses to take his place of leadership where he belonged with the rod of God in his hand with which he had worked miracles.

Then the LORD gave him the plan and assurance of His presence. He said, "I'll be standing there before you upon the rock in Horeb." That was God's presence. He assured Moses that he would not be standing alone. Then He gave him His plan. He said, "You shall smite the rock." Moses was now to use his rod, with which he had smitten the river of Egypt and turned it to blood, to bring water out of the rock. To smite the rock meant that Moses should strike it with all his might. Then the LORD said, "Water will come out of it." That was His promise. The LORD had a plan; His presence was assured; His command was to be obeyed; and the promise was results - water in the sight of all the people.

"And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel." Their leader's obedience brought them deliverance. Moses did what God told him to do, so God could do what He promised to do: water flowed from the rock and relieved their thirst. Deliverance comes when we are willing to take God's way.

Now here are three stages that show us we need not be the victims of our problems. God has a solution for each problem. It may not be exactly like Israel's - to strike a rock for water, but God has a solution appropriate to our problem.

An important warning comes to us as we face problems in life. Let us not charge God unreasonably when we meet difficulties. We are all human, as the children of Israel were. Sometimes when we get into difficulties, we are inclined to be discontent with His provision. But He wants us to trust Him so He can provide deliverance for us. He can do that as we trust in Him.

Thanks, J. Mark, for teaching us, and thank you for joining us. We trust our time together has been a blessing. If you would like this teaching or if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to us.

Here are a few ways you can contact us. The best way is via email. Our email is hope@heraldsofhope.org. If you don't have email, you could send us a letter. Our address is Hope for Today, Box 3, Breezewood, Pennsylvania 15533. Or you can connect with us on our website. Our website is *heraldsofhope.org*. On our website, you will find more teaching like this and other helpful resources; please look around while you are there. Again, our website is *heraldsofhope.org*.

Thank you so much for being with us. We look forward to next week and hope you will join us then as we continue our study in Exodus. I will part with an encouraging thought from Joel chapter 2, "Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the Lord your God and there is no other." Blessings as you serve our great King!