

The Wilderness Test

Main Lesson: Do we believe God is with us? (Ex. 17: 5-7 ; 1 Cor. 10:1-6)

The Presence of God is a major theme in the Book of Exodus. Time and time again God is revealed to be actively involved in the redemption and salvation of the Israelites. Here are a few examples:

- God heard Israel's cry and responded (Ex. 2:23-24; Ex 3:7-8)
- God's presence manifested in the burning bush (Ex. 3:2)
- God's power displayed through the miraculous and terrible plagues (Ex. 7- Ex. 12)
- God was with the Israelites at the Red Sea (Ex. 14)
- God Journeyed with Israel, leading them through the wilderness (Ex.13:21-22)

In Exodus 17 we encounter another manifestation of God's presence among his people. Thirsty for water, the people of Israel begin to pressure Moses to provide for them. In the heat of their desire for water, the people turn on Moses, accusing him of all manner of evil and threaten to do him harm. By the end of the story, we see how the Israelites even go as far as to doubt the presence of God in their circumstance.

"Is the LORD among us or not?" (Ex. 17:7)

They doubted if God was with them. But Moses prayed, and God provided water from a rock (Ex. 17:4-6).

When reading a story like this it is easy to think of the Israelites as foolish and shortsighted. For all the things that they have witnessed, the signs, wonders and blessings God has bestowed on them up, how can they doubt God presence? But the truth of the matter is that we too may feel tempted at times to think that God has abandoned us when we go through our dry seasons. We must remember that God always remains faithful to His people (1 Cor. 1:9).

Here are a few lessons to take away from this account:

1. Trust in God providence for your daily need

God provided the Israelites with enough nourishment to satisfy their daily needs. His provision was sufficient. God gave them manna every day, and supplied them with water, sustaining them for 40 years. Later, Jesus told his disciples to pray for our "daily bread" (Matt 6:11). The Book of Exodus shows us that we can trust God to do just that because He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrew 13:8)

2. Trust in Gods Son for your deepest needs

The Word states that man shall not live by bread alone, meaning for us to be "whole" in this life, our physical needs only count for part of our well-being. We all have a need that can only be satisfied by the very presence and power of God in our lives.

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God”(Duet. 8:3; Matt.4:4).

Jesus is the Word made flesh (John 1:1-4, 14), God has spoken his life-giving words through his Son (Hebrews 1:1-2) so that in Jesus we can trust that our deepest need will be satisfied.

3. Offer living water to the thirsty

Finally [...] whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)