



2026 Weekly Devotions

Week of: February 2nd - 8th

Sermon: February 1st



SMYRNA BAPTIST CHURCH
building community ◦ equipping believers ◦ serving Jesus

February 2

2 Corinthians 1:8b-9; 1 Peter 2:23

As we begin another week of Points to Ponder, it is good to pause and consider that the places where the Israelites encountered hardships were ordained by the sovereign plan of God. Once again, Exodus 17 begins with a clear admission that the people moved on from the wilderness of Sin to Rephidim “at the commandment of the Lord” (Ex. 17:1). They were exactly where they were supposed to be at this moment in time. I mention this today because it states at the end of the same verse, “but there was no water for the people to drink.” God led them to a place where there was no water. Is He a poor General or is there more to His story?

Recall in the previous chapter that God had provided both manna and quail for the people to eat. God referred to His provision as bread from heaven. They faced a trial of faith, or a crisis of belief and God met their need. Now, here they are in Rephidim and find themselves in the same predicament. Only this time it is water they lack. We must ascertain from our journey through the book of Exodus that our path of faith is a path of trials. Those who are led by God must expect that we will encounter constant tests of our faith and situations that cause our flesh to recoil in objection.

I am reminded of what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 1:8b-9 pertaining to his own trials. He said, “For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.” You see, God brings us to places in our lives like Rephidim to help us learn to trust Him and not ourselves or our circumstances. It takes trials and tests to break us and to show us His faithfulness and goodness. The fact that we see similar instances in chapters 14, 15, 16, and here again in 17 tells us that we are painfully slow to learn this lesson.

The absence of water was no difficulty to God at all. Just like feeding the 5,000 in Matthew 14 was not for Jesus during His life on earth. It was no more difficult for God to provide manna, quail, and water than it was for Him to part the Red Sea. He knew He led them to a place where there was no water. I can personally say that when I remind myself that so many, if not all, of the hard places where I end up God planned that I be there, it helps me tremendously to view them as places and moments with purpose. I change my mindset from one of complaining to one of looking for what God is doing, how He will show up, and what He is teaching me under the pressure of the circumstance. That sustains me more than I can say.

The people failed to look to God for their provision, but Moses did not. I am both encouraged and challenged as I see the example Moses sets for us. He did not fight back against the people. Instead, He took his troubles as their leader to the Lord (v.4). He sought direction from the Lord even as the people railed against him and his leadership. This is a good reminder friends that we should learn to do the same. Like Christ, when he was reviled, he reviled not in return but entrusted his case to the Father (1 Pet. 2:23).

February 3

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

It is interesting and important to note that the staff with which Moses was told to strike the rock, was the same staff used to strike the Nile (Ex. 17:5-6). That is important because later on in Numbers 20 we read of an incident that is likely around forty years later. At that time, God told Moses to take "the staff" and assemble the congregation and tell the rock before their eyes to yield the water (Num. 20:8). Now, the staff here is thought to be the staff of Aaron that is mentioned in Numbers 17:10. This staff was to be kept in the ark in the Most Holy Place.

What I am alluding to is the fact that the staff of Moses with which he used to strike the Nile and the rock in Exodus 17 was a staff of judgment. Aaron's staff, from Numbers 17, was considered to be a priestly rod and was not used in judgment but in mercy. The point is that the rock smitten in Exodus 17 represented Jesus Christ, the Rock, who was to be smitten for the people **once**. Once He had been smitten, He would never have to taste of that judgment and death again.

Another very interesting fact is that the Hebrew word translated rock in Exodus 17 is not the same as the word used in Numbers 20. The rock in Exodus 17 foreshadowed Christ on the cross, having been smitten, while the rock in Numbers 20 foreshadowed Him on high. The term in Numbers 20 refers to an elevated rock pointing to Christ in His exaltation. If you have ever wondered why Moses was disciplined so harshly, this is why. Christ was not to be smitten twice. Paul wrote in Romans 6:9-10, "We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death He died, He died to sin, once for all." Moses' actions interfered with the shadow or type that God was painting with the rock.

You must understand that He is the substance of the shadow of the rock in Exodus. Paul also wrote in 1 Corinthians 10 these words, "For I do not want you to be unaware brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ." When Moses was commanded to smite the rock, that was a foreshadowing of the moment when Jesus would be smitten for the sins of the world.

When I consider the punishment Moses incurred for striking the Rock in Numbers 20 rather than speaking to it, I think of two things. First, God is extremely serious about the pictures that He is painting for us in the Old Testament. I have failed to realize how important this is because it actually points to the omniscience of God and His omnipotence too. He is all-knowing and all-powerful. It is important that we understand God is in control of all things. Everything will go as He plans and Moses nor anyone else has the right to change His canvas one iota. Second, no one will smite Jesus a second time. He did what He did in humility, but He is exalted now and will receive all the glory and honor He deserves as the One once smitten for the sins of the world.

February 4

Isaiah 53:4-5; Acts 2:18

Today I want to continue focusing on the shadows that we see in Exodus 16 and 17 that point us to Jesus. In Exodus 16, the “bread from heaven” is easily understood to be Christ. In the gospel of John, He often referred to Himself as the Bread of Life. The Lord’s Supper depicts the bread as the body of Christ. He said Himself that night in the upper room that the bread represented His own body that would be broken for them (1 Cor. 11:23). It is a short step to realize in light of Exodus 17 that Exodus 16 is painting a picture of the incarnation of Christ. He would come down from heaven to earth, to give His body as the bread of life for all who would receive Him.

Now, understanding that truth, it is easier to see Exodus 17 as a picture of the crucifixion of Christ. The One who came down from heaven to give His life would be the One who was smitten from which Living Water flowed. As the manna descended from heaven, so did Jesus. As the rock was smitten by the rod of judgment in the hand of Moses, so Jesus would be judged by God for the sins of the world. He would be smitten and by His stripes we would be healed (Isa. 53:4-5). Note too that God tells Moses that He would be there before him on the rock. This would indeed be an act of divine judgment just as it would eventually be on the cross at Calvary.

It wasn’t until the Rock was smitten that the life-giving water flowed from it. Luke wrote in Acts 2, the words of Peter, that the Spirit would be poured out on that day as prophesied by the prophet Joel. I have mentioned John 7:38-39 before but it fits once again. There John wrote the words of Jesus Christ, “Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ Now this He said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit has not been given because Jesus was not yet glorified.” First Jesus was crucified and risen, and then the Holy Spirit came.

We cannot leave this point to ponder without worshipping around the truth of Psalm 105:41-42. In reference to the Exodus and the wilderness wanderings, the Psalmist wrote, “He opened the rock, and water gushed out; it flowed through the desert like a river. For He remembered His holy promise and Abraham His servant.” The water from the Rock flowed and all of the people drank from that spiritual Rock who was none other than our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). Friends, the people didn’t deserve the life-giving water anymore or less than you and I deserved God’s free gift of grace given to us by His Spirit either. God saved them because He is a covenant keeping God. We need never fear that God would ever break His promises or not keep His Word. The giving of the water was God acting through His marvelous grace as He so often does.

February 5

Romans 7:23

I must admit that I deeply love and enjoy looking for the shadows or types provided in Exodus. To be clear, this would include Moses as a type of Christ (deliverer), Pharaoh as Satan, and Egypt as the world (sin). Israel groaning in slavery pictures the sinner bound in their sin nature. Israel's deliverance from the cruel taskmasters points to our redemption and the journey across the desert is an example of the life of faith that is filled with trials, tests, setbacks, and advancements.

In Exodus 17, we get our first clear picture of the battle that will rage between our old nature and the new until we are finally glorified. Let me say at the outset, that although we will talk for a bit about the struggles, we must never forget that God has guaranteed our victory and that He has given us everything we need for the journey that pertains to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). For the first time since they were formed as the people of God, we will find in our text from Sunday that they are called to do some fighting (Ex. 17:9). If you follow the flow of the pictures presented so far, you will remember that after Jesus, the rock, was smitten, the life-giving water flowed like a river to the people. We know this represents the Spirit who is to come after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

Now we come face to face with another reality of the Christian life. There is now a new nature that has been born again in us and brought us to spiritual life. This new nature is attacked by the old and a war rages in each of us (Rom. 7:23). Far too many people have failed to understand the importance of the value of this picture cast forth from this portion of Scripture. How many people have mistakenly thought that when they "accepted" Christ the struggles would all go away? This has left so many people discouraged, frustrated, disillusioned, and hopeless. The new has indeed come but that does not mean the old just went away without a fight. All of this is pictured in the second half of Exodus 17 as it is in other places in the Bible too.

The two natures are represented for us in the life of Abraham and Sarah. They had two sons: Ishmael was born to Hagar, and Isaac was born to Sarah. Ishmael of course represented that which was born of the flesh. Ishmael was born according to normal, common nature while Isaac was born as a miracle. Ishmael was born to the bondwoman while Isaac was born to the free (Gal. 4:22). BUT, after Isaac entered the household of Abraham and Sarah, there was a conflict (Gen. 21:9). Paul wrote, "But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now" (Gal. 4:29).

The old nature in us does its very best to persecute, to tear down, and to destroy the new nature who is in us. What we are going to see in the battle between the Amalekites and the Israelites is a picture of the battle that rages in all followers of Christ; especially at first. The Amalekites surely heard of the river of water flowing in the camp and sought to attack them in order to acquire it. This would have been nothing new for them. They wanted the water and knew they would first need to take possession from Israel. This was common practice (Gen. 21:25; 26:19-20, etc.). We will pick up here tomorrow.

February 6

Galatians 5:17

Have you ever noticed that even after God told Jacob that He was changing his name to Israel, there are still times when He refers to him as Jacob (Gen. 32:28). Believe it or not, this too exemplifies the battle between the two natures that struggle within. For so long I despised Jacob. Truthfully, he is still not one of my favorites in the Bible. I have learned however that in too many ways that I don't want to admit, he represents me. His life often exhibits that dual personality problem that we all have. At one moment we see him trusting God and exercising faith, and at other times we see him giving in to fear and unbelief.

When the Holy Spirit through the writers of the Old Testament refers to him as Jacob, it is when we see the old nature with the upper hand in his life. When he is mentioned as Israel, you can see the fruits of his new nature being produced and worked out in him. For example, When Joseph's brothers came back from Egypt and told their father that Joseph was still alive it is recorded, "...but when they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said..." (Gen 45:27). Also, in Genesis 49:33 he is referred to as Jacob, but when he is embalmed, he is referred to as Israel (Gen. 50:2). Jacob died and Israel was embalmed. I can't help but think that the old nature, Jacob, was finally gone and the new nature, Israel, was all that remained.

The point is that on the path of faith as a Christian, there is a conflict between our two natures. Just as Ishmael persecuted Isaac and Jacob's two natures battled, so it is in the Christian life. Paul said, "For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other" (Gal. 5:17). The question that we need to ask is what is the remedy? Are we bound by this never-ending struggle, and should we just accept that all we can do is hang in there and do our best?

Be encouraged dear ones for God has indeed made provision for us. The problems are expounded and seldom overcome because so many people fail to use the means of grace that God makes available to us for our spiritual journey. We will see these in Exodus 17 now. The Bible tells us that once the river of water began to flow to give life to the Israelites, the Amalekites showed up to fight with them at Rephidim. This is a picture of how Satan shows up when we get saved to create chaos and confusion in our lives. He immediately begins to seek any he can devour (1 Pet. 5:18). Surely, they heard about the water gushing from the rock and so came to take it.

It is interesting to note that Balaam refers to Amalek in Numbers 24:20 as the first to war against Israel but who will ultimately be destroyed. Friend, the devil may war against us, but he can't have us. God will finish in us what He started (Phil. 1:6) and will ultimately vanquish our worst enemy and greatest foe (Rev. 20:10). Don't forget for your own encouragement that it is not until you received the Holy Spirit, the living water, that the inward conflict began (1 Pet. 1:4). Your battle is not strange, and it is nothing new. Fight on Christian the victory belongs to our Lord.

February 7

Hebrews 12:1-2, 12

I was thinking the other day about how people who are politically, and more important spiritually, liberal tend to push their agendas to the point of forced acceptance. It isn't enough that they would be allowed to have their way, they want you to agree with them; anything less is to be deemed as judgment. I start here today because as I consider the battle between the Amalekites and Israelites, it is important to recognize the Amalekites attacked them.

As I mentioned yesterday, it helps to see the historical event recorded in Exodus 17 as a picture of a spiritual reality. Keep in mind that this was the first time the Israelites had been called to fight since before their bondage in Egypt. Note too that it was only after the Rock had been smitten and the people drank from that spiritual supply. This of course represents the future coming of the Spirit and the fact that the people would drink Him in and be filled. When the life-giving water was provided, the battle began.

Friend, you and I both know that when we accept Christ as Lord and Savior, the real spiritual battles begin. You see, it is not until you "choose" Jesus that Satan becomes adversarial. Previous to our new birth, we were all dead in our sins and not interested in living a holy life before God. Until the Holy Spirit begins to shed light in our wicked hearts, we don't realize the depth of our sin or its control over us. An unsaved or unredeemed person is entirely under the dominion of the flesh and serves its lusts and does its will. The flesh does not fight its subjects, it simply rules over them. As soon as we receive the new nature as a follower of Christ, the conflict begins. That is what we see in Exodus 17.

The new nature finds joy and delight in feeding on the Word of God and fellowshiping with other believers in worship, service, and community. But the flesh will not let him/her live in peace. The Devil lives to rob the believer of their joy and does all he can to work his sinister plans against us. This is what Paul meant when he said the flesh is against the Spirit. I am sure that we all know this far too well.

I will close tomorrow talking about the significance of Aaron and Hur holding up the hands of Moses while the battle raged below, but as we close today I want to point out that in the battle that we fight against the flesh in our own day, it is tiring and frankly is too much for us to win on our own or in our own strength. Even as Moses did his part in the battle, his hands grew tired and would naturally begin to fall by his sides. Luke wrote these words of Christ, "Always pray and do not lose heart" (Luke 18:1). It is so easy to lose heart when the battle rages and fatigue and frustration set in.

The author of Hebrews wrote, "Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees" (Heb. 12:12). This is written in the context of a people who are growing increasingly tired and worn out because of the opposition and persecution they are experiencing. I thank God that He reminds us to look to Jesus and all who have gone before us as instruments of encouragement and hope. Tomorrow we will finish the week thinking about the ministry of Christ and the Holy Spirit in our daily battles against the flesh.

February 8

Romans 8:26; Hebrews 7:25

Have you ever wondered what is the significance of Aaron and Hur holding up Moses' hands during the battle with the Amalekites? What a weird way to achieve a military victory. Surely there is more to it than some weird "power" found in the raised hands of a mere mortal. As we begin today, keep in mind that God is teaching us important truths about our battle as His people against the flesh and the evil one who opposes Him and us.

Moses does not represent Christ standing on the hilltop because Jesus would certainly not grow weary and needy as our Savior. The point of this picture is that God makes provision for us in our battle. In this case, Joshua needed Moses and Moses needed Aaron and Hur. I am encouraged and I hope you will be too as we ponder the point that although battles surely come in a believer's life, God makes a way to insure our victory. We are not called to drink from the river of living water and then to survive on our own from that point.

The first point that we must remember in our battle against the flesh is that we must pray. The uplifted hands of Moses surely speak to the necessity of fervent and consistent prayer. David wrote in the 28th Psalm, "Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help, when I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary" (v.2). In the New Testament Paul wrote, "I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands" (1 Tim. 2:8). Another demonstration of God's amazing grace and understanding extended to us by His mercy is that He knows we grow weary in our efforts to fight.

An all important point of Exodus 17 is that we must never forget that as soon as we lose our sense of total dependency upon God, our flesh begins to prevail over us. This is what Paul means when He said, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). I am so thankful that in this amazing picture we see that we are not left alone. Moses stands with Aaron and Hur by his side.

Aaron was the head of Israel's priesthood and must surely point to the One who could come to serve as our Great High Priest. The name Hur means "light." It should be understood that He represents the Holy Spirit in this beautiful shadow of what was to be fulfilled in the work of the Lord Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit when His work on earth was done. God in His grace has fully provided all that we need to gain victory over the flesh in the here and now.

I hope that you will recall that Christ intercedes for us from the right hand of the Father in heaven today (Heb. 7:25) and that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us from earth as well (Romans 8:26). So, from heaven and earth we are covered by grace, empowered from above, and aided by the second and third persons of the Trinity. Note that it says Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword. I can't help but think this must point to the importance of and necessity of the Sword of the Spirit, the Word, in the Christian's life too. Look at Deuteronomy 25:17-18 and make sure that you do not lag behind in your faithfulness to Christ. It is those who do who become prey for the evil one. Dear one, in the end God will destroy the Amalekites in your life too. Hang tough!