

Exodus 17:7

“So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the contention of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, ‘Is the Lord among us or not?’”

When the sojourning camp of Israel reached Rephidim they were horrified to discover there was no water. There are many things in life we view as necessities, which are actually comforts; water is not one of them. A person can survive in difficult desert conditions for about 3 days without water. Their situation was grave, to say the least. This truly could have been the end for Israel. As the people assessed the problem, the only solution they could come up with was to return to Egypt. They knew if water was not discovered quickly, they would certainly perish. When Moses heard their complaint, he immediately sought counsel from the Lord. After crying out to God, he received a remarkable promise. If he would take his rod and strike a rock, water would be provided for the people. Rather than relying upon the science that a rock is more dense than a stick, and if rock hits stick, the stick will break, Moses chose to trust in the word of God and strike the rock. Miraculously, water began to gush forth, and Israel lived to see another day. After the events had been accomplished, Moses decided to name the area. Whatever this particular site had been known as before, it would now have a different name. Reflecting on the events, many names would be applicable; he could have called it “Miracle Water”, “Where the Rock Struck”, “Provision from God”, “Watering Hole”; truly the possibilities seem endless. I am struck by the name Moses chose;

“So he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah”

Massah means tempted and Meribah means contention. Of all the things Moses chose to take away from the events of this day, he thought they should remember the contention of the people, rather than the amazing work of the Lord. This is a dangerous and costly way to live. We will read, some thirty-eight years later, Moses will once again find himself with the people and without sufficient water. The seeds of his hostility toward the people which were planted here, will get the best of him and he will strike another rock in anger, costing him his position as leader of the nation.

Whatever situation in life we are facing, there is always more than one perspective. If we choose to look through the eyes of doubt, bitterness, anger, fear or frustration, we will walk away with seeds that will produce the same kind of fruit later. On the other hand, if we choose to look for the hand of God in the

midst of our struggles, we will have our faith strengthened and be more conditioned to face the next difficulty life throws our way.

Moses was a great man who served the Lord in tremendous ways, but here he chose to look at things from the wrong perspective. Let's learn from his example.

Pastor Jim