

## 031223 "Where God Guides, God Provides" Exodus 17:1-7

If you read Exodus, there is a covenant between God and the Israelites. This is the covenant God establishes with the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai after he led them out of Egyptian slavery. With it, God supplies the Law that is meant to govern and shape the people of Israel in the Promised Land.

According to the Bible, in the time of Moses, God spoke directly to the Israelites through Moses, and God provided for their needs. Where God guides, God provides. Yahweh God has many names. For example, Yahweh Shalom – The Lord is peace. Yahweh Nissi – The Lord is my banner (victory). Yahweh Rapha – The God who heals. Yahweh Yireh – God will provide.

“Guide”, as a verb, is defined by Merriam Webster as “to direct in a way, to supervise or influence usually to a particular end, or to superintend someone’s training or instruction.” God does indeed guide us. God provides the Bible as instruction for us, as well as His commandments for us to follow. We know that God guides us through hard times and easy times through prayer, obedience, and relationship with God.

According to Exodus 17, leaving the Desert of Sin, the Israelites went from place to place, as God directed them, and ended up at Rephidim. However, there was no water for the Israelites at Rephidim. It is important to note that it was God who led Israel to Rephidim. We might wonder, “did God make a mistake?” Like the Israelites, we are called as children of God amongst ups and downs of this world. Faced with numerous trials in life, we try to live according to God’s word. We try to read the Bible, and moreover, we try to live by applying the Bible to our lives. However, despite our efforts, we often encounter numerous challenges we weren’t able to foresee.

The Israelites’ response to the lack of water was to grumble. In the eyes of the Israelites, their dilemma was that being obedient to the Lord’s

commandments had led them astray (to no drinking water), but there is more to the story.

The meanings behind names of people or places in the Bible hold special significance. In verse 7, "And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?". Massah means trial or temptation. Meribah means quarrel or dispute.

When we look closely at the quarrel between the Israelites and Moses in verse 2, the Israelites faulted Moses for bringing them into the wilderness. The scripture makes it clear that it was God's will to challenge the Israelites, but the Israelites were only fixated on the lack of water and placed all the blame on Moses. They were blinded to the guidance of God. They were blinded to their own disobedience and lack of faith. The situation escalated to the point where Moses cried out to God that the Israelites were ready to stone him.

Did the Israelites act this way because they are foolish and childish, or momentarily "out of sorts"? This is simply not the case. They were witness to God's 10 plagues of Egypt, witness to the parting of the Red Sea, and witness to God's guidance by means of pillar of cloud (in daytime) and pillar of fire (at night). They saw with their own eyes how God had miraculously sweetened the water at Marah, and how he had produced quail and manna. They had experienced firsthand God's grace at each and every trial they faced, but they hardened their hearts and did not believe God's promise. They lacked faith that God was among them. This wilderness story shows how difficult it is to transform a formerly enslaved people into a nation of trust.

In response to Israel's murmuring, God stages a miracle. "The LORD said to Moses, 'Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and

water will come out of it, so that the people may drink"" (verses 5-6).

It's easy to look down on the Israelites as foolish and weak, but this could just as easily be us. When we look back at our own lives, we can see evidence of God's grace during hard times, but we still doubt God's presence when things are not going well. Today's Bible story tells us clearly. Where God guides, God provides. Yahweh Yireh!

On July 1, 1899, Thomas Andrew Dorsey was born in a small town, GA. He, one of seven brothers and sisters, was around the church most of his early life. His dad was a devout Baptist preacher, and his mother was an organist. She started young Thomas on the piano when he was 7 years old. At age 21, he joined the Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago where he directed choirs and wrote more than 300 songs. In a taped interview in 1977, Thomas A. Dorsey told a writer the following story.

"My wife, Nettie, was about to bear our first child. I was called to St. Louis to sing in a revival. I wondered if I should go because of my wife's condition. She persuaded me that I should go ahead, so I, alone in my Model A, drove to St. Louis." "During the first night of the meetings, a lad brought a telegram to me while I was still on the platform. It was horrible news. It was a message that my wife had died giving birth to our son." "I rushed to a phone while the people were still singing and found that the message was true. Mr. Gus Evans drove me back to Chicago that night."

"When I arrived I found that the wonderful baby boy was seemingly fine, and yet, that night he also died. I buried my wife and little son in the same casket." "I became very despondent and filled with grief. A few days later I visited with my good friend, Professor Frye. We walked around the campus of Annie Malone's Poro College for awhile and then went into one of the music rooms."

"I sat down at a piano and began to improvise on the keyboard. Suddenly, I found myself playing a particular melody that I hadn't played before that time. As I played I began to say, 'Blessed Lord, blessed Lord, blessed Lord.' My friend walked over to me and said, 'Why don't you make that precious Lord?' I then began to sing, 'Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me stand.'" "When I finished the song, we began to use it and it has been going ever since. I have gotten letters from people all over the world. It was a great tragedy, but we got the message to the world."

This is the story behind the hymn, "Precious Lord, Take My Hand." Isaiah 41:13 says, " For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, 'Do not fear, I will help you.'"

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, God promises to never leave us. God promises to give us rest and hope. To those of us who repent and believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, God promises that we shall not perish but have eternal life. Until you enter the kingdom of God, why don't you ask God to hold your hand. Where God guides, God provides. Fairfield Grace, May God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you and your family, and your business, and your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.