

The Staff with Which You Struck the Nile



Sermon Text

Exodus 17:1-7



Big Idea

We are in the wilderness. We are exposed. We grumble. But God is gracious. He takes the judgment we deserve upon Himself and, in His blood, we find water.

(1) A Wilderness Grumbling

(1) What Exactly Is the Wilderness? It is the place of trial, of hardship, of deficiency, of little water and little food and little comfort. It's the desert. It's the place that exists between Egypt and Canaan, between the house of slavery and the Land of Promise.

(2) What Is God up to in the Wilderness? God actually takes us into the wilderness, the desert, so we can see clearly once more. He takes us into the wilderness to dissipate the mirage of self-sufficiency and bring us into full-hearted relationship with Him again.

(3) How Do We Often Respond in the Wilderness? Every grumble is an argument with the Almighty. Every grumble is an audacious attack on the way in which God is running the universe. Every grumble is a toddler trying to tell her daddy how to parent. Every grumble says, in essence, "If I were on the throne, I would do better." When the gap between my expectations and reality isn't closed by faith, grumbling quickly rises to fill the void. Or to put it another way: When the gap between my will and God's will (what I want God to be doing in my life and what He's actually doing in my life) isn't closed by faith, grumbling quickly rises to fill the void.

(2) A Striking Provision

(1) What Is Moses to Do? "Strike."

(2) What Is Moses to Strike? "The rock."

(3) What is Moses to Strike the Rock with? "The Staff with which you struck the Nile."

Each of these things, in one way or another, is preparing us to see the work of Jesus on the cross. He is God's gracious provision for grumbling people. He is the way of healing and life even in the midst of the wilderness.

(3) An Unspeakable Privilege

The rock has already been struck. Now all we need to do is speak. Christ, has already made an offering for our sin, our grumbings, our breaches of faith. No more atonement is necessary. No payback is required. All that God asks is that you come and speak. And the living water of His grace will flow. Even in the midst of the wilderness.

Reflection Questions



- Do you feel at home in the world, or does it truly feel like a wilderness to you? How so? Be specific. What is the "water" that has been lacking lately?
- We often spend all of our time and energy trying to change the wilderness—to make it more comfortable, more pleasant—but really God draws us out into the wilderness so that He can change *us*. How have you been trying to change the wilderness lately? How has God been using the wilderness to change you?
- Read Numbers 20:1-13. Explain in your own words what it means that now the rock (which is Christ [1 Corinthians 10:4]) only needs to be spoken to. What is God trying to teach us here? What would it mean for you to strike the rock again? Have you been speaking to Christ in your wilderness pilgrimage lately? How has living water been coming to you from Him?