

THE BIGGER PICTURE (Ex. 17:5)

Sometimes when we are in our own little corner we tend to only see the battle right in front of us. Whether it relates to our church or to some personal issue we can focus in on the problem so much, we don't see the bigger picture. Either we end up becoming overconfident which would breed carelessness, or we become discouraged at the potential scale of the problem, and we retreat or surrender ... it can affect us as Christians.

Moses was a great man of God and yet he didn't always see 'the bigger picture'. In dramatic circumstances God had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, **Ex. 13:17** And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near ... **18** But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed [*fully armed and prepared*] out of the land of Egypt ... **21** And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: **22** He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people. ... **Ex. 14:5** And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled: and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us? **6** And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him: **7** And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them. **8** And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel ... **10** And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. ... The people complained ... **11** And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? **12** Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. **13** And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. **14** The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace ... and the Lord miraculously saved them from the Egyptians, **29** But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. **30** Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. **31** And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.

Moving on, **Ex. 15:22** So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. **23** And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. **24** And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? **25** And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, **26** And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee. **27** And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.

After resting at Elim ('palms?') and benefitting in the Lord leading them to an abundance of water, **Ex. 16:1** they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. **2** And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: **3** And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. **4** Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you ... So the Lord provided water and bread for them.

Travelling deeper into the wilderness, the people complained again, **Ex. 17:1** And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. **2** Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink ... They were verbally and emotionally attacking this elderly eighty-year old man who was only doing what the Lord had told him to do, **3** And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? In fact, it 'crossed their minds' to stone him, **4** And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.

The Lord had already done so much for them through Moses, but there was no gratitude and they still had not learned to call out to God for help. Instead, Moses bore the brunt of their anger ... and Moses then **4** cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? In the circumstances, Moses forgot God had set

him over these people, and he was thinking *he* was responsible for finding an answer to their predicament. ... But really, he would not have had the people there if the Lord had not taken them there, - the Lord was in control, but it seemed Moses was forgetting that for he asked, *What shall I do unto this people?*

And the Lord simply said to him, *5 Go on before the people ... walk on ahead of these people ... take only the elders with you, and the rod with which you smote the Red Sea, 6 Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. ...* The Lord never takes us anywhere He is not prepared to provide for us. It doesn't matter how barren it is around us ...

My Lord knows the way through the wilderness ...

Strength for today is mine all the way,

And all that I need for tomorrow ...

All I have to do is follow.

... The Lord will never take you anywhere He is not prepared to provide for you ... How many times in those recent couple of months had the Lord provided for the Hebrews? ... He opened the Red Sea for them to pass through. He defeated their armies. He provided manna. He led them through the wilderness with the cloud by day and the fire by night. He hadn't left them once! He was with them all the time ... but they weren't seeing the bigger picture.

And Moses wasn't seeing it either until the Lord told him to go to a place where the only voice he would be listening to was the voice of God. All the voices around him were exacerbating the problems and he wasn't able to see the bigger picture of what God had already done and what He was continuing to do.

It is not good to ignore reality, but sometimes it *is* good to move out of the present circumstances to see a different perspective for we have a God Who promises, *Ps. 50:15 call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*

We need a church secretary, new deacons, younger people, children for the Sunday School ... you can very easily see all our needs. ... We could be like the children of Israel with Moses, grumbling and griping every step of the way, - why don't we do 'this', and why don't we do 'that'? ... But if they had taken the step into the Lord's presence they would have seen He *was* working. If He hadn't been, they would not even have made it into the wilderness, but they would have drowned in the Red Sea! ... And the history of Israel would have

been very short! Instead, He took them through the wilderness and kept them for the next forty years ... He had promised Abraham, the father of their nation, **Gen. 15:13** thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs [*Egypt*], and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; **14** And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they [*the Hebrews*] come out with great substance. ... **Gen. 17:8** And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. ... *That's* the bigger picture Moses and the people had forgotten.

God is able to fulfil all His promises, no matter how dire the situation may appear. The God Who has the power to change darkness into light is the God Who defends His people. He has a path before them to progress and with His strength, they will ... no matter what the circumstances. ... And that is what the psalmist David learned too, **Ps. 37:18** The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever. **19** They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied ... **22** For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth ... **23** The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way. **24** Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand. ... And that *is* the bigger picture.