

Have you ever lost a job? Did you worry about getting another one? Have you had bills you couldn't pay? Or been seriously sick? And, God came through for you. But then something else happened, something serious. Was it easier to have faith the second go-round? Or did you find you struggled equally as much, wondering if God would come through, just like the anthem we just heard.¹

We are like the children of Israel, during difficult circumstances. How many times must God come through for us to have faith? Do you struggle with doubt? This message is for you.

This is the third round for Israel. They were stressed! They had been without water once. God helped them out. Then, they were without food. God fed them every day. Now, they were without water – again! God should have been undoubtable. But reality drowned out trust. Do life's difficulties snuff out your faith?

Perhaps you think God was being unreasonable by allowing these repeated harsh conditions. After all, they were simply following God out into the desert. God had given them fantastic victory, now things got hard. Why?

God was doing something. God has a purpose in every challenge.

Do you find yourself challenged by desert-like circumstances? Perhaps you doubt God too, wondering, *Is God with me or not?*

But God is indeed here. And indeed God intended through these trials to show God's presence and love, and to build faith. How is your faith? Would you like to have more faith? I would! Gaining faith is a process accomplished through exercising it. Faith is a requirement for God's children; without it you and I accomplish nothing. The challenges we encounter are what God uses to build our faith. Faith makes us strong Christians. Faith is our witness. If we don't give God the opportunity to come through in power, nothing shines.

Even though the children whined, God provided the water. God is generous, not stingy. God does not withhold. It wasn't about being good to gain water, although lack of faith will hinder your prayers. It was about learning how to have faith. God involved elders, the staff, and a rock.

Faith is a community event. So God called for the elders to join Moses. God called them to step up because Moses could not do this alone. Those leaders stood with Moses to impart the vision of faith and enact it. The job of elders, then and now, is to take a significant role in leading God's people and to take steps of faith.

Currently our nominating committee is praying about the next class of elders. They are selected from the members at FPCD. So if you feel a call to leadership, the first step is to join the church. Are you a member? Take that important step of commitment.

¹“So You Would Know” by Brooklyn Tabernacle

Secondly, elders are not moderators of committees but leaders in faith. They are spiritual leaders who stand with me to impart God's vision for this church. They do stuff too, like pray for you, teach Sunday school, plan worship services, and lead special events. God looks for leaders who will step out in faith.

Are we acting in faith here at FPCD? Yes! Let's take the building repair and restoration. It began with a gift that was designated for the building. An elder received notice of the gift. She could have spent the money and left it at that. But she felt compelled to do more; she wanted to paint. Others caught her vision and joined her. Then, someone else decided to buy new inside doors to replace old, scratched, broken doors. At the same time, the women's ministry donated funds to purchase new outside doors for the fellowship hall. God is moving us; and you all are responding in faith. Next a larger gift came in, making possible the purchase of carpet for half the education building. Faith caused all this to materialize.

Inspired by faith, more people got involved, cleaning and reorganizing the classrooms. Broken windows, torn screens, and rotting siding have been replaced. Overgrown shrubs were removed. Someone else began work on redesigning the now new garden area. Faith says this church is worth the investment.

Last Saturday 35 people showed up for workday to scrub and care for God's house. This place was crawling with people. Faith is contagious. Vision inspires.

A workman was here hanging the doors that Saturday. He was stunned. He's never seen a church full of people who care. He felt drawn by your faith and vision. In fact, a week later, still amazed, for 30 minutes he enthusiastically told me what a great church I have. All because someone had the vision to give and then others, inspired by that gift, moved forward in faith.

God told Moses to take the elders and go do something really unique. I can hear the conversation. Moses went to those seventy guys and said, "Come with me. We are going over to a rock which God has shown me. God himself is there on the rock, even though you can't see Him. And I'm to take my staff and strike that rock for water. You are to stand with me." And together he and the elders set out to accomplish this task of faith.

Surely walking along they probably thought, *is Moses crazy? Water from a rock? Impossible!* It would take real faith to do this. But God was teaching something special here.

How is doubt overcome? Do you ever feel God calling you to something but fear and doubt stop you? And so you stall out.

How did Moses have faith? He went forward. He did the task he was called to do. He went and hit the rock. He trusted God wasn't just up there in heaven floating around, but right there standing on the rock ready to act. As soon as Moses acted, God gave out the life-giving water they needed.

The book of James tells us faith requires action (2:14). Every believer listed in the faith chapter of Hebrews (ch. 11) did something. God works through doubt by saying, "Move along, do

something.” Everyone can do something. The person who wrote that initial check would surely be amazed at what has come out of it.

Hebrews tells us people of faith believe in a far better place than what you can see around us – life filled with desert places (11:26-27). Moses had his eye on God who was standing on a rock, ready to share the most wonderful truth: God gives life in the middle of dead places! And that life comes through Christ, our rock. We read it earlier: “For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:4).

How is Christ a rock? He told the woman at the well who was seeking water, “it’s a gift of living water. It’s better than living for the here and now, because this life only leads to more thirst. But the water Jesus gives wells up, gushes up to eternal life” (John 4:10-14).

Isn't that amazing that God was already doing that for the children of Israel in the desert? God was giving them faith.

Ordinary life was tough, but God was unveiling the most marvelous gift that frees us all – the Rock, Jesus. Hebrews tells us Moses saw it. Do you see Jesus as the One who can overcome your thirst?

At a festival in Jerusalem, Jesus cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink . . . ‘Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” He was speaking about the Spirit, which believers were to receive; (John 7:37-39a).

Isn't it incredible that Jesus and the Holy Spirit worked in that desert with God? If they worked there then, they work here now, inside you, in your dry place. Are you stepping out in faith?

Revelation says, “They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat . . . for the Lamb . . . will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (7:16-17).

Let God replace your tears and doubt with faith today. Are you standing on the rock? Stand on it. Trust that God is there ready to shape you into a person of faith.

“Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift” (Revelation 22:17b).

AMEN