

God invested His life into the dying Israelites through the water of Rephidim

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June 1, 1975

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Exodus 17: 1-7: All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim; but there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore the people found fault with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you find fault with me? Why do you put the Lord to the proof?" But the people thirsted there for water, and the people murmured against Moses, and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?" So Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." And the Lord said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand the rod with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, that the people may drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the faultfinding of the children of Israel, and because they put the Lord to the proof by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

Moses was given direction from God to take the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan, but it was so difficult that Heavenly Father knew He had to do something for the Israelites or it would have been almost impossible to achieve. There was no water, no food. It was clear from the beginning, therefore, that even God knew how difficult the course was. As we read Exodus, we can't count the number of rebellions and betrayals or complaints against God and against Moses. If there were no such thing as forgiveness, the Israelites would have been smashed by God.

But according to the Bible, the Israelites were forgiven hundreds and hundreds of times, so many that God almost seems to be foolish for not being more strict. And yet, He forgave them as many times as they committed sins. For instance, during the 40 years in the wilderness, there was almost no faith left at all. Nevertheless, God told Moses, "Make a serpent of bronze and let them see the serpent and they will be cured." God had sent serpents among the people to make them repent, but when Moses prayed for them, God said, "Everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." (Num. 21:8) That's all they had to do, just look and they would be forgiven. God was too generous, too sweet.

When we look at the past, God was not so forgiving. For instance, at the time of Noah, when Ham failed in his mission Ham was forsaken. Also, all the people who had ridiculed Noah were killed by God, judged at once. But at the time of Moses, this same God was forgiving and sweet. Why? Once a sin is committed it is impossible even for God to forgive unconditionally, therefore there must have been some condition through which God could forgive the Israelites at the time of Moses. That condition was the water of Rephidim. Through this condition, God established a life relationship with the Israelites, a relationship that could not be broken by any force. Water means life.

If someone you have just met on the street comes to your center to hear a lecture, you don't know him or

her so well. If that person has some strange habit and you say something about that, then he or she may get angry with you and leave because you had no deep relationship with him or her. But if your intimate friend comes to you, you can say anything to him: Hey, what are doing? Why are you so spaced out today? Whatever you may say doesn't matter to that person, but if you say it to a guest he will get angry and leave. What is the difference?

If you cut your wrist even slightly, you may die, but if you cut your leg even if the wound is deep you wouldn't die. The artery is just beneath the skin at the wrist, so even a small cut might be fatal. But a leg cut, even if deep, is not fatal because the artery is very deep. The same is true in relationships between people. If your relationship is deep your words don't reach the artery, even if they are insulting. But your guest with whom you have no relationship feels even a slight insult as a fatal wound.

This is the same with God. Originally we had a father-son relationship with God, but because of the fall of man this relationship was cut and we became strangers to each other. God had nothing to do with the fall of man so when mankind tried to come back to God the relationship was very shallow. Even a small event might destroy that relationship between God and man. Therefore, Heavenly Father was very anxious about this relationship. If something happened to destroy it, God would have to forsake the Israelites. God also knew the Israelites might betray Him many times and thus the artery might be cut and the relationship between God and man might have died.

Because this artery was so shallow at the beginning, to deepen this relationship God established a special condition through which He could create a life relationship with the Israelites- this was what happened at the water of Rephidim. When the people complained, Moses asked God how to deal with this and God said to strike a rock. Moses did it and water came out; they drank the water and their thirst was healed and thus God and the Israeli res came to have a life to life relationship. This condition meant that at the price of their life the Israelites would obey God, and even at the price of His life, God would protect the Israelites. After that, nothing could destroy the relationship between God and the Israelites.

If the Israelites complained against God, if they betrayed and disobeyed Moses which meant disbelief and disobedience to God, it gave God deep wounds. This happened hundreds and hundreds of times. God was covered with cuts and scars and was bleeding all over, but owing to the water of Rephidim no matter how deep the cuts given by the Israelites, the artery was not broken. The relationship between God and the Israelites remained alive. This is the reason why even though they disobeyed God so many times, God could still give them the Ten Commandments and the special privilege of the tabernacle. Even when Moses later failed in his mission (by striking the rock twice), as long as one person kept faith in the tabernacle it was possible to continue God's dispensation. When the Israelites disobeyed God, it was painful to Him, but the life relationship was not destroyed and enough of a foundation existed for God to continue to forgive them.

How deep is your relationship with God and with brothers and sisters? How deep is the artery? How many of us can say we have this kind of deep relationship among us? Sometimes some trivial event happens and our relationship is broken. Even small cuts can be fatal because the artery is just beneath the skin. If our life relationship with God and each other is deep, then even when brothers and sisters make mistakes we can forgive them. Whatever we say -- "Oh, you are a fool! You are spaced out!" -- the wound is not fatal. There is a German saying that those who love each other can tease each other. By teasing, we are just making sure of the depth of trust, we are just checking the depth of the artery, of the relationship. If you have an internal relationship with God, you can tease God and God is still happy, and God might tease you and you feel happy.

If you hear from brother B that brother A said something bad about you, if your relationship with A is shallow you might be insulted and the relationship might be destroyed. But if your relationship with A is deep, then if you hear something you would say, "Maybe there is some mistake, some misunderstanding. I will check with A directly." Then the relationship can only get deeper. Whatever happens, once the foundation of trust is laid nothing can destroy that relationship. Love is stronger than evil so even if your friend is doing something bad, because of your love for him you can help him solve his bad points or overcome his failure. You can pray for him, persuade him, or give him loving advice.

The depth of the arteries between God and man and among brothers and sisters is the key point in the foundation for receiving the Messiah. The foundation of faith is our relationship with God -- the vertical relationship. The foundation of substance is the horizontal love between brothers and sisters. The crossing-point is the point where we can meet the Messiah.

When the Israelites complained that they were thirsty and were dying, they were serious and God knew it so He invested His life there at the water of Rephidim. Man was dying and God invested His whole life into the water, so the life relationship was established. Even any disbelief or difficulty could not destroy that relationship.

In order to establish this kind of relationship with God and with brothers and sisters we must invest

ourselves wholly for the sake of God and for the sake of brothers and sisters. Without giving all of ourselves it is impossible to establish a life to life relationship. God invested His life into the dying Israelites through the water of Rephidim. If a brother or sister is dying spiritually, we must invest our entire life into him or her even at the price of our life. If by doing this your brother or sister lives, then they will feel they have been given life. This will create a life to life relationship. This is the meaning of the water of Rephidim. We need the water of Rephidim among brothers and sisters. If your brothers or sisters are wrong, you must cry for them, pray for them. If you know God is suffering, you must cry for God, even give your own life for God. Then God can also give life to us and a life to life relationship will be established.

To serve God even at the price of my life means to think more of His desires than my own desires. In order to realize God's desire, can I forget about eating, forget about sleeping, forget about enjoying myself? If we can think more of serving God through feeling God's desire than we think about eating or sleeping or resting, then God will invest His life into us.

When I visited Korea, Reverend Moon asked me how many people I had shed tears for and for how many people did I do something more than the sacrifice of my life. I was ashamed and speechless. I had been in the family pretty long but still I couldn't answer this question. I still didn't know how to sacrifice for the sake of brothers and sisters, how to love brothers and sisters. Unless we can experience true love even at the price of our lives we can't establish a life relationship between God and man and between man and man.

The Unification Church is the school of love. In order to graduate from this school we must establish this life to life relationship. Rebirth is the foundation, but the experience of love is just as important. Let's practice love. Let's love brothers and sisters with all our might and mind. Let's pray and think how to love God and Christ and brothers and sisters. Unless we put this into practice, nothing works. Let's give the water of Rephidim to brothers and sisters.