

Grumblers & complainers, gloomists & doomists, ranters & ragers – they all strike a nerve in each of us who have to live with, work with and deal with them from day to day. How do you handle such people in life? The Psalmist gives us some insight in today’s Templates of Truth.

In recounting the experiences of God’s people, the Psalmist states: *They also provoked Him to wrath at the waters of Meribah, so that it went hard with Moses on their account; because they rebelled against His Spirit, he spoke rashly with his lips* (106:32-33). He was writing about an event recorded in the book of Numbers when *there was no water for the congregation...the people thus contended with Moses and spoke, saying, “If only we perished when our brothers perished before the Lord! Why then have you brought the Lord’s assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here?”* (Numbers 20:2-4). Moses took the situation to God’s attention in prayer, and the Lord instructed Moses and Aaron to take his rod, assemble the people, and *speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water* (20:8). Moses and Aaron did as God commanded, but the way they did it was wrong. Once the people were gathered around the rock, Moses declared: *“Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out this rock?” Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly...but the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”* (Numbers 20:10-12). Basically, Moses let the sorry attitude of the people get to him, and, as my mother used to always say, he “let his mouth overload his brain;” or in this case, his heart! He *spoke rashly with his lips!*

What was it, exactly, that Moses did wrong and why was God so offended? The answer lies in the instructions God gave Moses on this occasion. Pragmatically, God told Moses to *speak* to the rock, not strike it with his rod. Jesus taught His disciples that *“if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall SPEAK to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it shall move!”* (Matthew 17:20). The power of God has often been revealed in the spoken word: *Then God SAID, “Let there be light,” and there was light* (Genesis 1:3). The offense to God, however, was far more serious than the mechanics. The way Moses handled this situation failed *to treat (God) as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel.*

When we have to deal with difficult people in our home life or work environment, we can often let them get to us to the point that we become frustrated, angry and resentful. When we have “had up to here” with them, we can often cross a line. We take on the role of God, and serve as judge, jury and executioner. Notice again what Moses said: *“Listen you rebels, shall WE bring forth water for you out of this rock?” Then Moses lifted up HIS hand and struck the rock.* When the water came forth, it appeared to the people that it was Moses who performed the miracle, and not God. As a result, the sin Moses committed, was as offensive to God as the sins of the people. It reminds me of another old adage my mother use to say: “two wrongs don’t make a right!” God never approves of us doing the right thing in the wrong way. Partial obedience is still disobedience! Had Moses declared what God intended to do, and simply spoke God’s command into existence, the people would have witnessed the miracle as a demonstration of God’s power

and Moses as a mere vessel through which God manifested Himself. Unfortunately, that is not what Moses did.

There are difficult people all around us. We deal with them day after day. Their attitudes are as negative and nagging as the grumbling Jews in the wilderness. You cannot reason with them. You cannot make them happy. If you try to talk logically with them, you often get into a never-ending game of “yes, but...” If you let them push you to the limit, however, and you take matters into your own hands, your offense can often be more consequential than theirs. Moses was called by God to lead the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage into the land of promise. The sin of Moses in this event resulted in his forfeiture to accomplish that call - *therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them*. We don't realize how much Moses regretted this consequence until we read later how much he begged God to relent and God put his foot down to Moses and declared, *“Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter!”* (Deuteronomy 3:26). Moses had to pass the baton to Joshua, and it was Joshua who led the people into the promise land.

Are you dealing with a difficult person in a difficult situation in life right now? Has your patience run thin? Be careful that while they're striking a nerve, you don't strike a rock!

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in Christ Jesus.

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