

SPIRITUAL DEHYDRATION IS A DEADLY CONDITION

Don't think, "It can't happen to me!" -- Drink regularly from the Rock who is Christ.

Exodus 17:1-7

TEXT: *The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?" But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

They say that after 7 days without water, the human body begins to shut down, and can fall into a condition that is irreversible. A condition that leads to death. However, dehydration of the human body in less noticeable situations can cause serious debilitating health issues that can be irreversible, and that might even result in death.

If water is so essential to the health and life of the human body, we will also know what Jesus meant when he once told a woman that she was spiritually "dehydrated": *If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. ... whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.* Jn 4 You and I know who it is who said these things to this woman. We have tasted and have drunk from the well of which Jesus speaks. But as dehydration can be a subtle threat to our bodies, so also is the more serious threat of the spiritual dehydration that can overwhelm and destroy our faith and our souls.

This is so important the Holy Spirit Himself sets before us a warning that SPIRITUAL DEHYDRATION IS A DEADLY CONDITION. He warns us: Don't think, "It can't happen to me!" and urges us to Drink regularly from the Rock who is Christ.

The Israelites could not stop their sinning. Shortly after the miraculous deliverance at the Red Sea, the miraculous provision of fresh water at Marah, the miraculous provision of fresh meat and daily manna, they run out of water again at the place called Rephidim. The Bible says: *They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?" But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."* They complained. After all that they had witnessed, they still complained. They did not have the courage to shake their fists at God, so they went to their pastor and complained. And then when he told them to take their prayers of discontent to God, they went away and grumbled: *...they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me."*

The Holy Spirit connects this ancient piece of Israel's history to the New Testament Church of today through the inspired letter of Paul to the Corinthians. Paul writes: *I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.* 1 Co 10 BUT, Paul writes: *God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to*

indulge in pagan revelry." We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did-and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did-and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did-and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! Could this happen to us? Could we fall into the sin of THINKING that we are standing firm while on our way to a fall?

We live among a people blessed like no other nation in the history of the world. And still the sins that disregard the Lord stand out among us. IDOLATRY? "Eating, drinking and indulging in pagan revelry?" What is that? Simply put, it is spending more time, energy and money on worldly pleasures than on the things that pertain to the kingdom of God. Or SEXUAL IMORALITY. Today's mothers and fathers, grandmas and grandpas participate in the moral filth of today's children by keeping their mouths shut instead of condemning the dishonoring of marriage and the common practice of living together and having sex before marriage. Silence is our consent. And GRUMBLING... God hates grumbling, as Paul writes: *some of them (grumbled) and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!* Don't think that spiritual dehydration cannot happen to me! It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that spiritual dehydration has already weakened the faith, or destroyed the faith of so many who still think that they are Christians. When asked why our congregations are getting smaller, well, this is the answer!

Without the water of life we die. We must drink deeply and regularly from the water of life!

The Bible says: *Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." The LORD answered Moses, "Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.* Jewish legend has it that the Israelites chipped off a piece of this rock and carried it with them during the 40 years they wandered in the Sinai wilderness so that whenever they needed water, this miraculous rock would provide it. What the legend forgets is that it was not the rock that provided the water, but the Lord who provided the water from out of that dead rock.

Without the Lord, whose Word caused water to come out, there is nothing but a dead rock. Without the Word of the Lord, the water that we use in Holy Baptism is just plain water. There is nothing holy about the water, but it is the Word used with the water that makes Baptism the vehicle, the tool, that the Holy Spirit has chosen to indicate that he is present with his power to create faith and life.

It is the Lord whose Word makes the eating and drinking of bread and wine the vehicle by which he transfers his true body and blood to the mouths and souls of those who participate in the Lord's Supper.

Without God's Word, specifically, that Word that is the message of Christ, crucified, died, buried and raised again for the forgiveness of our sins, and that Word of forgiveness connected by God's command to the water of Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper, there is no Holy Spirit. God has ordained these means as the tools of "hydrating" the hearts, minds and souls of people to keep them in the only true saving faith.

The legend that the Israelites carried chunks of the rock from which the Lord had Moses draw water so that they would always have a supply of water may only be a legend. There is nothing in the Bible that says that they did this. But the Bible does tell of what good King Hezekiah did to the Bronze Snake that the Lord had Moses make some 800 years earlier when the Israelites whined and complained and the Lord sent poisonous snakes to bite them as a punishment. Remember that piece of Bible History? When the people repented of their sin of grumbling and complaining against their pastors, Moses and Aaron, God told the people that when a snake bit them, if they would simply gaze upon the bronze snake he had commanded Moses to make, they would survive the snake bite. They kept that bronze snake as a relic, and after 800 years the Israelites were worshipping it. Hezekiah put an end to that open idolatry by destroying the relic. The Bible says: *(Hezekiah) did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done. ... He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it.* 2 Kings 18 To this day, the greatest danger for Christians is that we can fall into a spiritual dehydration by thinking that we are standing firm just because we belong to a church. Is it possible to belong to a church while neglecting worship, the preaching of God's Word and the blessed Sacrament? Yes, it is possible. Signs of

spiritual dehydration are when we begin to grumble and complain, worry and fret about life, become impatient with our fellow Christians, and even grumble and complain against the pastors and teachers that the Lord has called to lead us to that “Rock” that is Christ among us.

I mentioned that women from Scripture to whom Jesus said: *If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water. ... whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.* Jn 4 You and I know who it is who said these things to this woman. We have tasted and have drunk from the well of which Jesus speaks. Dehydration of the human body is serious, and after about 7 days its effects become irreversible and deadly. But forgetting the Lord is more serious because it is ETERNAL DEATH.

So let us all drink regularly and deeply from the Rock that is Christ among us, the Rock, that is the Gospel in Word and Sacrament. Let us drink, be refreshed and strengthened, and live! Amen.