

Obedience is better than Sacrifice

1 Corinthians 10:4: They all drank of that rock – and that rock was Christ.

As Moses fell before his God, he began to weep
How could he satisfy the needs of his two-legged bleating sheep?
'Twas just a week since they had come across the riven Red Sea
Already forgetting what God had done to set His people free.

"I've heard their cry and know their need - Egypt's in each soul
They must drink of living waters before they can be whole
You see the *tsur*ⁱ, that cutting rock, go smite it with your rod
I'll stand between you and its face" - so came the word of God.

The law-giver stood before the rock in that dry and barren land
He did as was commanded, his staff held in his hand
He struck but once – that's all it took - and living waters ran
The people drank to quench their thirst - enough for every man.

A picture has been painted here, to show what's Calvary's for
At Golgotha's rock, the Lord will bear the smiting of the Law.
That *tsur* rock – a cutting rock – that speaks of covenant made
The rod of law - that caused the wounds upon the Saviour laid.

For everyone who comes there thirsting, living streams still flow
To satisfy each longing heart on the journey here below
A foretaste of eternal springs that flow from 'neath God's throne
A promise to all repentant men who'd call His kingdom 'home'.

Years passed on and all had gone that drank of that first spring
Once again the murmuring rose – they had not learned a thing!
The aged patriarch comes once more to bring his case to God
Another picture he's told to paint – this time with a different rod.

"From before the ark, go take the rod that speaks of priestly right
Speak to the rock, the *sela*ⁱⁱ rock – within the people's sight
The *sela* rock – a fortified rock that points men to the sky
Where Christ my Son now sits enthroned inviting you draw nigh."

A different rod, a different rock, a different action sought
No more a beating from the law – its work's already wrought.
We come now to his presence with a priest's authority
And speaking out the people's needs, we bow before his knee.

And he pours out living water from the abundance of his grace
And invites us to come boldly and look upon his face
To mount the rock, ascend on high, and higher still to climb
To know his joy unspeakable and peace that's so sublime

This picture Moses failed to paint as he struck against the rock
No water came – he struck again in anger and embarrassed shock
The Father's heart was grieving but the damage had been done
'Twas blasphemy to strike again the body of His Son.

“Because you have not honoured me in doing what I said
You cannot lead my people on, another will go instead
To overcome the enemy within the promised land
And taste the blessings there for those obeying my command”

As Moses stood on Pisgah’s height, the Promised Land so near
His heart was filled with sorrow and his soul with awesome fear
He watched as youthful Joshua crossed to the other side
Then the patriarch – the friend of God - laid down his head and died.

Moses was 120 years old when he was forbidden to enter the Promised Land – something he had desired for many years. He pleaded with God but to no avail (Deut 3:23-27) for God was angry with him. I considered why God should treat His friend in such a way until I saw that His instructions spoke of two different rods (representing the Law and Grace - priesthood); two different rocks (one a sharp, jagged piece of flint, usually used to cut the sacrifices; the other a high fortified cliff – Strong’s); two different actions (smite and speak).

Surely these speak (1) of the smiting of the Saviour by the Law at Calvary, and (2) our privilege now to come to Him, high and exalted on His throne, as priests to seek His Spirit, water poured out from on high. Moses failed to “portray” this picture. God did give water to the people at the second rock – but only after Moses had struck it twice. Even when we sin in disobedience, God is merciful to the needy but not to those He has called to be leaders.

ⁱ Exodus 17:5,6

ⁱⁱ Numbers 20:7-12