

This passage illustrates the wonderful objectivity of the Bible. It shows the sins and weaknesses, as well as the strong points, of its heroes. Nu.xii.3 contains a strong but factual statement of Moses' strongest point, his meekness; our present passage shows how he sinned at this very point. We need to be on guard, not only at our weak points, but also at our strong points, for that is where Satan may overcome us if we leave them unguarded.

It is easy to understand how lack of water would arouse severe dissatisfaction and complaint (2-5). Yet, after all that these people had seen of the wonderful care of God, they should have learned to trust Him fully. It would seem that Moses and Aaron felt that the murmuring of the people was now inexcusable and beyond endurance. Then the glory of the Lord appeared to them (6). Moses is told to take the rod...and speak ye unto the rock before all the congregation (8). He promised that it would give water before their eyes, as had occurred once before (Ex.xvii).

Next follows one of the saddest passages in the Bible (10,11). Moses failed at his strongest point. He let pride get the better of him. He called the people rebels and put himself in the place of God, forgetting that 'the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.' Perhaps he was becoming worn out after the long series of events which had tried his patience. At any rate he showed that he no longer had the endurance needed to lead the people into the Promised Land. Aaron and Moses stood together in this act, and were judged together; but it is primarily Moses with whom we are concerned, since Aaron was never in his class as a leader, and had fallen into serious error before (Nu.xii). God quickly announced His judgment upon Moses and Aaron (12). The place where this striving occurred is named Meribah (13). The same name had been given to Massah, where a similar event had previously occurred (Ex.xvii.7). To distinguish the two places, which are a long way apart, this one is sometimes called Meribah-Kadesh (cf. Nu.xxvii.14 and Dt.xxxii.51).