

# The Rock That Was Struck Was Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] Still got a biscuit under here.

You won't mind if I just crack on. Well, thank you very much, David. Thank you. We need you to hear that. And thank you for praying. These are serious days.

You know, and sometimes, Jen was saying to me the other day, it's so easy to feel detached from it. But it can be so easy to think it will never happen to us.

This morning we are in the book of Exodus in the Old Testament, and we've been studying through this great book of God's great redemption to the nation of Israel.

And we are in chapter 17. If you have a Bible, please open it there. If not, it's going to be up on the screen. I'm going to be reading out the first seven verses of chapter 17.

[ 1 : 02 ] And we are on the other side of the Red Sea. God has rescued his nation. They first went in as the 12 sons of Jacob, who is also called Israel, and 70 people went into Egypt.

And hundreds of years of slavery later, they come out a nation, and they only come out at the hands of God. He brings them out, brings them through the sea, and now they are on the other side in the wilderness.

And so in chapter 17, they have been trying to learn what it is to trust God and trust Him at His Word, especially when the situation is difficult.

And so let me read Exodus 17. Exodus chapter 17. 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 quarreled with Moses and said, Give us water to drink. And Moses said to them, Why do you quarrel with me?

[ 2 : 17 ] Why do you test the Lord? But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to kill us, and our children and our livestock 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.

Take with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff 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, and the people will drink.

And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah in Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, Is the Lord among us or not?

This is the word of the Lord, and we pray he blesses the reading of it. Well, in order to get into the passage, I want to first ask, Why does God allow trials?

[ 3 : 34 ] Why does he test us? One of my heroes is a chap called Bear Grylls. I don't know if you know him. Actually, I've wore a top with his name on it today.

All proud. Don't worry, I don't worship him. But he is one of my heroes. He's the TV survival expert, former SAS trooper. He broke his back in a parachute accident, and he recovered to become one of the youngest Brits to climb Mount Everest.

He's an author, adventurer, chief scout, and most importantly to me, he is a brother in Christ. He's a real role model and a leader. And one of the things that he often says is that we are like grapes.

He says, Until we are squeezed, you don't really see what people are made of. In an interview, he said, Everyone likes to think that they could do survival, but actually you can't learn it all from a book.

You've got to be tested. You've got to be squeezed. You don't get where Bear Grylls is by sitting on the couch, only looking after the comfortable life.

[ 4 : 39 ] And I'll admit, I personally find that really challenging. In some ways, I'm often inclined to comfort. Not always, but I understand the desire to want to avoid difficulty. I do.

But at the same time, I know that testing isn't meant to hinder us. It's meant to help us. Think of the many tests that you've been through in your life, whether it's at school, university, a driving test, or whatever.

All the tests, were they set up as impossible tests to trip you up and make you fail? Was the intention of many of the tests to just embarrass you and make you look weak?

Not all tests are bad. And so Peter, Peter, the disciple and friend of Jesus who failed in denying him, he says this.

He went through many trials. He says, For a little while, if necessary, you are grieved by various trials so that the tested genuineness of your faith may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

[ 5 : 49 ] Peter is saying a few important things here. Firstly, Peter is saying that faith may or may not be genuine. Jesus indicated this with a parable of the sower and the conditions of the soil.

Even on the rocky soil and among the weeds, the seed shot up, but only in the good soil did it remain and bear fruit. The seed was the word of God and the soil was the heart. And though you may see a response from the word of God in a person's life, the question is, will it endure?

Will it bear fruit? And so faith may or may not be genuine. Secondly, Peter is saying the way to know whether a person's faith is genuine or not is often when it is tested by trials.

Again, this is the case in that parable. The seed that fell on the rocky ground didn't have the roots to endure the scorching sun. But Psalm 1 says, Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord.

He's like a tree planted by streams of water that yield fruit in its seed. Your roots go down. Thirdly, being grieved by various trials is not indefinite.

[ 7 : 00 ] It will pass. Peter says that it is for a little while and Paul says it is a light momentary affliction. Both these men were not unaware of the pain and severity of trials.

They persevered to the death. But having seen Jesus risen from the dead, they had a trust in his promise and an eternal perspective that helped them see beyond the trials.

They did, as it says in Hebrews 12, look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus was obedient to the will of his Father, obedient to the point of death on a cross. Yet he went, knowing that horror was not the end. He knew who he was and he knew why he came.

And he knew of the glory that would follow suffering and the joy that would follow anguish. And that's what Peter's saying. Glory will follow suffering. Joy will follow anguish.

[ 8 : 05 ] And Peter knows that's the case. Fourthly, he says that genuine faith, though it be tested for a little while, will in the end result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Genuine faith, though it's tested for a little while, will result in glory and praise and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And so I wanted to say that because we all go through many and various trials and it tests the genuineness of our faith. I wanted to speak about these things as a way to frame trials and testing and difficulty.

Because when we go through such things, we're not supposed to think that God has abandoned us. We're not supposed to think that God has lost control of things like they've just got out of hand. Nothing is out of God's hands.

Nothing. They're supposed to lead us to look to him and to call out to him, to trust him and to follow him. And so I wanted to do that first because when we go through Exodus, this is another difficult passage of what not to do and how not to respond.

[ 9 : 14 ] And Paul says we are to learn from these things. And so I want to look at three areas as we go through this. I want to look at our leaders, our heart, and our Lord. And so our leaders.

One of the things that was a point of contention between Jesus and his disciples and the Pharisees was their memory of Moses. The Jews in Jesus' day, the Jews are proud of Moses and rightly so.

But when the Pharisees were rejecting Jesus as the Christ, he would remind them of how much they were like those who rejected Moses. And as such, those who rejected Moses were rejecting God.

And in Jesus' day, those who were rejecting Jesus were rejecting God. And so Jesus said this, rejecting the one sent means rejecting the one who is sending him.

And so the way that we treat our leaders will often reflect the way we trust God. Let me remind you of how the people treated the one that God had raised up to lead these people of Israel.

[ 10 : 22 ] In Exodus chapter 2, 14, Moses visited the Hebrews and he killed an Egyptian that was beating one of them. And then he came back the next day and he saw the Hebrews fighting together and he tried to correct one of the Hebrews' striking another.

He was rejected. And the man said, oh, well, who made you a prince and judge over us? Are you going to kill me like you killed that person the other day? And so Moses came to redeem his people and yet he was rejected and accused of bringing death.

Forty years later, he comes back and he has to prove himself to the people in chapter 4, verse 31, they believe. Yet in Exodus chapter 5, after Moses' first meeting with Pharaoh, their burdens grow greater and the people say to Moses, the Lord look on you and judge because you made us to stink in the sight of Pharaoh and his servants and you have put a sword in their hands to kill us.

Again, they are accusing Moses of death. They're accusing Moses of threatening their lives. And then they see all these plagues and signs and wonders and they do as Moses commands them.

Yet when they are encamped by the sea in Exodus 14 and the Egyptians are marching on them, they say to Moses, is it because there are no graves in Egypt?

[ 11 : 45 ] You've taken us out here to die in the wilderness? What have you done in bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not what we said to you while we were in Egypt? Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians for it would have been better for us to serve them than die in the wilderness.

They're accusing Moses again of just leading them to death. And yet the question is always, who said anything about dying? Do you not trust the promise of God? See, if you go through the book of Genesis and the book of Exodus up to that point, so many times the promise of God to take them into the land He promised.

Who said anything about these people dying? So in every instance, they view Moses not as a deliverer, but as a death bringer. In all these instances, they treat their, how they treat their leader reflects the way they trust God, which is evidently not very much.

And now many people, many people claim to worship God, but the way that you serve God, the way that you trust God is not separate from how you treat other people and how you trust those who God has given to lead you.

This is the case with Moses. In our passage, we seem to have reached what seems like the terminal velocity of the people's disbelief and distrust in God.

[ 13 : 07 ] Like, it cannot get any stronger than this. At the bitter waters of Marah, the people grumbled and tested, and God tested them and gave them an oasis. And then in the wilderness of sin, the whole congregation grumbled and accused Moses of leading them to their deaths.

But God rained down bread from heaven, and He tested them with daily food and with a weekly Sabbath. Yet they failed the test and they disobeyed. And now they come to Rephidim, and not only did they grumble and accuse Moses of bringing death to their children and livestock, but this time, at this point, they turn the test on God.

They test God and they say, is the Lord among us or not? They forget that the pillar's still right there in front of them, but they say, is the Lord even with us?

With the bread, Moses said that their grumbling against him was actually against the Lord. And at Rephidim, he says, they are now testing the Lord, which is a serious sin.

Now, every time, every time on the ground, the people have been directing it at Moses, but their treatment of him reveals their relationship with God. And it's a relationship of distrust and dissatisfaction.

[ 14 : 27 ] And so, the book of Hebrews, the book of Hebrews refers back to this time in Exodus as a warning. Don't harden your hearts like the people did when they tested the Lord.

And later on, in Hebrews 13, it talks about trusting your leaders. See how these things would be appropriate to the people of Exodus with Moses. See how it applies today.

Hebrews 13, verse 7, says, remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the Word of God. Consider the outcome of the way of their life and imitate their faith.

That's what they were supposed to do in Exodus. Look at Moses. Look at God. Trust God and imitate his faith. He's the one that's speaking the Word of God to them. Hebrews 7, verse 17 of chapter 13, it says, obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will have to give an account.

Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. At this time in Exodus, they are making it very difficult for Moses to lead them.

[ 15 : 36 ] Very difficult. They're not trusting him. They're not trusting God. If God has given Moses to lead them, and if God has given someone to speak the Word of God, then trust and listen.

A good and godly leader doesn't have his own interests in mind. He has your soul in mind. And that's what Moses has here. But the way they were treating Moses reflected what they thought of God.

Their distrust and dissatisfaction of Moses revealed their distrust and dissatisfaction with God. And it's interesting. Did you know that a teachable person can get much from even the weakest of leaders much more than a stubborn person can get from even the greatest of leaders?

Someone with an open heart that trusts God can get so much even from the weakest of leaders, but a stubborn person with a hard heart can't get anything even from the greatest of leaders? Is that not the case?

Ten spies out of twelve learned very little from Moses. Great a leader as he was. And Judas Iscariot learned very little from the Son of God.

[ 16 : 54 ] It says more about his heart. And so that leads us to the second part of our heart. If we often find ourselves grumbling and dissatisfied it might be time for a heart check.

The other side of the coin to the first point is if we are to trust the people leading us then we need to trust God. He knows what we need. God has not abandoned us. He knows where we are.

That doesn't mean we don't need to say anything to anyone. We should hold people to account. We should. But we shouldn't grumble and complain.

We shouldn't assume and accuse. We should call out to God. We should inquire. We should ask. We should hold leaders to the standard that God has set. And most certainly we should pray for them.

What they are going to try and do most is help us trust in God if they are a good and godly leader. If they are not pray that God will help them to repent or pray that God will replace them.

[ 17 : 52 ] But if they are a godly leader they will speak the word of God to try and help you to trust in God. Because ultimately it's not about our trust in people it's about our trust in God.

Only God can do for us what we need Him to do. Do we trust in His word? That's why Hebrews talks about leaders who spoke to you the word of God. It's not just to trust any old person.

Trust the word of God. More than anything our hearts need the word of God. This is what we seen last week in Exodus 16. The Israelites failed to test with the bread. Bread was rained down from heaven but they failed to trust the word of God.

Now why did God allow them to go hungry in the first place? Well in Matthew chapter 4 Jesus is led out into the wilderness as well. After having gone through the water He's led out into the wilderness and He is tested.

And the first test that He has is with bread and hunger. And yet unlike the Israelites He knew what they were supposed to learn. Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.

[ 18 : 59 ] More than bread we need the word of God. More than water we need the word of God. The word of God is more powerful than we can possibly imagine. Everything that we see and feel and hear and taste and touch only exists by the word of God.

The heavens and earth were created by the word of God. The nation of Israel only exists by the power of the word of God. Think about that because Isaac would never have been born if it was not for the word of God.

And Israel came from Isaac. We need the word of God because in the word of God is life. Jesus knew this during his own test in the wilderness and he passed the test and then when he fed the five thousand he said the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

And then later Peter knew this didn't he when he said to Jesus Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And in the second test in the wilderness that Jesus goes through he passes where Israel failed because the devil took him to the pinnacle of the temple and he said if you are the son of God then throw yourself down.

You will not be harmed for it is written and the devil quotes scripture at Jesus. The devil quotes the word at the word. And Jesus said again it is written you shall not put the Lord your God to the test.

[ 20 : 30 ] And he's quoting Deuteronomy 6 in reference to this very passage today when the people put the Lord to the test. And Jesus is saying you don't do that to God.

The Israelites did this in Exodus 17 by saying is God among us or not? And so I want to give you four reasons four reasons why it is such a serious and ridiculous and forbidden sin to test God.

Number one because it doubts his nature. Testing God is doubting his nature. God is faithful by nature. He cannot be anything but faithful. Testing God in this regard is like testing water to see if it's wet.

You've just fell in a puddle and then you want to go and take it into the lab and test water as if it's wet. It's wet by nature. God is faithful by nature. God's not like man that he should lie.

He's not. Testing God is like making God to be a man and see if he'll pass the test. It's entirely appropriate for God to test man because of our nature but it's entirely inappropriate for man to test God because it makes God out to be like man.

[ 21 : 42 ] And so firstly the reason why testing God is ridiculous and forbidden and sinful because it's doubting his nature. Secondly it's doubting his word. God said that he would be with them. God said that he would be with them.

That he would take them into the promised land. And so now his word has been tested. His promise has been tested. His word never fails. It was by his word that the heavens were made.

It was by his word that the Israelites exist. It was by his word that they were delivered from the Egyptians in the first place and it's by his word that they have bread every single morning.

When they wake up and go out and gather the manna they should realize that God's word is sure and faithful. Yet when they test him they're testing his word because he said he would be with them and he said that he would take them into the promised land.

How can they doubt his word? Every morning they see the bread. Every day they see the pillar. Third reason testing God is forgetting what he has already done.

[ 22 : 46 ] The Israelites testing God is a bit like this and I was trying to think of an appropriate illustration. It's a bit like a doctor in the delivery room assisting a mother in giving birth to her child and then immediately after cutting the cord the doctor requires the mother to take a DNA test to see if she is the mother or not.

It's ridiculous. It's like did they not just see what God did in bringing them out of Egypt? It's forgetting what he has already done and making them test take a test to see if he can be faithful or not.

And fourthly testing God is like ignoring what he is presently doing. In Exodus 13 it says that the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light that they might travel by day and by night.

And then it says the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people. And it says that at the end of Exodus as well the last words of chapter 40 throughout all their journeys wherever the cloud was taken up over the tabernacle the people of Israel would set out but if the cloud was not taken up they did not set out till the day that it was taken up for the cloud of the Lord was on the tabernacle by day and the fire was in it by night in the sight of all the house of Israel throughout all their journeys.

All the way every day and night this pillar stood before them. It is doubting what he is presently doing ignoring what is right in front of you by focusing on your circumstance by testing God in this way is the Lord among us or not?

[ 24 : 30 ] They were ignoring the pillar of the Lord that was before them and did not depart the entire time. But it's difficult. Are we ever tempted to ask if God is really among us or not?

Whether it's in this church or in your life in your daily trials are you ever tempted to say is God even here? Is God with me? Do we ever doubt whether God is really with us?

If we do it's time for a heart check. We must remember to lift our eyes from all that we see on the ground from all of our circumstances and the chaos that is around us at times and remember that God is among us.

God is the one who said I will never leave you nor forsake you. And so when it comes to leaders in Hebrews it says Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

It was His blood that purchased you and I. It was His light that pierced the darkness. It was His death that crushed the serpent's head. And it was His resurrection that put death to death.

[ 25 : 39 ] He has ascended. He's ascended. And so let us look up to the Lord. And that's our final point, our Lord. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10, Our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea and all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink for they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them.

This rock that was struck Paul says they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them and he says the rock was Christ. How does God respond?

At this point when Israel are testing God, how does God respond to the failure of His covenant people? Despite His displays of power and providence, despite His faithfulness to every promise, Israel continually disbelieve and disobey.

What is God to do? What is God to do with all of our failures? Time and time again, God is slow to anger, gracious and merciful, chance after chance.

As they rightly sung in Exodus 15, you have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed. You have guided them by the strength of your, by your strength to your holy abode.

[ 26 : 58 ] So what is God to do? Who will bear the brunt of all this disobedience? What is God to do when Israel, who were called God's firstborn son, continually fail the test?

The answer has been hinted all along. The answer has been hinted at since the beginning of the covenant. In Genesis 12, the covenant would be fulfilled in Abraham's offspring, a son, like Paul says in Galatians 3.

In Genesis 12, 8, Abraham calls upon the name of the Lord. Like in Joel 2, as Peter says in Acts and Paul says in Romans 10, call upon the name of the Lord and you shall be saved.

And who? What is the name of the Lord? Well, to them it was Yahweh. And in Jesus, it has been revealed as Jesus. In Genesis 15, the Lord made a blood covenant with Abraham, yet he put Abraham to sleep and he passed through the animals himself.

As it is said, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch pass between these pieces. Not only does this tell us that the divine blessing relies on God as man sleeps while God acts, but it also tells us the divine curse is ultimately taken by God himself for the failure on man's part.

- [ 28 : 24 ] Again, in Genesis 22, when the firstborn son of the promise was to be offered up, God provided a ram in his place. The expectation of death all along is overturned in life because of God's word.

And this is the case for the patriarchs. Abraham's wife, Isaac's wife, and Jacob's wife were all barren, but through God, life comes by his word when life is not expected.

God will act. His word is sure and his word brings life. Do we trust in God's word? If it were not for God's word, Isaac would not have been born.

Israel's existence in the first place is a witness to the power of God's word. The fact that they came out from under the power of Egypt and were able to possess the land of Canaan is a witness to the certainty of God's promise.

The reason for their continual grumbling is a sign of distrust in God's word because they keep accusing God of leading them out to die. They were doubting his promise to take them to the land.

- [ 29 : 33 ] They were doubting the promises of God. And let me just name just a few promises of God. Genesis 12, 7, when Abram set out at God's word and came to Canaan, the Lord appeared to Abram and said, to your offspring, I will give this land.

This land. We're not unaware of where Canaan is. Genesis 13, 14, the land that you see, I will give to you and your offspring forever. ever. Genesis 17, 8, I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.

This is the promise of God. And many, many more times from Genesis 12 to this point in Exodus, as a friend recently said, Israel are the only nation that has an eternal security.

There is no doubt who God gave the land to, okay? There is no doubt who God gave a promise to. And yet, in the New Testament, Paul says, all of God's promises in Jesus Christ are yes and amen.

For he is the offspring. He is the true son of Abraham. He is the son of David. He is the Christ, the Messiah. Now, this doesn't mean that every individual is secure whether they trust God or not.

- [ 30 : 53 ] Most of the first generation of Exodus didn't make it into the promised land. because of their disobedience. You can be sure they had chance after chance after chance. But nevertheless, God is faithful to his promise.

And he took Israel into the land he promised. But what will God do with Israel? What will God do with those who were called to be the firstborn son in Exodus 4 when they continually fail?

Well, in our passage in Exodus 16, the smoking fire pot and flaming torch of Genesis 15 now stands before Israel in a pillar of cloud and fire.

And as it is hinted at back then, this divine presence stands on the rock and is struck. Now, this wasn't meant for this morning, but I thought it was interesting.

We have this plaque up here of Yahweh, and it stands on top of where we take communion. The presence of God stood on the rock and was struck for the people.

- [ 32 : 02 ] Is God among us or not? Not only is he among us, he is struck for us. When Jesus came as the true Israel, God's own son, born of a virgin, as Matthew tells us, the fulfillment of Isaiah 7, 14, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means what?



God with us. Is God among us? God is with us. God's son, the promised offspring of Abraham, is God with us.

And when he goes to the cross, he fulfills Isaiah 53, stricken for us, pierced for our transgressions. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Thank you. In Jesus, God is with us. In Jesus, God is stricken for us. Out of his side poured water and blood.

Out of the rock poured water. Streams of everlasting life come from Jesus. He passed the test because he is the true offspring of Abraham. He's the son of promise.

[ 33 : 11 ] He's the one who will possess the land. He's the one who will fulfill the promise. He's the son of God in Psalm 2 who inherits the nations. He's the son of David given his eternal throne.

The Christ whose kingdom shall never end and who will reign forever as God's king. And so we are called to look to Jesus, the son of God. Jesus said this, for my father's will is that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him shall have eternal life.

and I will raise him up on the last day. Amen. Let us leave testing God to his enemies. Let us trust God.

Even when we test God, he is testing us. We are not the judge, nor does God need to prove himself faithful or present. The test is, will you trust the word of God?

And who is the word of God? But Jesus Christ, the son of God, the word who became flesh and tabernacled among us. Look to him, call upon his name, turn your eyes to your redeemer and trust in his faithfulness, to his promise, to you and his steadfast love, to you, that you and I, even us, though we were not part of that nation, can join in in that eternal kingdom.

[ 34 : 33 ] For whatever's going on today, we pray the Lord will prevail and we know that one day he will. For when Jesus returns, he will take that place as his own and secure his kingdom forever.

Jesus Christ is bidding us all to trust in him and believe in him. And if we believe in him, we shall have eternal life. We shall be called children of God, citizens of his kingdom forever.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. If the failures of Israel brought such riches of blessing to us Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean?

One day we will be celebrating in streets of gold. He is your God and he is with you. He is the rock who was struck for you.

And he is the rock that is ever with us. He is our rock and redeemer. And he said he is with us always. Let me pray and let us sing.

[ 35 : 43 ] Oh Lord, how often we cannot make sense of things that are going on. We are called not to live by sight, but live by faith. Lord, we have failed time and time again, but we thank you that it is not on the basis of our righteousness or of our success, but it is on the righteousness of your Son that we can be redeemed.

Lord, we thank you that you have made promises that you will never turn back on. We pray for our brothers and sisters who are in Israel, who are Jews, who are part of this covenant promise, and we pray for Gentiles alike.

We pray for all who do not know you, and we return to you and be given life in your name. Lord, help us to trust you and in trusting you have life and joy forever.

Amen.