

Christ the True Rock

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Preacher: James Ross

[0 : 00] Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
[2 : 30] Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
[5 : 00] Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
[7 : 30] Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
[10 : 00] Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Well, good morning, everyone.
[12 : 29] Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
[14 : 59] We've looked at you.

Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 [17 : 29] Thank you.
 Thank you.
 And in your name, I will lift you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 [19 : 59] Thank you.
 Jesus, Jesus.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Jesus, Jesus.
 [22 : 29] Let's join you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 Thank you.
 [24 : 59] Thank you.
 Thank you.
 And we pray that you, we're going to be at work.
 And then our church, we're going to be here.
 And guide us.
 [27 : 59] For every step.
 And we're going to be here. Our God, our God, our God, our God.
 And we're going to be here. O praise the one who, our God, our God, our God, our God, our God.
 And we're going to be here. And we're going to be here. And we're going to be here. And we're going to be here. And we're going to be here.
 And we're going to be here. And we're going to be here. Now, we're going to love and be missed, so that we're all good. And we're there.
 [30 : 51] On thing just a moment we're all going to may be here today. Now in just a moment we're going to hear God's word of bé God. Now in just a moment, we're going to hear God's word there. the first 13 verses together. So let's hear God's words.
 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and 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.

Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them. Their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 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 revelry. We should not commit sexual immorality as some of them did, and in one day 23,000 of them died. We should not test Christ 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 culmination of the ages has come.

So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall. No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it. Amen. This is God's Word.

[32 : 58] Amen. Now we're going to pray together for some local concerns, some national concerns, but also to pray in particular for Zuriel on her last Sunday with us. Zuriel has been worshipping with us, serving with us for a number of months for the second time around. And she's heading home tomorrow, so we're going to pray for Zuriel. And I will also pray for Keith as he heads to Atlanta for a big PCMTW missions conference and to think about the work of missions as we do that. So let's again join our hearts in prayer together. Father God, we are deeply thankful for fellowship that we enjoy in the gospel, for brothers and sisters in Christ as we can gather together and worship together from different parts of the world and different cultures to demonstrate the unity that there is in Christ and within the body of Christ. And so we thank you for Zuriel and we pray for her as she gets ready to head back to Singapore tomorrow. Lord, that you would be the God who would go with her as you promised, that you would enable her to find work, to settle into a church to continue to live out her faith in the Lord Jesus. We thank you for the ways that she has served with us in Beccle, on the desk and welcoming and with the international community in particular. Lord, we also give you thanks for

Keith and for the Knowlton family. We pray for him as he goes to this conference next week. Lord, we thank you for the way our partnership with MTW and with the Knowlton's has been such a blessing to us. We thank you for their ministry among us. And we pray that as he goes and shares about the work of the Mission to the World of the World Team throughout the UK, that folks should be encouraged, encouraged to pray and to support and to consider coming in order to make Jesus known throughout our nation. And we pray more widely that the work of Global Mission would continue, that you would keep laying it on the hearts of men for your word which is living and true. And we thank you for your word as it teaches and trains us as your people. And we thank you that you are the God who feeds us spiritually. And we ask that you would help us to grow and to mature, that we would be moving from spiritual milk to solid food, that you would give us wisdom in discerning right from wrong, in knowing how to please you in the different situations that we encounter day by day. Lord, we do pray for our ministries, many of which we have mentioned already today, as we seek to grow and mature as followers of the Lord Jesus. Thank you for every opportunity that we have to spend time together around your word where it is preached and where it is taught and where it is discussed, that where we gather in fellowship and in prayer, we ask that you would be building your people and building your church. We continue to remember the International Bible Study on a Monday evening. And we think about the men's Bible study beginning again on Thursday afternoons. Lord, that you would take your word, you would apply it to hearts and lives for the good of many.

Lord, we think about our mission to grow and to make disciples. We do pray that your spirit would be active. We pray for conversions as people would come to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior. And we pray that in our circles and networks there would be a growing spiritual interest, a hunger and a thirst after righteousness. Now, we pray that you would give to us as Christians many opportunities to bear witness to your goodness, to the transforming power of your love. Lord, we also thank you that we have the privilege of supporting different churches in church planting. We remember Hope Church down in Leith.

We think of Derek and Katrina in their ministry. We ask that you would encourage them in these early days. And we pray that the church building would be ready for service and for ministries of mercy.

And we pray that you would gather a core group and gather people around them who are hungry for truth. Now, we also pray for Galashios and for Craig and for Amy and the church that is established there.

[38 : 11] We think of Craig's visit to the states to meet with church partners, to let them know how things are, and to continue to continue to find support. And we pray especially that you would provide a building for them of their own where they can worship and minister to the local community.

Lord, we also pray for the nations that we represent. We recognize we come from different places. And we pray for government and for leaders here in the UK and around the world. At a time when people have elected new presidents when presidents will be elected. We thank you that we pray to the one who is sovereign over all the events of history, over all local and national leaders. Lord, we recognize the needs that there are in our world, in the nations that we represent. We pray for wisdom and humility for leaders who make important decisions. And we thank you for Christians who seek to be salt and light, to bring mercy and to bring hope. And we pray most of all for the work of the gospel. And we pray that the good news of the Lord Jesus would continue to spread throughout this world, recognizing that He is the one true Lord and King. And that we would hear more and more encouraging reports of people bowing their knee, confessing with their tongues that Jesus is Lord. And we pray for ourselves towards that end.

I'm praying all of this in Jesus' name. Amen. Now, in just a few moments, we're going to be turning to Exodus 17, which in part Paul referred to in 1 Corinthians. But before we do that, we're going to sing together from Psalm 42, and we're going to sing the first five verses. Again, standing together as we are able to sing.

As plants, the deer for flowing streams, so loves my soul, O God, for you. I first forgot the living God, when can I meet with God anew. My tears have been my constant food, both in the night and in the day.

While all day long insistently. Where is this God of yours, they say?

[41 : 45] As I pour out my soul in grief, these things I do remember still.

How with the multitude would I went up to God's house on Zion hill.

In their procession I would lead, as we approach with tearful song, and shouts of joy and thankfulness, rejoicing with the festive throng.

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why are you so disturbed in me?

Trust God, for I will praise him yet. My Saviour and my God is he.

[43 : 53] Now we're going to turn together to Exodus chapter 17, second book of the Bible, page 75, if you're using a church Bible.

I'm going to read verses 1 to 7. Thinking about what Paul said, that Christ is this rock, the true rock, as we get into Exodus 17.

The whole Israelite community set out from the desert of sin, travelling 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?

[45 : 05] They are almost ready to stone me. The Lord answered Moses, go out in front 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?

We're going to leave our reading there. Now just to remind you, or if you're new to church, we are trying to see Christ in all of Scripture over these last few weeks.

We've seen him as the true King. We've seen him as the true point of connection between heaven and earth. We've seen him as the true righteous sufferer given for our salvation.

[46 : 07] We've seen him as representing the true reality of the Day of Atonement, that God has made a way in Jesus for our sin to be covered. We've seen him as the true year of Jubilee, our means to have true spiritual freedom.

And today, we see him as the true rock of Exodus 17. We're in the middle of Old Testament Israel's journey in the wilderness.

So, it's a specific journey for them, but it's a journey that brings questions that have universal significance, I think, for all of us today. It's a story of God being questioned.

A story of God being tested. Do you care? Is God able to provide for us? Is God among and with His people?

Now, that's a question or questions that you might be bringing with you today. Or it might be questions that you have asked in your journey through life.

[47 : 13] Perhaps if you're here today and you're not a Christian, you're wondering, what is the character of the God of the Bible? Is He trustworthy? If you're here as a Christian, perhaps you're going through hard times.

Perhaps you feel like you're in the middle of or you've been through your own wilderness experiences. And you've wrestled with those questions. Are you there? Do you care?

Is he loving them? Is he loving you healingWhat? Is it God? Is help in the LEDTjänst a your life Secondarlow? Is warfare. Is it God willing to spare our father? And there's all the kids who have for knowledge, or for power, or for success, or for meaning, or love, or for purpose.

This speaks of deep longings and deep needs within our lives. And there are times as people where we find ourselves, as it were, in the desert.

We are desperate for those things and we are trying everything, but that thirst remains. It's as if there is no oasis to satisfy.

[48 : 38] To paraphrase Augustine, our hearts are thirsty. And Exodus 17 reminds us that thirst will remain until we find our true satisfaction in our God.

And so as we think about this text, we're also going to be thinking about the good news within the Bible that in Jesus Christ, we do know the character of God. We do know that God cares.

And we do know that He does come near to be among us. And that in Jesus, God does answer the thirst that we have in our lives and He does provide eternal satisfaction.

So two simple points today from this text. We're going to think first of all about a grumbling people and then secondly about a gracious God.

So the grumbling people, first of all, in these first four verses. So as we said, we are in the middle of a wilderness journey. God's people Israel have been taken out of slavery in Egypt and they're moving towards Mount Sinai to meet with God, ultimately to go to the Promised Land.

[49 : 48] And God has been testing them and their faith as they travel. Is this a people who will trust God? Is this a people who will live by faith in God?

And He's not leaving them to make up those answers blindly. He has shown very clearly that He is the God who is with them and the God who provides for them.

So they have been following, well they've seen Him work these plagues of judgment and salvation. They've been following a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night.

If you were to turn back a couple of pages in your Bible, chapter 15, you would discover that He has turned bitter water into fresh water, helping the people to see that the Lord is their healer.

In chapter 16, He has rained down bread from heaven, supplied birds to feed them. So He has shown that He is with them and for them.

[50 : 49] But now we find outrageously the people are testing the Lord. It's there in verse 2, Moses speaks to them, why did you put the Lord to the test?

Verse 7, they tested the Lord saying, is the Lord among us or not? The demand for water, the question, why bring us out of Egypt just to let us die of thirst?

At the heart of this quarreling and grumbling and testing is that they do not trust that God is with them and for them. They do not trust that He will keep His promise and that He will provide for them.

Edmund Clowney, the Bible teacher, pictures this as a lawsuit, which I think is really important. We're brought into the courtroom.

And here we have Israel bringing a case against their God. And the charge is, God, you have not kept your covenant promises.

[51 : 57] You have failed in your duty to be our Lord and our God. You have not provided for our needs.

And we know that they are, as it were, giving a guilty verdict on God because look at verse 4. Here is Moses and he is God's representative for them. And Moses cries out, what am I to do with these people?

They are almost ready to stone me. Stoning was a guilty verdict that has been passed. So they believe God has failed them, has failed the test.

He's guilty of breaking covenant. This is a huge and a solemn moment. Maybe you saw it in the news.

King Charles has been on his travels and he went into the Australian Parliament and there was that senator who was expelled for shouting, not my king.

[53 : 01] And that made, at least here in the UK, it made the news. But recognize how much bigger a story we are dealing with here. Here are God's people saying of him, the Lord is not our king because he has failed our test.

Now what are we to make of this? What lessons can we draw for ourselves? I want us to see three things that are wrong here. And perhaps three things that can also sometimes work out in our own thinking also.

First of all, the test is wrong. Just to fast forward to Jesus' ministry, the beginning of his ministry, the Gospels record that as Jesus is baptized, to show he is God's promised and anointed one, that the Spirit leads him into the wilderness to be tempted.

And one of those temptations involves him being taken up to the highest point of the temple. And the devil says to him, you'll throw yourself down and God will have to send angels to look after you.

The devil is in some ways suggesting, here's the shortcut, Jesus, to glory and fame and honor. And Jesus says, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test. And so we need to understand the mindset that's wrong for Israel here.

[54 : 31] It is wrong to bargain. We will trust you. We will honor you if you give us water. We will follow you if you give us the career or the relationship or fill in the blank.

It is wrong for us to challenge God in this way that comes out of a lack of faith. I will not trust you until you prove your worth again and again and again.

I do not trust the character of God. That's wrong. We need to understand who God is. He is creator. He is Lord. He is King. And the response he invites is one of humility and faith and trust.

And it was a lesson that Israel was slow to learn. We need to recognize too that the perspective is wrong. They are focused a very short term and on the temporal and the physical.

And it's as if that is blocking out everything else in their vision. That their present circumstances have so filled their gaze that they cannot see beyond to the bigger picture of who God is and who God has been for them.

[55 : 48] Think about their story of salvation so far. God had made a promise to Abraham. God promising, swearing by himself, I will bring you to the land of promise.

I will make you into this great family. You will enter into a special relationship with me. You will live knowing my blessing. That's a promise that was for Israel.

In the story of Exodus, God has by his grace and through his power saved them from slavery. God has absolutely shown his commitment to be with and for his people.

God has been faithfully providing for them. God graciously enters into this special relationship. I will be your God and you will be my people.

But it seems like that's forgotten. Like Israel, it is so important for us as God's people to let the good news of salvation frame and reframe our story.

[56 : 59] It can be so easy and so tempting to find our identity in our suffering, our struggles, our present circumstances.

But instead, we must find our identity in Christ our Savior. God in Christ has acted in history to save us.

God in Christ has committed to be with us. Jesus is our Emmanuel, God with us. God faithfully provides for us.

He gives us his word so we can hear who he is. We can hear the gospel. He has given us his spirit so Christ is with his people, the church. God gives us one another for fellowship and to encourage us.

God in Christ has established a covenant relationship, the new covenant with his people. And he has promised that he will most certainly bring us home to be with himself.

- [58 : 19] And it is so important for us to have that dominate our perspective on our lives, to count our blessings, to consider God's faithfulness, to contemplate God's love for us daily.
- I would also say that the thirst is wrong here. So, of course they needed water. Of course they needed physical relief. But we absolutely see that that's what matters most for them.
- But greater by far is the living water that God provides. As he provides himself. More important by far is that his people live with worship and trust.
- To just think about them asking that question in verse 3. Why did you bring us up out of Egypt? To be stuck in this circumstance. Why were they brought out? They were brought out so that they of all people could know God.
- They were brought out to taste and see that God is good. To enjoy salvation. To have true physical and spiritual freedom. That's why they were brought out. Their thirst is wrong because their focus is not on their God.
- [59 : 38] To again think about the ministry of Jesus. I think he captures this in John 4. As he meets with a woman at a well. A place of water which was also a place of deep thirst.
- As Jesus meets with that woman it becomes clear that her thirst is for a stable, secure relationship. She is thirsty for love and she's searched for it in multiple men and she's come up empty.
- And in response to her thirst Jesus declares I will give you living water. I can satisfy all your deepest longings.
- And so our text is really an invitation not to be too easily satisfied. To come to the Lord Jesus.
- To recognize that he is the end of the search. Because when we find him and receive life with God through him, our deepest longings, our great needs are met in him.
- [60 : 48] Well if that's the grumbling people, and we also absolutely need to meet our gracious God. Verses 5 to 7. The story so far, the people have acted shockingly.
- They are absolutely lacking in trust. They've placed God in the dock. They're accusing him of wrong. And maybe that seems unbelievable and outrageous to us. Until perhaps we recognize how easy it can be to stand in judgment over God as we look at what he's doing in our life or the life of others.
- We can easily presume that we know better and we can do better than God. And so I think we need to listen in with humility. And especially to recognize that if what happens first is shocking, that what comes next in many ways seems even more incredible.
- Because God's response isn't to judge them instantly for their sin and their rebellion, but rather he gives this gracious object lesson. Because he wants to show just how willing and able he is to care for his people.
- So the courtroom scene, the trial scene continues. Verse 5. The Lord answered Moses, go out in front. Everybody needs to see this. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile in gold.
- [62 : 09] The staff, the symbol of God's power. Sometimes the symbol of God's judgment. And the elders, it's almost as if the jury is being assembled.
- And then we discover in verse 6, I will stand there before you by the rock of Horeb. God comes near, standing before the people.
- He becomes identified with the rock. Remember that question, is the Lord among us or not? Here he is again graciously saying to them and to us, I am, I am among you.
- And next, Moses is commanded to act. Into verse 6. 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. So that staff of judgment, it falls, it comes down. But notice it doesn't fall on the sinful rebel people.

[63 : 19] Where does it fall? It falls on the rock. God the rock bears the judgment. Standing in the dock in the place of covenant breakers, taking the punishment for sinners.

And what happens next? Life-giving water pours out. The rock is struck and life flows out to an undeserving, ungrateful people in one more demonstration of God's great grace.

To read the Bible is to discover that God teaches using visual aids. And this rock is a powerful one. So remember the test and the grumble. Is God with us? Does He care for us?

Will He provide for us? And here's the answer. In this rock, God comes so near as to take the place and to take the punishment that His people deserve.

He is a God so willing to care that the place of judgment becomes a place of life. And so every time that the people saw that rock, if they passed that way and they looked at the rock, they were invited to remember, we tested God sinfully.

[64 : 45] We rebelled against God and God loved us and graciously provided for us. And then in the New Testament, as we read, Paul returns to that visual aid in 1 Corinthians 10 as he was warning the church of his day, don't be like Israel in the wilderness, lacking trust, lacking faith.

Learn the lesson of the rock, the rock who is Christ. So I want us to think about these two lessons.

The first lesson as we think about our gracious God is to just think about what it means that that rock was Christ, as Paul tells us. That rock which became that source of life-giving water is a rock that's full of the gospel.

Because just as the people of Israel witnessed the rock being struck in judgment and God bearing the penalty for covenant breakers on behalf of his people, God himself will come to bear the judgment for covenant breakers at the cross.

Jesus will stand in the place of sinners. And on that day at the cross, the staff of judgment will be in the Father's hand and it falls on God's own Son.

[66 : 12] Satisfying divine justice against the sin of rebellion. Not Jesus' rebellion because he is sinless, but our rebellion. The sin of testing rather than trusting.

Of turning our back on God. Jesus, of course, as he was on the cross would say, I'm thirsty. He thirsts as he bears the punishment so that we can drink freely from the waters of life.

In his gracious act as he bears judgment, life flows. eternal life can flow to us. We find forgiveness and freedom from guilt in Christ, our rock who dies for us.

There is this great exchange that takes place. Jesus takes what I deserve, the rod of judgment, so that you and I can get what he deserves, which is eternal life.

God is so committed in the gospel to saving and dwelling with his people that Jesus, the eternal son of God, becomes one of us.

[67 : 27] That by his wounds we might be healed. The people of Moses' day had this wonderful life-giving truth in the wilderness.

And we see that truth being played out at the cross. And the question is, how do we receive that for ourselves? How do we discover and experience God who is faithful to save us and to be with us and for us?

We need to look to the rock who is Christ, to look and to live. Because in the gospel message, we have this wonderful visual aid.

Think about the cross of Christ. Think about it in the church, those visual pictures of the gospel, baptism and the Lord's Supper. They stand as a demonstration of the love of God for us.

His saving commitment to a sinful people. His gracious provision to a needy world.

[68 : 36] His means of establishing covenant relationship with sinful people by His grace. And so we need to look, to look by faith, to trust in Jesus and to keep looking, to trust and to recognize that He was struck for us, that He supplies life to us, that He is the one who satisfies our deep thirst.

as we thirst for a love that is never lost and a life that never ends, an identity that is solid and can't be taken, a security that is unshakable, we find those in Christ.

And so we are invited today to look to the rock, to build our life on the rock, to find our questions and our longings met in the rock who is Christ.

Let's pray together. Our God and Father, we thank You for Your grace and Your patience with people who are so prone to wander and to lack faith and to be slow and to learn the lesson of trust.

what's true of Old Testament Israel is so often true of ourselves. And we thank You that You are a God who gives visual aids to demonstrate Your love and Your grace.

[70 : 15] For the people then, it was a rock. For us today, it's the cross of Christ. We thank You for Jesus bearing the judgment, being struck for us so that life might flow to us and in us.

Lord, we ask that for all of our questions, for all of our longings, we would take them to Christ, that we would find Him as our all in all, and that we might walk through our journey of life on a journey of faith, trusting and looking to Christ, our rock and our Redeemer.

And we pray in His name. Amen. Now, we're going to close with a hymn that's based on Psalm 62, My Soul Finds Rest in God Alone.

And again, as we're able, let's stand together to sing. I pray My soul finds rest in God alone, my rock and my salvation, a fortress strong against my foes, And I will not be shaken Though lips may bless and hearts may hurt And lies like arrows pierce me I'll fix my heart's unrighteousness I'll look to Him who hears me Oh, praise Him, hallelujah My delight and my reward

Everlasting, never failing My Redeemer, my God Find rest, my soul, in God alone Amid the world's temptations When evil seeks to take a hold I'll cling to Christ now patient Though riches come and riches grow Don't set your hearts upon them The fields of hope in which as home Are harvested in heaven Oh, praise Him, hallelujah My delight and my reward

[73 : 18] Everlasting, never failing My Redeemer, my God I'll set my gaze on God And trust in Him completely With every day pour out my soul And He will prove His mercy Though life is but a fleeting plan A sight to need to measure My weakness, my grace on God My weakness, Christ, the curse of death And I am this forever Oh, praise Him, hallelujah My delight and my reward

Everlasting, never failing My Redeemer, my God My Redeemer, my God Oh, praise Him, hallelujah My delight and my reward Everlasting, never failing My Redeemer, my God I receive this benediction taken from Ephesians chapter 3 from verse 17 May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and established in love May a strength to comprehend with all the Lord's holy people how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God

Amen