

Grumbling

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[0 : 0 0] The reading is from Numbers chapter 10 verse 33 on page 142 of the Church Bibles.

Page 142. So they set out from the mount of the Lord three days journey. And the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them three days journey to seek out a resting place for them.

And the cloud of the Lord was over them by day whenever they set out from the camp. And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you.

And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, to the ten thousand thousands of Israel. And the people complained in the hearing of the Lord about their misfortunes.

And when the Lord heard it, his anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some outlying parts of the camp. Then the people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to the Lord, and the fire died down.

[1 : 1 6] So the name of that place was called Taborah, because the fire of the Lord burned among them. Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving.

And the people of Israel also wept again and said, Oh, that we had meat to eat. We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic.

But now our strength is dried up, and there's nothing at all but this manna to look at. Now the manna was like coriander seed, and its appearance like that of badellium.

The people went about and gathered it, and ground it in hand mills, or beat it in mortars, and boiled it in pots, and made cakes of it. And the taste of it was like the taste of cakes baked with oil.

When the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell with it. Moses heard the people weeping through their clans, everyone at the door of his tent.

[2 : 1 6] And the anger of the Lord blazed hotly, and Moses was displeased. Moses said to the Lord, Why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favor in your sight, that you lay the burden of all these people on me?

Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth that you should say to me, Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing child, to the land that you swore to give their fathers?

Where am I to get meat to give all these people? For they weep before me and say, Give us meat that we may eat. I am not able to carry all these people alone.

The second reading is taken from Numbers chapter 11 verses 31 to chapter 12 verse 16, and can be found on page 144 of the Church Bible.

So starting at chapter 11 verse 31. Then a wind from the Lord sprang up, and it brought quail from the sea, and let them fall beside the camp, about a day's journey on this side, and a day's journey on the other side, round the camp, and about two cubits above the ground.

[3 : 29] And the people rose all that day, and all night, and all the next day, and gathered the quail. Those who gathered least gathered ten homers, and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp.

While the meat was yet between their teeth, before it was consumed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord struck down the people with a very great plague.

Therefore, the name of that place was called Kibroth-Hatava, because there they buried the people who had the craving. From Kibroth-Hatava, the people journeyed to Hazorot, and they remained at Hazorot.

Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses, because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman. And they said, Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses?

Has he not spoken through us also? And the Lord heard it. Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.

[4 : 33] And suddenly the Lord said to Moses, and to Aaron and Miriam, Come out, you three, to the tent of meeting. And the three of them came out. And the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the entrance of the tent, and called Aaron and Miriam.

And they both came forward. And he said, Hear my words. If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make myself known to him in a vision. I speak with him in a dream.

Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles. And he beholds the form of the Lord.

Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them. And he departed. When the cloud removed from over the tent, behold, Miriam was leprous, like snow.

And Aaron turned towards Miriam, and behold, she was leprous. And Aaron said to Moses, O my Lord, do not punish us, because we have done foolishly and have sinned.

[5 : 42] Let her not be as one dead, whose flesh is half eaten away when he comes out of his mother's womb. And Moses cried to the Lord, O God, please heal her, please.

But the Lord said to Moses, If her father had but spat on her face, should she not be shamed for seven days? Let her be shut outside the camp for seven days.

And after that, she may be brought in again. So Miriam was shut outside the camp for seven days. And the people did not set out on the march till Miriam was brought in again. After that, the people set out from Hazoroth and camped in the wilderness of Paran.

Thanks very much for reading, Helen and Ashley. Can I encourage you just to make sure that if you haven't got sight of the back of the handouts, that's going to be very useful for us this morning. We'll be referring to it a fair bit.

So it would be worth being able to see that. Before we begin, I'm going to pray for us. Father in heaven, we thank you so, so much that you have sent your spirit into the world, that when your word is heard and your people listen, then you speak.

[6 : 57] Father in heaven, we thank you so, so much. You help us this morning put to one side anything that is clogging our heart or our mind so that we might hear faithfully what you have to say.

Amen. Why does Christianity look so weak? Why does it look so weak? If we haven't asked that question already in our lives, I'm sure that we will do so one day.

We meet in a school hall, for example, that leaks. It leaks directly on the speaker when it's raining. It's very good fun. We sing old songs no one else knows. We gather around a 2,000 to 3,000-year-old book that is considered out of date by some and morally evil by others.

But worse, though, we might be thinking is our message. I wonder if you've ever thought about this marketing campaign. Become a Christian. All you have to do is understand that one man was murdered as a slave who is God in human flesh.

And if you want to be saved, all you have to do is recognize that you are utterly vile, cannot save yourself, and fall at the feet of King Jesus. It is the most beautiful message, I'm convinced, but it's not the easiest to proclaim to a world obsessed with status.

[8 : 07] Or perhaps, rather than the message, we question God's means rather than the message. Prayer looks weak. Bible study looks weak. Fellowship with other Christians looks weak.

And we might, if we're honest with ourselves, begin to doubt that God's ways, God's messages, are the best ways. We might start to believe we know better.

Now, as Simon mentioned, that's been happening a lot in our denomination. Jane Ozan, who is one of the key figures in pushing through same-sex marriage in the Church of England, and says that we've moved on, ultimately, from the Bible, because we are Western 21st century Christians.

In other words, she's decided that God's ways, God's words, well, they're too weak. They're too weak for today. We need to move on. But for us, as we feel that temptation, do we ever think his ways are really worth trusting in to get us to heaven?

Are his ways really strong enough? Are they good enough? Are we coming on narrative to the beginning of the journey? We've had 10 whole chapters building up. The preparations are finally done.

[9 : 15] God has done everything to ensure that his people will make it to the promised land. And the journey begins, chapter 10, verse 11. Have a look down with me, chapter 10, verse 11. In the second year, in the second month, on the 20th day of the month, the cloud lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony, and the people of Israel set out by stages from the wilderness of Sinai.

And it seems to be going very well. They set out in the right order. Verse 14, the standard of the camp, the people of Judah set out first by their companies. And over their company was Nashon, the son of Amminadab.

So everything seems to be going to plan. The journey's beginning. All looks well. The journey has finally started. It's kind of like, I suppose, as you're in a film, and the camera has been set firmly on God for 10 chapters.

God has set everything up for their journey. But now the camera has shifted to the people themselves. The journey has begun. And we're now going to see whether or not the people can make it and trust God enough to make it to the promised land.

And the answer is a resounding no. No. And that brings me on to my first point. And we're going to be spending most of our time in this point.

[10 : 29] So if you think by the time we get to the end of this point, gosh, we've been going for however long. Don't worry. This is where we're going to be spending most of our time. Man's oldest enemy, faithlessness. Man's oldest enemy, faithlessness.

Now 11 to 15 is where we're going to be looking out for these verses. And they provide us with two grumbling case studies. Two grumbling case studies. So the first one is a nice, short, snappy, sweet.

11, 1 to 3. And then the second one is a little bit longer. 11, 4 to 15. So we're going to dive straight into the first case study of grumbling. 11 verse 1.

And the people complained in the hearing of the Lord. It's so jarring, isn't it? We've had such a huge build-up.

10 chapters of God being faithful. The journey's begun. And we're finally coming. Yes, the journey's begun. The story can finally begin. And immediately, they grumbled. It's like running fingers down a chalkboard.

[11 : 30] Really? Again, after all God's provision. After all that preparation. Even after they've seen everything in the Exodus. And they still complain. And God's judgment falls.

Verse 1. When the Lord heard it, his anger was kindled. And the fire of the Lord burned among them. And consumed some outlying parts of the camp. Then the people, verse 2, cried out to Moses.

And Moses prayed to the Lord. And the fire died down. So the name of that place was called Tibera. Because the fire of the Lord burned among them. It seems in our first case study. That we've got a kind of pattern, therefore.

That we're hoping is going to continue. The people complain. God's judgment falls. But then Moses intercedes. And the judgment of God is removed. Crisis averted.

It seems, therefore, that as long as God's servant, Moses, remains faithful. It doesn't matter that everybody else is complaining. As long as the servant is faithful. The people stand.

[12 : 28] It seems as though the people's success in this journey is entirely dependent on whether or not God's servant is going to be faithful.

And I use the term servant deliberately. If we flick across to 12, verse 6. Just quickly to see why we're using the word servant. And why that's so important for us this morning. 12, verse 6.

This is when God is speaking to Miriam and Aaron for confronting Moses. And God said, Hear my words. If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make myself known to him in a vision.

I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth. Clearly. And not in riddles.

And he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? In other words, Moses is not just a prophet. Moses is not just a special man of God.

[13 : 24] He is the man. The best man. If Moses stands firm, the people stand firm. But we come to our second case study.

That was 1 to 3. And the second case study is 4 to 15. The grumbling begins again, verse 4. Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, Oh, that we had meat to eat.

Rabble in verse 4. Those are the Gentiles on the outskirts of the camp. But it spreads like wildfire. And within a verse, within a verse they are complaining.

Wishing they were back in Egypt. Have a look with me again at verse 5. We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing. The cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, the garlic. But now our strength has dried up.

And there is nothing at all but this manna to look at. Never mind that that manna is exceptional. 7 to 9. Have a look with me. Now the manna was like coriander seed in its appearance, like that of bedillium.

[14 : 25] The people went about and gathered it and ground it in hand mills or beat it in mortars and boiled it in pots and made cakes of it. And the taste of it was like the taste of cakes baked with oil. Now we might think that cakes baked with oil doesn't sound that appetizing.

But I want you to imagine your favorite for the French among us, pan au chocolat. I'm sure I've butchered the pronunciation of that. Pan au chocolat or croissant or whatever the case may be. That's what it's like. It's like getting croissants from heaven.

It's incredible. And yet they've decided that this somehow is boring. They complain, arguing that slavery and death in Egypt would have been better.

But of course, we had our first case study, didn't we? So we know what's going to happen. Moses, the best man that's ever lived. He's going to jump in. He's going to pray. Crisis averted.

We can move on with the journey. Verse 10. Moses heard the people weeping throughout their clans, everyone at the door of his tent. And the anger of the Lord blazed hotly, and Moses was displeased.

[15 : 25] Moses said to the Lord, why have you dealt ill with your servant? And why have I not found favor in your sight that you lay the burden of all this people on me?

Moses complains. And he complains bitterly. In a mere five verses that we're going to see from 10 to 15, Moses refers to himself just under 20 times.

And we're going to read it. And I want us to notice the number of times I and me comes up in these verses, beginning at verse 11. Moses said to the Lord, why have you dealt ill with your servant?

And why have I not found favor in your sight that you lay the burden of all this people on me? Did I conceive all this people? Did I give them birth that you should say to me? Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing child to the land that you swore to give their fathers.

Where am I to get meat to give to all this people? For they weep before me and say, give us meat and that we may eat. I am not able to carry all this people alone.

[16 : 30] The burden is too heavy for me. If you will treat me like this, kill me at once. If I find favor in your sight that I may not see my wretchedness. This is a hissy fit of all hissy fits.

Kill me, Lord. I can't be doing this anymore. I've had enough. I've had enough. Moses has entirely turned inwards. And he only thinks about his own misfortune and suffering.

Blaming God, blaming the people, he falls to complaint. But this second case study is even more vicious and all-consuming upon a second reading.

Because this is actually a massive regression. Right back to the first sin in the book. Right back to Adam. And this is why the handout is going to be so important for us on the point one.

Verse four. Have a look with me again. Eleven verse four. Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. Now that word craving has only ever come up once in the Bible before.

[17 : 35] And it's the verse on your handout. Genesis chapter three, verse six. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a craving, delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit and ate.

Yes, it's the same yearning. But the Eden language escalates. Verse seven. How is God's manner described? Now the manner was like coriander seed and its appearance like that of bedillium.

Bedillium, a word that has only ever come up once before to describe the Garden of Eden. It's like a sticky, rich tar, like myrrh. And it was used to describe how beautiful Eden was.

Yet God's people say, I don't want paneshocolas from heaven. I want to go back to slavery. And finally, the language of Eden and the fall climaxes in Moses with devastating force.

For when Moses comes before God, he acts exactly the same as Adam. Blame, blame, blame. Have a look with me at Genesis three, verse 12 on the handout.

[18 : 37] The man, that's Adam said, upon God confronting him about his sin. The woman, blame, whom you, blame, gave to be with me.

She gave me the fruit of the tree and I ate. Moses, verse 11 of chapter 11. Moses said to the Lord, why have you, God, dealt ill with your servants?

And why have I not found favor in your sight that you lay the burden of all this people? Blame on me. The point being that the author of Numbers wants to make is that man is utterly, completely, irreconcilably faithless.

God can do everything short of ripping out their hearts and giving them a new one. And they will still be utterly faithless. From the rabble, to the people, to Moses.

Man has not moved an inch out of Eden. They are still as faithless as they were in the garden. Now some of you know that relatively recently, or in the last couple of years, cigarette packages had to put this kind of hideous advertising on the front of it that if you smoke this, your jaw will fall off or something like that.

[19 : 56] But they found that despite changing the advertising, the consumption of cigarettes didn't fall. The reason being because you haven't actually dealt with the issue of addiction.

In other words, God could spend all this time that he wants setting the people up. Makes no difference if their heart is still in Eden. Makes no difference at all if man's great problem is still faithlessness.

It's worth pausing here to think about how this might apply to us. Because the application actually is very pertinent to us today.

First, there's going to be two points of application for us to think about. The temptation to stop trusting in God's words is going to be our primary temptation from now until we're in eternity.

I'm going to say that again. The primary temptation for us now until we're in eternity is going to be that we're going to stop trusting in God's words.

[20 : 59] We might read this story of Israelites and roll our eyes and think that would never be us. Never be us in the wilderness. I would be the one who's not complaining. But that misses the depth of the problem that the author of Numbers is trying to illustrate for us.

From Adam to Moses to us today, the problem of doubt, faithlessness, is a soul-deep problem.

It's our constitution. It's in our DNA. We've not moved an inch from Eden. You could even say we have DNA of doubt. And we have, as a humanity, fallen for that lie every single time.

Every single time. With one exception, which we'll come back to in the second point. We will always, always be tempted to distrust God, his words, and his means.

And bizarrely, therefore, that is a huge comfort to us, for those of us in this room who do doubt, which is everyone.

[22 : 09] We all experience doubt. You are not weird if you doubt. You are not strange if you doubt. It is not like something has gone terribly wrong with your faith if you doubt, if we doubt.

It's the oldest lie in the book. It's our greatest temptation. We have DNA of doubt. Second application. Faithlessness looks like distorting reality.

Faithlessness looks like distorting reality. Did we notice that the wilderness generation, they considered Garden of Eden-like manna, pan-au-chocolats from heaven, boring and undesirable.

Instead, they described slavery and death in Egypt as not only preferable, but infinitely more desirable. So let us make no mistake.

Let us not be naive. Satan, in order to generate and manipulate that disposition to doubt, will always seek, always seek, to persuade us that God's ways and means are boring, weak, stupid, and that the world is desirable.

[23 : 20] But make no mistake, Satan making the world desirable is like putting makeup on a corpse because that's exactly where the love of the world leads.

So we need to be so, so vigilant over our souls and over each other that we don't allow ourselves to believe the lie that God's ways are not worth trusting in.

I was recently speaking to a young chap at JAM. He would openly say he's not a believer and we were chatting about, but he was asking lots of good questions in our discussion group.

And I asked him, so what is it that, where are you on your spiritual journey? What do you think about Christianity? And his reply was, well, it's okay, but it is just really boring.

It is just really boring. And I kind of thought, gosh, you have the living word of God open to you every single Sunday. You have a relationship with the person who knows you and loves you, offered to you every single week.

[24 : 21] You have satisfaction and joy at your fingertips. And yet you say it's boring. But of course we understand what he means. Every single one of us has felt the exact same thing.

It's boring. I have the great privilege of being in a job where I'm paid to spend time in God's word. My boss asked me how my prayer life is going. It is very easy for me to find joy in God and his words because I'm paid to do so.

I'm literally paid to spend hours reading God speaking to me every single day. Yet every single morning, without fail, I sit, I open my Bible, and I think, gosh, I could play chess.com right now.

That would be so much better, wouldn't it? Bible's boring. And it's hard. And the lies and the lies and the lies are coming again and again and again. We must not be naive.

Faithlessness is in our DNA. Faithlessness is in our DNA. We come now to the second and final point. An unfinished solution.

[25 : 27] Much more quickly. An unfinished solution. We see in the latter part of our passage that God decides, given that Moses has failed and the people have failed, to take justice and mercy into his own hands.

And we're going to deal with this solution in two points. God is just yet merciful. This is on the handout. And God is committed to his servant. So first, God is just yet merciful.

God explains to Moses his plan to help him. Moses has given up, as we saw in verse 15. He says, I can't bear these people anymore. He's given up. And so God decides to help and intercede for him with his weakness.

Have a look with me at verse 16 of chapter 11. Then the Lord said to Moses, gather for me 70 men of the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them, and bring them to the tent of meeting and let them take their stand there with you.

And I will come down and talk with you there. And I'll take some of the spirit that is on you and put it on them. And they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you may not bear it yourself alone.

[26 : 34] And say to the people, consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow you shall eat meat. For you have wept in the hearing of the Lord, saying, who will give us meat to eat? For it was better for us in Egypt.

Therefore the Lord will give you meat and you shall eat. You shall eat not just one day, or two days, or five days, or 10 days, or 20 days, but a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and becomes loathsome to you, because you've rejected the Lord who is among you, and have wept before him, saying, why did we come out of Egypt?

Note, God is deciding to take mercy and justice into his own hands. He decides to help Moses by sharing the load on 70 elders, which is exactly what he does.

Verse 25, Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke to him and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the 70 elders. And as soon as the spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not continue doing it.

God was merciful to Moses, in other words, in his weakness. God took mercy into his own hands. But he also took justice into his own hands, which is what we saw read by Ashley.

[27 : 43] Have a look with me again at the quail and the plague. Verse 31, 32, and 33. Then a wind from the Lord sprang up, and it brought quail from the sea and let them fall beside the camp about a day's journey on this side and a day's journey on the other side, around the camp and about two cubits above the ground.

And the people rose all that day and all night and all the next day and gathered the quail. Those who gathered least gathered ten homers and they spread them out for themselves all around the camp. While the meat was yet between their teeth, before it was consumed, the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, against the people, and the Lord struck down the people with a very great plague.

God decided to take justice and mercy into his own hands. However, I want us to see, or I hope we see, that this feels not like a finished solution.

Judgment and justice and mercy, but we still have this heart problem. They're still faithless. How is this dealing with that problem? It seems like a slightly strange solution, like going to a chiropractor for cancer or to a Lego shop for a car crash.

It's strange. It doesn't seem like a solution that entirely fits. This is further rammed home with the second part of God's solution, which is 12 verse 1 to 6, which is God's continued commitment to his unfaithful servant, Moses.

[29 : 14] He's continuing to be committed to Moses, surprisingly. Verse 1 and 2, Miriam and Aaron, they speak up against Moses unsurprisingly, given that he's shown how unfit he is for leadership.

They spoke up against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married, for he had married a Cushite woman. And they said, Has the Lord indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not also spoken through us?

And we might be thinking, Fair play. Time for Moses to go. Showing that he's just as bad as everybody else. But notice the surprising answer that the Lord gives.

Verse 3, Now the man, Moses, was very meek, more than all the people who were on the face of the earth. Imagine putting that on your CV. We are, I am the most meek person on the earth.

It's quite a statement, isn't it? And suddenly, verse 4, The Lord said to Moses and to Aaron and to Miriam, Come out, you three, to the tent of meeting. And the three of them came out. And the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the tent and called Aaron and Miriam.

[30 : 16] And they both came forward. And he said, Hear my words. If there is a prophet among you, I, the Lord, make myself known to him in a vision. I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses.

He is faithful in all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles. And he beholds the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them. And he departed. That feels like a very strange answer. Moses has demonstrated that he is just like Adam, just like the people.

And yet God says, Well, this is the best, meekest man on earth. How dare you speak against the man that I speak to face to face? I will continue to use him. It's a very strange answer.

God is committed, it seems, to carrying on with his unfaithful servant. So we've seen a sort of unfinished, I don't want to say unsatisfactory, an unfinished solution.

[31 : 23] God taking mercy and justice into his own hands. God continuing with a faithless servant. But the problem is so deep-rooted. How is this going to deal with man's soul-deep problem of not moving an inch from Eden?

How is this the answer to that problem? As we conclude, of course, though, this is as good as Israel is ever going to get. We've seen, haven't we, as Simon has been taking us through these beginning chapters in Numbers, that God has done everything in his part to set them up for success.

They're led by the best man, the meekest man in all the earth, that God speaks to face to face, mouth to mouth. That they've been given, all they have to do is obey the cloud above the tabernacle.

They've been given a tabernacle. They've been given priests. They've been given a place to go. They've been given promises. All they have to do is obey. But the age-old problem of soul-deep faithlessness remains.

They've not moved an inch from Eden. The clouds are looming over this journey. We're not sure if they're going to make it. More next week on that. We, however, to close, are in a very similar position to that wilderness generation.

[32 : 39] We have a soul-deep problem of doubt and faithlessness. But there is one important detail that we have that they do not.

Of course, when we say that we're in a similar position, we mean that the wilderness and the temptation to doubt is going to be our great temptation too.

We feel it when the Bible seems dry, when we fall asleep in church, which happens, which when God's people seem more difficult than our colleagues, and when we consider prayer a burden or the suffering of being a Christian not worth it.

And we must realize, first and foremost, let's not be naive. That is absolutely normal. It's normal that we would doubt. Doubting God is a soul-deep problem from the archbishop to children, the rabble to Moses.

But God himself, for us, has taken ultimately the burden of justice and mercy on himself. Because we do not have an imperfect servant like Moses.

[33 : 47] We do not have an imperfect intercessor like Moses. We instead have the Lord Jesus Christ, who never once refuses to intercede for his people, who on the cross brought God's justice and mercy perfectly, who was God's perfect, faithful servant.

An entirely satisfactory answer to man's soul-deep problem. So for us, the application is deep but simple.

Simple, not sinful. Simple. We have a soul-deep problem. We must not be naive. But the answer is to look to the one servant who was faithful, Jesus Christ, Jesus alone.

To close, I want us to think about two ways in which we often hear our friends or ourselves turning to to build us up in this life, in the wilderness. The first is sport and the second is self-help or emotional health.

Often we hear, don't we, with sports that if you really want to have character in this world, if you really want to be built up and strong, sport is a great place for building character. My dad, whenever I didn't want to play rugby, which I never did, said it's good for your character, son, off you go.

[35 : 06] And then I proceed to get beaten up, basically. And apparently I'm better for it. But of course if that is true, then we would expect to see the most characterful people, the people with the best character, being in the Premier League.

Of course that's what we would expect to see if sport built character. Now one second, looking at the news with sexual assault in football and racism in cricket, well it's obvious to see sport does not build character.

Second though, we might often hear our friends say, well what you really need is good emotional health. To get through the dark times, to get through the wilderness of this life and I'm all for having healthy mental health.

But can we see from numbers that our emotions are the worst guide in the wilderness? They are the worst guide in the wilderness.

Our emotions are prone to doubt. Our emotions will tell us death is better. Our emotions will tell us God's ways are not trustworthy. No friends, we must not be naive.

[36 : 14] Faithlessness is going to be our acute problem. We must keep looking to the Lord Jesus Christ. Allow me to close us in prayer. Father, I thank you that whilst every single man has failed from the rabble to Moses to archbishops to children, the Lord Jesus Christ is faithful in all your house.

Please would we cling to him alone. Amen.