

# Exodus 15:22-16:36

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[ 0 : 00 ] Brilliant, thank you. Do you not think the Israelites are a little bit daft?! Do you not think it's crazy their constant grumbling?

! Just recap what's going on with me. There are a bunch of people who were in slavery in Egypt and God had promised, I will save you. He told them, he gave them his word that he'd beat Pharaoh and he'd take them out of Egypt and he'd take them to a land flowing with milk and honey and they'd be his forever.

God promised that. And when God promises, he delivers. He sent ten plagues and he destroyed the land and it was crystal clear that he was the Lord and unstoppable powerful.

He rescued Israel from his judgment through the blood of a Passover lamb. He led them out of Egypt and when Pharaoh and his chariots came after them he parted the Red Sea and led the people through to safety.

He controls every molecule of creation. He's an undeniable, wonderful saviour. And last week in Exodus 15, as the Israelites stand safe on the shore having come through the sea, they sing at the top of their voices the Lord is my strength and my defence.

[ 1 : 15 ] He's become my salvation. He is my God and I will praise him. As the New Testament puts it, if God is for us, who can be against us?

They look back, they see his promises, they see everything he's done and how he's delivered them and in high spirits they set off into the desert on their way to the promised land. 72 hours later the atmosphere changes.

Look again at chapter 15, verse 22. Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the desert of Shur. For three days they travelled in the desert without finding water.

When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. That's why the place is called Marah. So the people grumbled against Moses saying, what are we to drink? 72 hours gone, they're not singing anymore about their good God.

They're as bitter as the water. But the Lord is kind. Then Moses cried out to the Lord and the Lord showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water and the water became fit to drink, sweet and life-giving.

[ 2 : 27 ] From there the Lord takes them to Elim, verse 27. Twelve springs, 70 palm trees, a fertile oasis in the desert.

This God provides. They're embittered. They don't like him. They grumble against him.

He provides sweet water. He takes them to Elim. He feeds them. They leave Elim and enter the desert of Sin. And what happens? They grumble again.

We're going to die here. We haven't got any food. Doesn't the Lord care? And again, he feeds them. Bread raining down from heaven. Quail, good meat for their stomachs.

Morning by morning they see his faithfulness. Who could ever doubt this God? In chapter 17, verse 1, they set out from the desert of Sin, following the Lord's directions, and they come to Rephidim, but there's no water to drink.

[ 3 : 28 ] You think, that's okay. The Lord is faithful and powerful, and he always provides. There is no need to... Verse 2, so they quarrelled 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 do you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?

What does the Lord do? He commands Moses, verse 6, to strike the rock at Horeb, and out of the rock water bursts forth. And Moses called the place Massa and Meribah because the Israelites quarrelled and because they tested the Lord, saying, is the Lord among us or not?

Do you think that's daft? They grumble in the desert of Shur, and he gives. They grumble in the desert of Seen, and he gives.

They grumble again at Rephidim, and water pours forth. How could they doubt him again? How could they grumble against him, having seen everything that he had done and how he provided all the way through?

[ 4 : 40 ] That's crazy. Actually, more than that, you think, isn't there something slightly perverse and twisted going on there? Well, thank goodness that you and I would never be like them.

None of us, having been rescued through the blood of our Passover Lamb, Jesus, would ever doubt his love and care for us. Would we? None of us, on the way to our heavenly home, would ever spend our days mumbling and grumbling about our circumstances.

Or would we? Life in the desert, here in Exodus, is picked up in the New Testament and saying, this is the Christian life between having been rescued and the Promised Land.

And I just wonder if Israel's attitude pricks you at all this morning. Come back with me again to the end of chapter 15.

What I want to do this morning is just drill down a little bit and examine a touch more the attitude of Israel and the reaction of God.

[ 6 : 04 ] I think whether we're Christian believers or not this morning, I think these chapters have got something really foundational and significant to say to us. First off, just explore a bit more slowly with me Israel's grumbling heart that tests the Lord.

On the tables in front of you there's a little handout you might grab if you want which just tells you where we're going this morning. Drilling down a touch, point one, Israel's grumbling heart that tests the Lord.

A couple of comments. Just notice, would you firstly, that the context for grumbling is life in the desert. In 15 verse 22, Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the desert of Shur for three days they travelled in a desert without finding water.

Life in a desert is heart. That's a fact. There's little water, there is little food. It gets hot in the day and cold at night and it's barren and windswept.

There are no creature comforts in a desert. And in a sense that is what life is like in a decaying and fallen world.

[ 7 : 29 ] Whether you're a Christian or not, you get tired and exhausted and worried and blown about in life. You may at some point struggle to put bread on the table.

Your finances may be a mess, your health goes downhill, your mental state is fragile, your marriage goes dry, your relationships go sour, your to-do list gets longer and your stress levels get higher. That is life and it's heart. Add on top of that the hardship of being a Christian. you've had to deny yourself and follow Jesus.

Could be you're less well-off than you could have been. Could be you have less sexual experience than you would have liked. Could be you've fewer friends now because the in crowd has shunned you.

Could be you're increasingly aware of your failings and you hate it. In many ways the Christian life is life in the desert. fact. The question is how do you respond to that?

[ 8 : 39 ] What do you do with it? Chapter 15 verse 24 so the people grumbled against Moses. Chapter 16 verse 2 in the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron their leaders.

but not actually against Moses and Aaron. Just flip over to 16 verse 8 and the end of verse 8 Moses says you're not grumbling against us but against the Lord.

The word grumbling means hostile complaining or strong words of discontent. really grumbling is an expression of anger.

What I'm experiencing now is wrong it's not fair it seems like he doesn't care and I'm not having it. My guess is you wouldn't put it like that we wouldn't quite put it like that.

But I do want to just ask this morning and just get you to think a touch how is your grumbling? Do you know what we're talking about here?

[ 10 : 03 ] I sing songs about God on a Sunday and I thank him for everything he's done for me and then during the week I chunter and grumble and complain about my circumstances. Maybe just under my breath to myself as I drive along.

Why am I feeling under the weather this week? Why don't I get treated properly? It's not right. Such a struggle to manage everything.

Why is it so tiring having to live for God? Why do I have to live with my body, this husband, this job? And maybe deep down in my heart hearts, I'm angry. I'm angry with him because it's not meant to be like this.

Why doesn't he care for me? A close friend of grumbly anger is self-pity.

[ 11 : 11 ] It's often bound in together. in 16 verse 2 again, notice this, in the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

Listen to what they say here, listen to their exaggeration and their self-absorption. the Israelites said to them, if only we died by the Lord's hand in Egypt. There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you've brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.

I thought he'd bring me life, but it doesn't feel like it. No one has it as hard as we do. That's what I asked this morning.

Do you know any of that in your life or in your heart? Because you've got to realise what grumbling is at the end of the day, and I say this to you as well as to me, at the end of the day grumbling is just rank unbelief.

I don't deserve life like this. He doesn't care for me. I don't trust him. here's the question.

[ 12 : 38 ] How does the Lord respond? If maybe you know you're a bit of a grumbler, how does he react to grumbling people?

answer? Surprisingly, wonderfully, actually, in Exodus 15, 16, 17, he reacts to grumblers by giving them grace.

See that? this is the gospel going on here. In the face of grumbling hearts, come face to face with a giving Lord who gives to you and tests your heart.

And it happens three times, that's what I said at the start, in the desert of Shur, in the desert of Seen, and at Rephidim. But see how it's put at the start of chapter 16, this grumbling met with wonderful grace.

from verse three again, chapter 16. The Israelites said to them, if only we died by the Lord's hand in Egypt, there we sat round pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.

[ 13 : 52 ] Then the Lord said to Moses, I will rain down bread from heaven for you. People are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I'll test them and see whether they'll follow my instructions.

On the sixth day they're to prepare what they bring in and that's to be twice as much as they gather on the other days. So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, in the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord because he's heard your grumbling against him.

Who are we that you should grumble against us? Moses also said, you will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning because he's heard your grumbling against him.

Who are we? You're not grumbling against us but against the Lord. Isn't that amazing that he does that? Notice a few things.

Firstly, a word of promise from him. In verse four, then the Lord said to Moses, I will rain down bread from heaven for you.

[ 14 : 58 ] a word of promise from the Lord that he will feed them. That is a promise actually that every day for their 40 years in the desert he will care for their needs personally.

Notice secondly, a miraculous provision. I won't read all the chapter but see what happens from verse 11 onwards and imagine yourself in the desert.

The Lord said to Moses, I've heard the grumbling of the Israelites, tell them at twilight you will eat meat and in the morning you will be filled with bread then you will know that I am the Lord your God. That evening quail came and covered the camp.

Can you imagine that? As the sun goes down in the middle of the desert falling from the sky all around you just as he's promised plump birds around your feet food for you.

And in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp and when it was gone thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor and they saw it and they said to each other what is

it? Because they didn't know what it was and Moses said it's the bread the Lord has given you to eat.

[16:16] White coriander like seed tasting of honey manna a little taste for them of the land flowing with milk and honey. In the desert every day grumbling Israelites stand there and know and come face to face with a God who cares for them and gives them what they need.

What does he promise you today? If and when you put your faith in the Lord Jesus what does he have for you now in the desert?

when you come to Christ he doesn't promise you an easy life and wonderful health but he does shower you with grace upon grace you know that?

Your every living breath a gift from him it does not depend on the strength of your diaphragm it depends on the Lord who gives you every waking breath your heavenly father promises to feed you when you pray give us this day our daily bread you pray it because he's the one who gives and he grants you the food and water you eat and drink the stuff in your fridge and the stuff in your fruit bowl is a gift to you from your father your heavenly father will clothe you he promises you that but it's more than that as well we won't turn there in John's gospel in chapter six Jesus says to some Israelites I am the bread of life your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness yet they died but here is the bread that comes down from heaven which anyone may eat and not die I am the living bread that came down from heaven whoever eats this bread will live forever!

live forever he puts his spirit inside you like a stream of living water that you may know him personally and through the hardship of today he promises to keep you from falling he will sustain you today and tomorrow in your faith he will not let you be tested beyond what you can bear and he will keep you and feed you and clothe you and not tempt you be what wand you can bear and he will use you in his service and he will take you through to the day of your death and on the final day Jesus Christ will raise you from the grave to eternal life I grumble against him life is not fair you don't care and I receive in sustaining provision I think what these chapters would say to me and to us is do you see that life and breath and today's mercies and eternal life and his spirit in you and a church family and everything all gift to you as you sit right here this minute gift from a loving caring father

[19:39] I grumble and he returns grace to me again and again and again but but you might say I've been reminded of that thank you but my life is still not easy now sure he gives me life and breath and everything and food and water and he'll take me home to glory but I am in the desert and my finances and my health and my stress and how hard it is to live as a Christian all of that presses on me today and it hurts and I do want those things sorting out and why doesn't he do that for me now!

one comment he is good day in this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions do you know what the Lord God really wants for us right now in the hardships of life he wants us to trust him and trust his word to us his project what he wants to do is he wants you and me to get rid of a hard angry independent grumbling heart and he wants you to know that you're totally and completely dependent on his loving care that's why the Israelites have to collect manna every morning they're not given a year's supply to chuck in their freezer so that every single morning they come to the end of their ability to cope and they cry out to their Lord and they find the resources they need in their God and learning that lesson is so important and so precious in God's sight that for them he led them and he kept them walking through the desert for forty long years he's not a baddie he's not stingy but as a good and kind father he uses life in the desert to deepen and grow your faith in him a grumbling heart that tests the Lord met by a giving gracious

Lord who tests our hearts final final question what are you going to do tomorrow morning when you get up Monday morning in fact every morning for the next forty years in the desert or however long it is as you wake up to a day of failing health and struggles with sin and stresses and strains and pressures what will you do here's your choice nurse a hard and grumbling heart it's not fair he doesn't care I won't have it you go that way you become increasingly calloused and hard yourself that actually is a path to death at the end of the day or tomorrow morning and every morning for the next forty years aware of your tendency to grumble and knowing his care for you come before your saviour with a soft and humble heart father

I am weak but you are mighty I hang on your words show me your mercy and meet my needs and preserve me I trust in you my lord and know in the midst of life that he cares for you and he will take

you home humble your heart and trust him because that is the path to life grumbling hearts and a glorious overwhelming giving God who would have us trust him for eternity let me lead us in a prayer our lord and our god my guess is that among us there there are a number of grumblers so often we we fail to see your goodness towards us and many of us feel we deserve better than we are getting and deep down we're angry with you in your mercy please forgive us thank you that our our standing with you does not depend on whether we've grumbled or not we praise you that you return grace upon grace upon grace to us we praise you for food and clothing and sustenance and every breath and the lord jesus who is for us and in us and your promise to keep us from falling and to present us blameless before your throne on the final day please make us men and women who see clearly and with soft and tender hearts entrust our lives to you would you spare us from grumbling make us thankful and take us home to heaven we pray in jesus name amen god [ 26 : 26 ] Thank you.