

EXODUS 15-17

“The Grave Danger of a Grumbling Spirit.”

Opening illustration.

Main Idea of the Message: **We must trust and obey God despite our circumstances.**

Three pictures of Israel complaining in the wilderness

Exodus 15-17 gives us three pictures of Israel complaining in the wilderness.

- 1. Israel complains when they are thirsty at Marah (15:22-27).** The first stop after crossing through the Red Sea was a place called Marah, where there was no potable water to drink. Forgetting the mighty saving work of God just days before, they complain against Moses, who turns to the LORD to provide. The LORD supernaturally makes the water potable by giving Moses a log to throw into the water which makes the water sweet.
- 2. Israel complains when they are hungry in the Wilderness of Sin (16).** Confronted with their hunger and remembering the food they had to eat while in slavery to Egypt, the people again complain to Moses for leading them into the desert to starve. This time, Moses points the people back to God, saying, “What are we, that you grumble against us...? Your grumbling is not against us, but the LORD.”
- 3. Israel complains when they are thirsty at Massah (17:1-7).** Even after God supernaturally provides quail to eat and manna from heaven, the people still don't trust God's provision and again grumble against Moses for leading them into the desert. When the people demand that Moses provides



them water, they are

Why are they complaining?

1. The people are tired.
2. The people are hungry and thirsty.
3. The people are frustrated.

What do the people complain about?

1. They complain about their circumstances.
2. They complain about their leadership.

The people's physical needs reflect a much deeper spiritual condition.

There are four things that we learn from how the Israelites respond to God's testing in the wilderness:

1. The people's complaints are not cries to God in faith, but short-sighted and self-centered frustrations that don't take into account God's will for their lives.
2. The people are separating the work of God from the *person* of God.
3. The people's complaints display a pattern of behavior that goes beyond simply complaining about physical needs, but complaining against the very work that God is doing in their midst.
4. The people's complaints are against God's servant, Moses, who is simply obeying God's commands.

The people's complaints against Moses are actually complaints against God.

1. "



GOD USES OUR CIRCUMSTANCES

God ordains our circumstances and uses them in three primary ways:

1. God uses our circumstances to test our faith.
2. God uses our circumstances to demonstrate His faithfulness.
3. God uses our circumstances for our instruction.

1. God uses our circumstances to test our faith.

There will come a day--if there hasn't already--where God will test your faith by leading you into some circumstance in which you need to trust Him with the outcome. And when He does, there are only two ways that you can respond.

- You can respond in disbelief.
- You can respond in faith.

Both of these are inward responses, internal decisions that we make at a gut level, but they show up in our outward response.

When we respond in faith, we turn to the LORD and bring our needs before Him. We know that we're responding in faith when we see the fruits of the Spirit: kindness, gentleness, self-control.

When we respond in disbelief, it's usually much more noticeable. We harden our hearts. We shut down. We turn inward and become self-absorbed. We're bitter, we're angry. And usually, it will come out as complaining.

We're not talking about "day-to-day" complaints. We're talking about a deep dissatisfaction with God's plan and purpose for your life that hardens your heart against Him and tempts you to disobey what He has commanded you.

The people respond in disbelief. You see it in Marah, you see it with the manna, you see it at Massah...



2. God uses our circumstances to demonstrate His faithfulness.

Even when the people grumble against God, He is still faithful to provide for them.

The way they respond to their circumstances shows that there are five areas where they distrust God.

Israel didn't trust God's:

- **Promises** - God promised to deliver the people of Israel to the land of Canaan.
- **Protection** - God had just demonstrated that He would protect the people when He delivered them through the Red Sea.
- **People** - 16:7 - "Who are we that you grumble against us?"
- **Provision** - 16:20, 16:27 - God supernaturally provided for the people of Israel, but they didn't trust that He would continue to do so.
- **Presence** - 17:7 - "Is the LORD among us or not?" God displayed His glory for the Israelites, yet they still didn't trust that He was present among them.

God uses the Israelites' complaints to point them back to Himself.

- 1. God makes them a promise.** "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer" (15:26).
- 2. God promises His protection.** "I will put none of the diseases on you..." (15:26).
- 3. God reassures His people.** "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." (17:4). In the wilderness of Sin, God provides for the people directly. In Massah, when the people grumble against Moses, He provides for the people *through* Moses by leading him to strike the rock and providing water.
- 4. God continues to provide for His people.** Despite their grumbling, God is faithful to provide for His people.
- 5. God reassures His people of His presence.** "Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your grumbling" (16:9).



What is God's purposes? Just like in Egypt, God promises, "You shall know that I am the LORD." Apparently, Israel hadn't figured it out yet!

This means two things for the people of Israel:

1. **God will continue to demonstrate His glory to the Israelites.** God is *patient* with His people while He teaches them His ways in the desert. But...
2. **God will be glorified.** God uses the same language against the Egyptians: "they shall know that I am the LORD." It is language of both deliverance and judgment, and God gets glory in both.

The hardness of the Israelites' hearts here is a warning sign.

3. God uses our circumstances for our instruction.

God uses our circumstances—and His provision—to condition the people's hearts to receive the Law.

1. **God's promise in verse 15:26 points us to the covenant He is making with His people. sdf**
2. **God gives the people the Sabbath in verse 16:23.** "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.' " God is teaching the people to rest in His provision and trust in His Word.

Deuteronomy 8:3 - "And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread *alone*, but **man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.**"

WHY IS THIS STORY IN THE BIBLE?

1. **As an example.** 1 Corinthians 10:1-6. "For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was



Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. **6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.**"

2. As a warning. Hebrews 3:12 - Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. 15 **As it is said, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."**

3. To point us to Jesus.

THE WILDERNESS POINTS US TO JESUS

1. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness (Luke 4).

4 And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness 2 for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing during those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." 4 And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone.'"

2. Jesus is the living water (John 4).

Jn. 4:7 A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." 8 (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) 9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) 10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." 11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have



nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? 12 Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." 13 Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." 15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."

3. Jesus is the bread of life (John 6).

Jn. 6:28 Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." 30 So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform? 31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' " 32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." 34 They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." 35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.

HOW DO WE RESPOND?

Philippians 4:5b-7 "The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

