

Christ the Rock

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to the first portion of Scripture that we read, the book of Exodus, Exodus chapter 17.

Exodus chapter 17. And if we read again in verse 4. Exodus 17 and verse 4. 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, taking 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 and 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?

And so on. You know, some people, they love to complain.

[1 : 23] And when they complain, they complain a lot. Truth be told, we all love to complain. We all like a good moan and a good mutter.

We all enjoy a good grumble and a good groan, whether it's about something or about someone, whether we're complaining about the weather, which is a favorite of ours, especially living in Lewis, or we're complaining about the price of food, electricity, or fuel, or we're complaining about our annoying neighbor, or somebody who's frustrating at work.

Whatever it is, and whoever it is, we often love to complain. You know, it's actually said that over 70% of British people, they love to complain.

70%, over 70% of British people love to complain. However, as Brits, we only complain privately in our homes.

We only complain among our family, maybe sometimes among our friends. We very rarely complain publicly. Of course, there are some who are the exception to the rule.

[2 : 29] A number of years ago, there was an article in the Daily Mail written about a woman who described herself as a professional complainer. And she described herself as a professional complainer because she was actually making more money on compensation by filing complaints than she was from her 9 to 5, Monday to Friday job that she was employed in.

There's also another man who goes by the name of Jasper Grigson. He regards himself as the complainer. In fact, Jasper Grigson, maybe you've seen him.

He's been on the TV. He's also spoken on the radio. He's written many articles in newspapers. And he's also written many books. They're entitled The Joys of Complaining, The Complainer's Guide to Getting Even, and The Complete Complainer.

Jasper Grigson, he's known as Britain's greatest complainer. And, you know, you come to a passage like this one, and you see in Exodus 17 that God's redeemed people, they were Israel's greatest complainers.

They were Israel's greatest complainers. And I want us to look at this first half of Exodus 17 this evening. I want us to look at it under two headings, two simple headings, the complainers and the Christ.

[3 : 50] The complainers and the Christ. So first of all, the complainers. The complainers. Look at verse 1. We're told here that 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 they 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?

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.

You know, by the time the Israelites had passed through the wilderness of sin and camped at Rephidim, they had become professional complainers. They had become professional complainers because after being redeemed and rescued from slavery and bondage in Egypt, at each point on their wilderness journey, we have seen the Israelites grumbling and groaning against God and their muttering and moaning against Moses.

They're even complaining and criticizing their own congregation. They were professional complainers. Because if you were to look at your map, I don't know if you still have your map in your Bible, but if you were to look at your map of the Exodus, you'd see that before the Israelites had even crossed the Red Sea, they had started complaining.

[5 : 24] When they were at Pi-Hi-Hereth in Exodus chapter 14, which is a few chapters earlier, the Israelites, they became aware that Pharaoh's army was now pursuing them. He was chasing after them.

And immediately, in Exodus 14, the Israelites, they grumble and groan against God. They mutter and moan against Moses. And they say to Moses, they say to him, is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you've now taken us away to die in the wilderness?

It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness. But with this first complaint, Moses reminded and reassured the people. He said to them, And that's what happened.

The Israelites, you'll remember, they were delivered through the Red Sea, and Pharaoh's army drowned in the Red Sea. But then shortly after crossing the Red Sea, and singing songs of salvation on the banks of the Red Sea, these professional complainers, they started complaining again.

Because in the following chapter, now in Exodus 15, the Israelites, they've passed through the wilderness of Etham. They've traveled for three days without water. And their bitter experience of thirst, it became even more bitter when they came to that place called Marah.

[6 : 50] Because Marah was a bitter place of testing. Because the water at Marah was bitter. That's why they named it Marah. And again, the Israelites, they grumbled and groaned against God.

They muttered and moaned against Moses. And they said to Moses, What shall we drink? And again, Moses cries to the Lord, and the Lord transforms Marah to Matah, from bitter to sweet.

And again, the Lord reminded and reassured His people, the Lord said to them, I am Jehovah Rapha, the Lord, your healer. Then the next chapter, Exodus chapter 16, we saw this last time.

The Israelites, they'd passed through the bounty of Elam, and they'd come to the barrenness of this wilderness, the wilderness of sin. And it's there in the wilderness of sin that the Israelites, they're once again grumbling and groaning against God.

They're muttering and moaning against their leader, Moses. But this time it wasn't water that they wanted. They now wanted food. And as the Israelites complained, they said, Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate all the bread to the full.

[8 : 02] But you've brought us out here into the wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger. And yet, as we saw in Exodus chapter 16, the Lord provided.

He provided sustenance for His people every day. He promised them that He would provide for them every day throughout their wilderness journey. They would have morning manna for breakfast and a quantity of quail for dinner.

And then you come to chapter 17. The Israelites, they move on from the wilderness of sin. They're now in Rephidim. And there's no water. And instead of waiting upon the Lord to provide for them, like He did not so long before, instead of waiting, instead of praying, instead of pleading to the Lord to provide, these professional complainers, they take things into their own hands.

And for the fourth time in four chapters, the Israelites, they once again grumble and groan against God. And they mutter and moan against their leader, Moses.

And we read in verse 2, therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, give us water to drink. And Moses said to them, why do you quarrel with me?

[9 : 19] Why do you test the Lord? Do you know, as their leader, Moses, he was struggling. Moses was struggling under the strain of their constant complaining and criticism.

So much so, you could probably say that Moses was now at breaking point. He's at breaking point, and he's asking the Israelites, why are you quarreling with me? Why are you testing the Lord? And you know, all these constant complaints and criticisms of the Israelites, it had such an impact and an influence upon Moses, the man of God, that he named this place.

He named this place. He called the place, boys and girls, Massah and Meribah, which means testing and quarreling.

Massah, testing, Meribah, quarreling. He called the place, Massah and Meribah. We see in verse 7, it says there, he called the place, the name of the place, Massah and 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?

[10:33] And you know, when you actually read, when you slowly read verses 1 to 7, you have to see that there's a play on words here in this passage. Because when we read verse 2, we're told that the people quarreled with Moses.

Literally, it's the people, Meribah, with Moses. And they said, give us water to drink. And Moses responded to the people. He said to them, why do you quarrel with me? Why do you, Meribah, with me?

Why do you test the Lord? Why do you, Massah, with the Lord? And then we see that Moses, he called the place, Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord, saying, is the Lord among us or not?

You know, as the leader of the Lord's people, Moses was someone who was hurt. Moses was heartbroken. He was battered and bruised because of the constant complaining, the constant criticism of the Israelites.

They're grumbling and groaning and growling against God. They're muttering and moaning and murmuring against their leader, Moses, to the point that the Israelites are asking in verse 3, why did you bring us out of Egypt in the first place?

[11:53] Why did you take us here? Was it to kill us? Did you take us here to kill our children? Did you take us here to kill all our livestock? Why did you take us out of Egypt?

And you know, you read the passage, and you see the narrative and how it's unfolding, and you see that the Israelites, they've become so selfish. They've become so self-consumed that they've lost sight of their salvation.

They've become so selfish and so self-consumed that they've lost sight of where they've been taken from, to the point that the Israelites are now convinced that the Lord's salvation wasn't actually to save them, but it was to slaughter them.

They think that they've been brought out into the wilderness to be killed. And what does Moses do? Moses does the only thing he can do. He cries to the Lord.

He cries to the Lord, verse 4. So Moses cried to the Lord, What shall I do with this people? What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.

[13:04] Moses was exasperated. Moses was enraged by the selfish and self-centered attitude of the Israelites. Because with this mob mentality, they're ready and rearing to stone Moses, the man of God.

They want to get rid of him. The Israelites, they're so angry. They're so agitated. They're so bitter. You could almost say that they're bullish as people. They're so selfish and self-consumed that they want rid of their leader, Moses.

And they want someone to blame. They want someone to point the finger at. They now think that they're actually better off without Moses and his leadership. And Moses cries to the Lord, What am I going to do with this people?

They're almost ready to stone me. They want me dead. You know, there was one commentator who said tongue-in-cheek, he said, Anyone who has been in pastoral ministry for longer than a month has prayed this prayer.

What shall I do with this people? And you know, I remember Kenny I. McLeod, he once said at an induction, I think he was speaking, addressing the minister, and he said, The best thing about the ministry is people.

[14:17] But at the same time, the worst thing about the ministry is people. Because where there's people, there's problems. And that's because it's not just the weather or escalating prices or people in the community that we love to complain about.

Some people love to complain about the church. Some people, that's all they talk about is the church. They love to complain about the minister or the elders or people in the congregation. And we said earlier that people love to complain. And when they do, they complain a lot. They love to complain and criticize and condemn. They love to grumble and groan and growl like the Israelites.

They love to mutter and moan and murmur. And they just keep doing it. You know, I remember Professor John McIntosh. I don't know how all these men came to my mind looking at this. Professor John McIntosh, remember when he said to us when we were students in the college, we were studying, and I think we were in church history at the time. And he said to me, or to us as a class, he said, don't be surprised when you learn that some of your congregation, they go home for dinner, and instead of having roast meat, they'll have roast minister.

[15:33] I thought, wow. Instead of having roast meat, they'll have roast minister. They'll complain. They'll criticize. They might even condemn. They'll grumble. They'll groan.

They'll growl. They'll mutter. They'll moan. They'll murmur against the minister or the elders or someone in the congregation. But you know, like it was for the Israelites, the Lord hears it all, whether it's said in public or in private.

And the Lord hears everything we say, and we are all answerable to the Lord, as am I on the day of judgment. You know, that's why the Lord later said to his people, he said, touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm.

It's mentioned throughout the Psalms, touch not mine anointed and do my prophets no harm. Of course, that's not to say that you should never speak to your minister or to your elders about things that you care about or things that concern you.

Because I would hope, and I really would hope, that you could and would speak to me or the elders openly and honestly about anything, any care or concern that you have.

[16:49] And that we would speak, not aggressively, not argumentatively, but I would hope that we could have an, as David Meredith likes to call them, an adult conversation about anything, whether that conversation is a complaint, a criticism, a change, or maybe even a compliment, whatever it is.

I hope we could talk about it in a godly and gracious manner. I hope that we'd be able to do as Paul said and as he wrote to the church in Colossae. Paul said, let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer one another.

I would hope that that would be our conversation. But you know, I love the way in which the Lord responds to the cry of Moses. Because Moses cries to the Lord.

Moses is here. He's at the end of his tether and he's saying, Lord, I'm trying to lead these people into new pastures and they don't like it. Lord, they don't like being taken out of their comfort zone. They want back to Egypt. They don't like the changes that are taking place and they want rid of me. Lord, what am I going to do with these people? They're almost ready to stone me. And the Lord says, Moses, don't get angry and agitated.

[18:07] Don't be enraged and exasperated. Don't lose your cool. Stay calm and preach Christ to them. Preach Christ to them, he says.

That's what we see secondly. The Christ. The complainer and the Christ. Look at verse 5. The Lord said to Moses, Pass on before the people, taking 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 and 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?

The issue here is that the Israelites they had lost sight of their salvation because with all their grumbling and groaning against God and all their muttering and moaning against Moses they'd lost sight of the goodness.

They'd lost sight of the grace of God in their salvation. They had forgotten and you know it's fascinating the words that I used in this passage. You go back to Exodus 1 it's the same language.

[19:29] They had forgotten that for 400 years the Israelites had been complaining and crying. They had been grumbling and groaning. They had been muttering and moaning for the Lord to redeem them and to rescue them from slavery and bondage in Egypt.

And when the Lord did when the Lord brought them out when the Lord did hear their complaining and their crying and their grumbling and their groaning and their muttering and their moaning and the Lord brought them out they then became confused and they became convinced that the Lord drowned Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea and he delivered them from Egypt all so that the Lord could now slaughter them in the wilderness.

And you know from our perspective it seems crazy to think that. Can't they see the bigger picture? But of course they can't. The reality was the Israelites they had forgotten they had forgotten the goodness and the grace of God in their lives.

They had taken their rescue and redemption for granted. They had forgotten about their salvation. And what does the Lord say to Moses? What does the Lord say to Moses? Never mind the complainers. You preach Christ to them. Never mind the complainers. You preach Christ to them.

[20 : 52] That's what he says. The Lord says to Moses remind them and reassure them that their redemption it has all been purchased by Jesus Christ. Preach Christ to them he says.

The Lord says in verse 5 pass on before the people. In other words Moses don't go back with them. Don't go back to Egypt with them. No, no.

You're going the other way. Go. Go forwards with the people. Go forward with the people. Pass on before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel.

And take in your hand he says the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. Now I want you to notice verse 5. Look at verse 5.

Notice what the Lord says to Moses. Take the staff with which you struck the Nile. Take the staff with which you struck the Nile.

[21 : 52] Notice the river he mentions. The Lord doesn't say take the staff with which you parted the Red Sea. He did take the staff. He did part the Red Sea with the same staff. But he says take the staff with which you struck the Nile.

And of course it was the same staff. It was the same staff the whole way through the narrative. It's the same staff that turned into a serpent in Pharaoh's palace. It was the staff which Moses raised into the air and it brought plagues and pestilences and pandemics upon the land of Egypt.

It was the staff which Moses had stretched over the Red Sea and it had parted in front of them to allow them to be delivered through the Red Sea.

But notice what the Lord says here. Take the staff with which you struck the Nile. Take the staff with which you struck the Nile.

If you remember the first plague in Egypt which was a long time ago we looked at it. The first plague in Egypt was when Moses took his staff and he struck the water of the river Nile.

[23 : 01] And when he struck the water of the river Nile the water of the Nile turned to blood and all the fish in the Nile died.

But more than that we're told if you go back to the narrative the river stank and it stank so much that the Israelites couldn't drink the water from the river Nile.

It left the Israelites or the Egyptians the Egyptians couldn't drink. It left the Egyptians unable to drink. So the Egyptians were thirsty when Moses struck the Nile with his staff.

But here's the Lord and he's saying to Moses bring the staff with which you struck the river Nile. Bring the staff which turned water into blood.

Bring the staff which brought judgment and death upon Egypt. Bring the staff which made the Egyptians thirst because of their sin and their rebellion against the Lord.

[24 : 03] Bring the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. Go he says. Go to Mount Horeb. And you know my friend listen to what the Lord says here.

Don't miss it. Don't overlook it. Look at verse 6. 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.

Do you know what the Lord was saying to Moses? Go to Horeb and strike me. You know Moses he doesn't just strike the rock he strikes the Lord.

Moses strikes the Lord at Horeb. Moses strikes the Lord with the staff in his hand.

No. Moses strikes the Lord with the staff of God's judgment in his hand. Moses strikes the Lord with the staff of God's judgment in his hand.

[25 : 11] My friend what we're seeing here is that on the rock at Horeb where Moses was sent by the Lord on the rock at Horeb the Lord offered up himself in the place of his people.

On the rock at Horeb the Lord in some amazing way becomes a substitutionary sacrifice for his people. On the rock at Horeb the Lord takes upon himself the sins and the grumbings and the groanings and the mutterings and the moanings of his people and he is struck by the staff of God's judgment.

That's why Paul writes in the New Testament. That's why Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 the Israelites they drank from that spiritual rock that followed them and that rock was Christ.

That rock was Christ. You know my friend this passage in Exodus 17 it's a picture it's a portrait of the cross of Jesus Christ because Jesus boys and girls Jesus is the rock.

Jesus Christ is the rock. He's the one who stood as the substitutionary sacrifice of his people. Jesus Christ is the one who became sin for his people.

[26 : 34] Jesus Christ is the one who was smitten and struck with the staff of God's judgment on behalf of his people. And you know the wonder is that the Israelites drank from that spiritual rock that followed them.

and that rock says Paul. Paul is interpreting this passage in 1 Corinthians 10 and he's saying to us that rock was Christ.

That rock was Christ. And you know when you read it when you read this passage in light of 1 Corinthians 10 it makes so much sense.

it makes so much sense as to what Jesus was saying to the crowds at the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Feast of Tabernacles was a feast that commemorated and celebrated the Exodus.

The Feast of Tabernacles was all about celebrating the Lord's provision of food and water in the wilderness. And you go to John chapter 7 and on that day in John chapter 7 we read that Jesus stands up.

[27 : 44] John tells us on the last day of the feast the great day Jesus stood up and cried out. What did he cry out? If anyone thirsts let him come unto me and drink.

If anyone thirsts let him come unto me and drink. Why? For whosoever believes in me says Jesus out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

My friend Jesus Christ is the rock. He's the rock of our salvation. He's the rock who was smitten and struck on our behalf.

And he says to us in the gospel because I am struck because I have been opened out because living water flows from me if anyone thirsts let him come unto me and drink.

Come unto me to receive the refreshing water of salvation. And you know you listen to Moses and you think Moses yep the Lord was right never mind the complainers you preach Christ.

[28 : 53] You preach Christ Moses you tell them tell them that Jesus Christ is the rock of our salvation. Tell them that he is the one who was struck and smitten on our behalf.

Tell them that Jesus Christ is the rock. But you know as we conclude you know this passage in Exodus 17 it not only had an impact and an influence upon Moses it had an impact and an influence upon Moses that he named the place he called it Massan Meribah but this passage also had an impact and an influence upon the psalmist.

If you read Psalm 95 I'm sure it's a favorite of many in Psalm 95 the psalmist remembers this occasion he recalls this occasion he reflects upon this occasion and as the psalmist reflects upon this occasion in Exodus 17 he opens Psalm 95 with this great exhortation and encouragement to come to come to Christ that's how he opens Psalm 95 we'll sing it in a moment he says O come O come let us sing to the Lord come let us everyone a joyful noise make to the rock of our salvation then he says let us before his presence come with praise and thankful voice let us sing psalms to him with grace and make a joyful noise the psalmist is saying come come come to this Christ and then there's the other invitation at verse 6 we'll sing it in a moment when he says to us if you haven't heard me yet

O come and let us worship him let us bow down with all and on our knees before the Lord our maker let us fall O come come come to Christ because Christ is the rock of our salvation come to this Christ because from him flows life giving water but the psalmist doesn't leave it there he doesn't leave it there because the psalmist concludes his psalm in a very interesting way we won't sing it but I want you to read it when you go home he concludes with a word of warning a word of warning to all our unconverted friends whether here or at home this evening he says today today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart as at

Meribah and Massah in the wilderness today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart as at Meribah and Massah in the wilderness don't be grumbling and groaning against God don't be

muttering and moaning but today he says if you hear his voice do not harden your heart do not harden your heart and you know my unconverted friend that is my prayer and my plea for you today today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart because the wonder of this passage is that Jesus Christ is the rock of salvation smitten and struck for sinners such as you are and he says to you if anyone thirsts let him come unto me and drink let him come unto me and drink today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart well may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray oh Lord our gracious

[33 : 20] God we give thanks to thee this evening for these pictures and portraits of Jesus found in the Old Testament that he is there for us to be seen and he is there for us to be found and known and followed and Lord we pray all that we would come to him and confess him as the rock of our salvation that we would be able to say with the psalmist that he only my salvation is and my strong rock is he he only is my sure defense much moved I shall not be bless thy truth to us we pray encourage us we ask to keep looking to this Jesus the rock of our salvation go before us into a new week that whatever is before us in this coming week that we would know the Lord leading us and guiding us and keeping our going out and our coming in from this time forth and even forevermore take away our iniquity receive us graciously for Jesus sake amen we're going to sing in conclusion that psalm which we mentioned psalm 95 psalm 95 it's on page 357 in the

Scottish Psalter psalm 95 we're singing from the beginning down to the verse marked 6 but before we sing I'll ask the questions so I don't forget question one are you awake yeah what were the Israelites doing in the wilderness grumbling yep they were complaining all the time what does masa okay we'll do one what does masa mean testing yep well done so what does merabah mean what what is it quarreling well done good job and last question who is the rock Jesus yeah Jesus is the rock it's like the Sunday school question and you always give the answer Jesus in the hope that it's correct so who is the rock

Jesus is the rock well done so we're going to sing about that rock in psalm 95 where he tells us he encourages us to come oh come let us sing to the lord come let us everyone a joyful noise make to the rock of our salvation let us before his presence come with praise and thankful voice let us sing psalms to him with grace and make a joyful noise we'll sing down to the verse mark 6 of psalm 95 to god's praise oh come let us sing to the lord come let us everyone a joyful noise make make to the rock of our salvation let us before his presence come with praise and thankful voice let us sing psalms to him with grace and make a joyful noise for god a great god a great king above god she is depths of the earth are in his hand the strength of his hands to him the spacious he belongs for he the same did make the dry land also from his hands its warm first day oh come and let us worship him let us part down with all and on our knees before the

Lord that may come let us fall the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more amen