

# Why God Tests His People

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, I think there's a question that a lot of Christians ask often. They might not ask it out loud to other Christians, but they ask it in their own heads.

And the question is, why is my life still so hard? And you know what? It's a good question. Because surely it shouldn't be.

If the gospel is true, you know, that God has shown himself to be our father, that he has called us out of the world, he has set us apart, he has saved us as Christians, he has set his love upon us. That's what the Bible teaches, right? And he wants the best for us. And he's sovereign. Then why do I still have problems?

Have you ever wondered that? I certainly have. Why? Why is there financial difficulty still? For God's people, the God who owns all things.

[ 1 : 04 ] The God who I know could heal my sickness right away if he wanted to. Why do I still have problems? Why doesn't my life look like I'm a child of God?

Have you ever wondered that about your own life? I mean, if you haven't, if you haven't ever sat down and thought, why? Why is my life still hard?

Then you're better than most of the holy men in scripture. Because Job cried out to God asking that very question. The psalmist often asks that question.

Why do the righteous, those in right relationship with God, still suffer? It's an important question and we need an answer for it.

And that's why this morning I want to spend our time together by trying to answer that question by looking at the Israelites in the wilderness. By joining them again in Exodus.

[ 2 : 04 ] Because where we are in the story of Exodus is that the Israelites are finding themselves wondering that same thing. They've just been saved by God out of slavery in Egypt.

But no sooner are they saved through the waters and brought into God's purposes than they find themselves in all kinds of difficulties that they didn't expect as God's people.

And that's where we are now in Exodus 16. And so I encourage you to have your Bibles open as we try. There's a lot we can get from this passage, but I think it would help us just to focus on trying to answer the question, Why does God put us through difficulties?

Why does life still seem so difficult for God's people? And I think this chapter does go a long way in answering that very important question for us.

And what we discover as we read it, and you've probably already picked it up when it was read earlier, is that God is engineering these situations that are really difficult for the Israelites in order, we're told, to test them.

[ 3 : 17 ] You see that word, testing, quite a lot in this passage. So, for example, in 1525, the first time they realized, oh, wow, the wilderness is actually not just a walk in the park, they cried out to the Lord.

And then in verse, the end of verse 25, the Lord made a statute and ordinance for them at Marah, that's the place they were, and he tested them there.

And this is the first time you actually come across this idea in Exodus of God testing his people. And it's a very uncomfortable idea. We don't like to be tested. I mean, you think a test, you think back to school, right?

And you never felt good about tests. Maybe you do, and you're a rare breed. Most people don't like being tested, though, right? You see it again in chapter 16, verse 4.

The Lord said to Moses, I'm going to rain bread from heaven for you. The people are going to go out each day, gather enough for that day. This way, at the end of verse 4, I will test them.

[ 4 : 18 ] And so, this is not the end of it. There's a whole series. You could call it a test series, I suppose. There's a series of tests in this part of Exodus.

As they're now saved, and they're on their way to Sinai, but we're in this middle section now where they're in the wilderness, and suddenly God is testing them unexpectedly.

And so we're introduced to this idea of God testing his people with difficulties. But as we read it, we also discover why they needed it so desperately, why they needed to be tested, and why we do as well.

More than we think. Our faith needs to be tested. And it's from the story that we find out at least three reasons why. And that's what I want us to look at this morning.

The three reasons why, as we go through the story, we discover why we need tests. We need trials. We actually need difficulties as God's people.

[ 5 : 18 ] So let's see why. First of all, the first reason we see in this story is because testing exposes the gaps in our faith. Testing exposes the gaps in our faith.

Now, if you were here last week, remember the song that Israel sung. It was this glorious, epic worship session on the far banks of the Red Sea.

They had just been rescued in this miraculous way, and they just sang this amazing song, the first song in the Bible, of how God is their strength. Remember that.

God is my song and my strength. He's my rescue. It's kind of the stuff that we sing. It's just positive worship song of how God has come through for them.

But then you read on, and something changes very quickly. Right after this epic worship session, they find themselves in the wilderness.

[ 6 : 14 ] It's kind of like, you know, us waking up on Monday morning after a great Sunday. And they find themselves in the hardness of life, in the wilderness where things are not easy.

And it's a place that God has deliberately brought them to. And it's amazing when they're in this situation, the moment they're in this hard situation, it's amazing how quick their attitude changes from the song they just sang.

So look at verse 2 and 3 of chapter 16. The entire Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, if only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt when we sat by pots of meat and ate all the bread we wanted.

Instead, you brought us into this wilderness to make this whole assembly die of hunger. Talk about being grumpy. But I mean, whatever happened to, the Lord is my strength and my song.

He has become my salvation. Whatever happened to, you will bring us and plant us on the mountain of your possession. Whatever happened to all this positive, faithful hope that they just sang about like a chapter before.

[ 7 : 29 ] All these sentiments that they sang about in their worship quickly dissolve in the face of the hard reality of life. Now, these people, they've just seen God.

You've just got to understand how ridiculous this is. They've just seen God miraculously rescue them from the Egyptian army, the superpower of the day, in this way that is undoubtedly divine, this passing through the Red Sea.

They saw fire from heaven come down. They saw these huge signs from God. And it doesn't take long for them to go, oh, we should have just died in Egypt when they face a little bit of difficulty.

And they really should trust God by now, after all he's done. And you'd expect him, you'd expect him to respond in a hard way.

Like, I mean, he has every right to go, you know what? Just forget these people. I've had enough of them. But he doesn't. He actually responds in a surprisingly gracious way.

[ 8 : 31 ] Have a look at verse 4, how God responds to their grumpiness in the wilderness. Their obvious just throwing all that he's done in his face and not trusting him.

And yet he responds like this. Verse 4, God is gracious here because he knows something about the Israelites.

He knows that their faith still needs work. He knows, he expects. He knew that they would get into the situation. He led them into the situation. He knew it would come out in them going, oh, we should have died in Egypt and being all grumbly and grumpy.

And he knew they needed this test because their faith still needs work. It has gaps. He could have provided for them from the start.

Now, this is the amazing thing about Exodus. We see he provides miraculously, actually for 40 years in the wilderness. He could have done that right from the start so that they go, wow, that's awesome. I'm so looking forward to this journey to the promised land.

[ 9 : 50 ] But he didn't. He held back. And he deliberately led them into a crisis situation so that they could realize that they don't fully trust him yet.

You see that? He deliberately led them to a situation where it reveals their remaining unbelief so that it can be worked on. It's like having tests at school before your exams.

You know, you've got your midterm tests. Throughout the year, the teacher will set tests. Now, you don't like the tests, but actually, when you get to the exam, you look back on your tests and you go, I'm actually glad I took those tests.

Why? Why are tests at school good for you? Because they show you where you still need to work on, right? They show you your areas that you thought you knew stuff, but you actually didn't.

And so you need to go back and study. And in a similar way, when God tests his people, it's not in a vindictive, horrible way. It's in a way they need to see where there's still gaps in their faith that need to be worked on.

[ 10 : 51 ] And we see it here in how God tests his people, the Israelites. And God tests his people the same way in every generation. Us included.

And you know what? We need it. We need these tests. We need these midterm tests. Because we sing these truths on Sunday, don't we?

We sing them out loud. We believe them. And they're great truths. The God who saved us. The God who cares for us. The God who rescues us.

The God who's given us hope. The God who never lets us go. Oh God, you never let go. We were just saying it earlier. And then Monday comes. And what happens?

Monday comes and we're reminded, we look at the bank account, and we're reminded of our financial difficulties. Or we go to the doctor and we get a bad diagnosis. And it's amazing how quickly we forget what we've been singing on Sunday, isn't it?

[ 11 : 54 ] But that's precisely why God lets those things happen. Because he wants to expose to us that we still need work. To expose the gaps in our faith so that they can be worked on so that we can grow.

To be the people that he's called us out of the world to be. It's exactly what we see in the New Testament a lot. It's amazing actually how often difficulties and trials are addressed in the New Testament.

And James 1, you'll probably know it. But if you don't, just listen to these words. And if you do, just be reminded of them. Because he's saying the same thing about why God allows us to go through tests, even though he could take them all away.

He could take all those financial difficulties away from his people. He could take all the health problems away. But he allows it because it's good for us to show us the gaps in our faith.

Look at how James puts it in James 1 from verse 2. Consider it a great joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you experience various trials. Because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance and let endurance have its full effect so that you may be mature and complete, lacking nothing.

[ 13 : 16 ] And so, as we approach this question, you know, why is life still so hard for God's people? We realize that the problems we face, the difficulties we face are not out of his control.

But rather, he engineers them to mature us. To make us stronger. To show us where the gaps are so that like the Israelites, we are ready for where God plans to take us.

Okay, that's the first reason that he allows these things in our life because we are not yet ready for where God wants to take us. and we need to be tested so that the gaps can be addressed.

And that leads us then to the next reason why life is still hard. Why God allows these trials in the lives of his people. The next reason is that testing frees us from self-reliance.

Testing frees us from self-reliance. And it's something we need actually to be freed of because just as the Israelites were freed from slavery to the Egyptians, they didn't realize there was another slavery they still needed to be freed from.

[ 14 : 39 ] And that is the slavery of feeling they have to always provide for themselves because that is actually a slavery. Let's see, though. as we look at the second reason that God provides or allows these difficulties in our life, to teach people to actually trust him.

You know, I don't know if you've ever done a trust test with your friend. Remember that? I don't know if kids here have done that. I used to do it with my brother. It didn't help our relationship. But, you know, you stand up straight like a plank and then you'd fall back and you're not allowed to bend your legs. Remember that? Have you done that? Put your hand up if you've done that. Yeah. And then someone's got to catch you. Right? Oh, I saw this. I shouldn't mention it. I saw this funny video on YouTube where they had this Bible study. You may have seen it. Where they were illustrating this and the Bible study gathered around and said, listen, we're going to catch you. Close your eyes. Okay, stand up here and he stands up and then, okay, we're going to gather around, gather around and then you just need to fall and people, he was standing up in this thing and then his whole Bible study gathered behind him ready to catch him and he said, okay, you can fall now and he fell forward.

[ 15 : 55 ] Yeah. But the idea of, the idea of the trust test is, is, are you actually going to trust this person to catch you without trying to brace yourself?

Right? And it's really hard to do, isn't it? It's hard to keep straight. As you're falling, all your instincts say, no, you've got to brace yourself. You've got to rely on yourself. You can't rely on this person behind you. And it's hard not to bend our legs to kind of break our own inevitable fall. Well, God is doing that with the Israelites here in the wilderness. He's giving them a trust test to see if they're able to fall on him to provide for them without trying to provide for themselves, without trying to brace themselves. They needed to learn, if they were going to go forward in the mission, the plan God has for them, they needed to learn to fully trust him if they were going to go through this wilderness and get to the promised land.

[ 16 : 56 ] And the thing about the wilderness and the reason why God led them through the wilderness, remember, he didn't have to, he could have led them on the coast road, which is, you know, got fish in the coast, it's a nice place, it's, they would have had all they needed to provide for themselves, but God deliberately diverted them to go through the wilderness.

The thing about the wilderness is that you can't provide for yourself there. It's very hard, at least. Okay? I mean, the wilderness, the desert, there's not a lot of plant life, there's not a lot of wildlife, and what wildlife is there is like snakes and lizards and stuff, and so it's really hard to provide for hundreds of thousands of people.

And so they, they were in a situation where they, they were forced to rely on God. They, they had no choice. But we see what, what a struggle that was in this, in this test, in chapter 16. We see how, how difficult it was to actually, at every point, rely on God to be enough for them. Because they wanted to know they could provide for themselves.

I mean, think about it, you're going on this, this great journey through the wilderness, you want to, you want to actually sort out, okay, how are we going to provision ourselves? Is there going to be enough?

[ 18 : 18 ] You know, do some logistics planning. They want to know that they can be able to provide for themselves. It's very hard for them to go forward unless they've got it sorted. Because, I mean, that's a human instinct, isn't it?

We love being able to provide for ourselves. We don't like it when we have to rely on someone else. It, it humbles us. It undermines our pride.

We want to be able to provide for ourselves. Ultimately, we focus our lives on that. We focus on getting educated enough that one day, you know, we'll be able to provide for ourselves, have a career where we're self-sufficient and we don't have to live in our parents' house anymore.

And, and we celebrate when we get that degree because now I've just stepped up in my self-sufficiency. And everybody celebrates with you, especially your parents. Yay, now finally they'll leave the house.

And when we get, we get our first job, we celebrate, I can, I got my first paycheck. I can look after myself now. We celebrate and we glorify being able to provide for ourselves.

[ 19 : 23 ] And in all that, we forget that we were never meant to. I'll say it again. We were never meant to provide for ourselves.

See, when we go right back to the beginning, we look at Eden and we look at the relationship humans had with God before the fall. They were fully provided for.

They did not have to worry about where their next meal was coming from. God gave them right there in their environment everything they needed. Humans were under his provision and you know why we learn in Genesis?

It's so that they could focus on doing what they were actually made to do, which is not to spend their lives chasing after money to provide for themselves, but to steward the world and bring the best out of it to glorify God.

That's what we're here for. Humans, we are meant to be God's representatives, stewarding the world, bringing the best out of it, not spending our lives making sure we have enough food, which is what we, after the fall, the result of the fall, the curse, is toil and labor, is that now we can't focus on the thing that God has actually made us for and we've got to focus on just surviving.

[ 20 : 38 ] And we become so used to that and we actually glorify being able to do that, that we forget that we were never meant to be self-sufficient. We were not made to be self-sufficient.

As God's creatures, we were made, we were meant to always rely on our Creator's provision. But now you see what's happening in Exodus and in the story of God's plans in bringing the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery, out of the world, into the wilderness.

He's also calling them back into His original plan, for humanity. And so He wants them to learn how to trust Him like the first humans did.

So that they can follow Him into a higher calling He has for them. So that they don't have to be distracted by having to provide for themselves, but they can actually stop and focus on what God has actually called them out of the world to do.

The problem, of course, is that that surrender of self-reliance was just too much of a shock to the system for them. And we see that in just how they reacted.

[ 21 : 56 ] You know, when they realized that they can't be self-reliant, they complained that, you know, even back in Egypt, yes, we were slaves, but at least we could look after ourselves. At least we had pots of meat and bread.

And so God brings them into this wilderness and that's exactly why they needed this training, this test series. Not just, not just to realize that actually they are, they are not meant to provide for themselves, but they are meant to see God as their provider and learn to trust Him truly as their provider, but also to trust Him to give them just enough.

No more. And no less. That's another part of this test. So if you look in Exodus 16 again, you'll see that God doesn't want them to just trust Him for their provision, but for just enough provision.

Verse 4, the Lord said to Moses, I'm going to rain bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day.

Just for that day. Just gather enough. God's wanting to test them in this way, I will test them, He says. God's wanting to test them to see whether they're happy just to trust Him for every day. Just day by day, not for the future.

[ 23 : 18 ] Not to worry about the future. And then we see it again in chapter 16, verse 16 onwards. And so this is Moses telling them, after God does this amazing thing and provides this food source from nowhere, Moses says, this is what the Lord commanded, gather as much of it as each person needs to eat.

You may take two quarts per individual according to the number of people each of you has in his tent. So the Israelites did this. Some gathered a lot, some a little. When they measured it by quarts, the person who gathered a lot had no surplus and the person who gathered a little had no shortage. Each gathered as much as he needed to eat. Moses said to them, no one is to let any of it remain until morning. This was the first part of the test actually.

Are they going to try to save it? Because they need some for tomorrow. Verse 20, but they didn't listen to Moses. Some people left part of it until morning and it bred worms and stank.

Therefore Moses was angry with them. They still can't help themselves. God's given them enough and he says he's going to give them enough tomorrow. But you know what? They skimp today so they can have a little bit for tomorrow just in case God doesn't come through.

[ 24 : 34 ] Isn't that so human? We need to provide for ourselves. And so they still didn't get it. They still can't help themselves. They're still bending their legs as they're falling back.

They're not fully trusting God. But that is a lesson that God's people in every generation still need to learn. That we still need to learn.

because just as the Israelites were called to something bigger than themselves and their own lives, we are called.

The Christians are called out of the world to a higher calling. And that's why Jesus says these words when he's trying to explain to his disciples the higher calling that we're called to. He also says this in Matthew 6 from verse 31.

So don't worry. Don't worry. Saying, what will we eat or what will we drink or what will we wear? [ 25 : 33 ] For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be provided for you.

Therefore, don't worry about tomorrow because tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. You see, this test that God put his people through in the wilderness hasn't been withdrawn.

It is a test in every generation and Jesus is trying to tell his people, his disciples the same test will come their way. Will they trust God for just enough?

Will they trust that God is enough and they don't need to try get more than what God provides? But we can't help it. We can't help it.

We need to be self-sufficient. And so we struggle to do that. We struggle to break out of that need to be self-sufficient that we've instinctively been raised in.

[ 26 : 38 ] And that is why we struggle to take up our higher calling as Christians. That is one of the main reasons we struggle to take up the higher calling we've been given to work for the kingdom.

To use our time and our energy and our resources and our gifts for this greater task of what God is doing through his church. We struggle to do that and that's why Jesus and the New Testament spends a lot of time talking about money.

Why do we need to learn about money so much? Because that's the thing that distracts us from actually doing what God has saved us to be involved in. Kingdom work. One of the biggest challenges I have as a pastor in doing my job of trying to get people involved in kingdom work to equip the saints for works of ministry, one of the biggest challenges is people are too busy trying to secure their own lives still.

Yeah, I'll do that when I've got time but I've got to secure my own life first. You know, this is more important. And so they're too busy trying to secure their own lives to have time for kingdom work. And that's why job, studying, becomes more important than church. And it seems like a totally justifiable reason, I couldn't come to church because I was studying. Oh, well that's much more important.

[ 27 : 57 ] Yeah, because you need to be able to provide for yourself rather than do the work that God has called you to do. You see, we almost agree with it when we use those excuses.

I've got to secure my life and then after I've done that maybe then I'll get around to doing Christian things, to doing kingdom things. Sounds sensible but actually it's a failure to believe Jesus when he says but seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be provided for you.

And you know what? Because because that is such a distraction to us to try to secure our own lives you know what God does?

He deliberately makes it hard for us to do that. He makes it hard for us to secure our own lives and that's why he brings his people sometimes more trials than those who aren't his people.

He brings his people deliberately to places that they can't provide for themselves uncomfortable as those places are so that we have to rely on him for our daily bread.

[ 29 : 12 ] And then we realize when we do that when he brings us to those places when we're forced to rely on him we realize he comes through every time.

He comes through. If you haven't been in those situations if God if you've been comfortable and had enough all your life you've not yet experienced the amazing realization that God comes through every time.

Not in ways that we might want him to come through not in ways that we might expect but he comes through. It's the same here in the wilderness he came through but not in a way that they expected.

It's very interesting their reaction to when he provides this manner. This manner was this weird substance that melted when it got too hot that they had to collect in the morning and the first time they see it what's their reaction?

It's verse 15 when the Israelites saw it they asked one another what is it? Because they didn't know what it was. Do you know that's what manner means? The word manner is Hebrew for what is it? [ 30 : 26 ] See it didn't look like what they're expecting. God said he'd ran bread from heaven right? What's this? Look at Moses' answer verse 15 Moses said to them it is the bread the Lord has given you to eat.

Yes it's not what you expected but God has come through in a way that you never expected and maybe you wouldn't have chosen and that's what we need to learn.

That's why God sends these trials to his people that he will come through but in his way not ours but he will come through every time.

I can testify to that in our life and if you're a believer and you've lived through those trials you can too and it's when we realize that and it's when we learn to trust in him like that it's then and only then that we can experience what God actually wants us to experience which is real rest.

Real rest. That's the third reason and the final reason we're going to see this morning that God puts difficulties in the lives of his people is because it teaches us to rest.

[ 31 : 38 ] We need to learn how to rest properly because the test continues. Have a look from verse 23 of Exodus 16. He told them this is what the Lord has said tomorrow is a day of complete rest a holy Sabbath.

This is a new concept by the way. This is the first time the Sabbath is mentioned in the whole of the Bible. So it's a new idea and the test is to test whether they rest.

Reading on from verse 23. Bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil and set aside everything left over to be kept until morning. So they set it aside until morning as Moses commanded and it didn't stink or have maggots in it.

So you see what's happening? Normally if they saved any for the next day it would become unusable but on the sixth day if they saved it like God commanded them to it didn't.

It was a miraculous intervention because of this test. Verse 25. Eat it today Moses said because today is a Sabbath to the Lord. Today you won't find any in the field.

[ 32 : 52 ] For six days you will gather it but on the seventh day the Sabbath there will be none. Yet on the seventh day some of the people what did they do? They went out to gather but they did not find any.

Then the Lord said to Moses how long will you refuse to keep my commands and instructions? Understand that the Lord has given you the Sabbath.

Therefore on the sixth day he will give you two days worth of bread. Each of you stay where you are. No one is to leave his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.

Do you see how much effort it took to convince them just to rest? It wasn't easy for them. Now as I said the Sabbath this is the first time it's mentioned in the Bible but this Sabbath command becomes a key part of the Israelites future life and it's because it's rooted right in creation.

Remember what God did on the seventh day of creation? Nothing. Well he rested. Genesis 2 verse 2 On the seventh day God had completed his work that he had done and he rested on the seventh day from all his work he had done.

[ 34 : 17 ] God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy for on it he rested from all the work of creation. That by itself is a profound idea that the goal of God's work was to rest and that's something we don't fully get.

We think the goal of rest is to work but actually in Genesis 2 we learn the goal of work is to rest is to achieve rest.

That was the goal of creation and that's God's goal for humans to actually rest to enjoy what he's given us and to have this the Hebrews had a word for it shalom which meant more than just taking a break it meant this deep fully settled contentment that I have everything that I need and I don't have to worry and everything is good and that's rest and you know what that is all that is what we all yearn for deep down inside.

We all chase after it but it's like a rainbow we never quite get it even though we take holidays and even though we take time off and we do what we enjoy and our hobbies we still still can't rest because even if we're on holidays I don't know about you but when I'm on holiday I'm kind of psyching myself up for work in the next kind of term because we we tend to rest in order to work because we find our identity and our productivity and our work and our self-sufficiency but it should be the other way around we should work so that we can rest and that is God's plan for humans to

actually have rest as the final goal even though and we see it in Eden they rested even though they did work they stewarded creation there was work to do in Eden but they could at the same time truly rest because it was without the toil of having to provide for themselves and because we live in this world where we've got to always provide for ourselves we think we've got to be self-sufficient that's why we can never truly rest and so what God is reminding the Israelites of here with the Sabbath giving them the Sabbath command is that is the ultimate goal for his people he wants them to think back to Genesis and say guys there's a rest that I have for humanity and this is the beginning of that plan that I'm going to get humanity to my rest again and he gives them the Sabbath as a taster every week as a reminder of a looking forward to when God is going to give rest to humans finally ultimately and so they were to have this day of rest where they just stop what they're doing and remember that but you know what they struggled to do that they struggled even to take one day and they try to get more to secure their lives

God gave them enough they looked oh we've got enough for today let's try it now that we've got enough for the seventh day let's go out and gather what we can for tomorrow so that we've got a bit of savings you know that we're hedging ourselves a little bit they had to learn still how to just rest and stop worrying stop trying to provide for themselves they had to learn how to rest in God but you know what this vital lesson of resting in God only happened when their faith was tested they only ended up resting on the seventh day after this test when they had gone through the test and that's why faith needs to be tested we also need to learn that because God wants us to experience real rest not just ultimately but he wants us to taste real rest in him in this life but unless he trains our faith in difficulty we'll never learn how to rest we need it we need those trials we need those tests to learn the secret of real rest because you know just as God could have given the Israelites all they needed from the start he could give us all we need right now he could take away your sickness he could give you financial security he could secure your job he could give you everything you need but if he does that you'll never learn to truly rest in him and it's vital we do it's vital we learn to trust in God fully it's vital we learn to be able to fall back with our legs straight when it comes to

[ 38 : 44 ] God because that is the kind of faith we'll need to enter ultimate rest that is the kind of faith that saves that is the kind of faith that we need to be saved a full trust you know people talk about trusting in Christ but what that trust is is much harder than we think because it's falling back without bending your legs and that's what this whole episode actually points to in the end it's the faith that we need to enter our promised land and so to end this morning I want to take us to John turn with me to John chapter 6 and I want to read these incredible words that Jesus teaches John chapter 6 from verse 1 after this

Jesus crossed the sea of Galilee or Tiberias a huge crowd was following him because they saw the signs he was performing by healing the sick Jesus went up a mountain and sat down there with his disciples now the Passover a Jewish festival was near so when Jesus looked up and noticed a huge crowd coming toward him he asked Philip where will we buy bread so that these people can eat verse 6 he asked this to test him for he himself knew what he was going to do Philip answered him 200 denarii wouldn't be enough for each of them to have a little one of his disciples Andrew Simon Peter's brother said to him there's a boy here who has five body loaves and two fish but what are they for so many Jesus said have the people sit down there's plenty of grass in that place so they sat down the men numbered about 5,000 then

Jesus took the loaves and after giving thanks he distributed them to those who were seated so also with the fish as much as they wanted now this is Jesus obviously miraculously doing a sign to remind his disciples back of the exodus they're out in the wilderness and he feeds them in a way that they couldn't provide for themselves but then look what he teaches onwards so go to verse 32 John 6 32 Jesus said to them truly I tell you Moses didn't give you the bread from heaven but my father gives you the true bread from heaven for the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world then they said sir give us this bread always I am the bread of life Jesus told them no one who comes to me will ever be hungry and no one who believes in me will ever be thirsty again and he goes on down at verse 47 truly

I tell you anyone who believes in me has eternal life I am the bread of life your ancestors ate the wilderness and they died this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that anyone may eat of it and not die I am the living bread that came down from heaven if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh you see Jesus is showing here that just as God has provided for the Israelites needs. Jesus is saying that he has come to

provide our eternal needs because we need much more than just food to survive. We need forgiveness of our sins and we need eternal life. And that is what Jesus achieved when he died on the cross and he rose again to provide our eternal needs. That's why he calls himself the ultimate bread that if we eat of, we will have eternal life. But to eat of that bread and to find that life, we need first to learn how to abandon our own attempts to be saved, our own self-sufficiency. And we need to truly rely on Christ for both our temporary and our eternal provision. It is key and essential, this reliant faith in Christ for salvation. And unless we do, we can never rest. Unless we learn to truly trust in Christ for all things, we can never truly rest.

You know, Augustine, famous early church father said, our heart is restless until it rests in you. And that rest that only Christ can give us, that is what we need more than anything else.

[ 43 : 52 ] But it will take tests to develop it. It'll take tests to learn to truly trust in Christ and rest in him. And we need those tests because our trust in Christ is what saves us.

As 1 Peter says, started reading 1 Peter chapter 1 last week, but now I'll read it again and go on a little bit because look what he says about the tests that God gives us. 1 Peter 1 from verse 3, you can just listen. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because of his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you. You are being guarded by God's power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials so that the proven character of your faith, which is more valuable than gold, which though perishable is refined by fire, may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though not seeing him now, you believe in him and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. But you see how that faith is like gold because faith in Christ is what brings us into God's kingdom and it is like gold, but just like gold needs to be refined in a fire, so does our faith. And so when you face the trials that will come, how will you respond? There's two ways.

When you face that financial strain that will come, when you face those work problems, when you face that health crisis, how are you going to respond? Option one, grumble. Grumble. Because you're so grumpy that you couldn't control your circumstance. Or option two, realize that as the prayer book says, this is a visitation of God. This is by design. That God has brought you into that wilderness to train you and to teach you that no matter how little you have and no matter how hard the road, if you're one of Christ's people, you have all you need in him so you can rest. Let's pray. Lord, you want us to rest in you. You want us to realize the truth that you are all we need.

[ 46 : 59 ] But Lord, we admit that we struggle to do that. We struggle not to rely on ourselves, not to think we need more than you. And so we pray, help us when we face trials to realize that this is the way that you lovingly and graciously test us and train us and help us to realize that it's only through these trials that we can learn to have a faith that truly rests in a way that the world can't. We thank you, not just for the ultimate rest that Jesus died and rose again to give us one day, but for the rest that we can have even now as we learn to trust you. And we pray, Lord, that you would train us and help us to find out everything in you. In Jesus' name. Amen.