

The Wilderness Test

Hook: What are some thoughts that flow into your mind when you hear the word “test”?

Some might hear the word test and immediately think off hallways, classrooms, chalkboards, smartboards, and school. For others the word test brings up thoughts of a barrage of questions that can only be satisfied with correct answers. What do you think of when you hear the word test? What feelings come up in your heart? Is it anxiety? Worry? Excitement? Disappointment? Triumph?

In the bible there are several instances in which the idea of “testing” is brought into divine perspective, recall as an example the binding of Isaac ([Gen 22](#)). The “tests”, which are administered by God, are given to his beloved believers as a means of measuring their level of commitment, while also, training, disciplining, and sanctifying them. These tests usually take the forms of trials and afflictions, where a believer is put in a situation that requires that they live out the message of [2 Corinthians 5:1-10](#), stepping out in faith, looking towards their heavenly Father, seeking to please Him in doing so.

Just like in school, after learning a topic our understanding of it is put to the test, from which, we get a clearer understanding of where we are, and what needs improving. When we walk with Christ we are enrolled in the “University” of highest learning, where the Lord instructs us and tests us so that our souls are refined(sanctified) for His good purposes.

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord,
are being transformed into the same image from one degree of
glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.”

[2 Corinthians 3:18](#)(ESV)

In this session, we look at Israel’s Wilderness test, in order to learn from their example.

Main Lesson: Do we believe that we deserve God’s provision? ([Exodus 17:1-2](#))

By the 17th chapter of Exodus, the Israelites are about one month into their journey towards the promise land. By this time the Israelites were growing increasingly discontent with the way things were turning out. They began grumbling and quarreling against Moses, blaming him for their present situation. This “quarrelling and grumbling” is something that Moses had to continually deal with. This was a pattern for Israel. They grumbled while under Pharaohs rule ([Ex. 2:23](#)), They grumbled at the Red Sea ([Ex. 14:11-12](#)), they grumbled when they encountered the bitter undrinkable water at Marah ([Ex. 15:22-23](#)), they grumbled against their leaders when they lacked food ([Ex. 16:2-3](#)), and in the 17th chapter they grumble against Moses because of lack of water.

The word “grumbling” refers to the outward expression of inner discontent, in other words, it’s when we speak out or act out our frustrations about certain things in our lives. The truth of the matter is that most of the time this form of expression is faithless complaining

(complaints against God). Moses puts it best in Exodus 16 when he responds to the people who were grumbling about their lack of food, in verse 8 Moses states:

“What are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.”

The truth is, most of the time, when we grumble it's usually towards or about someone whom we deem accountable/responsible for our present predicaments. Things go wrong in the country and the president gets the heat, things go wrong in the streets and the police gets the heat, and when things went wrong in the desert Moses and Aaron got the heat. It's easy to blame others for our discontent, but in reality, God is in control, and when we grumble we are grumbling against God's good and sovereign rule. Now recall from a few weeks ago that there is a type of “faithful complaining” (**complaining to God**) that does glorify God. But the focus of our session presently is this, *a grumbling heart is inclined to believe that it deserves the things that are withheld*. This feeling of entitlement leads to making demands on such things.

The demand of the Israelites towards Moses to “Give them water to drink” says a lot about their state of heart. They did not approach Moses (and by extension God) in humility instead they were acting like spoiled kids. We must learn from their example and not imitate them. We must avoid believing that somehow, we deserve God's provisions. The fact of the matter is that God's provisions are a wonderful gift of grace, from the food that we eat, the comforts we enjoy, the opportunities we receive, the forgiveness we are offered through the death of Christ, to heaven itself that is being prepared for the faithful. Grace. Thus, we must learn to trust God and not live with a sense of entitlement but a sense of contentment ([Phil. 4:11-13](#)). The apostle Paul encourages us to:

“¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.”

[Philippians 2:14-15](#)(ESV)

Suggestions until next time

Read: 1 Corinthians 10

Sermon Spotlight: “A friend of God will experience testing” by Ted Traylor (Attached to email)

Article Spotlight: “How to Complain without Grumbling” by Jon Bloom

- <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-to-complain-without-grumbling>

Finally [...] whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)