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## God Is: Patient, Kind, and More than Enough

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TEXT: Exodus 15:22-16:30 (ESV)

Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" And he cried to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the Lord made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, saying, "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."

Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.

They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and the people of Israel said to them, "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 bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily." So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, "At evening you shall know that it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against the Lord. For what are we, that you grumble against us?" And Moses said, "When the Lord gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the Lord has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the Lord."

Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, 'Come near before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.'" And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. And the Lord said to Moses, "I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'"

In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.'" And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat. And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning." But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, "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.'" So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none."

On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. And the Lord said to Moses, "How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? See! The Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day." So the people rested on the seventh day.

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Dear friends,

I was listening to a person talking on the radio a while back who was telling about how disastrous his family road trip to the Grand Canyon had been. He said his children were horrible travelers, fighting and arguing with one another in the back seat and complaining and continually asking, "Are we there yet? How long?" Saying, "I'm bored, I'm hungry, I'm getting carsick." When they arrived at their destination, the man told of how they were at the edge of the Grand Canyon. The sun's going down, the view is breathtaking. But as he was taking it all in, his children were tugging at his shirt

saying, "Dad, dad look at the squirrel back here. Can we go to the motel now so we can swim? We're hot." Sometimes the trips we take with our families can be very trying... can I have an "amen" to that? Today, we have a story before us about a trip. The Israelites had just been saved by God from slavery in Egypt. Now, he was taking them back to the land that he promised to give to their ancestors: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And we see in our reading that the Israelites were horrible travelers, just like those kids. They did nothing but grumble and whine and complain. They became upset with Moses and Aaron for the challenges they were facing in the wilderness. And Moses pointed out to them that really, they were grumbling against God for leading them out there, if you can believe that.

The mood of those difficult travelers, I would call "discontentment." They were discontent with the circumstances they were experiencing; the way life was turning out under Moses' leadership and God's. I love this story because it points out to us something about our human nature. You see, just three days earlier, these same people who were complaining had been singing and praising God for his unfailing love and power after they got across the Red Sea. And now they're unhappy. What have you done for us lately, God? Talk about short term memory. I'm reminded of a story about a mother and her young son who lived in a forest. One day they were out walking and the tornado surprised them. The mother clung to the tree and tried to hold on to her son, but the winds carried him into the sky and he was gone. The woman began to weep and pray: "Please, Lord, bring back my boy. He's all I have. I'd do anything not to lose him." Suddenly the boy toppled from the sky right at her feet, a bit mussed up, but safe and sound. His mother joyfully brushed him off. Then she stopped for a moment, looked up to the sky, and said, "He had a hat, Lord." Human nature, right? A Christian writer by the name of Dan Kistler once wrote, "The person with the discontented heart has the attitude that everything he does for God is too much and everything God does for him is too little."

And that's what we're seeing here in this story. They got thirsty, grumbled about it, and when they came to this pond, the water was bitter and undrinkable and they grumbled against Moses. And Moses cried out to God and God showed him a log and Moses threw it into the water. It became sweet. The people drank: all as well. And he moved on to Elam, where they camped by the springs of water. But did you notice something missing in this story? There's not a word of thanks or gratitude. Then next, they grumbled about being hungry and they actually started longingly talking about the

good old days in Egypt when they had plenty to eat. Wow. How soon they forgot what life was really like back in the good old days. And God provided them with food: mana and quail. But again, no gratitude. They would soon begin grumbling again. Not only do we see discontentment, but we also see disobedience in this story. God gave the people mana to eat, right – enough for each day and they were to save nothing except on the day before the Sabbath, when they were to rest. Then they could save for that day. But they thought they had a better plan, or so they thought. They attempted to save the mana for the next day just in case God didn't provide. They wanted to control their own lives rather than being dependent on God. They still were not finding their security in God and they didn't trust him, so they disobeyed. And when they woke up the next morning, what did they find in their saved mana? Maggots. God also told them to pick enough for two days for the Sabbath, right, because they were to rest on the Sabbath. They collected two days' worth on Friday, but then they got up the next morning and went out to gather more mana, but they found none. And God said to Moses, "How long? How long will these people refuse to keep my commandments?" Well, when you read the whole wilderness story, you find out that this was just the beginning. It's not a pretty picture of humanity, of God's people. It's a picture of discontentment, disobedience.

But this is more than a story about human nature. It's more importantly a God story, and I love how God responds in this story to these people. In his responses to these difficult travelers, I can't help but be reminded of 1 Corinthians 13, which reads, "Love is patient and kind." That's God. In this story, patience means long-suffering, which is exactly what God went through with them. He suffered long with their complaining and rebelliousness and yet continued to show kindness to them, which means generosity. God was also teaching them to trust and obey him in all things because he was enough for them. That's what's going on here: He's teaching them. The relationship with him as their God was plenty, all they needed. Through his actions, and his words, God patiently showed them that he was with them and would care for them and that he was enough. And they were to be content in that and trust and obey him and him alone. But they were slow learners, like we tend to be. But notice: God does not disown them. He shows patience, kindness, amazing love.

So today, we have some more adjectives to add to our list of God's attributes. God is patient, kind, and enough. Now, much, much later in time, the descendants of these

travelers would sing a song that celebrates those attributes in their pilgrimage to Jerusalem each year. It went like this:

I lift my eyes into the hills. Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. The Lord will not let your foot slip. He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord watches over you. The Lord will watch over your coming and going from this time forth and forevermore.

Obviously, some of God's people had learned in the wilderness, and from the stories of the wilderness wanderings as well as in the history that followed that trip, that God always goes with his travelers, his people, and cares for them. And he's always patient and kind, and God is enough for them. He's all that we need to make our pilgrimage through life.

Yes, it's true, we can be terrible travelers like those people in our story for today; discontented, thinking we know what needs to be done and questioning God's care, doubting... We can also be disobedient, trying to take control and do things our way. It's in our DNA, but shame on us. But in this passage, we learn that God is amazingly patient and kind and more than enough, whether we're at an oasis in life or in the desert. That desert wilderness might be a period of unemployment, or a shocking report from the doctor containing the "C word": cancer; it might be the death of a loved one and you're walking in the valley of the shadow of death, or a time of guilt and remorse because you've messed up terribly doing things your way instead of God's. Or you're spiritually dry and you're wondering and maybe even grumbling, "Where are you, God, why aren't you taking care of me? I'm thinking of looking elsewhere for help." We need those times to remember especially what a patient and kind God we have there for us, and that he is enough, and that we can trust him and turn to him who loves us even more than we love ourselves. We can call upon his name, knowing that he is for us.

I'm reminded of the apostle Paul's testimony that he gave in 2 Corinthians 12 about the thorn in his flesh that he complained about to God, asking him to remove it. And what was God's response? "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." And Paul goes on to testify: "Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me for the sake of Christ. I'm content with weakness, insults, hardships, persecutions, calamities. For when I'm weak, then I'm strong, strong in the Lord." Paul is speaking from personal experience. He had

found contentment even in times of weakness, those desert times. He'd learned that God is patient, kind, and more than enough for the ups and downs of his life.

The story today reminds me of a Chris Tomlin praise song we used to sing in our church worship services now and then, it goes like this:

All of you is more than enough for all of me  
For every thirst and every need.  
You satisfy me with your love,  
And all I have in you is more than enough.

How about you? Have you experienced this in your life? Are you able to say, I found God to be patient and kind and more than enough in my trip through life? Because if you haven't, you can. Today, he's provided the way, you see.

As I read the story of Moses and his people out in the wilderness, I was reminded of the story of another person who fed 5000 people out in the wilderness with five loaves of bread and two fishes. And when he was done with this miracle, the people, of course, were amazed and they talked about the story of the mana in the wilderness at the time of Moses. And Jesus said to them, "Moses really didn't give the mana, the bread from Heaven, to the people. But my father provided it and he's providing it again," because Jesus went on to say, "I'm the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger. Whoever believes in me will never thirst." He's talking about our greatest need, friends, which is spiritual, a relationship with God, the source of life. God has provided what we need for that to happen. Jesus, the bread of life. You see, when we in our rebellious ways were wandering helplessly in the wilderness of our sin and death, God, in His loving patience and kindness, provided the bread of life: Jesus Christ, his son, who paid the penalty for our sinfulness by his death on a cross, and then his resurrection so that we might be forgiven and walk in a restored relationship with God all the way to our heavenly home, our promised land.

So, having this patient and kind and enough God we've been talking about begins with surrendering yourself to his care by trusting in Jesus Christ, who he has provided as your savior. Ask him in. Then you can begin walking with him, reading and studying his word, calling upon him in prayer each and every day, in trust and surrender. And you soon discover that as you go through those wilderness times and other times as well, in your trip through life, you'll discover God always there; protecting, providing, preserving, every step of the way until we enter the heavenly promised land that awaits

all who trust in Jesus Christ. In Christ, you see, we are pilgrims on a trip to the promised land. Oftentimes the traveling can be rough and we and we can also be difficult and rebellious travelers who think we know a better way – better than God – and try to take matters into our own hands. I know I can be that way. But today we learn our patient and kind God has a message for us. And that and that message is: “I am more than enough for you. So trust me, depend on me, every day. One day at a time.”

Let's pray:

Loving father, thank you for the patience and kindness you've shown us. You know what rebels and ingrates we can be. And for that, Lord, we're sorry. Help us to trust you more and turn to you more often, believing that you are more than enough for us.

Amen.