

Messages from the Wilderness 6 - Don't Tempt God

1. Tempting God.

In Numbers 11 we come to a very significant problem that the children of Israel as they ventured further into the wilderness. It is one of three times that Moses refers to in the book of Deuteronomy where they provoked the Lord to wrath.

Deut 9:22 And at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibrothhattaavah, ye provoked the LORD to wrath.

At Taberah God sent His fiery indignation. At Massah where Moses struck the Rock. At Kibrothhattaavah where they ate quail till it came out their nostrils and God struck them with the plague. However, these were not the only times that Israel complained. It is just that at these times God's wrath came down in judgment because of their murmuring and complaining.

- Taberah

Num 11:1-3 And *when* the people complained, it displeased the LORD: and the LORD heard *it*; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the LORD burnt among them, and consumed *them that were* in the uttermost parts of the camp.

2And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the LORD, the fire was quenched.

3And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the LORD burnt among them.

- Massah

Israel had already tempted the Lord before this:

Exod 17:6-7 Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

7And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD, saying, Is the LORD among us, or not?

- Kibrothhattaavah.

And then Moses referred to Kibrothhattaavah, which would come after Taberah.

Num 11:4-9 And the mixt multitude that *was* among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?

5We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:

6But now our soul *is* dried away: *there is* nothing at all, beside this manna, *before* our eyes.

7And the manna *was* as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.

8And the people went about, and gathered *it*, and ground *it* in mills, or beat *it* in a mortar, and baked *it* in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.

9And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.

Num 11:18-20 And say thou unto the people, Sanctify yourselves against to morrow, and ye shall eat flesh: for ye have wept in the ears of the LORD, saying, Who shall give us flesh to eat? for *it was* well with us in Egypt: therefore the LORD will give you flesh, and ye shall eat.

19Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days, nor twenty days;

20But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the LORD which *is* among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?

Num 11:31-34 And there went forth a wind from the LORD, and brought quails from the sea, and let *them* fall by the camp, as it were a day's journey on this side, and as it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits *high* upon the face of the earth.

32And the people stood up all that day, and all *that* night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread *them* all abroad for themselves round about the camp.

33And while the flesh *was* yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague.

34And he called the name of that place Kibrothhattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted.

After these several specific times of tempting the Lord, they would do it yet another time when the spies would be sent out to bring a report on the land. We will give that time a special treatment in another sermon, but Paul explains the result of tempting the Lord in the book of Hebrews:

Heb 3:7-10 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice,

8Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:

9When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

10Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in *their* heart; and they have not known my ways.

It is foolish to try to tempt the Lord because according to James God cannot be tempted with evil. He cannot be bribed, lured, seduced, He does not lust, hunger, or thirst after evil. Paul gives a clue to what the Israelites did when he refers to *provoking* the Lord. They were judged for *trying* to manipulate God by throwing it up in His face when *they* lusted.

For them to tempt God, it was like saying, "Hey God, what have you done for me lately?" First, they showed a lack of appreciation for all the good things God had given them. He had proved Himself in the plagues against Egypt. He had proved Himself when He led them the Red Sea. He miraculously provided water and food for them. People are like that. No matter how God has blessed, people are just never satisfied and they will hold it against God if He doesn't do what *they* want.

Also, to tempt God means that you are throwing it up to God that there's something *wrong* with *Him* because He is somehow not giving you something *He* owes *you*, that you *deserve* and He is holding out on you somehow as if you have some rightful claim.

Then, to tempt God is like daring Him to perform as if you could you *shame* Him into doing something.

All of this is what is going on when we are discontent and complain. It was true of Israel and it is true of us.

Don't tempt God! Don't tempt God to bring down His wrath. This is a little easier to understand when we sin. We expect that God would judge us at those times. But what is underlying our sin? Not trusting God, putting our own lusts ahead of His will, not being satisfied with what God has given us and living according to our lusts. The Israelites demonstrated their ingratitude and not being content with God when they provoked Him, and that is what we do, too.

2. Be content.

How do we avoid tempting God? Is it only done when we are complaining about God? No, it is also when we complain in general. It is okay to say ouch when you stub your toe. If your boss, husband, friend, coworker, acquaintance asks you how to improve something, then it is perfectly in order to express problems with something. Also, there are some appropriate and polite ways to express displeasure and say "No, thank you." But, whenever we are complaining with the implication that something is not fair that is when we risk complaining *indirectly* against the lot God has given you in life.

Here are some things you can do to avoid being a God-tempter.

- Discipline yourself to be positive and to express yourself positively.

I want to emphasize that I am not saying *only* be positive. I can give plenty of Biblical examples of times when being positive is wrong. What I *am* saying is as a *general* rule, be positive.

Rom 12:18 If it be possible, **as much as lieth in you**, live peaceably with all men.

Phil 2:12-15 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

14Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

15That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

Do not look for reward. Do good because it is good to do. If you find yourself disappointed because of the lack of response you get, then you know that you were doing it for what you could get and you are thinking like a victim who didn't get something you deserved.

Matt 5:43-47 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on

the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?

Matt 6:1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.

There are things I do because I was taught to be a gentleman and those things are done because that is what gentlemen do. We cannot hold back on someone because of how they treated us. That does not speak of their bad service as much as it says something about us and why we were being good in the first place.

Rom 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

Actually, there *will* be rewards that we will receive. The problem is with our motivation. Do you only talk to people when there is something you expect to happen because of your conversation with them?

- Exercise the discipline of patience.

Ps 27:14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

Isa 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; *and* they shall walk, and not faint.

Rom 12:12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

- Appreciate people.

2Cor 9:1-3 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

2For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

3Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

Paul spoke of the Corinthian's zeal for the Lord as he expected them to be generous in their support. This expression is all the more outstanding considering how blameworthy the Corinthians had been. Try to go for a week expressing yourself positively instead of complaining when you have to direct someone.

One of the most common mistakes people make is to ask why they didn't do something they were supposed to do? Like, "Why didn't you clean your room? Why didn't you go to work? Why didn't you go to the bank?" Now this might sound like all you are doing is asking a simple question, but that is not necessarily how it comes off. If you are actually only asking a simple question looking for information, then be prepared to accept whatever you are told, like, "I didn't feel like it. I wanted some time off. I forgot."

When we ask this kind of question as a precursor to being in disagreement with someone, what they hear is, "Why in the world would anyone be so inconsiderate and irresponsible as to do what you did?" And then we are surprised with the lame excuses they come with while they think you are actually interested in what they were thinking or doing. The implication is, "Good people don't do such things, therefore you are not a good person." Such questions look like they are used to manipulate someone rather than "only asking a simple question for information." Don't be surprised if the ultimate response is that someone simply doesn't agree with you. If you want someone to respond to you, simply express what you would like and skip looking like you are calling their judgment into question. This really only works when you have someone who generally desires to be a blessing, but instead of calling them into question, express how you appreciate them when they clean their room, go to work, or take care of something that has to be done and then ask them to do it.

- Be appreciative in general.

Phil 4:11-13 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content.

12I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

1Thess 5:16-18 Rejoice evermore.

17Pray without ceasing.

18In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

I admit that there are some times when it is extremely hard to give thanks for something, but I assure you that it is possible. If you have disciplined yourself to see your life as having a grander and far more fulfilling sense of purpose in Christ and you are sensitive to all the opportunities around you where you are a testimony for Him, you *will* be more content in whatever state you are in and you *will* be able to give thanks to God for all things. Alongside your sorrows will be the joy of the Lord. It would be nice if on earth we could achieve being able to say that the Lord completely and only sustains us...but rest assured that you will *definitely* know Him this way when you enter into heaven.

Sometimes the day seems long,
Our trials hard to bear.
We're tempted to complain,
to murmur and despair.
But Christ will soon appear
to catch his bride away!
All tears forever over
in God's eternal day!

CHORUS:

It will be worth it all
when we see Jesus!
Life's trials will seem so small
when we see Christ.
One glimpse of his dear face,
all sorrow will erase.
So, bravely run the race
till we see Christ.

At times the sky seems dark,
with not a ray of light;
We're tossed and driven on,
no human help in sight.
But there is One in heaven,
Who knows our deepest care;
Let Jesus solve your problems,
just go to him in prayer.

Life's day will soon be o're,
all storms forever past;
We'll cross the great divide
to Glory, safe at last!
We'll share the joys of heaven:
a harp, a home, a crown;
The tempter will be banished,
We'll lay our burdens down.

Rev 21:2-4 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

4And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

Although I don't know if I would trust all of Hulk Hogan's theology, there is something he said and since he said it, he gets the credit for it:

In three short months, just like He did with the plagues of Egypt, God has taken away everything we worship. God said, "you want to worship athletes, I will shut down the stadiums. You want to worship musicians, I will shut down Civic Centers. You want to worship actors, I will shut down theaters. You want to worship money, I will shut down the economy and collapse the stock market. You don't want to go to church and worship Me, I will make it where you can't go to church"

"If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Maybe we don't need a vaccine, Maybe we need to take this time of isolation from the distractions of the world and have a personal revival where we focus on the ONLY thing in the world that really matters. Jesus.

All of these things can help us avoid a victim mentality that suggests that we are owed something rather than appreciate all that God is doing in our life.

3. Don't despise God's ultimate gift.

There is yet another warning against tempting God that is even more dire. There is one gift that God has given that carries even greater consequence if we neglect it.

Heb 4:7 ...To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Heb 10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

When someone does not appreciate and turns their nose up at God's ultimate payment for their sin, there is nothing more that could be done for their eternal salvation.

2Cor 6:2(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is*

the day of salvation.)

Becoming a child of God is largely saying thank you to God. When someone offers you a gift it would be horrible manners if you offered to pay them for it. When someone offers you a gift that is clearly perfect and you reject it, it speaks of you rejecting the love with which it is offered. When someone offers you a gift, say thank you, and receive it, and then live your appreciation for the giver.

The gift of salvation will transform you, and you won't experience what that means until you receive it, and that is why it is unspeakable.

2Cor 9:15 Thanks *be* unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Now is the day of salvation. Ask God to forgive you for being a sinner. Tell Him thank you for dying on the cross. Ask Him to come into you and change you into a child of God.