

## For GC Discussion

- What kinds of fruits should God's promise of provision have in our lives?
- What kind of response should we make to the principle of Sabbath in our lives?
- What can we do practically to increase our faith in the power of persevering prayer?

**Next Week:** we see God begin to give His people the law they are to follow as they seek to worship Him.

### *Notes and Questions*

**For Worship:** Listen to *'The Lord Our God'* by Kristian Stanfill. You can find it on YouTube, or on the Hill City Church blog on the website.



## Week 7: Grumbling in the Desert Exodus Chapters 15:22-18

### **This Weeks Summary**

Having been released from slavery in Egypt we now see the beginning of Israel's journey through the wilderness. Unfortunately the joy of their escape doesn't last long and grumbling and complaining soon takes its place.

### **For Study:**

The verses below relate to one of the major subjects in this weeks text:

#### **The Provision of God:**

Deuteronomy 2:7, 29:5-6	2 Kings 4:1-7
Psalms 23:1-6	Psalms 34:1-10
Matthew 6:19-34	Matthew 7:7-11
2 Corinthians 9:6-15	Philippians 4:6-7, 10-20

#### **The Sabbath:**

Exodus 20:8-11	Isaiah 58:13-14
Mark 2:23-28	Hebrews 4:1-13

#### **Persevering Prayer:**

Luke 11:5-10	Luke 18:1-8
Ephesians 6:18-20	1 Thessalonians 5:17

This week's text touches an awful lot of different subjects, primarily the beginning of the Israelites relationship with God in the wilderness which isn't entirely positive as they grumble and complain at Him as soon as they leave Egypt. Here though are 3 more issues that the text brings up:

### **The Principle of Sabbath**

As God sends His people the miracle provision that will sustain them in their long years in the desert, He makes it very clear the importance of a principle that was laid down right in the very beginning. It will be officially articulated for God's people in the law just a few chapters later, but for now God makes it clear that on the 7th day of the week the people were not to go out and gather food as they do for the rest of the week, but they are to make sure they are prepared on the 6th day. Just as He did when creating the world, God says that the people ought to work 6 days, and then rest for the 7th. He builds rest into the routine of His people right from the beginning, knowing that it would be so easy for us to find our value and worth in what we can accomplish, and therefore treat our work or our activity as our god. For some this won't seem a difficult principle to obey because we're lazy, but for others it is vital we take this on board - we were created to function best when we take the appropriate time out from our labour to rest. For those of us with a fervent desire to honour God and be used by Him while here in this world we would do well to remember this principle when we're tempted to push ourselves so hard that we're in huge danger of burning out. The feeling of guilt we may have when we have a rest can quite easily come from the enemy, who wants to push us to breaking point. We need to take that thought captive and allow the Lord to take us to places where He can 'restore our souls'.

It's also important to realise what God doesn't say about this special day - He actually doesn't call it a day for worship which we can so easily turn it into. Actually the system of worship God was setting up went on all the time and so should our worship - we should worship while we work, worship while we're at home, worship while we meet as God's people, and also worship while we rest. Our 7th day isn't a day marked out for 'church' (though practicalities and the tradition of the apostles lead us this way) - it really ought to be just what God says it is - a day for rest. How we work this out practically isn't prescribed in the Scriptures - we no longer live under the Old Testament law, and Paul makes it clear that different people work this out differently, and that's ok (Romans 14:5) - what matters is that we do what we do 'to the Lord', honouring the principles He has given us in His Word.

### **Victory in Prayer**

As Israel enter their first battle after leaving Egypt maybe they could have hoped that just as happened at the Red Sea, God would fight their battle for them and defeat the Amalekites on His own. However that isn't what happened this time - God's people are called to fight in the battle, but we still see a remarkable indicator that though practically they won their own victory, the result of the battle really was all in God's hands. Moses trip up the mountain to hold out the staff of God was a declaration of the people's dependence on God, and surely also a great picture for us of what prayer and intercession can mean in our lives. The staff being raised was the determining factor in the direction of the battle, and it teaches us one important thing about prayer - it must be consistent and persevering to win battles for the kingdom. Not that God doesn't use our one-off prayers to accomplish great things, but He is more interested in prayer when we continue to bow to our knees, lift up our hands and cry to Him over and over again.

When we look around us we see people struggling in their faith, or situations which desperately need the intervention of God, our first thought is probably to try and fix them if we can - maybe even to try and fight peoples battle for them. Maybe what God actually wants us to do is daily, if not more often than that, lift up our own staff of prayer over these situations, and when we continue to do so it's then that He will bring the victory.

### **The Importance of Burden-sharing**

I'm guessing the episode where Moses Father-in-law comes to correct the way he is leading the people wasn't particularly easy for Moses to take. Naturally speaking we all want to be the centre of attention. We often love to be the one who is bearing the burden of responsibility, and the respect and honour that comes with that. Just as in the principle of the Sabbath though we can easily overstretch ourselves, and that's exactly what Moses was doing when he was resisting asking for help. Not one of us was made to bear every burden for those around us, we're just not strong enough. Rather it brings God glory when the workload is shared, and every member of His body is allowed to bear their own share of the burden. Some will naturally bear more than others, but we should never be found too proud to reach out to those around us when we know we're taking on more than we can bear. Humbling though it may be, just as in Moses' case, it's the only way to ensure God's people remain healthy and functioning as they ought to.