

# Numbers 15

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[ 0 : 00 ] Do you sit down. And we're in Numbers 15, Numbers 1 to 21. Hopefully now you're familiar with the pattern of numbers.

! How the book has these amazing stories and narratives.! These amazing stories and narratives. And then you have little sections of lore that seem to break up the flow of it. And you wonder, what is the point of this? Why has Moses written that here?

Do we really need this little bit of lore? Why can't we just get on going with the story? Let me try and place the lore in its context. Do you remember last week, chapter 14?

Twelve spies were sent to spy in Canaan. Ten were bad and two were good. Two were good. And they come back from the land of Canaan. And they say, it's a really wonderful land.

[ 1 : 09 ] It's a land flowing with milk and honey. Everything we need is there. Everything that God said about that land is true. There's massive, huge clusters of grapes. The people there though, they're like giants and we're like grasshoppers.

And there's just no way that we can take it. And they proved to be without faith. Those first explorers in the land, ten of them, had enough power and enough influence to sway the whole of the nation.

And the people of God consequently say, no, we won't go in. And God says, well as a result of that, this whole generation, apart from two men, Caleb and Joshua, you'll die in the desert.

The previous section has got to do with astonishing unbelief. The next chapter, chapter 16, can you see where it's headed? The ESV gets it right, it's Korah's Rebellion.

Sounds like things are only going to get worse, doesn't it? From here on in. And we find another example of the sin of the people. Their refusal to listen to the covenant mediator.

[ 2 : 17 ] To accept the prophets whom God has given. And it's really a rejection of the gospel. A smack bang in the middle of these sections is chapter 15.

A section of law. We don't like law, do we? It's always the way we react to law. Christians always want to say, oh, we're not under law, we're under grace.

Go on, tell us more and more about grace. And I'll do that. And I will do that tonight. But I want to do that by preaching the law. Because the grace of God is contained in the law.

That's what you're going to see tonight. Chapter 15 is in two parts. 1 to 21 deals with a particular issue. And then verse 22 to the end deals with unintentional sin.

And we'll look at that section next time. What we have here tonight is two new sacrificial taxes being announced. And like the word law to Christians, the word tax to everyone, no one likes taxes today.

[ 3 : 24 ] And yet what God is doing here is he's giving laws about sacrifices. And he's adding a tariff, if you like, to the sacrifices that they already know about. That they have to give.

And there's something really ironic, isn't there, about this. Because the whole nation is now turning away from the promised land. There's a whole generation that is doomed to die in the wilderness.

And at the very point where they're turning away from the promised land. Because God will not let them go in. They're beginning what is essentially going to be a death wander through the desert.

God speaks these laws. Or at least they're put here for us. In the book of Numbers. And you think, and I think, that's peculiar, that's odd. Why on earth at such a solemn moment, and a tragic moment, when they're condemned to wander for the rest of their lives in the desert, would God speak to them in this way?

What he does in the first example is that he tells us something to do with animal sacrifice. That runs from verses 1 to 16. Just look at that with me.

[ 4 : 33 ] We'll go through it in a minute. There are several examples. And they tell us the particular sacrifices in the Old Testament. I want to make a small point. If we'd studied the book of Leviticus,

which we did a couple of years ago, we'd be familiar with these list of laws.

There's numbers of different types of sacrifices. And we would instantly know what they mean. And I'm sure you remember them very, very clearly. Some of them were for atoning for sin, weren't they?

Some of them were about forms of fellowship and friendship with the living God. Some of them were almost like the communion table. There were various reasons why there was animal sacrifice in the Old Testament.

And of course, all of these laws are pointing forward, aren't they, to the ultimate sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what he gives in this example is, if you want to bring a small sacrifice, he says here is a new tax.

I want you to take some of your fine flour and mix it with oil. And this is the ratio. It'll be a little ball of dough. And then you'll have to bring a little amount of wine.

[ 5 : 43 ] And if you bring a medium-sized sacrifice, then you'll notice the fractions go up. I don't know whether you noticed that. In proportion. You give a little bit more fine flour and a little more oil. And you mix your dough and then you give a little bit more wine.

And then if you bring your large sacrifice or your super-sized sacrifice. So, a simple number is 15, like Starbucks, alright? You have grande and, is it viney?

And then I don't know what the largest one is. Or McDonald's, which some of us are more familiar with. You have medium. I don't think you even do small anymore. You have medium and large and super-sized.

And so, small sacrifice, small portion. Medium sacrifice, medium portion. If you bring a super-sized sacrifice, you bring a bull. And the portions were somewhat bigger.

The other example that he gives in verse 17 is also to do with sacrifices. And new tariff. It's the sacrifice of the firstfruits. And we're familiar with that. We've seen that already in numbers.

[ 6 : 45 ] The firstfruits are the womb. The firstborn was to be redeemed. The Levites represent Israel in that sense. Or the harvest. They were to bring the firstfruits, the first part of the harvest to God.

But now they're giving an example of a woman baking in the kitchen, at the oven. And every time she bakes a new batch of bread or cake, she is to take some of that dough and to give it as a firstfruits offering.

She probably sent that to the priest. Food that was to be given to him. So every time the woman or the man are baking, there's an offering taking place.

There's a new sacrifice or a tariff. And that's being explained here. Baking day. I don't know when it is in your house. I'm telling you normally baking on a Thursday. If you want to come to our house, come on a Thursday, Thursday afternoon, evening.

On a Wednesday night, there's very little in the house. And we come and look at the tins. And so let's say you're making bread or you're making cakes or whatever it is that you make.

[ 7 : 50 ] And you would take a bit of your dough and you'd give it to one of your children. And you'd say, can you take that to the priest or to the temple? That's the firstfruit of the dough. That's a new thing.

They are familiar with the sacrifice of the firstfruits. But now, suddenly, it's getting very, very close to home. It's getting a bit regular. The firstfruit, the harvest, it was probably once a year.

A woman giving birth, let's say, at a rate of one a year. But baking bread, maybe that would happen once a week. Twice a week. Maybe possibly every day.

And that is what the law was all about. It's about the simple thing of baking everyday bread in every part of life. So what do we learn from these two examples? Three points, okay.

First of all, this law is in itself a reminder of the grace of God. This law itself is a reminder of the grace of God.

[ 8 : 49 ] And I think we're not familiar enough with thinking about law in that way. We tend to think of law and grace as separate things.

I think there is a sense in which they are separate. The Galatians teaches that, doesn't it? In that we have to think of them separately. But at the same time, if you separate them entirely, you miss the point.

You miss the point of the magnificence of the grace of God. Why would I say that? I say that because the law is a reminder of the grace of God that comes to us.

So children, don't let me down here. How do the Ten Commandments begin? How do the Ten Commandments begin? Anybody want to tell me?

Ellie? Who? Out of the house of?

[ 9 : 59 ] That's great. I can retire a happy man. Start of the Ten Commandments is not, you shall have no other gods before me. Don't ever think it is.

The law is rooted in the grace of God. It's that I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of slavery, out of the house of bondage. He has redeemed them already. He has already set them free.

The very nature of the law highlights grace. The law was given to them, saying, if you have no other gods before me, I will bring you out of the house of bondage, the house of slavery.

Of course it doesn't say that. It doesn't say that. He brings them out. He redeems them. He sets them free. He showers his grace upon them. And then he says, so live like this because this is who I am. This is what holiness looks like.

This is the way to honour me. It's in the context of grace. And I think that is true about Numbers 15 as well. There are three points in this, three ways in this passage show you and I the graciousness of God's law.

[ 11 : 06 ] You probably noticed them. They're really simple tonight. So there are three ways in which I think grace is magnified. First of all, because God is speaking. And that is gracious, isn't it?

Do you remember the context? The whole nation in chapter 14 has rejected him. The whole nation has refused to hold him in high esteem. They didn't believe that he would do what he said he would do.

And so he turns away. Turns them away. He's not giving them the promised land. They are going to wander this generation. They're going to wander this generation until they die.

And yet God keeps on speaking to them. Have you ever had the experience that someone doesn't do what you've advised them to do?

And they refuse to do what you keep telling them to do? How do you react to that? Do you keep telling them what to do?

[ 12 : 12 ] Or do you just stop speaking to them? There's a lot of people, isn't there, in our world who won't speak to each other. I'm not going to waste my breath anymore.

I've said what I needed to say. But that is not the nature of the grace of God. So this passage keeps telling us over and over again that God speaks.

Look at verse 1. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the people of Israel and say to them.

Look at verse 17. The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the people of Israel and say to them.

Verse 37. The Lord said to Moses, Speak to the people of Israel and tell them. Look at verse 40 and verse 41.

So interesting, isn't it? So you shall remember and do all my commandments and be holy to your God. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord your God.

[ 13 : 15 ] He is reminding them of what he's already said in the Ten Commandments. He's picking up the very language of the preface. Keep my commandments. Listen to my words. Do what I'm telling you.

This is what holiness looks like. It's all a sign of grace. And so when you hear God's law, do you think, Oh, more rules.

But what we should say is, Thank you, God, for speaking. For telling me who you are and how to live.

Thank you for the grace that comes to us in these laws that you've not turned away. God is not silent. And he's revealing himself and he's revealing his grace to sinners.

That's a glorious thing. Second way which you see that this law, These laws are a reminder of God's grace. It's because he gives instructions of this new tax or this new tariff.

[ 14 : 12 ] That's going to be added to their sacrifice. And he gives them a particular time. He tells them when it's going to be introduced. It's good to know, isn't it, when your tax is due. And he tells them when it's going to happen.

He says, It will happen on this date. They are just churning away, aren't they? En masse from the promised land to wander and die. And at that very moment, God says to them, verse 2, Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, And it is shocking, isn't it, When you come into the land you

are to inhabit, Which I am giving you.

And then he gives them the law. But wait a minute, look at verse 2 again. When you come into the land. Astonishing, isn't it? He speaks to them at the very moment in time, When you come into the land which I am giving you.

And then he does the same with the second example. If you just go to verse 18. That was again. Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land which I will bring you. The land that I am giving you. The land which I will bring you to. Who is he speaking to? He is speaking to his people. And particularly the generation that is growing up.

[ 15 : 29 ] The generation that did not sin with their fathers and with their mothers. When they rejected God in the promised land. And he is saying to them, Here is the point of time in which you must begin to obey this.

When I give you the land. When I bring you into the land. He is saying the law is a reminder of that promise. Do you see that? The law contained a reminder of the promise.

And that's why it's so full of grace. It's so full of hope. It's not just a law. The people getting their bread ready. They wouldn't simply. The person making the bread wouldn't simply just get a chunk of the dough.

And plop it on the side. And say well this is what God requires. It reminded them that this was grace to them. That they were in this land. And they wouldn't do this until they were in the land.

It tells them two things about God doesn't it? It says that he has the power to give them the land. It tells them that he has the power to lead them into the land. And it's all grace.

[ 16 : 34 ] All right he's saying. Your fathers have sinned. And your mothers have sinned. But listen up. Listen to me. I'm going to keep my promise. We're not great.

We're not great are we at keeping covenant. But God is. And the law is a reminder of the promise that he will do what he says. He will give them the land. And that's a glorious reminder of the grace of God to us.

That he has the power to give you what you need. And to guide you every step of the way to glory. By his grace. The third thing that this reminds us.

Reminds us why it's all to do with grace. Is the first example has to do with sacrifices. Small animal sacrifices. Medium animal sacrifices. Supersized animal sacrifices.

And each one of them was a reminder of the atonement. Atonement that God is willing to make. With sinful men and women and boys and girls. That God is willing to be made one.

[ 17 : 38 ] With sinners. And he is willing to do that. Because he is gracious. He is dealing with sinners.

Vile sin. In his presence. They rejected him. And yet he speaks of mercy. And he still speaks of atonement. And he still speaks of our sin. Having been dealt with in the right way.

That men and women. Boys and girls would be right with him. And worship him. And he is pointing all the time. Isn't he? At the one that is to come. The coming saviour. This is all which seems peculiar to us.

And almost random. It is not random in the slightest. Because it is a specific reminder to you and I. That God is full of grace. And that is what we need.

It is what we always need. And whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. Particularly when we find ourselves struggling to believe. We always need to be told. That the very law of God.

[ 18 : 39 ] Is full of the grace of God. That the gospel throbs through everything. That God speaks to us. That is the first point. The second thing that these laws set before us.

Is that it is not just about grace. It is about abundant grace. It is abundant grace. This passage is a reminder to you and I.

That sinners who deserve no good. From God's hand. And their children deserve no good. From God's hand. It is a reminder to us.

That God is not simply going to be gracious to us. But gracious to succeeding generations. His grace is going to overflow. And I think again there is three ways.

That is very clear to us. Remember these people. They are nomadic aren't they? They are wandering people in the desert. They will have flocks.

[ 19 : 35 ] And herds. But they will not have fine flour. They will not have fine flour. You see it wasn't just flour they were to use.

In proportion with the oil. It was fine flour. Fine flour means. That we are not just going to grow. A grain crop. And grind it down. And make bread.

Fine flour means. That we are going to become. Artisan bakers. It is artisan bread. Isn't it? For cashier. And things like that.

It is not just. Here this will do. It is really good bread. Fine flour. And oil.

It is probably olive oil. It takes some time to get ready. And the other part of this is wine. You don't get good wine quickly. Do you? You don't get good mature wine quickly.

[ 20 : 34 ] There is only one wedding we know of. Where good wine comes quickly. But all these are signs aren't they? Of a people. That are enjoying.

A settled. Civilised prosperity. And who gave that to them? God gives. That to them. And when you have this.

You see it is not just. Grace. God says. I am going to give you. I am going to give you abundant grace. It is a land flowing. With milk and with honey. And they come to enjoy.

And savour. Every part of it. It is a people enjoying. Prosperity. And joy. Who are able to worship God. This way. God's grace. Is never just grace.

It is always abundant. And the second way you see this. You see the abundance. Of God's grace. In the varying sizes. Of the sacrifices. Don't you? I have emphasised.

[ 21 : 32 ] The supersized one. It is one thing. Is it to wander around the desert. With a small flock of goats. And some sheep. But there weren't many bulls.

Wandering around. In the desert. Were there? That is a sign. Of immense prosperity. One of the commentators.

Puts it like this. Helpfully. You might not. Think it's helpful. I did. But a bull. Is like having a tractor. It is like having a Massey Ferguson. Or a John Deere. Their good mix.

Of tractors. And it means. That you're not just. Wandering in the desert. But that you're able. To do anything. You want. On your farm. Because your John Deere tractor.

Or your Massey Ferguson. Is so strong. And so powerful. It's the pride. And joy. Of your farm. And he is saying. Take your tractor. And you offer it up.

[ 22 : 28 ] As a burnt offering. And there are not many people. Are there. That are willing to do that. But it's like. He's saying here. Isn't he. Take your great.

Farming equipment. Which is a sign. Of how prosperous you are. And give it to the glory of God. I'm going to send. My Massey Ferguson tractor. Off to. Diaconal mission work.

In Uganda. Or something. God has blessed me. With this great tractor. And I'm devoting it. To that work. Do you understand? You don't reach. That kind of prosperity. Unless God's grace.

Is abundant. They reached a point. Of having. What we call. Enormous factors. Fine food. Good wine. It's the kind of farming.

We like. Do you see the point? God is. Simply showing. Grace. And he's saying. I'm going to pour out. My grace. Upon you. I'm going to smother you in it.

[ 23 : 26 ] And when I do that. I want you to respond. In this way. You want to respond. In proportion. And he gives them details. It's a tenth of flour. For the little one. And then the medium sized sacrifice.

It's two tenths. And then the super sized sacrifice. Because you're able to give more. You give three tenths. You're going to respond. In these ways. And worshipping God.

Because of his abundant grace. The third reason. Why I think. It shows us. That God is not only a God of grace. But abundant grace. Is because the law. Is not just for you. It's for those.

Who are on. Temporary visas. It's those. Who have found themselves. Here. And they're in the immigration system. It is for those. Who have been given.

Permanent leave. To remain. There aren't two layers. Of law here. Whether they are temporary. Or sojourning. Or living permanently. This is the way it's going to be.

[ 24 : 21 ] And God is saying to them. I'm going to bless you. And I'm going to bless. Everyone who comes. Under the shelter. Under the shadow. Of the wings of the God of Israel. It's a statement.

Of the law. Which is eventually fulfilled. At Pentecost. It's a statement of the law. And they're being told. Here is glorious. Abundant grace.

And it's never just only for you. It's going to flow out. And bubble over. And be for others. And for nations too.

It's a reminder of grace. For all who come to Christ. And that's a glorious truth. Isn't it? A glorious gospel truth. Contained in the Old Testament. They were being informed.

That God is not just gracious. But they were being informed. That God is a God. Who is full of abundant grace. And I don't think there's anything.

[ 25 : 19 ] That you and I. Need to be reminded more of. Each day. From the fact that God. Is not only gracious to me. But that God's grace. Overflows. He doesn't just fill my cup.

According to Psalm 23. My cup overflows. Because he keeps pouring his grace. Out upon us. And not just us. It's for people who are.

Living and dying tonight. In Gaza. It's for people who are living. And dying tonight. In Iraq. Iran. It's for people in England.

It's for people everywhere. Abundant grace. Third thing. We've seen. In these laws. We've grasped it correctly. That God is gracious. And that God's grace is abundant.

Secondly. And abounding. The third thing we learn. Is that the place. That this is most obvious. Should be the home. And that is what this little law. Is all about.

[ 26 : 19 ] I think. The first fruits of the dough. I think it's teaching us. Is that when grace. Is abounding. To sinners. That it becomes. Most obvious.

Around. What we might say. Around your own heart. At least it should. Because that is the nature. Of the grace of God. And what I mean by that.

With the first fruit of the dough. Is teaching us. That grace. Teaches us. That all the ordinary. Things of life. Grace fills. All the ordinary. Things of life.

Life. And all the ordinary. Things of life. We should do with joy. And thankfulness. For the Lord Jesus Christ.

Has loved us. And given himself. For us. Apparently. When the Jews. Were dispersed into exile.

[ 27 : 15 ] When they went into exile. And they were no longer. Able to kind of. Put this into practice. And see what they did. With this little law. When the temple. Was dismantled. And there was no priesthood. Where they could send.

The first fruits. Of the daily. Batch of bread. Because there was no temple. And no priesthood. The Jewish housewife. Or Jewish house husband. Would pull a section. Of the dough off.

And throw it in the fire. To be burnt up. Because you couldn't send it. To the priest. Because there was no temple. That's the tradition anyway. It was a reminder.

To thank God. In everything. And that God was Lord. Of everything. In our daily lives. It was a way of remembering.

That I have my daily bread. Because my father loves me. And I have daily bread. Because he really. Really. Loves me. And he has shown his grace.

[ 28 : 11 ] To me. And his grace. To me. Is overflowing. And so I thank God. For my daily bread. Those of you who cook.

And I don't class myself. In that class. Is that what you think. When you're cooking. Or are you thinking. Something else entirely. Isn't that why we stop.

Before we eat. And say. Thank you Lord. I eat this. Because you are gracious. To us. And you are more than gracious. To us.

And what we have in Christ. We give thanks for. And that is a glorious. Glorious thing. Every batch. Of delicious things.

That comes out of your oven. Was organized. In such a way. As to say. God is great. Isn't God. Magnificent. Isn't God's grace.

[ 29 : 07 ] Astonishing. And he pushes us. Always. To Jesus. Always. Always. Always. That's what God's grace does. God's grace.

Keeps our whole life. And every little. Thing. In our life. About Christ. And about the glory. Of Christ. Christ. And we are not good.

At keeping covenant. But he is. He is. And when he gives us. His law. It is to help us. To be holy. And to help us.

To be happy. And when he is. Helping us. To be holy. It is to help us. Sing his praises. That's grace. Isn't it? Grace.

Abounding. To the chief. Of sinners. That we have daily bread. And so. We are reminded again. Aren't we?

[ 30 : 03 ] That Jesus Christ. Is Lord. Over every part of our life. And Abraham Kuyper. Was right. Isn't he? He said. There's not one square inch.

In this world. Over which Jesus. Does not cry. This is mine. And so. Whether you are someone. Who is in a very. Very boring. Monotonous job.

Or whether you are in school. Or whether you are a homemaker. Baking bread. Overall. Jesus Christ.

He is Lord. Let's pray.