

# I Can't Take It

by Jim Cymbala

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*Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the critical importance of faith in God's promises and the detrimental effects of unbelief and complaining.*

**Duration:** 29:06

**Scripture:** Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 15:18, Exodus 12:23, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 10:6, 1 Corinthians 10:10, Philippians 2:14

**Topics:** "Faith"

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## Description

In this sermon, Pastor Symbol emphasizes the importance of shining as believers by doing everything without complaining or arguing. He acknowledges that this is not an easy task, but highlights the primacy of faith in trusting God's promises. The sermon references the story of the twelve spies who were sent to explore the land of Israel and their report on the challenges they faced. This report ultimately had a significant impact on the history of the Israelites.

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## Transcript

One of the most important things to understand in the Old Testament as we study the history of Israel, God's covenant people in the Old Testament, is something that happened at a place called Kadesh Barnea and its application for us today. This was a turning point in more ways than one for a lot of people, probably more than a million Hebrews, Jewish people. The Lord had brought them out of Egypt, where they had been slaves for hundreds of years, and he brought them out under the leadership of Moses.

And as they came out of Egypt, they went northeast, went out into the wilderness, and went to Mount Sinai, where Moses received not only the Ten Commandments, where God gave them a law to live by, but hundreds of instructions on civil and ceremonial matters, and how law courts should operate, and so on and so forth. Also, the entire construction plan for the tabernacle, where the Jewish people would then be focusing their worship. And the tabernacle was a portable thing, huge, like a football field, but nothing on, no roof.

And the tent-like structure was sent up with an inner building made of tent material, and that's where the holy place was, and the holy of holies. After all of that was gotten, they went on their way, and they traveled for a little while until they got to a spot. Now, God had promised, I brought you out of Egypt to bring you into the promised land.

I didn't bring you out of Egypt so you'd wander around in the desert. I brought you out of Egypt so that you would go into the land that I had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They got to this place of Kadesh Barnea, and they're now just south of Palestine, Israel.

God tells Moses, send 12 spies to check out the land, one from each tribe. There were 12 tribes. Send a spy from every tribe.

To do what? Go into the land and find out, is it a good land? Go from the south, which you'll enter first, all the way to the north. They have small villages, or do they have large cities? Do they have fortified places with high walls, or do they have just kind of open and vulnerable places? Check out the soil. Is it good soil, fertile soil, or is it a bad soil, bad land? Bring back some grapes or some of the fruit that you see there so we could check it out.

And check out, do they have armies? Who lives there? So they went out and saw the land, and they came back after 40 days. After surveying the land for 40 days, the 12 spies came back. The report they brought back changed the history of the people who God had brought out of Egypt, as we're going to see.

So let's look at numbers, shall we? After exploring the land for 40 days, the spies returned to Moses, Aaron, and the whole community of Israel at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran. They reported what they had seen and showed them the fruit that they had brought. They told Moses, we explored the land and found it to be rich and fertile, and here is some of its fruit.

But the people who lived there, see that but, that B-U-T, a lot of trouble in that. But the people who live there are powerful, and their cities are very large and well fortified. Even worse, we saw the descendants of the giants there, tall people.

Amalekites live in the southern part of the land. Hittites, Jebusites, Amorites live in the hill country. And the Canaanites live by the Mediterranean Sea and along the Jordan River, along with the Brooklynites and the Manhattanites, which weren't even mentioned, but they were there too.

Caleb and Joshua, they had the minority report. They silenced the people who were complaining against Moses and said, we should attack now and take the land. We are strong enough to conquer it.

But the men who had gone with Caleb said, no, we are not strong enough to attack them. And the people there are more powerful than we are. So they spread a false report.

Now, that word false there is translated bad in other translations, bad report. And in some translations, it's called an evil report. And in some translations, false, evil, and bad.

They gave a bad report among the Israelites about the land that they had explored. They said, that land doesn't even produce enough to feed the people who live there. That was false.

Everyone we saw was very tall. And we even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. We felt as small as grasshoppers.

And that is how we must have looked to them. Notice that when you lose your courage, notice how crazy things get. Now you're an ant and these people are all giants.

All night long, the people cried out. We're into chapter 14 now. All night long, the people cried out in distress.

They complained against Moses and Aaron and said, oh, it would have been better to die in Egypt or even here in the wilderness. Why is the Lord taking us into that land? We will be killed in battle and our wives and children will be captured. Wouldn't it be, oh, can you believe this? Wouldn't it be better to go back to Egypt where they were slaves? So they said to one another, let's choose a leader and go back to Egypt.

And the rest of the story plays out this way. When God hears that and the 10 spies majority report, it goes to show that voting doesn't ever find the will of God. The majority can be totally off in a church, in a group of people.

Democracy is great for America, but you can't decide spiritual things that way because the vote was 10 to 2. 10 to 2. 10, we can't. And the land is too difficult. And only 2, Joshua and Caleb said, no, this is a piece of cake.

Come on. Are you kidding me? Let's get this on. God is with us.

The other 10 said, no, no way. You can't do this. And the people listened to the majority report.

And God got so angry that he said to Moses, all the people who are moaning and complaining and believe that report and won't trust me after all I've done for them. I brought them out of Egypt. I opened the Red Sea.

Imagine the people that were saying this. They had seen the 10 plagues in Egypt. They had seen God deliver them.

They had seen all those things that God did. And now they can't believe that God will give them the next step that he had promised. So God says, none of the people who I brought out of Egypt, not one, will ever go into Israel, into the promised land, except Joshua and Caleb.

I'm going to let you wander for 40 years, one year for each day that you surveyed the land. And that's the history. That's the genesis of the 40 years in the wilderness.

Wasn't God's original plan. God was, let's get this thing on. I'm going to give you this land.

But their unbelief knocked them out of the box. They had to wander and wander. God provided for them.

He gave them manna. He gave them water. But they all died.

And only Joshua and Caleb were alive. And then all the children that they cried about, my kids, my children, what have we done? The children went in and possessed the land. God waited till they grew up and went in.

Now, you might say, but that has nothing to do with us. Well, it really does. Let me just set it up.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul in the 10th chapter says, now, all the stuff that happened to Israel is a lesson for us. And it's a warning to us. Because what happened to them, the things they went through, have an application to our lives.

So let's look at 1 Corinthians reference here. Now, all of this is an example for us to warn us not to desire evil things as they did. And then verse 10, we must not complain as some of them did, and they were destroyed by the angel of death.

Now, there's an application for us. What's the application? What's this all about? Notice these were God's covenant people. These weren't a bunch of Hittites, Amorites, uncircumcised people who had no relationship with God.

These were God's people who lost out. Paul says, heads up, be careful now, because there's some lessons to learn. So what are the lessons we can learn? Number one, do you notice here the primacy of faith? The thing that God is looking for above all things that starts our relationship with him is that do we trust his promises? Do we choose to believe them or do we choose to ignore them and reject them? Even though these people had seen God do all these great things, here God had delivered them from slavery, brought them out of Egypt, and now he's telling them, listen, I brought you out so I could bring you into the land.

I made this promise hundreds of years ago to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They only lived in tents when they were roaming around in Israel, but I told them, don't worry, a day is coming when your descendants are going to come and possess this land. Now, I made that promise to them, and now I brought you out of Egypt so you can possess the land of Israel.

By the way, that's what Netanyahu and all the other Israeli leaders since 1948 have stood on. They don't have any other thing to stand on but the word of God. God gave us this land, and now they're on the edge of it and go, yo, we can't do this.

This is too hard. There's enemies. We got to fight battles.

They look so big. We look so small. They look at circumstances, and the circumstances got bigger than God's promise.

Oh, isn't that something that happens to us sometimes? We have God's promise, but then we have like what's going down. Look at everything I can see with these eyes and hear with these ears, and now God's promise gets sublimated, and what overwhelms us are the circumstance instead of saying, wait a minute, God said it. He's going to do this thing.

I don't care what I see. I don't care how tall they are. God's going to do this, but they didn't do that.

Now, when we as God's people lose our faith, which is what happened to them, a lot of bad things happen. Let's think about some of them. First of all, they got a panic attack.

They fell into self-pity. Did you notice what it says there at the beginning of chapter 14? Like, what are we doing? We're going to die. They went into fatalism.

Fatalism. It's over. We're going to die.

No, God just did all that. I don't care what God did. We're going to die.

It's over. No, but God promised. I don't care what God promised.

Don't you see what's happening? This thing is all a mess. They had a pity party. The Bible says they cried all night, but it wasn't good crying.

You know, there's good crying all night when you cry out to God. Amen? When you mourn over your sins, that's good crying, but this was the crying of fear-filled people who thought that God had brought them out

to let them fall in a black hole. God got upset by it.

Bible says His anger was raised against them because what God was saying basically was, wait, I promised, and you say I won't do it. I've already done all these things for you. You saw what I did, and now you're putting me under the bus? Oh no, you'll never get the land.

I'll give it to your helpless children. So they not only lost out emotionally, they went nuts. A lot of times when we throw our tantrums and we go off, it's because we've lost our faith.

You don't have to say amen. It's true. When you lose your faith in God, you lose your peace.

You lose your joy, and you can give into any kind of crazy emotion, and we've all done it. Come on. How many have lost your faith at a moment, and you just like panic? Come on, lift your hand.

Be honest about the whole thing. We're in church. Might as well be honest about it, right? But they not only had like a panic attack and emotionally started to be full of self-pity.

Come on. Haven't we ever had pity parties? Some of you have had huge pity parties like me, right? You invite friends. You have food.

You cater it. A big pity party. Woe is me.

Woe is me. And God is looking down going, woe is what? I am with you. I promised I would be with you.

What's all the screaming for? So you have to see how this looks to God, not how you feel, how God looks at this. What are you crying about? Didn't I say I would never leave you nor forsake you? Is my word not dependable? Wait a minute. Haven't I brought you through so many things? Forget Israel.

How many have been brought through a whole lot of things in your life by the grace of God? And God's saying, wait a minute. I brought you through all these things, and now I'm going to let you go? Unbelief calls God a liar. We just pass it off as, well, I'm struggling to believe.

But unbelief in a way like this aggravated form, it calls God a liar. They also go after leadership. A lot of people who lose their faith, they have to vent, and they criticize leadership or your parent or the police officer or the president of the United States or Congress and all of that.

Instead of trusting God and saying, I don't care what anyone else does. God's going to take care of me. Now they want to get rid of Moses and Aaron.

Moses and Aaron are the best two leaders they could have had. But no, they're not happy because when you lose your faith and you start acting like a baby, which we all have, you just resent leadership. You resent anything, everything.

And worse than that, they thwart God's purpose for their life. Unbelief is so powerful that when it gets in our lives, it can thwart God's purpose. What was God's purpose? Out of Egypt into the promised land.

Did they get into the promised land? No, they did not. Why? Don't say because God didn't want them to. He said in his word, I'm going to bring you out so I can bring you in.

But they missed it because of unbelief. Just like faith is so powerful, unbelief is incredibly powerful in a negative way. Remember where Jesus went to his own hometown after he began his ministry? For those

of you who don't know, you can read it in the gospels.

Jesus got baptized by John the Baptist, and now he began his ministry of power. And when he went to his own hometown, the Bible says he could not do many miracles or do very much because of their unbelief. He's the son of God.

He's Jesus. No demon was too powerful for him. No sickness was too difficult.

But the Bible says, I say it reverently, it's as if his hands were tied because the people were so full of unbelief. He could only do a few minor miracles, and that could be us. You have big faith, you got a big God.

You have strong trust in God, you'll see God do a lot in your life. You got little faith, you reduce God down to your faith. Well, you say God can do anything.

No, yeah, but Jesus said this as a first principle of spiritual life. According to your faith, according to your faith, so be it unto you. Let's say that together.

According to your faith, so be it unto you. Say it again. According to your faith, so be it unto you.

Believe God for little, you'll see him do little. That's in the Bible. You have very little faith, you'll pray very little prayers.

You got little faith, you'll pray little prayers. God just helped me get through today. When God says, no, ask great things and I'll do great things for you.

But you don't ask for great things unless you have great faith. And then there was the matter of another word which comes here. They started to complain.

Unbelief is the mother of complaining and murmuring. People filled with unbelief are always murmuring and complaining about life. And your children hear it, and your friends hear it, and if you're married, your spouse hears it.

Now that's a cross to bear. To be married or be around someone who's always complaining. Drip, drip.

Oh, this is hitting home. Drip, drip. Complaining, complaining.

Life's so hard. My boss. And God says, I sent my son to die for you.

I live inside of you. You have eternal life. I'm going to bring you home to be with me.

I said, I would never leave you. And you're doing what? You're complaining. You're murmuring.

The effect it has on children. Negativity. Everybody around someone so negative, you want to take your life after having lunch with them.

Come on, let me know what I'm talking about. Have you ever been with someone so negative? Whatever you say, they're going to turn it negative. They're always depressed, always negative.

And the best thing can happen, isn't it a beautiful day? Yeah, it's going to rain tomorrow though. It's terrible. There's a bad front coming in.

It's going to be horrible. And some of us are infected with it. How about if they had a tape recorder of you tomorrow? Or better yet, yesterday.

And every word, by the way, there is a tape recorder. It's all in heaven. Every word he listens to.

Are they positive words? Were they thankful words? Were they, thank you, Jesus. You've been so good to me. Oh God, I got to pray.

Yeah, I got some problems, but oh, God has been good. Oh, praise. Is that not our testimony? Come on.

How many have a testimony of that? And listen, some churches, we were talking about that with my interpreter who grew up in a certain kind of church, like Italian Pentecostal church in New York, where he was. The culture was the more morose and depressed you were, the more spiritual you were. And the women wore black, black stockings.

And if your parent died, he told me, if your spouse died, you mourned for two years. You wore black for two years and everything was, oh, she's spiritual. She walks close to God.

No, she doesn't. The joy of the Lord is our strength. Come on.

How many say amen? The joy of the Lord is our strength. Complaining about your spouse, complaining about the government, complaining, complaining, complaining. And God's listening to all of us all the time.

Oh yeah. Oh, no, no, no. I just do that behind closed doors.

There are no closed doors to God. He's listening to everything. And that's what got him upset.

How do you complain when I have become your God after all I've done for you? You ever see a spoiled child and want to give him a slap? Come on. Look, we're doing real talk now. How many, lift your hand if you've ever seen like a spoiled little brat and you just want to go, oh.

Their parents give them everything and they're complaining still. God gave us his son. What were you and I complaining about? He gave us his son.

All the sins you've ever committed, there's not a record of one of them in heaven. Look at me. Not one sin you've ever committed is recorded against you now because of the blood of Jesus Christ.

And what were you complaining about? How did life give you a bad hand? Oh, Pastor Cymbal, you're talking about something that's just so farfetched. Oh, last verse, Philippians 2, verse 14. This is the hardest verse in the Bible, not to understand, to obey.

Look. Do everything without complaining or arguing. Come on, everybody together now at the count of three.

One, two, three. Do everything. And pure as God's perfect children who live in a world of corrupt and sinful people.

You must shine among them like stars lighting up the sky. How's one of the ways that you shine? Wait. How do you shine? Do everything without complaining or arguing.

Some people say, oh, Pastor Cymbal, the Bible is so hard to understand. I don't think the Bible is so hard to understand as impossible to do without the grace of God. Who of us could do everything without complaining or arguing? Who of us this last week did not complain about something or argue about something? And yet the Bible says do everything without complaining.

I leave you with this. Did you ever read in the gospels Jesus complaining about anything? Have you ever gone to Jesus in prayer? Have you ever gone to God in prayer no matter what you've done? And you come to God in prayer and God says, I don't know. What am I going to do with you? No, I mean, when I picked you, oh, did I pick a winner? Whoa, boy.

What in the world made me pick you into my family? Did you ever see God do that? Has God ever done that? Or does he rejoice over us with singing? If God could take care of us and not complain, who are you and I to be complaining? And remember, their unbelief caused the complaining and their unbelief and their complaining cost them the blessing that God wanted to give them in their specific case. They never saw the promised land. You know what the Bible says? God says, I'm going to wait till you all die in the wilderness because you wouldn't trust me.

I don't want that said about any of us. I want us to grow in faith. How many want to grow in faith? Lift up one hand if you want to grow in faith.

How many want to do less complaining and arguing? Let's just fixate here on one thing. How many want to complain less for the rest of your life? Take complaining out of it because after all he's done, has he been good to you? Well, can I give you my testimony? He's been better to me than I've been to myself. You know the biggest disappointment in my life? I want to make one complaint.

You know who the biggest disappointment in my whole life has been? Me. My father was an alcoholic for 22 years. That's not my biggest disappointment.

No, no, no. Haven't you failed yourself more than anybody else has ever failed you? Am I the only one living like that? Come on, how many can say amen to that? Make promises you don't keep? You know, she promised me and she didn't do it. How about all the promises you made to yourself? You haven't kept them, but God keeps on loving you.

Oh, praise God. His faithfulness endures forever and ever. One time when I was just out of college, God was blessing me in a service in a certain way.

It doesn't matter how. And I knew who I was. And God knows this.

I actually said to God, God, what you're doing now I don't deserve. Please leave me alone. That's the truth before God.

God, don't come on me this way. I'm not worthy. You know, I did not have a good week.

But his love is bigger than our mess. How many have found his love is just bigger than our mess? No matter how big your mess is, no matter how you fail, if you will only believe. If you'll only believe.

Jesus said, if you only believe, all things are possible. So instead of being grateful and believing, they were ungrateful and full of unbelief. And then they began to complain.

And guess who heard it? Dad, God. God heard their complaining. Oh, God, take away complaining out of our mouths.

If he gave us his son's life and blood, will he not give us everything we need? Should we complain about anything? Should we worry about how circumstances look? The giants in the land? The fortified cities? And I don't know the economy. And I don't know what's going to happen. No, great is thy faithfulness.

The Bible says, after having given us his son, will he not also give us everything else that we need? Let's close our eyes and pray. Father, thank you for giving your son. And you said that as long as we're alive on planet earth, we should look back and remember the Lord's death until he comes again.

We remember his body that was given for us, for my and my brothers and sisters' horrible sins. He took the blow. He was the substitute.

We're free today because someone else paid the price. Gracias, Señor. Thank you, Father.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We confess all of our sins and mistakes and rebellions. And we especially confess our complaining and our murmuring and our dissatisfaction with so many things in life that we're embarrassed to think how we've complained.

Instead of joy and peace, we're not shining like that kind of light, but we're showing people complaining, murmuring, negativity. Save us from it. We confess it.

Fill us with faith, faith that rejoices, faith that says, I don't care what I see. God is on the throne. I don't care what people say.

The Lord will never fail me. He said he will never leave me nor forsake me. I'm going to go by what he said and not by what I see or what people say.

Thank you, Jesus, for loving me. Thank you for loving my brothers and sisters to the uttermost. We're here today.

We confess it happily. We're only here today because of your great love and faithfulness. We're not here because any of us are good people or nice people.

We're here because of your amazing grace. Great is thy faithfulness. Now help us to love each other more.

I pray I can be a blessing to someone, Lord, through this book. I pray you'll spread it throughout the country and around the world. I pray you'll put it in other languages, not because I wrote it, but because it's the truth from your word.

Make it a blessing, Lord, and make us a blessing today and give us a great rest of the day. We pray it in Jesus' name. And everyone said, stand up, give three people a hug.

God bless you. Thank you, choir.

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