Unit 5 GeoClips: Chain Erosion, Zion National Park

Hey Sridhar, look here.

What's going on there?

The chain that we are using to climb up the hillside here in Zion is actually causing some mechanical weathering. And you can see how everybody that grabs on to the chain as it goes up--

Ah, cool. Check it out.

It carves into here. It actually carves into the sandstone.

It's made these little scallop marks where the chains that are turned in this way go in a little bit deeper. And the chains that are out that way are back a little bit farther.

Yep. It would be just like a rock in a stream or even a glacier pushing stuff along. It's just scooping things up at a constant pressure along the side of the rock.

And so this stuff is actually fairly friable. It breaks apart reasonably easily. This chain's probably only been here 10, 15 years. And already it's cut in, what 1/25 of an inch, an 1/8 of an inch, something like that.