

Lessons from Exodus 8

Exodus 16:1 The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt.

² In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron.

³ The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

We left the Children of Israel at the place of twelve springs and palms. They had been dealt with at the waters of Marah and had again seen God in a new way as the God that heals. Now they are moving from Elim (palms) to the desert of Sin (thorns) on their way to Sinai (thorny). God is moving them from a place of rest to a place of difficulty. This is how God often works with us as we need the testing to expose the Egypt (world) that is still in our hearts. If He asked them at Elim, "What keeps you from worshipping me with all your heart, soul, and mind?" They would say, "Gee, nothing I guess. Aren't we doing that?" "What do you think Jeb?" "Oh yeh, I'm there, I can do that." We are pretty clueless as to our real spiritual condition, unless we are facing trials. Then reality sets in.

The grace of God tests us to bring out the impurities, the dross that we don't even realize is there. Romans 5:3-5 (NIV)³ Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that **suffering produces** perseverance;⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.⁵ And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. Suffering exposes weakness and attitudes but it also replaces them (produces) with character we need to express the life of the Holy Spirit in us. If you are led into the wilderness of Sin (thorns) you are suppose to rejoice. James also tells us in 1:2 to consider it pure joy when we face trials of many kinds.

So here they are with test #3. We don't have it like we did in Egypt. This is a place of thorns. We either have to kill our livestock, that is our wealth, to eat or we get by on the scarcity of the desert. God gave us water but now He's gonna slowly starve us to death. Two problems are obvious here. One is they liked Egypt too much. That is the problem of many young Christians. The thoughts of former pleasure still haunt our minds. The early church had struggles with lust because of the society they came out of. When you come to Christ you are a new creature. But your years in the world and addictions to its counterfeit pleasures develop habits of thinking that must be changed. For these Israelites it was their idea of pleasure, sitting around the pots of meat at the end of a hard day and eating their fill. But wait a second, what about the hard slavery? We tend to forget the cost we paid for those worldly pleasures. We have these deep ruts in our minds and our thought patterns just tend to go that way. We need to change our heart and thoughts as to what is true pleasure. I often pray – even now – "Lord cement over those old ruts, and then pave the top of them so they don't wash out with all the flood of the world

around me." Intentionally connect the old pleasure temptations with the cost that went with them.

The other problem is they haven't learned it is God Almighty caring for them. You'd think they would get it by now but look how they are still talking about this whole thing as if Moses and Aaron did it all. We tend to think the same way. You are where you are, child of God, because the Lord brought you here. Don't call it circumstance, for circumstances are just the outworking of the God of Providence. Recognize Who it is that has you where you are.

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.⁵ On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days."⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt,
⁷ and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling **against him**. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?"
⁸ Moses also said, "You will know that it was the LORD when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD."

Moses lets them know they aren't gonna get away with pointing their finger at him when it is the LORD they are complaining about. Notice God says He will test them. He is presently, and He will through his instruction to them. Each day they are told to gather for that day alone – our daily bread, but on the sixth they can gather two days for the Sabbath. Give us this day our daily bread.

I don't know how the Lord deals with you but I can testify that He often gives us just what we need. And sometime we think we are going into some financial crisis and there is an extra job. I have seen countless times when I didn't know where it was going to come from and the need is always met. I used to get so worried and go through all these mental gymnastics trying to figure out what to do. Sure glad I learned that whatever comes, God will give us what we need. If I have extra, there is a Sabbath coming. If I don't seem to have enough, it is about to rain quail. God is a faithful provider. Look at the birds, Jesus said, they don't work or store in barns but your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they? What a place of peace to know that if we are faithful to follow, He will provide all our needs.

¹³ That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp.¹⁴ When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor.¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, "It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat."¹⁶ This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Each one is to gather as much as he needs. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.'¹⁷ The Israelites did as they were told; some gathered much, some little.¹⁸ And when they measured it by the omer, he who

gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one gathered as much as he needed.¹⁹ Then Moses said to them, "No one is to keep any of it until morning."²⁰ However, some of them paid no attention to Moses; they kept part of it until morning, but it was full of maggots and began to smell. So Moses was angry with them.

Meat and bread. The quail migrate to the north at this time of year and have a tough time flying over the Red Sea. When they get to the other side they drop and recover. The Hebrews had throwing sticks like the Hopi rabbit sticks. Some say this is just a natural phenomenon. Yes, unless you consider it was an especially good year for quail. The cloud directed them to camp right where the quail would fall. They asked for it not realizing it was on the way. God is in the details. This is no little miracle. You may be sitting there, asking for something He already has flying your direction.

In Hebrew Manna means, "What is it?" Now you can speak Hebrew. It was little round white flakes that tasted like honey and olive oil. All around us today is the bread that came from heaven. John 6:³⁰ So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do?"³¹ Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" (They are doing the same thing their forefathers did accrediting things to Moses. Watch how Jesus sets the record straight and tells them what the manna was a shadow of. ³² Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven.³³ For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."³⁴ "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."³⁵ Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

The nation of Israel had a physical hunger, or desire, but that is a very temporal thing. Man has a much greater need – a much greater hunger, a much greater thirst. God does take care of those physical things, but the spiritual need requires a much greater provision, the bread of God that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. God brings you into the desert of thorns to make you hungry for him, to recognize your spiritual need. When you're there the temptation is to give up and go back to slavery, but that is a substitute and will not satisfy. Those who endure are fed from God. "Give us this day our daily bread." Do you feast on Him daily? Are you communing with God on a regular basis? You can't gather enough for tomorrow. When they did that what happened? It got stinky and full of maggots. Sometimes I hear a brother stuck on a revelation he had years ago. Everything that comes up he relates to that revelation. Everything he shares is a reworking of that same revelation. It gets like that day old manna, stinky and full of maggots. Maggots attack what is dead. There is no life in it any more. We need to be walking daily with the Lord getting fresh, living bread. Some of us live off past testimonies instead of a present relationship. God wants you to be experiencing fresh bread daily.

Some people are voracious Bible readers and people of prayer. But you know they seem to have just enough. Some don't spend as much time but they also are consistent and they seem to have just enough. Some are trying to get others leftovers, but God wants you out there getting your own. Manna had all the nutritional needs for physical life. Jesus has all our nutritional needs for our spiritual life.

Taste and see the Lord is good. Honey – sweet and nutritious! and olive oil, a symbol of the Spirit of God. That is his word to us as we eat of the living word, the bread that came from heaven – Jesus.

One year and five days later in Numbers 11 we are going to see them face the same test again in the same area. But this time they have been eating of the manna for a year. God sends so many quail that they stuff themselves for a month, and then He strikes many of them dead. Num 11:33-34 (NIV)

³³ But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the LORD burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague.³⁴ Therefore the place was named Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had craved other food.

The ancient graves of these rebels are still there in the wilderness with pictographs of quail etched into the rocks. Are you longing for the flesh pots of Egypt. If you are tasting of the manna but your heart is still in Egypt eventually your heart will win out. He gave them what they pleaded for. Arthur Pink wrote "To ask for something not in accordance with His will is not prayer, but rank rebellion." We must allow God to transform our desires, cooperate with the renewing of our mind, or the deceit of the world will drag us back. Actually James tells us it is the our evil desires drag us into temptation. Our challenge today is to see that we gather manna daily, savoring it for all the goodness it is, forsaking the world's pleasures in our hearts.

The first time they learned this lesson of God's provision, God was very gracious and patient with them. A year later He deals much more severely with them. We need to learn and grow and act according to what has been revealed to us, or the Lord will have to deal more severely with us, until we grab hold of his revelation.

Finally a thought from Revelation 2. "To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna." The Lord has, I believe a special revelation of himself for each of us. But if we are going to taste of it we must be overcomers, those who hear what the Spirit says and act on it. If you want to taste of that special revelation of the Lord to you personally, hear what the Spirit says and act on it.

This is another warning from the Exodus. I think the Lord has one or two more before we move on. This has been our second month in Exodus. I trust we are taking to heart the warnings and examples that we find there as the Apostle Paul told instructed us.