

Third Presbyterian Church
Midweek Bible Study
Miracle Series – Miracle of Manna
Lesson 24 – Training Through Testing

Exodus 16:1-8 (NIV)

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." 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."

1. Nobody is perfect but we are being perfected.
 - a. How is God perfecting us?
 - b. How specifically is God perfecting you right now?
2. With no food to hunt no food stored, just no food at all, the Israelites found themselves in a situation where they had to TRUST GOD OR DIE.
 - a. Why do you think God put them in this situation?
 - b. Have you ever found yourself in a situation that compares to this one the Israelites faced? How did you navigate it and what did it teach you?
3. Why is it encouraging to know that seasons of training through testing are only temporary? What does this knowledge help you to do during your training?
4. God hate grumbling from His children, so discuss how:
 - a. being a Student helps us to resist grumbling.
 - b. being Expectant helps to resist grumbling.
 - c. being Consistent helps us to resist grumbling.
5. What can you do (or not do) this week to trust God to provide for you?
6. Share your main takeaway from the sermon and the lesson?

The Third Crisis of Israel In the Wilderness—Hunger: The Two Great Sins of Israel, That of Grumbling and Disobedience (Unbelief),

Introduction: one of the most basic needs of man is the need for food. Without food, a person starves to death. Consequently, when a person's food supply is threatened...

- he complains— grumbles and murmurs against the weather, some crop disease, or God.
- he blames the circumstances, the government, the economy, the grocery store, the farmer, his employer—just whoever or whatever is causing the shortage of food.

A person's trust in God and others is soon lost when his food supply is threatened. Trust in God far too often crumbles when hunger or any other serious trial confronts a person. This was the very situation facing the Israelites...

- that of hunger.
- that of complaining, grumbling, and murmuring.
- that of failing to trust God to meet their need.

But these things should never be. We should never complain nor fail to trust God, not because of hunger nor because of any other serious circumstance that might confront us. God loves and cares for us. And God has promised to take care of our needs in every circumstance, even in life-threatening circumstances. God's promise is clear:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" ([Matthew 6:33](#)).

This is the great lesson of this passage: *The Third Crisis of Israel In the Wilderness—Hunger: The Two Great Sins of Israel, That of Grumbling and Disobedience (Unbelief)*, [Exodus 16:1-36](#).

- [1. The crisis of hunger: the first great sin committed again, that of complaining and grumbling \(unbelief\) \(v.1-3\).](#)
- [2. The promise of God: to meet the needs of His grumbling people \(v.4-15\).](#)
- [3. The test of the people: they failed the test—disobeyed God \(v.16-30\).](#)
- [4. The manna \(bread\) memorialized: commanded by God \(v.31-36\).](#)

1. ([16:1-3](#)) Hunger— Complaining— Grumbling— Murmuring— Moses— Aaron— Israel— Sin: there was the crisis of hunger, and the first great sin of Israel was committed again, that of complaining and grumbling.

1. The people left Elim and marched to the desert of Sin (see [Deeper Study #1—Exodus 16:1](#) for more discussion). Note that God's people marched to the desert of Sin exactly one month after leaving Egypt. How quickly God's people forget the deliverance, care, goodness, and blessings of God! Just one month earlier, God had miraculously delivered His people out of Egyptian slavery. Yet, here they were committing a terrible sin. Note what the sin was.

2. The people complained—grumbled and murmured—against God's servants Moses and Aaron. Why? Because they were hungry: they had used up all their food supply. Before they left Egypt, they had apparently been instructed to take along one month's supply of food, and now they had no food left. A crisis existed and the situation looked hopeless. Where in the desert could two to three million people possibly find enough food to keep them alive? Such an enormous food source just did not exist, not out in the wilderness of the desert. The

people knew this, and they obviously began to talk about the problem among themselves. The talk soon became a complaint, and the people began to grumble and murmur against their leaders, Moses and Aaron.

This God's people should not have done. Instead of grumbling and complaining, God's people should have gone to their leaders, presented the problem, and suggested that they all—both leaders and people—seek God together. The people should have trusted God, trusted His goodness and power to deliver them. But this they did not do. They showed unbelief in God...

- distrusted His concern and care
- distrusted His goodness
- distrusted His power
- distrusted His provision

And note the terrible depth of their distrust and unbelief, the scorching heat of their sinful grumbling: they would rather have died in Egypt in one of God's plagues than to die of starvation out in the desert. At least in Egypt they had meat and bread. The Hebrew has the idea of *pots of meat*—all they could eat.

What audacity! What an affront against God! What rashness, arrogance, gall, rudeness, and defiance. What a terrible thing to say in the face of God! And after He had done so much for them.

- ⇒ Remember God's wonderful deliverance from Egyptian slavery.
- ⇒ Remember God's astounding power demonstrated at the Red Sea.
- ⇒ Remember God's glorious provision of water to take care of their thirst

All this had all taken place within the last thirty days. Time and again over a period of thirty days, God had gloriously delivered and provided for His dear people. But murmurers have short memories. And here they were wallowing around in the pit of sinful grumbling, showing that their hearts were full of...

- selfishness
- unbelief
- distrust
- carnal, fleshly thoughts

Thought 1. Our memories of the "good old days," of the past, are often magnified and exaggerated. This was certainly true of the Israelites, and it is true of us. In looking back to their days in Egypt, the Israelites could not have had enough to eat. Meat and plenty of food are never a part of the everyday diet of slaves nor of the poor of any society. The Israelites had short memories and warped perspectives. They had forgotten their days of affliction as slaves to the world of Egypt.

This shows the great crisis the Israelites were facing. They were facing starvation. A spirit of hopelessness gripped them. They knew there was no place out in the desert where enough food could be found to feed them, not two to three million people. Nevertheless, when a crisis arises for the believer—the genuine believer—he is to call upon God, not grumble and complain. In facing problems, we are to trust God—believe that God cares, that He loves us, that He will help us through the problem—no matter how severe the problem may be.

"The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him" ([Psalm 28:7](#)).

"Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" ([Psalm 31:19](#)).

"The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate" ([Psalm 34:22](#)).

"Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed" ([Psalm 37:3](#)).

Thought 2. J. Vernon McGee has an excellent application of this point.

"The children of Israel...despised God's heavenly food and complained about eating it. They grew tired of eating manna. They longed for the fleshpots of Egypt. They wanted to go back to that from which they had been delivered.

"That is the story, I am afraid, of some people who have been converted, and have been delivered out of 'Egypt' [the world, the old life]. Every now and then they take a side trip back to get the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. There are Christians today who need to make a complete break with the old life. Friend, you can't go on living like the world, living on the things of Egypt, and be serviceable to God and have the peace of God in your heart. There must be a break with Egypt. We must live on the true Manna that comes from heaven, even the Lord Jesus Christ."

DEEPER STUDY #1 (16:1) Desert of Sin

2. (16:4-15) Complaining— Grumbling— Murmuring— Manna— Supply— Provision— Blessing—

Testing: there was God's promise to meet the needs of His grumbling people.

1. God promised to provide *bread from heaven* for His people ([Exodus 16:4](#)). The only conceivable way two to three million people could be fed out in the wilderness of a desert—fed for over forty years—would be by a miracle from God. This was exactly what God was promising: to feed His people Himself, to feed them in such a way that His existence, love, and care could never be questioned nor doubted. (See [Deeper Study #3—Exodus 16:31](#) for more discussion.)

2. God would, however, test the faith of His people ([Exodus 16:4](#)). God was going to test their faith in two ways:

- ⇒ By charging His people to gather bread every day for that particular day. They were to gather *only one day's supply*, no more and no less. By laying down this restriction, God tested their trust in Him. They had to trust God *day by day* for food.
- ⇒ By commanding that they gather twice as much food on the sixth day ([Exodus 16:5](#)). This commandment would test the obedience of the people. Would they gather twice as much as commanded and rest on the seventh day, or would they go out and work to gather their food on the seventh day? Just what the people did will be seen later (note 3—[Exodus 16:16-30](#)).

3. God would prove Himself ([Exodus 16:6-7](#)). God's servants went before God's people and declared His wonderful promise:

- ⇒ In the evening, the Lord would use His provision to prove that it was He who saved them and brought them out of the land of Egyptian slavery ([Exodus 16:6](#)).
- ⇒ In the morning, the Lord would use His provision to prove His glory ([Exodus 16:7](#)).
- ⇒ Why was the Lord going to do this? Because the Lord was going to prove Himself—that He was truly the Lord—because the people had grumbled and complained against Him ([Exodus 16:7](#)).

4. Now note: God gave a warning. Grumbling is not against God's servants but against God Himself ([Exodus 16:8](#)). This is true in two ways.

- a. God, not His servant, is the person who leads His people. God, not the servants of God, had delivered the Israelites from their enslavement in Egypt (the world) and led them to begin their march to the promised land. God in His sovereign leadership had led the Israelites to be where they were, not Moses and Aaron. Therefore, their complaint, although spoken against Moses and Aaron, was really directed against God and His leadership.
- b. Complaining and grumbling show distrust in God, that a person does not believe God cares and will work things out for good. Therefore, when we complain and grumble, we are saying to God that we

do not trust Him, do not trust that He loves us and will deliver us. Our complaining and grumbling is not against God's servant, not really. It is against God.

"Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swore in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest" ([Psalm 95:8-11](#)).

"The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart fretteth against the LORD" ([Proverbs 19:3](#)).

5. God laid down the prerequisite for receiving the bread of God: the people had to come, to draw near God ([Exodus 16:9-10](#)). When believers sin against God by complaining and grumbling, they must come before the Lord and draw near Him. The idea is that of confession and repentance: the people were to draw near God, come before Him and confess and repent of their complaining and grumbling.

Note that the people obeyed: they looked to the cloud which symbolized God's very presence ([Exodus 16:10](#)). What they witnessed was a phenomenal sight: the glory of the Lord shone in the cloud ([Exodus 16:10](#). See [Deeper Study #2—Exodus 16:10](#) for more discussion.)

Thought 1. How often God would grant a clear, intense sense of His glory and presence—if we would only draw near Him. If we would only spend long sessions of meditation and prayer in His presence. How much power would be present in our lives and ministries if we often got alone with God for long periods of time.

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water" ([Hebrews 10:22](#)).

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded" ([James 4:8](#)).

6. God restressed the facts ([Exodus 16:11-12](#)). Note that He restated the facts to Moses: He had heard the people's grumbings and He would meet their needs. But He was doing it for a very specific purpose: that they might learn the truth, learn more and more that He is the Lord their God. God wanted the truth driven more and more into their hearts and lives, that He and He alone is the only living and true God. He and He alone was to be their God, the Lord of their lives.

7. God fulfilled His promise ([Exodus 16:13-15](#)).

a. God gave the meat He had promised. The quail came and covered the camp that very evening ([Exodus 16:13](#)). Imagine enough quail to feed two to three million people every day of the week for forty years. Moreover, imagine the quail always landing right where the Israelites were camped. The provision of the quail was beyond all question a spectacular miracle of God.

b. God gave the bread He had promised—the manna from heaven ([Exodus 16:13-15](#)).

⇒ The next morning after the dew had melted, the ground was covered with thin flakes that looked like frost ([Exodus 16:14](#)).

⇒ The Israelites had never seen the thin flakes before. Thus they called it manna, which means "What is it?" ([Exodus 16:15](#)). Moses informed the people that it was the bread from heaven that had been promised by God. (See [Deeper Study #3—Exodus 16:31](#) for more discussion.)

Thought 1. Man is hungry, hungry for all kinds of things. But lying at the very base of his hunger is the craving for...

- purpose and fulfillment
- acceptance and recognition.
- love and friendship
- joy and pleasure

The world offers food to satisfy and fulfill man's hunger. And when a man looks at the world, he sees an appealing offer to feed him, to feed him with...

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| • drugs | • stimulation |
| • alcohol | • excitement |
| • sex (illicit sex) | • position |
| • pleasure | • honor |
| • bright lights | • fame |
| • success | • beauty |
| • popularity | • power |
| • riches | • control |
| • property | |

But tragically, these things never satisfy; they never fill the deepest recesses of man's heart. The world leaves man empty, leaves him with a sense of empty gratification and pleasure and with unfilled achievement and success.

There is only one way man's hunger can be satisfied: he must eat, partake of the bread from heaven: the Lord Jesus Christ. Only Jesus Christ can satisfy the hunger of man's heart. Only Jesus Christ can give life to man. Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life. He is the bread given by God to satisfy the hunger of man's soul.

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" ([John 6:32-33](#)).

(16:1) Desert of Sin: this was a place, the actual name of a desert in the days of Moses. The word "sin" must not be confused with the theological word sin. The "Desert of Sin" was probably taken from the word *Sinai* or the bush *Seneh*. The desert was probably named the "Desert of Sin" because of its terrain, most likely referring to a rocky area with thorn-bushes scattered across the landscape. The desert was most likely located in the southwestern Sinai, close to the area of modern *Debbet er-Ramleh*.

Bread, From Heaven— Jesus Christ, Bread of God— Manna: God promised to feed the Israelites with bread from heaven. The Israelites called this bread *manna*. Manna looked like resin or a coriander seed. The coriander seed is a small white grain that is used for seasoning. *Manna* tasted like honey wafers ([Exodus 16:31](#)) or like wafers made with olive oil ([Numbers 11:8](#)). The manna could be ground with a handmill or crushed in some form of mortar and cooked or baked in pots ([Numbers 8:7-8](#)). Note three significant pictures—three important lessons—that can be drawn from the manna.

1. The manna was the bread given by God to save Israel from physical death (starvation). Jesus Christ is the Bread of God given to save man from spiritual death. This means the manna was a type of the *Bread of Heaven*, a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Note what Jesus Christ claimed for Himself:

a. Jesus Christ claimed that He is the true bread from heaven.

"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven" ([John 6:32](#)).

b. Jesus Christ claimed that He is the bread of God who came down from heaven.

"For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world" ([John 6:33](#)).

c. Jesus Christ claimed that He is the bread of life.

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" ([John 6:35](#)).

"I am that bread of life" ([John 6:48](#)).

d. Jesus Christ claimed that He is the living bread which came down from heaven.

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.... This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" ([John 6:51](#), [58](#)).

e. Jesus Christ claimed that whoever ate, that is, partook, of Him as the bread of life would live forever.

"This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever" ([John 6:58](#)).

f. Jesus Christ claimed that whoever came to Him would never hunger nor ever thirst.

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" ([John 6:35](#)).

2. The manna was sent by God, but the people had to gather it. Jesus Christ was sent by God, but we have to receive Him.

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" ([John 1:12](#)).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" ([John 3:16](#)).

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" ([Rev. 3:20](#)).

3. The manna was the daily bread for the redeemed, the bread upon which they were to feast. And note, they had to arise early to gather the manna or else the sun melted the manna. The picture is clear: believers must arise early every day to gather the manna of God, the Bread from heaven. We must arise early to receive our spiritual nourishment through prayer and the study of God's Holy Word. And we must remember: when the sun rises, the manna melts. The activities of the day begin to press in upon us when the sun rises. The point: we must arise early to feed upon the Bread of Life, the Lord Jesus Christ. We must seek Him in prayer and in the study of His Word, seek Him early every day. (See note, Thought 1, pt.2—[Exodus 16:16-30](#) for discussion.)

"But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" ([Deut. 4:29](#)).

"And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them" ([Deut. 17:19](#)).