

09272020 Exodus 16 Complaining Hinders Training

We often confuse God's training in our lives with God's disciplining us for Sin...and so did the Israelites...one of the reasons we and them do this is because we look at our relationship with God after being saved as a slave relationship...God is a cruel taskmaster or we are bad in his sight, therefore anything that goes wrong is a reprimand for some kind of wrong doing...

There are those times when we suffer reprimand for wrong doing but even in that, there is instruction going on...but a great amount of God's working in our life through tough times is didactic, that is instructional. used as an occasion for teaching the necessity of faith and obedience. for the purpose of maturing and equipping his people for good works of service!

Chapter 16 describes part of God's "boot camp" for Israel. Similar to the boot camp you and I undergo in the wilderness times of our lives... learning as He teaches His people to trust and obey, in this lesson learning to live one day at a time. trusting in the Manna he provides on a daily ...and as in all teaching there was a goal in that....**as Moses reminds them as they end their forty year journey in the desert and get ready to enter the Land promised... the big Picture**

Deut 8 *"Be careful to obey all the commands I am giving you today. Then you will live and multiply, and you will enter and occupy the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors. ² Remember how the LORD your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands. ³ Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. ⁴ For all these forty years your clothes didn't wear out, and your feet didn't blister or swell. ⁵ Think about it: Just as a parent disciplines a child, the LORD your God disciplines you for your own good. ⁶ "So obey the commands of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and fearing him.*

- **what you learn in the time of need..don't forget in the time of Plenty...for that is a very dangerous time spiritually**

⁷ For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land of flowing streams and pools of water, with fountains and springs that gush out in the valleys and hills. ¹¹ *“But that is the time to be careful! Beware that in your plenty you do not forget the LORD your God and disobey his commands, regulations, and decrees that I am giving you today.”* ¹² For when you have become full and prosperous and have built fine homes to live in, ¹³ and when your flocks and herds have become very large and your silver and gold have multiplied along with everything else, be careful! ¹⁴ Do not become proud at that time and forget the LORD your God, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt. **Now back to the details**

So lets learn from their time of want...that complaining hinders training

A month had passed between the time Israel departed from Egypt to the time when the nation reached the Wilderness of Sin. Water had already been a problem (ch. 15:22-26), and now they had run out of food.

Their growling stomachs soon produced complaining lips. ever notice that the latest crisis is always the worst crisis...for the complainer

^{Ex} **16:1** Then the whole community of Israel set out from Elim and journeyed into the wilderness of Sin,^[a] between Elim and Mount Sinai. They arrived there on the fifteenth day of the second month, one month after leaving the land of Egypt. ² There, too, the whole community of Israel *complained* about Moses and Aaron. ³ **“If only the LORD had killed us back in Egypt,”** they moaned. “There we sat around pots filled with meat and ate all the bread we wanted. But now you have brought us into this wilderness **to starve us all to death.”**

- **Before we consider God’s response to the complaining of His people, I want to point out some of the characteristics of Israel’s grumbling in this incident. We will find that complaining is also a problem in our lives as well.**

(1) Complaining starts with pain or problems. Complaining almost never occurs when we are experiencing pleasure, but nearly always when we are in pain or the discomfort of the situation we are in. We complain because we think that we should experience pleasure rather than pain, affluence and ease rather than adversity and deprivation or at least something different than we are experiencing

(2) Complaining is a problem of perception of those problems.

Complaining results from a difference between the way we perceive things to be and the way we think they should be.

- **Complaining** invariably distorts the facts. Israel greatly exaggerated the benefits of Egypt. They said they “sat” (v. 3) **by their meat pots, and that they ate “all they wanted” of a great variety of breads and meat.**
- **Facts..the Egyptians made them gather their own straw and were attempting to kill all boy babies, Israelite comfort along with great food would not be a high Egyptian priority.**
- **And Their perception of their own imminent danger of starvation was greatly exaggerated. No one had yet starved; at best, are hungry**
- **Worst of all, they accused Moses of leading them into the wilderness in order to kill them. Their perception of Moses’ motivation was entirely distorted.**
- **Finally, Israel’s perception of God’s was He failed them rather than the truth of he is training them...**

(3) Complaining is often a problem with God's authority but aimed at humans

- **The Israelites grumbled against their leaders, Moses and Aaron.**
- **The people had forgotten that it was God who was leading them, for it was the cloud that lead them by day and fire at night.**
- **Ultimately, then, Israel’s grumbling was a protest against God’s leadership, as Moses pointed out (16:7-8).**

(4) Complaining is a sin of the tongue, Complaining occurs when we can't control our situation and states God cant either.

- **Complaining is destructively contagious ...Complaining is not only a problem of the mouth, it is a problem which is spread by the mouth.**
- **We are told in verse 2 that, "the whole community complained ..."** someone had to start it ! and others spread it..

(5) Complaining is the result of a failure in our faith.

- **Complaining reveals a lack of faith, for the Complainer does not see that good hand of God, refuses to accept the adversity, and sees disaster rather than blessing as the outcome of their circumstances.**
- **In fact we can go farther and say that Complaining is allowing our present circumstances to nullify our confidence in God's purposes and promises.**

So God responds..gently...they are young in the Lord and this is a teaching moment..

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Look, I'm going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day. I will test them in this to see whether or not they will follow my instructions. ⁵ On the sixth day they will gather food, and when they prepare it, there will be twice as much as usual."

- **I am going to test them...he like a teacher already knew the answer...lets see if they can do one thing I ask them ...and do it everyday.....**

⁶ So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, "By evening you will realize it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt. ⁷ In the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your complaints, which are against him, not against us. What have we done that you should complain about us?" ⁸ Then Moses added, "The LORD will give you meat to eat in the evening and bread to satisfy you in the morning, for

he has heard **all your complaints against him**. What have we done? Yes, **your complaints** are against the LORD, not against us.”

- **These commands are God’s instructions regulating the gathering and use of the manna which He is about to provide for His people.**
- **It is these commands which serve as a test of Israel’s faith and obedience. broken down into one daily command...**
- **These commands which serve to strengthen Israel’s faith and to teach His people to obey Him.**

*EX 16:9 9 Then Moses said to Aaron, “Announce this to the entire community of Israel: ‘Present yourselves before the Lord, for he has heard your complaining.’” 10 And as Aaron spoke to the whole community of Israel, they looked out toward the wilderness. There they could see the **awesome glory of the Lord in the cloud**. 11 Then the Lord said to Moses, 12 “I have heard the Israelites’ complaints. Now tell them, ‘In the evening you will have meat to eat, and in the morning you will have all the bread you want. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God.’”*

- **Knowing that Israel’s complaining was the result of her lack of faith, because they are relatively immature in their faith. God responded in a way to build it. look at where I am...in front remember what I have done...and see what I am now doing... I am with you in your adversity. Consequently, God responded gently and graciously to the grumblings of the Israelites. Rather than to rebuke them for their complaining,**
- **Later on, the grumbling of the Israelites resulted in some painful reprimand. The difference between God’s response to Israel’s grumblings here in Exodus 16 and His more severe dealings later, is the difference in time spent with God in the wilderness.**

Ex 16:13 That evening vast numbers of quail flew in and covered the camp. And the next morning the area around the camp was wet with dew. ¹⁴ When

the dew evaporated, a flaky substance as fine as frost blanketed the ground. ¹⁵ The Israelites were puzzled when they saw it. “What is it?” they asked each other. They had no idea what it was. And Moses told them, “It is the food the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶ These are the LORD’s instructions: Each household should gather as much as it needs. Pick up two quarts for each person in your tent.”

- **The manna was miraculously provided and The manna was provided in abundance, so much so that limits had to be placed on how much was gathered ...**The manna which God provided appears to be very nutritious, as would be required for desert rations.
- **Israel was given nourishment and energy for the rigorous task of desert travel. he will provide the required nourishment for your tasks also...**

Ex 16:17 So the people of Israel did as they were told. Some gathered a lot, some only a little. ¹⁸ But when they measured it out, everyone had just enough. Those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough. Each family had just what it needed.¹⁹ Then Moses told them, “Do not keep any of it until morning.

- **When God provided the Israelites with this “bread from heaven” Miraculous... He also gave instructions as to how this bread was to be gathered and used.**
- **These instructions were intended to test the Israelites as well as to teach them obedience and increase their faith.**
- **Manna was to be gathered daily, and only enough for that day was to be gathered. Any excess from that day was to be disposed of at the end of the day ..In other words, manna could not be stored up or hoarded.**
- **Every Israelite family was required to gather manna for their own needs It may not have had the most exciting flavor, or at least the Israelites eventually tired of it, asking for something more spicy (Numbers 11).**

- **The manna would not keep, except over the Sabbath. Some of the manna was miraculously preserved, as a memorial of God’s provision for future generations (vss. 31-36).¹⁷¹**
- **Israel was to gather twice as much on the sixth day, and to gather none on the Sabbath (vss. 23-26).**

EX 16: 20 But some of them didn’t listen and kept some of it until morning. But by then it was full of maggots and had a terrible smell. Moses was very angry with them. 21 After this the people gathered the food morning by morning, each family according to its need. And as the sun became hot, the flakes they had not picked up melted and disappeared. 22 On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much as usual—four quarts for each person instead of two. Then all the leaders of the community came and asked Moses for an explanation. 23 He told them, “This is what the LORD commanded: Tomorrow will be a day of complete rest, a holy Sabbath day set apart for the LORD. So bake or boil as much as you want today, and set aside what is left for tomorrow.”

*24 So they put some aside until morning, just as Moses had commanded. And in the morning the leftover food was wholesome and good, without maggots or odor. 25 Moses said, “**Eat this food today, for today is a Sabbath day dedicated to the LORD. There will be no food on the ground today.** 26 You may gather the food for six days, but the seventh day is the Sabbath. There will be no food on the ground that day.”*

27 Some of the people went out anyway on the seventh day, but they found no food. 28 The LORD asked Moses, “How long will these people refuse to obey my commands and instructions? 29 They must realize that the Sabbath is the LORD’s gift to you. That is why he gives you a two-day supply on the sixth day, so there will be enough for two days. On the Sabbath day you must each stay in your place. Do not go out to pick up food on the seventh day.” 30 So the people did not gather any food on the seventh day.

31 The Israelites called the food manna. It was white like coriander seed, and it tasted like honey wafers. 32 Then Moses said, “This is what the LORD has

commanded: Fill a two-quart container with manna to preserve it for your descendants. Then later generations will be able to see the food I gave you in the wilderness when I set you free from Egypt.” ³³ *Moses said to Aaron, “Get a jar and fill it with two quarts of manna. Then put it in a sacred place before the LORD to preserve it for all future generations.”* ³⁴ *Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded Moses. He eventually placed it in the Ark of the Covenant—in front of the stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant.* ³⁵ *So the people of Israel ate manna for forty years until they arrived at the land where they would settle. They ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan.*

God was not imposing needless rules and regulations on the Israelites, as we God’s rules always have reasons. some now some later some forever

trust him in the wilderness learning the lesson to be content with daily provision ...then when you are in a more prosperous time and have much more than a day's provision...keep living in Trust and obedience

end

8 “Be careful to obey all the commands I am giving you today. Then you will live and multiply, and you will enter and occupy the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors. **2** Remember how the LORD your God led you through the wilderness for these forty years, humbling you and testing you to prove your character, and to find out whether or not you would obey his commands. **3** Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. **4** For all these forty years your clothes didn’t wear out, and your feet didn’t blister or swell. **5** Think about it: Just as a parent disciplines a child, the LORD your God disciplines you for your own good.

6 “So obey the commands of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and fearing him. **7** For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land of flowing streams and pools of water, with fountains and springs that gush out in the valleys and hills. **8** It is a land of wheat and barley; of grapevines, fig trees, and pomegranates; of olive oil and honey. **9** It is a land where food is plentiful and nothing is lacking. It is a land where iron is as common as stone, and copper is abundant in the hills. **10** When you have eaten your fill, be sure to praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

11 “But that is the time to be careful! Beware that in your plenty you do not forget the LORD your God and disobey his commands, regulations, and decrees that I am giving you today. **12** For when you have become full and prosperous and have built fine homes to live in, **13** and when your flocks and herds have become very large and your silver and gold have multiplied along with everything else, be careful! **14** Do not become proud at that time and forget the LORD your God, who rescued you from slavery in the land of Egypt.

- **The pertinent principle is this: Submission to the will of God is more important than the satisfaction of our physical, bodily, needs.**
- **Israel was led into the wilderness to be tested by God for forty years (Deut. 8:2). Our Lord was led of God into the wilderness to be tested (including hunger also) for forty days (Matt. 4:1-2).**
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The words of our Lord’s prayer in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:9-11). Our Lord taught His followers to pray,

MT 6:9 "This, then, is how you should pray:

" Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

MT 6:10 your kingdom come,

your will be done

on earth as it is in heaven.

MT 6:11 Give us today our daily bread.

- Given the backdrop of God's daily provision of manna in the wilderness for forty years, it is almost impossible to conceive of this prayer being unrelated to the purpose of the giving of the manna in Exodus 16. I would
- **The divine daily provision of manna in the wilderness taught the Israelites to look daily to God for their daily sustenance.**

The feeding of the five thousand and the resulting discussion and discourse

- (John 6). The crowds had followed our Lord to a desolate place (dare I say a wilderness? cf. Mark 6:35), where there was no food available.
- Our Lord gave them bread and meat (fish) to eat, just as God had given the Israelites bread and meat (quail) in the wilderness in Exodus 16.

JN 6:32 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."

JN 6:34 "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."

- The response of the crowd was to look to the Lord Jesus to become a “meal ticket” for them for the rest of their days: “Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread” (John 6:34).
- In response, Jesus said, “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. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe” (John 6:35-36).

Jesus not only fed the 5,000 to meet their physical needs, He sought to show them their spiritual needs, which He had come to supply.

Like the manna in the wilderness, which saved the lives of the Israelites from physical death, He was the “bread of heaven” (a play on words which goes back to the manna which God “rained down from heaven,” Exod. 16:4).

Unlike the “bread from heaven” which God gave the Israelites (the manna), the new “Bread from heaven” would give men eternal life. Jesus was not only claiming to be bread, but to be better bread.

(1) The Christian frequently must choose between immediate pleasure and eternal blessings. Self-indulgence inclines one to pursue the former, while self-discipline is required to gain the latter. Hebrews chapter 11 is filled with the names of those who chose to deny themselves of immediate pleasure for the certainty of God’s eternal blessings.

(2) The Christian who would rid himself of self-indulgence must learn to be content with the condition and the circumstances in which God has placed him (cf. Phil. 4:10-13; 1 Tim. 6:6-10).

(3) The Christian who would overcome the tendency toward self-indulgence must develop a sense of daily dependence upon God to meet his every need

end

The temptation of our Lord (Matt. 4:1-4; cf. Deut. 8:1-3).

- At the end of the forty day period, Satan approached our Lord to tempt Him. The first attempted temptation¹⁷² centered around food. Since our Lord was hungry after His

forty day fast, it seemed only logical that He should eat. Satan challenged Him to prove His deity by satisfying His human need for food, doing so by the exercise of His divine power.

Our Lord's answer was to refer Satan to Deuteronomy chapter 8, which was a theological reflection of incidents such as that recorded in Exodus chapter 16. The lesson drawn from Deuteronomy 8 was that one's physical needs are secondary to one's spiritual responsibilities—namely to be obedient to the will of God. Our Lord's hunger, like Israel's, was the will of God. To satisfy the physical need for food and, at the same time, to disobey God's will, was wrong. In point of fact, Jesus was saying that obedience to the will of God is more life-saving for a hungry man than is the eating of bread. Obedience to the will of God is the basis for survival, and is of higher priority than the act of eating. The pertinent principle is this: **Submission to the will of God is more important than the satisfaction of our physical, bodily, needs.**

Think about this principle as it helps us to understand our study of the Book of Exodus. Egypt was the bread basket of the world, both in the days of Joseph, and in the days of Moses. When Pharaoh, his officers, and the Egyptians disobeyed the command of the Lord to "let His people go" that "bread basket" was virtually emptied. The plagues show the progressive agricultural and economic devastation of that nation. Thus, disobedience to the will of God brought the Egyptians to physical hunger.

On the other hand, the barren desert was no place to find food, but because the Israelites obeyed God and followed Moses and the guiding cloud, God provided the hungry Israelites with a bumper crop of manna, six out of every seven mornings, for forty years. Disobedience turned a bread basket into an empty basket. Obedience turned a barren wilderness into a breadbasket. Submission to the will of God is of higher priority than the meeting of our physical needs.

The words of our Lord's prayer in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:11). Our Lord taught His followers to pray, "Give us today our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). Given the backdrop of God's daily provision of manna in the wilderness for forty years, it is almost impossible to conceive of this prayer being unrelated to the purpose of the giving of the manna in Exodus 16. I would suggest to you that the divine daily provision of manna in the wilderness taught the Israelites to look daily to God for their daily sustenance. The Israelites had to trust God very literally for their "daily bread." Those of us who are not living "hand-to-mouth" need to look to God as the source of our life, whether or not we have a supply of food adequate for the week. Dependence is a daily matter, and our prayers should demonstrate this kind of dependence. Whether or not we have a surplus of goods is not the issue, so much as on whom or what we have our sense of dependence. As Paul instructed Timothy, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put

their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 Tim. 6:17).

The feeding of the five thousand and the resulting discussion and discourse (John 6). The crowds had followed our Lord to a desolate place (dare I say a wilderness? cf. Mark 6:35), where there was no food available. Our Lord gave them bread and meat (fish) to eat, just as God had given the Israelites bread and meat (quail) in the wilderness in Exodus 16. The response of the crowd was to look to the Lord Jesus to become a “meal ticket” for them for the rest of their days: “Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread” (John 6:34). In response, Jesus said, “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. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe” (John 6:35-36).

Jesus not only fed the 5,000 to meet their physical needs, He sought to show them their spiritual needs, which He had come to supply. Like the manna in the wilderness, which saved the lives of the Israelites from physical death, He was the “bread of heaven” (a play on words which goes back to the manna which God “rained down from heaven,” Exod. 16:4). Unlike the “bread from heaven” which God gave the Israelites (the manna), the new “Bread from heaven” would give men eternal life. Jesus was not only claiming to be bread, but to be better bread.

If the parallel is not clear enough, we find that just as the Israelites grumbled in the context of the manna which God gave in Exodus 16 (and later on, cf. Num. 11, esp. v. 6), so, too the Israelites grumbled about our Lord as the “bread from heaven”: At this the Jews began to grumble about Him because He said, “I am the bread that came down from heaven” (John 6:41). The New Testament therefore shows us that the “bread of heaven” is the instrument of God’s salvation. The former “bread of heaven” preserved men’s physical lives. The final “bread of heaven” is Him who saves men's souls from eternal death. This He has done by giving His life as a sacrifice. It is no wonder that one of the two symbols present at the Lord’s Table which we partake of each Sunday is bread.

The teaching of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 and 2 Corinthians 8:14-15. The Corinthian church was a self-indulgent church. There were those living in sexual immorality (cf. 1 Cor. 6). The church even condoned a man living with his father’s wife (1 Cor. 5). Not only was the church self-indulgent in matters of their sexual appetites, they were also self-indulging in the area of food. Rather than to abstain from certain foods for the benefit of a weaker brother, some of the Corinthians indulged in the sumptuous meals which were related to pagan worship and sacrifice (cf. 1 Cor. 10:14-33). Even at the Lord’s table, some did not have sufficient self-control to wait for those who had to come later (1 Cor. 11:17-34). In taking a public role in the worship meeting of the church, many indulged themselves to the exclusion of others, depriving the church of edification (1 Cor. 14).

Paul speaks to the Corinthian self-indulgence by turning their attention back to the exodus of the Israelites:

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them, God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play.” Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer (1 Cor. 10:1-10).

I would suggest that while there is much more referred to here than just the events of Exodus chapter 16, there is a common theme, a common element—that of self-indulgence in matters of the physical appetites. That is why the verses immediately preceding this section pertain to the self-discipline required of the Christian (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27).

The manna which God provided in abundance in the wilderness provided the Israelites with the opportunity of over-indulging, but God’s commands pertaining to the harvesting and use of it prohibited such excesses. The manna was thus given to give God’s people a lesson in self-restraint. When Paul refers to the “spiritual food” of the Israelites, he does so in the context of self-control, and no wonder. That is what manna was all about—self-control.

The warnings and promises to the church at Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17). The church at Pergamum had fallen into an error which our Lord referred to as “the teaching of Balaam” (v. 14). We know from the context that this involved “things sacrificed to idols,” and “acts of immorality,” the very same evils as were present in the Corinthian church (see above). To those who were faithful and would be overcomers, our Lord gave this promise, “To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna” (Rev. 2:17).

I would like to suggest that our Lord is promising His “hidden manna,” that is His provision of the inner needs (not just physical needs) of those who were faithful, and who exercised the self-control necessary to deny the fleshly lusts which were being peddled by the false teachers referred to as the “teaching of Balaam.”

Conclusion

From the New Testament references to the manna of the Israelites, I would suggest that several principles were being taught in the provision of this “bread from heaven” which are just as applicable to Christian living today as they were for the Israelites.

(1) Manna teaches us the priority of submission to the revealed will of God. The great danger which Israel faced was not starvation in the midst of a wilderness, but the wrath of God. God could make a breadbasket into an empty basket, as He had just done to the Egyptians. God could also turn a desert into a breadbasket, as He did with the manna. As the closing verses of Exodus chapter 15 reveal, Israel’s reaping of God’s blessings and her healing from Egypt’s judgments are dependent upon her careful obedience to the commands and decrees of God. It is our response to the revealed will of God that results in either life or death, blessing or judgment.

This points out the importance of our Lord’s self-revelation as the “bread of heaven.” Our Lord came from heaven to save men from the divine wrath of God, which we all deserve. God offers healing to all who will accept Jesus Christ as their Savior, as the one who died in their place, and who bore the penalty for their sins. Just as God’s provision of manna, the “bread from heaven” was not “steak and ale,” it was the only means God had provided for her life. So, too, Jesus Christ is God’s only provision as the “bread from heaven” whom we must partake of in a personal way, if we are to be delivered from the wrath of God. Obedience to the revealed word of God is a matter of life and death.

(2) Obedience to the will of God is diametrically opposed to the self-indulgent orientation of our culture. Obedience to the word of God therefore requires self-denial and self-discipline. Few cultures have been more oriented toward self-indulgence and self-fulfillment than our own. In this sense, our culture is diametrically opposed to the Word of God. The self-sacrifice of our Lord (cf. Philippians 2:5-8) is the pattern for every saint, who must “take up his cross daily” to follow Christ (Luke 9:23). Obedience to the Word of God is our highest calling, even if this means physical deprivation or even death.

Our obedience to God therefore requires self-denial, and self-denial requires self-discipline. If we would be obedient to our Lord, we must obey His commands. Since He has commanded us to deny ourselves daily and to take up our cross (Luke 9:23), we must have self-discipline to replace self-indulgence (encouraged both by our culture and our fallenness) with self-denial. More and more I can understand why God did not immediately lead His people from Egypt into Canaan. They did not have the discipline necessary to survive either the adversity or the affluence of the land of Canaan.

The more I read the New Testament, the more I see the importance of self-discipline, which, you will recall, is one of the manifestations of the Spirit of God: “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Tim. 1:7).

Reading through Paul's second epistle to Timothy, along with his letter to Titus has underscored in my mind the vital role which self-discipline plays in the Christian's life. And, incidentally, it is also noteworthy to observe that one of the common characteristics of the false teacher is self-indulgence: "These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage" (Jude 16, cf. also v. 18; 2 Pet. 2:10, 13-22).

I would like to suggest two very practical outworkings of self-discipline in our daily lives. I must warn you, they are not easy, nor are they pleasant (which is exactly why self-discipline is required). The first suggestion I would make is that we must learn to do without those things which we cannot afford. Such a suggestion is so obvious, you may wonder why I make it. The reason is that contemporary advertising and credit buying consistently encourage us to buy what we neither need nor can afford. We are told that "we owe it to ourselves," "we are worth it," and in addition, we are given credit sufficient to enable us to buy those things which we don't have the money to buy. I am not saying that all credit buying or borrowing is wrong. I am saying that most of us buy things we cannot afford, simply to indulge ourselves.

The second practical suggestion I would make is that we need to develop the ability to deny ourselves of some things which we can afford. I have a negative illustration from personal experience. This week, a friend took me and another friend to lunch. It was a buffet, so that once you paid, you could eat all you wanted. I ate two pieces of angel food cake, with gooey icing. Affording the cake was not the issue. Let's face it, I indulged, I over-indulged. All of us need to learn to say no to things which we could have, but need to do without for the sheer discipline of it. That is what God required of the Israelites. They could have harvested huge quantities of manna, but He told them to take only what was required for that day.

(3) Self-discipline is not something which man can produce from within himself, but comes from God. When I speak of self-discipline, I want to be clear that I am not speaking of the teeth-gritting, self-effort which is merely a form of "works" which is displeasing to God. There are those who engage in self-denial, in a way that is offensive to God.

Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence (Col. 2:20-23).

No, we are not talking about the kind of self-denial which we generate within ourselves, feeling that such asceticism makes us more holy in God's eyes. We are talking about the self-control which the Spirit of God works within the believer and which characterizes those who are mature in their faith and sets them apart from false teachers (cf. 2 Tim. 1:7; 2:1-7; 3:3; Titus 1:8; 2:2, 6, 12). We are talking about that discipline which is motivated by our love for God, and our love for men.

The tension which we face here, with regard to self-discipline, is a part of the broader tension between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. The manna God provided Israel in Exodus 16 illustrates the fact that divine sovereignty and human responsibility are inter-related. God provided the manna which Israel needed, but He commanded them to collect, cook, and keep it, in accordance with His instructions. So, too, self-control is something which God produces in the saint through His Spirit, but it is something in which we participate as well.

Let me attempt to draw these matters of self-indulgence and self-control to a conclusion by summarizing several principles which relate to them:

(1) The Christian frequently must choose between immediate pleasure and eternal blessings. Self-indulgence inclines one to pursue the former, while self-discipline is required to gain the latter. Hebrews chapter 11 is filled with the names of those who chose to deny themselves of immediate pleasure for the certainty of God's eternal blessings.

(2) The Christian who would rid himself of self-indulgence must learn to be content with the condition and the circumstances in which God has placed him (cf. Phil. 4:10-13; 1 Tim. 6:6-10).

(3) The Christian who would overcome the tendency toward self-indulgence must develop a sense of daily dependence upon God to meet his every need (cf. Matt. 6:11). For those of us who have enough food for today and tomorrow and the next several weeks, we must recognize that it is God who is our provider. We must seek to avoid a false sense of confidence based upon our material wealth (1 Tim. 6:17), and we must be free to share out of our surplus (2 Cor. 8; 1 Tim. 6:18). We must recognize that we are dependent upon God daily for our life, for health, and for the grace to deal with all that comes our way. These are things which money cannot buy.

May God give us the grace to learn to live with affluence, and to avoid the perils of self-indulgence by the development of self-discipline and self-denial in our lives.

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Exodus 15 - The Song of Moses

EX 14:29 But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. ³⁰ That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. ³¹ And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant.

After God graciously delivered the children of Israel across the Red Sea, miraculously opening a path for them in the sea, and drowned Pharaoh and the armies of Egypt in the depths of the sea, he brought Israel into the wilderness of Shur, where for three days they wandered without water. The scorching sun beat down upon them. The desert sands scalded their feet. Their cattle were perishing. Their children's tongues were swollen. And their lips were parched. Then, at last, they came to the plentiful fountains of Marah. When they saw the waters of Marah, how their hearts must have rejoiced in hope and expectation. As they approached Marah, they could almost taste the water. They could almost feel the cool, refreshing water in their mouths. But when they got there, the waters were bitter. They could not drink the water. Can you imagine the frustration and disappointment they must have felt?

Immediately, they turned upon Moses, and began to murmur and complain. Actually, they turned upon the Lord God who had brought them to this place. Though the Lord led them by the fiery and cloudy pillar, though he was with them, though he miraculously and graciously delivered them from the bondage of Egypt and promised to do them good, they did not trust him. All they could see, all they could think about were the bitter waters before them and the thirst within them. Because they saw nothing good in God's providence, they despised it. When they should have remembered God's goodness, they thought only of their troubles. When they should have looked to their merciful Deliverer, they looked only upon Marah's bitter waters.

When they should have prayed, they murmured. When they should have believed, they grumbled. *"But God, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not. For he remembered that they were but flesh" (Ps. 78:38-39).*

It was God who brought Israel to Marah. He brought them here to teach them and to make himself known to them, and to teach us and make himself known to us (I Cor. 10:11) as Jehovah-Rapha - "*the Lord that healeth thee*" (Ex. 15:25-26).

JEHOVAH-RAPHA IS THE HEALER OF ALL OUR TROUBLES. Though our days on this earth are few, they are full of trouble. But our troubles have a reason. One reason why God brings trouble into the lives of his saints is that we may come to know him as Jehovah-Rapha, "*the Lord that healeth thee*" (Ps. 34:6; 3:1-8; II Sam. 22:1-7, 17-20, 31). When the children of Israel came to Marah, they found themselves in great trouble. The waters were bitter. They were dying of thirst. And they had nothing to drink. They seemed to be mocked. There was plenty of water, but not an ounce to drink. Then God intervened. He delivered them from their trouble by healing Marah's bitter waters. The Lord our God has many ways by which he makes our bitter waters of trouble sweet. **Sometimes he simply changes our circumstances.** How often have you been in such great sorrow and trouble that you thought you could not endure another day of it? But, just when it looked as though you would be overcome, the Lord removed the trouble. Many times I have been in a strait, not knowing what to do, or how to order my steps. I have come to the point where some decision must be made, but I knew not what to do. Then the Lord stepped in and completely altered the whole affair. He opened the way before me. He took me by the hand and said, "This is the way, walk in it." **At other times the Lord turns our sorrow to joy and makes our bitter waters sweet interjecting something unexpected, which changes everything.** He showed Moses a tree and commanded him to cast it into the waters. And "*when he cast (it) into the waters, the waters were made sweet.*" The waters, which Israel could not endure before, became sweet to them because of the tree. That tree, of course, refers to the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ps. 1:3; Song 2:3; Rev. 22:2). No doubt this tree had always been at Marah. But God had to show it to Moses. And our Lord Jesus Christ is always present with us in our troubles. He is the One who brings them. They come to us because of his gracious work as our Mediator. Yet, until he reveals himself, interjects himself, we cannot see him. But once we see Christ's hand, the hand of our Redeemer in our bitter waters, those very waters become sweet (Gen. 50:20; Job 1:20-21; I Thess. 5:16-18). **Frequently, the Lord makes our waters of bitter trouble sweet by simply giving us satisfaction with his will.** Nothing removes trouble from our hearts like submission to the will of God in the trouble he brings. Acquiescence in the will of God brings peace to the troubled heart quicker and more effectually than anything else (John 12:28). How often we cry out with Jacob, "*All these things are against me.*" Then, the Lord takes us down to the land of plenty and shows us our beloved Joseph upon his throne; and we are ashamed that we ever questioned his goodness. Then, with weeping eyes, amazed that we could ever doubt him, we sing, "Oh, how merciful, how merciful, Blessed Lord, how merciful Thou art to me!" All that we have experienced should teach us that our God is able to make the most bitter things sweet. Past grace is his pledge of future grace. The name of God our Savior is Jehovah-Rapha - "*the Lord that healeth thee.*" (John 14:1-3).

JEHOVAH-RAPHA IS THE HEALER OF ALL OUR SICKNESSES. Certainly, sickness and disease are included in this promise of healing. They are specifically named. We recognize that no one today has the apostolic gifts of tongues, healing, or inspiration. Those who claim to possess them are either deceived or deceivers. However, we must not allow our awareness of the charismatic heresy to rob us of the blessedness of God's promise, or diminish its fullness. The name of God our Savior is Jehovah-Rapha. He is "*the Lord that healeth thee.*" Exodus 15:23-26 tells us several things about

sickness and divine healing. **This passage certainly assures us that all sickness and disease is the result of sin.** Read verse 26. It is plainly stated that if we had no sin, we would have no disease. If we were perfectly righteous, obedient, and sinless, we would never get sick. Though our bodies are redeemed by Christ, they are not yet changed. The change for our bodies will come later. The resurrection will do for our bodies what regeneration has done for our souls. But until these bodies are raised incorruptible, so long as we live in this world, we will have to suffer sickness and disease in one form or another. This body is yet under the sentence of death because of sin. It is left under the sentence of death by divine purpose, *to remind us of the effects and consequences of sin.* If Christ had not redeemed us from sin, we would have to suffer eternal death in hell. And he has wisely left bodily sickness in us, sickness that will eventually bring bodily death, to constantly remind us what he has done for us in redemption, to make us both grateful and humble. All men get sick and die, young and old, because all are sinners. But those who are redeemed by the blood of Christ and saved by his grace have nothing to fear of either sickness or death. **Yet, the Lord our God, Jehovah-Rapha, does heal his people from bodily sickness and disease.** Our Lord Jesus is so much concerned about his tried and afflicted saints that he makes our bed in times of sickness (Ps. 41:3). He "*took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses*" (Matt. 8:17). And he plainly tells us how to seek his healing power (James 5:14-15). Often the Lord heals us of sickness and disease by graciously preventing them (Ps. 91:4-16). We do not often think of it, but God's prevention of disease ought to be as much a matter of praise as his curing us of it. But, with us, that which should inspire constant gratitude creates indifference. We see the healing hand of the Lord more conspicuously when we have been sick and graciously restored to health. Let us never attribute praise to the medicine we have taken, the doctors who have treated us, or to some ingenuity of our own. It is God alone who wounds and God alone who heals. Let God alone be praised. **However, the Holy Spirit here shows us, very plainly, that God uses ordained means for the healing of his sick people.** God could have simply spoken the word and made the waters of Marah sweet. But he chose to use a specific means. Had Moses not cast in the tree, the waters would not have been healed. The use of means does not hinder faith. It proves faith. Believing God, Moses took a worthless tree and cast it into the waters. And the waters were healed. This is the first reference of healing mentioned in the Bible. And it was accomplished by the use of means. The healing was done by God. That tree had no healing virtue; but God used the tree to accomplish the healing. In a similar way, the Lord healed the waters of Jericho when Elisha cast salt into them (II Kings 2:19-22). God told Isaiah to lay a lump of figs upon Hezekiah's boils to heal him (II Kings 20:7). Paul told Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach disorders (II Tim. 5:23). And James told the sick to use both prayer and the anointing of oil for the healing of their sick bodies (James 5:14-15). **In every healing we experience, we have a pledge of the resurrection of the body.** Jehovah-Rapha, who brings us up from the gates of death, will, at the time appointed, bring us up from the very pit of corruption. He who restores health to our bodies will restore life to our bodies in the resurrection (I Cor. 15:51-56).

JEHOVAH-RAPHA IS THE HEALER OF OUR SOULS. The bitter waters of Marah were an emblem of the bitter curses of the law because of that bitter thing, sin, which makes for the bitter work of repentance. The law demands bitter plagues upon every sinner, even a bitter death in hell. It cannot give us peace. But Christ, the Tree of Life, was immersed under the curse of the law, and made a curse for us. He endured in our place the bitter wrath of God and suffered the bitter curses of the law to the full satisfaction of divine justice. Now, the law of God, once so bitter to our souls, is sweet, pleasant, lovely, and comforting because it is fully satisfied by Christ our Substitute. How is it that

God heals the sin-sick soul? How does he remove the plague of our hearts? Look at Marah again, and you will see the answer. **First, the Lord made the people know how bitter the water was.** There was no healing for that water until they had tasted its bitterness. But once they knew how bitter it was by nature, the Lord miraculously made it sweet to them. That is exactly what happens in conversion. The Lord first makes sin bitter to us. He makes us see how corrupt and wretched we are by nature. He squeezes the cry from our hearts, "*O wretched man that I am!*" Then he heals us by his grace. This is God's way with men. First he wounds. Then he heals. First he strips. Then he clothes. First he humbles. Then he exalts. First he kills. Then he makes alive. **Second, before the waters were healed, prayer was made to God.** The prayer of Moses did not heal the waters. But until he called upon the name of the Lord, the waters were not healed. And sinners are not healed of sin and the plague of their hearts by their prayers, but healing is not experienced until they call upon God for mercy through Christ Jesus (Luke 18:13-14). Still, something else was needed. **Third, the waters were not healed until the tree was cast into them.** That tree represents two things. It is a picture of Christ himself (Rev. 22:2) and a picture of the cross upon which our Savior put away our sins and brought in everlasting righteousness for us (I Pet. 1:24). We can only be saved, healed of our souls' plague, when the work of Christ is imputed to us. We are saved when Christ himself comes into our hearts by the power of his Spirit. **Fourth, once the tree was cast into the waters, they were completely healed.** The waters of Marah, once so vile and bitter, were made to be the sweetest waters on the earth, once the tree was cast in. And God's elect, so vile and bitter in themselves, are made whole once they have Christ and have his work put in them. When God heals a soul, it is healed forever and healed completely (Eccles. 3:14; Col. 1:12; 2:9-10). This is the name of God our Savior, **JEHOVAH-RAPHA - "THE LORD THAT HEALETH THEE!"** He heals all our troubles. He heals all our sicknesses. And he heals our souls.