

Unlocking The Mystery & Treasure Of Our Inheritance

#31 God's Grace Poured Out His Grumbling Men

Lesson: Life's Journey Involves Much More Than Merely Reaching A Destination

Truth: Going Through The Wilderness Is NOT Necessary For Our Salvation > Justification. But It Is Absolutely NECESSARY For Our Sanctification.

After their recent experience at Marah, one could assume Israel would promptly and confidently turn unto Jehovah in the future to supply their needs.

Chapter 15 ended with the Israelites enjoying the 12 wells and 70 palm trees at Elim.

Chapter 16 [AND] links that event with their experience in the Wilderness of Sin. Why?

1. To demonstrate the inexcusable conduct of Israel immediately following God's gracious time at Elim.

2. To magnify the marvelous patience and infinite mercy of Jehovah

Question: How will they meet this new test of faith?

Upcoming Events Upon Leaving Elim

1. Ex. 16:1 AND they left Elim and came to the Wilderness of Sin on the 15th day of the 2nd month after departing from Egypt. [~1 month since they left Egypt]

a. Vast and hostile environment of sand and stone

b. Barren surroundings provide the perfect place for God to test and shape their character

2. Ex. 16:2-3 The WHOLE congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron.

Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt,

when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full;

for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

a. Growling stomachs have produced grumbling lips!

b. The waning food supply in the desert has produced fear. We will starve to death!

Key Point #1 For the first time, the full impact of desert life stared the people fully in the face. Every step they took was now leading them farther away from the inhabited countries and carrying them deeper into the land of desolation and death. [We Are To Die To Old Nature]

Key Point #2: Leading Israel into the Wilderness of Sin brings out the strength of Moses' faith.

Key Point #3 The courage and faith of Moses in bringing a multitude of at least two million people into such a howling waste, demonstrates his firm confidence in the Lord God.

Note: Moses was not ignorant of the character of the desert. He had lived for forty years in its immediate vicinity (3:1). Therefore, he knew only a miracle - a series of daily miracles - could meet the vast needs of such a multitude.

Key Point #4 These people had been divinely spared from the 10 plagues on Egypt.

They had been delivered from the land of bondage and miraculously delivered at the Red Sea.

They had been divinely guided by a Pillar of Cloud and Fire. Now, they [whole congregation] are murmuring, complaining and rebelling against their Divinely-chosen leader.

Key Point #5 In their rebellion, they lied. As slaves of the merciless Egyptians there is no ground for us to suppose they "sat by the flesh-pots" or "ate bread to the full."

Key Point #6 Their wicked unbelief comes out: "you have brought us forth into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." It was Jehovah who led them there.

Key Point #7 Ex. 3:12 - GOD HAD PROMISED them they would worship Him at Sinai. It was not possible for them to die with hunger in the wilderness.

What was the Lord's response to this awful outbreak of rebellious unbelief?

3. Ex. 16:4a Behold, I will rain bread [plentiful supply] from heaven for you;

- a. Marvelous grace; sovereign unmerited favor
- b. Behold = Holy Spirit's exclamation mark - Worshipful wonder
- c. The manna was a supernatural gift.

It was not a product of the earth, manufactured by man or brought out of Egypt.

d. This food is His Word. It is both His written Word and His incarnate Word.

4. Ex. 16:4b-5 and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I MAY PROVE [TEST] THEM, whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

Key Point #1: The easy accessibility and nearness of the manna added to their responsibility. It lay on the ground just outside their tents. They must either gather it or trample it beneath their feet! This is equally true of God's Word. Its easy access and nearness determines our responsibility. You will either feed on God's Word as nourishment for your soul, or you will despise and trample it beneath your feet by a criminal neglect.

5. Ex. 16:4-27 God gives detailed instructions on the gathering and use of the manna to test their faith and obedience.

God's Response to Israel's Grumbling

Ex. 16:9 Come near before the LORD: for He hath heard your murmurings.

1. God responded gently and graciously to these early grumbings.
2. Rather than rebuke them, He did 2 things to demonstrate His presence with them in their affliction and adversity.
 - a. He revealed His glory to them by a special manifestation of Himself in the cloud.

Ex. 16:10 They looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

b. Ex. 16:12-13 I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God. And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

Note: In Numbers 11, their grumbling results in painful and severe chastisement. Why?

1. They have spent much more time with God in the wilderness.

2. God's Law had been given and His faithfulness had been repeatedly demonstrated.
3. In Exodus 16, they have only spent 1 month following God. Immature in their faith
- Ex. 16:14 And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground.
- The sum total of God's revealed Truth in a book which can be carried in your pocket.
 - All we need to sustain our souls through our earthly pilgrimage; all we need to make us complete or mature is in this one divinely-inspired Word.

6. Israel's Disobedience:

Sadly, it also relates the Israelites' disobedience in following God's clear command.

Ex. 16:20-22;27 Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.

²² And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man... Some went out on the 7th day to gather, and they found none.

- Can you imagine their zeal in collecting the first provision of manna?
- The effort to hoard God's provision of manna was in direct disobedience to God.
- Their greed reflected their attempt to hoard a surplus so they could feel secure.

Ex. 16:28 The LORD said to Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?

7. Ex. 17:1 AND all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was NO WATER for the people to drink.

Leaving The Desert Of Sin where God's miraculous provision of manna had commenced, the Israelites went from place to place, as the Lord directed them. God continues to lead them into difficult and trying situations in order to prove His power and build their faith and character.

Note: God was in no hurry to bring them to Canaan.

Lesson: Life's Journey Involves Much More Than Merely Reaching A Destination

Consider: Her wilderness wanderings at the BEGINNING of her journey from Egypt toward Canaan [Boot Camp] and BEFORE the Law was given are not the result of her sin.

These wanderings are intended to teach them the necessity of faith and obedience.

God's design is to wean us from everything down here, to bring us to the place where we have no reliance upon material and human resources, to cast us completely upon Himself.

How slow, how painfully slow we are to learn this lesson!

How miserably and how repeatedly we fail! How long-suffering the Lord is with us.

Contrast: Israel's wilderness wanderings AFTER the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai and Israel's failure to possess the Promised Land were a result of disobedience due to UNBELIEF.

a. God led Israel to Rephidim where there is no water. This dilemma is God's will.

Note: He repeats an old test! Will the response be different?

8. People's Response Ex. 17:2-3 Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, GIVE US water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?

Corrie Ten Boom: "Don't bother to give God instructions; just report for duty."

Consider: Israelites Were EXPERTS In Murmuring & Complaining

[Ex. 16:1-12; Num. 14:2, 27-29; 16:41; 17:1-10; Deut. 1:27; Ps. 78:17; 106:14]

Key Point #1: While God was testing them, they were tempting Him by their attitude and words.

a. To tempt God: deliberately adopt a disobedient posture and dare Him to do anything about it. [Wiersbe]

b. Many occasions, the Israelites invited the judgment of God by their obstinate attitude and persistent grumbling.

Key Point #2 Greater transgression than before

a. They should have learned to trust God to supply their needs based upon His previous provision of water at Marah [15:22-26] and quail and manna in the wilderness of Sin.

b. Grumbling has grown to quarreling and demanding Moses give them water to drink.

c. They are ready to stone Moses. [17:4]

d. Moses accused them of "putting God to the test."

e. Their challenge: "Is the Lord among us or not?"

Imagine: They ask this as the pillar of cloud hovered in their sight!

f. Moses' rebuke fell on deaf ears. They began to rehearse their memories of the "good old days" in Egypt. They recite their miseries and near-certain death in the desert.

Key Point #3: Complaining doesn't solve problems.

a. If we try to run away from a difficult situation [back to Egypt], we'll meet the same problem in the new place and still need to solve it.

b. Job was frustrated with God and repeatedly said he would like to meet God and ask Him a few things. When God came to Job, Job is so overwhelmed he doesn't ask God a thing!

[Job 40:1-5]

c. Explanations DO NOT heal our broken heart, but promises do, because promises depend on FAITH which puts us in direct contact with the grace of God.

Characteristics Of Their Grumbling

1. *Grumbling Is A Problem With Pain Or Problems.*

Grumbling rarely occurs when we experience pleasure, but nearly always when we are in pain.

a. We grumble because we do not like the pain or the discomfort of our circumstances.

b. We think we should experience pleasure rather than pain, affluence and ease rather than adversity and deprivation.

2. *Grumbling is a problem of perception.*

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

b. Grumbling invariably distorts the facts.

- c. Israel greatly exaggerated the benefits of Egypt. They said they "sat" (v. 3) by their flesh pots, and ate "all they wanted" of a great variety of foods and meat.
- d. They forgot the bondage, beatings and misery of forced labor as slaves.
- e. Their perception of their own imminent danger of starvation was greatly exaggerated. They believed that their hunger was starvation.
- f. They accused Moses of leading them into the wilderness in order to kill them.
- g. Finally, Israel's perception of God's care and compassion is minimized to grotesque proportions. They failed to perceive the loving hand of a sovereign God in their sufferings.

3. *Grumbling is a problem of submission.*

a. The people had forgotten it was God who was leading them, not only by Moses, but also by the cloud which was before them (cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 16:10).

b. Israel's grumbling was a protest against God's leadership, as Moses pointed out (16:7-8).

4. *Grumbling is a sin of the tongue, which is closely related to disobedience.*

a. Grumbling occurs when we can't control our situation.

b. Disobedience occurs when we choose to do other than that which God has commanded.

5. *Grumbling is a communicable disease spread by the mouth*

a. "the whole community grumbled ..."

b. Max Lucado: Trust More; Stress Less; Amplify Gratitude; Mute Grumbling

6. *Grumbling is the result of a failure in our faith.*

a. Grumbling is a symptomatic sin which reveals a lack of faith.

b. The grumbler does not see the good hand of God, refuses to accept the adversity, and sees disaster rather than blessing as the outcome of their circumstances.

c. Grumbling allows our present circumstances to nullify our confidence in God's purposes and promises.

Lesson: Every difficulty God permits me to encounter will become either a test that can make me better or a temptation that can make me worse.

It is my attitude that determines which it will be.

Murray: The "evil heart of unbelief" in man tends to distrust God. Trust anything but God. It would rather lean upon a cobweb of human resources than upon the arm of an omnipotent, all-wise, and infinitely gracious God; and the smallest cloud is more than sufficient to hide from its view the light of His blessed countenance. Well, therefore, may it be termed 'an evil heart of unbelief.' which will ever show itself ready to 'depart from the living God.'"

Unbelief is at the heart of my lack of commitment to God!

8. Ex. 17:4-5 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people?

they be almost ready to stone me. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and GO.

9. Ex. 17:6 Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb;

and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

- a. Water came forth in abundance providing for the Israelites' needs.
 - b. A gracious God met the needs of a complaining people.
10. Ex. 17:7 And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the LORD...Is the LORD among us, or not?

Key Point: At Massah & Meribah, Israel doubted God's presence among them.

- a. It is an incredible thing they could doubt God's presence and power among them.
- b. God had evidenced His presence and power so many times in very recent days: in the plagues, passing through the Red Sea, provision of food and water.
- c. His presence was manifested in the cloud.
- d. Nevertheless, the absence of water = absence of God.

God uses the difficult experiences of life to strengthen our faith and mature our character.
God can solve our problems by:

- a. Changing things: Make the bitter waters sweet
- b. Give Us Something Else like the wells of water at Elim
- c. Give us the Grace to bear our difficulties and not complain = Produce lasting spiritual growth

Consider: On the map of my life, how many experiences should be labeled, "Testing and Quarreling" because of my complaining. It's one thing to sit in church and sing "All the way my Savior leads me what have I to ask beside?" and something else to be confronted with distress and disappointment and meekly say, "Not my will but Thine be done."