

When Manna Is Not Enough

Text: Genesis 11:1-35

The trip from Egypt to the Land of Promise took much longer than it needed to. The underlying reason was disobedience. When we back away from God's designated paths for our lives, God will give us lessons and instructions while on our detour. In the loving-kindness of our Lord, He will also give us provision. In Israel's journey God gave them manna. Observe Israel's introduction and Israel's response to manna from the Bible: "And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat" (Exodus 16:15). "And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey" (Exodus 16:31).

Please notice a year later, the contrast is found in Numbers 11: 6-8: "But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes. And the manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium. And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil."

What a contrast! When first introduced to God's provision of manna it was a beautiful, delicious food and tasted like an exquisite treat, honey. As time moved on, it is not as pretty, it is the same manna, but now it looked discolored and tasted like oil. Now oil was not a hated taste, because even in the Mideast today, we discovered that oil is a staple at every meal. The mention of oil tells us that what God was giving Israel was no longer considered a treat - it had become boring and not so interesting. Isaiah 43:22 says: "But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel."

Like Israel of old, many of God's people today have grown weary with God's merciful provision and path in life. The next step is to categorize His blessings as burdens; His provision as plain; His mercy as mediocre. For the people of Israel, God wasn't enough. Jesus, Himself makes the parallel: "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). "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). "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38).

To say that the manna was not enough is to say, in essence, Jesus is not enough.

1. GOD'S CONTEMPT OF COMPLAINING

Numbers 11:1-3

The Bible here tells us that God was displeased and sent a "burning" among the people. It appears that the shrubs near the tents or the tents

themselves caught fire. The people asked Moses to help. Moses prayed and the fires were abated. Before more extreme judgment comes, God will often send a kinder warning. His purpose in doing so is found in Romans 2:4: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

2. THE CRAVING OF THE CROWD

Numbers 11: 4-9

The mixed multitude left Egypt, but Egypt never left them. The problem was not in their palate; it was in their heart.

"O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (Psalm 34:8). "Unto you therefore which believe he is precious..." (I Peter 2:7a). "And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread" (Numbers 21:5). "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:14).

3. STRESS IN GOD'S SERVICE

Numbers 11: 10-15

Moses, humanly speaking, had come to the proverbial end of the rope when he said, "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me" (Numbers 11:14).

Elijah also suffered from extreme stress as evidenced in I Kings 19:4, 5: "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat." In C. I. Scofield's notes, he titles this portion of I Kings 19 "Jehovah's tender care of His overwrought prophet."

4. GOD'S COVENANT COMMUNITY

Numbers 11:16, 17, 24-30

God uses His covenant community to help carry the burdens of the body. We see this principle in the Old Testament and the New Testament. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

Moses' father-in-law, Jethro saw the virtue of others to help carry the load. "Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens" (Exodus 18:18, 25).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF CAPTURED CRAVINGS

Numbers 11:18-23, 31-35

A miracle took place. God said he would send Israel enough flesh that they could eat from it for a whole month. God sent a mighty wind that seized quail from the sea and blew them to the camp of Israel. It was quite the phenomenon; the quail were flying at about three feet off the desert floor to make it easy for them to capture the birds. There were so many that in either direction, it would have taken a day's walk to come to the end of the line of their flight. Then it is noted that all that gathered the quail took no less than sixty bushels each. At this rate it has been estimated that Israel laid hold on no less than 3,500 pounds of fowl. Their happiness at the capture was short lived as God's prophecy came to pass that even before the people could swallow, they were smitten with a very great plague and so many people died that the LORD Himself named the place Kibroth-hattavah, which means "Graves of Craving."

And the old saying bears truth here, i.e., "the people got what they wanted, but did not want what they got in the end."

"They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel: But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul" Psalm 106:13-15). "Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein: and he that rolleth a stone, it will return upon him" (Proverbs 26:27). "Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them" (Proverbs 1:31, 32).

All of the Devil's gold is fool's gold. All of lustful pleasures are plastic pearls. "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." (James 1:15). "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe" (Proverbs 29:25).

-Pastor Pope-