**The Gospel According to Moses**

**Grumbling and Gathering**

**Exodus 16:1-36**

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We are working our way through the Old Testament book of Exodus in our series, the Gospel According Moses, looking at chapter 16 today. Israel is in the wilderness learning to trust the Lord, live by faith as the follow him. Chapter 16 describes the Israel’s response to difficultly/trial. They grumble and God responds with grace. Let’s follow along as 16:1-8 is read. My big idea today is that God provides for the difficulties we face daily. I want to look at three characteristics of God’s provision for the difficulties we face.

**The Provision was Supernatural (4, 11-15)**

The bible describes the wilderness as the place of trial and temptation.[[1]](#footnote-1) As a matter of fact, the same Greek word is used of both trial and temptation in the New Testament. Let me start by describing the difference between the two. Trials are God ordained circumstances with three purposes. First, trials test our faith to see whether we will obey the Lord or not (16:4). Second, trials teach us to depend on God and his word (Mat 4:4). Finally, trials train us in righteousness, making us like Jesus (James 1:3-4). Therefore, Scriptures exhorts us to be thankful in all circumstances (1 Thes 5:18) and joyful (James 1:2) for trials because God has sovereignly orchestrated them as opportunities for growth. Temptation is that same circumstance except that Satan seeks to tempt us with unbelief and sin. In every trial God seeks to root out sin and unbelief in our hearts while Satan seeks root sin and unbelief deeper into our hearts.

Israel’s trial/temptation is over hunger. Sin in their hearts gave rise to unbelief, distorting reality that God would provide, so they grumble against Moses and Aaron, wishing the Lord had killed them in Egypt rather than freeing them. Grumbling glamorizes the past, Egypt was the good life with plenty of food. But life in Egypt was bitter (1:14) and God delivered them to take them to the Promised Land. Though they grumble against their leaders, they are ultimately grumbling against God (6-8). I am not talking about disappointment, groaning, or even legitimate criticism. Grumbling is not asking God for help but thinking you can run your life and the world better than he is. Grumbling is telling God that you know what is best for you not him. Grumbling does not believe that God is big enough to help or good enough to care. They grumble yet God responds in grace, providing bread from heaven, supernatural provision (9-13).[[2]](#footnote-2) For forty years, God provided Manna until Israel came to the Promised Land (35). Israel grumbles and the Lord provides (12). The Lord does that for us all the time, showing us that he is the Lord, trustworthy and faithful to his promises.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**The Provision was Sufficient (16-30)**

God gave them enough bread to eat daily, teaching them to trust him for their daily needs (16-18). To teach them that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Mat 4:4). Yet their gut response was to fear that He would not provide for tomorrow, so they kept some, but God caused it to rot (19-20). When they trusted the Lord and gathered enough for that day and did not stash some away, God provided and not one person lacked bread for forty years. The principle is the same for us. How are you depending on the Lord for your needs, today? For the rough spot in your marriage, for your financial struggles, for your parenting exhaustion, for having to wear masks at school, for other kids mistreating you. When you face difficulties in your life, are you joyful and thankful for an opportunity to trust the Lord or do you grumble?

I found it interesting that Paul quotes 16:18 in 2 Corinthians 8:15 to encourage the Corinthian church to be generous toward the needs of others, reminding them not to be stingy because God is generous to them. God’s is generous with us not just to meet our own needs but to be generous with others. When we hoard because of our fear of an uncertain future (anxiety), that which we hoard will eventually rot (Mat 6:19-21).

God’s provision was also sufficient for the Sabbath (22-30). On the sixth day God told them to collect two days’ worth of bread, saving some for the next day, the Sabbath. That bread did not spoil, miraculously (24). We will talk more about the Sabbath later but for now, the point is that God gave them one day for rest and for worship which they did not have as slaves. God was teaching them to trust his word to rest on the Sabbath, not to work or gather bread, and he would provide for them. But Israel refused to trust God’s word and tried to gather Manna on the Sabbath, but the Lord did not provide any (27-30)! Now lest we think badly of Israel, this is given to instruct us (1 Cor 10:11) because we are often like Israel. Our hearts are prone to wander, filled with unbelief we must fight against and fight and fight to trust him in the difficulties we face. An aspect of your discipleship to Jesus is learning to trust Jesus in the difficulties you face.

**The Provision was Sacred (31-36)**

In the same way God told Israel to memorialize the Passover Meal and Feast of Unleavened Bread for future generations to remember the Exodus, God tells them to memorialize the Manna for future generations to remember God’s provision. This way future generations would know and follow the Lord. God gave them intentional ways to teach and train their children in the faith.

We don’t know where the jar of Manna is but we know where Jesus is. In John 6, the Jews said to Jesus, Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” Jesus responded, “it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” Jesus responded, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst (6:31-35). Though we don’t have that the jar of manna we know where Jesus is, and we can see him with the eyes of faith. When we come to him, he gives you something better than manna, bread that lasts forever and doesn’t rot. Jesus is the true and better bread from heaven. The provision of manna pointed to and is fulfilled in Jesus. Feast on Jesus and you will never hunger nor thirst again. Do you believe that Jesus can provide for you like he did for Israel? Do you believe that when you wake up every morning, there are new mercies from Jesus? Do you believe that in whatever wilderness you face, God will provide manna from heaven each morning in the person of Jesus Christ, the one who forgives us of our sins, who sends his Spirit, who heals our diseases, and who promises eternal life? Do you trust that God will provide, and that he already has provided in Christ? Do you believe that Jesus is the only source of lasting joy and happiness when you face difficulties?

Life Group Questions:

1. Retell the story in your own words.
2. What sticks out to you the most?
3. What are trials, what are temptations, and what is the difference between the two?
4. Why did Israel grumble? What are things are your grumbling about?
5. What difficulties are you facing that you need God’s provision?
6. Where is the Lord already providing for you in your life?
7. What does this teach us about God, humanity, and us?
8. What does this teach us about following Jesus in discipleship?
9. How is God asking you to respond to this passage?

1. The Greek word translated trials is the same as temptation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Also called the bread of angels (Ps 78: 25) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The continual unbelief of Israel reminds us that miracles, signs and wonders, do not guarantee or necessarily produce genuine faith. The Exodus is the greatest display of God’s miraculous power in the Old Testament, yet it did not make Israel a people of faith or a faithful people. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)