

The Life of Moses

Moses and the Manna

Exodus 16:1 - 5

Chapter 10

Chapter 10

MOSES AND THE MANNA

“And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, 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. Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove 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.”
(Exodus 16: 1-5)

We have here an incident in the life of the man Moses as he leads the Children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt and to the path that the Lord had for them to follow. Chapter sixteen has several lessons for us as we study the life of this man of God. There are many things in the entire chapter but for our discussion in this chapter we will concern

ourselves with only the first five verses. As we look first at the context I am sure that the Lord will open our eyes to the truth that He has for us in this portion of His Word.

The context of this first part of chapter sixteen finds the people of God in the desert. Moses has led them out of Egypt. They have come past the trial of the threat of Pharaoh and the Red Sea. We studied how they danced for joy when they saw the deliverance of God from the chariots of Pharaoh. Next, they came to a place where they were forced to trust God to supply their need for water. They have seen God do so much for them, but still they feared and complained when the water bottles ran dry. That was when God turned the bitter waters of Marah to the sweet waters. God knew the need of His people and had already made arrangements for that need to be met.

Through all of this we have watched the man Moses as he grew as a leader for God. When he started he was so timid before Pharaoh that his brother, Aaron had to do the talking. When the people rebelled against his leadership in Egypt he wanted to quit and go back to the sheep of Midian. Yet, through these trials we have seen Moses, a weak, broken, timid man, become a bold voice for God. This came about as he obeyed God and let Him direct his life. His boldness was the evidence of the reality of God in His life. As a pastor it was always interesting to me to see my people, who were usually shy and timid, become bold for God when they served Him. The timid man who was shy would show no fear when out on visitation. The

lady who was so demure would have strength other than her own in her Sunday school class. Notice how God will give boldness and power to those who serve when they allow Him to work His plan out for their lives and to direct them. God's purpose through out the entire Exodus from Egypt was to reveal Himself to the world. God seeks to use you and me to reveal who He is to those who do not know Him.

God has shown the people His ability to deliver and to provide. He has revealed Himself to them and now He is trying to mold them into a nation of people capable of serving Him. During this period, as they travel from Marah to Sinai, God is teaching His people how to be his followers. Chapter fifteen ends with the People at an oasis called Elim. They had just come through the time of bitterness at the well of Marah. After that trial God sent them to a place of comfort. Elim had an abundance of trees and waters. What a wonderful place that must have been to the Children of Israel. After days of walking in the hot desert, and having been disappointed at Marah we see God giving them a time of respite from their trials. Elim must have been a wonderful place for them. With that in mind, chapter sixteen opens with a rather startling statement. *"And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin."* Why would the people want to move away from the wells of Elim? They probably really did not want to move away. Remember, however, they were following the leading of God in the pillar of fire by night and the

pillar of cloud by day. When God moved the pillar they followed. Why would God, then, move the people from this place? It was pleasant. It had what they needed. Yet, God knew better. Probably with that many people and all their herds the water would have soon been depleted. However, there was another more important reason for the people to move on. There was a lesson for the people to learn at Elim. The lesson was that God knows their strengths and gives times of rest when we need them. There were yet many more lessons to be learned that could not be learned at a place of ease. To stay there would have arrested their growth in the Lord. We are like that. We wish that things would always be good and nice in our lives. Yet, were there never any trials we would never learn all that God has to teach us about Himself and about ourselves. The odd truth about human nature is that we learn best during times of trial and hardship. Imagine a football team that had never had hard conditioning drills, hard times of practice to get the plays just right. When the game was played they would not be ready to face the other hardened team and would be defeated and probably injured in the game. Times of hardness teach us things that we would not learn without them. More importantly than that, however, is the fact that if the people had stayed at Elim they would have never reached the Promised Land. God sends times of testing and refreshing to His people. The testing is to help us learn. The refreshing is to keep us from fainting under our loads.

Israel soon began to murmur and complain against Moses again. Verses two the three tell us, *“And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, 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.”* They were proving that they had very short memories. Yet, before we get too hard on these people, we must realize that we also have a tendency to be a “what have you done for me lately’ kind of people” also. We rejoice with answers to prayer. Yet, in a few days another trial comes along and we begin to gripe and complain again. God wants us to grow to a point that when the trials come we look to Him for help and not automatically begin to despair. God allowed the people to come to a place where the need was great. He then provided for their need in a way that would test their obedience and demonstrate His love to them. They would learn to follow His instructions even in times of distress. Moses had learned and obeyed in every particular that God had laid down.

God had led His people into the wilderness for a reason. There is a very enlightening passage of Scripture in chapter eight, verse two of the book of Deuteronomy. There we read, *“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine*

heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no." In this passage God is reviewing the things that happened in the Exodus. He is giving a summary of what He was doing to His people. He was telling them that in the wilderness they were being humbled, tried, and tested. We often today wonder why God allows us to have difficult times. Yet, in those times God is with us and He is accomplishing some important things for us in the wilderness. He is humbling us. He is teaching us that, we cannot make it on our own. We must trust Him in every part of our lives. He is proving us. That is, He is trying our strength. Times of stress test our strength. Just how strong are you? You may possess great endurance and ability. That is not enough. You need God's strength to overcome the attacks of the Evil One. Maybe you know that you are not very strong, spiritually, emotionally, or may be even physically. God has shown you your limits so you will understand just where His strength begins. Where does your strength reach its end? Be assured that the Lord will allow you to reach this point so He can show you where His begins. He puts you in the wilderness to prove or test you. Then, thirdly, He tests our hearts. This test is a bit different that the test to try our strength. It is a test to show us just what is in our hearts. Have you ever said about a particular sin, "Oh, I would never do that!" Until God tests us we really do not know just what the depth of our depraved heart really is. He puts us in difficult spots to show us where our frustration and temper take over. He wants us to know just where we will refuse

to obey Him. He wants us to know because He already knows. The desert experiences of our lives are very revealing. Sometimes they show a side of our personality that we would rather not see or think about. We see bitterness, hatred, pride, envy, lust and a lot of other characteristics that we would have never admit to having. Without the trials we could never correct those parts of our lives and never grow in our knowledge of the Lord and in our usefulness to His service. God led the people of Israel into the wilderness that they might learn total dependence on God. Arthur Pink, in his Gleanings on Exodus tells us that, “God’s design is to wean us to the place where we have no reliance upon material and human resources, to cast us completely upon Himself.” The song writer put it very powerfully when he said,

“The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose
I will not, I will not desert to his foes:
That soul, though all Hell should endeavor to
shake,
I’ll never, no, never, no never forsake!”

To doubt the faithfulness of God in times like these would call into question, both the goodness and faithfulness as well as the trustworthiness of God.

Notice please the real direction of their murmurings. In verse eight of chapter sixteen Moses tells the people that the Lord would give them meat in the evenings and bread in the day. However, Moses tells them, “*the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him:*

and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD." This verse should be an encouragement to pastors. The church people may begin to complain about something. You know that you have faithfully followed the leading of the Lord in your ministry there in the church. Yet, the folks do not seem satisfied. You have carefully evaluated the criticism to see if there are ways that you can improve, and God has given you peace that their complaints are not worthy. You must pass them up to the Lord. The people were actually complaining against the direction of God in their lives.

Moses has learned many lessons so far on the wilderness journeys. He has first, learned that there are reasons for the difficulties that must be faced. All the griping that the people had been doing was really their hearts crying out against the working of the Lord in their lives. They were showing dissatisfaction with the provision of God. When Moses faced the angry, desperate people he had learned to pass the anger up to God and not to take it personally on himself. He had learned not to respond in kind. He did not grow angry with the people but learned to let God deal with them and be a voice for God to them. Later he would have a difficulty when he responding to the people in anger and God dealt with him accordingly. Yet, at this point he had learned to give the hard times back to God and trust Him for the victory over the difficulty. He had learned the most important lesson of all. He must be obedient. To help the people remember all these lessons he commanded Aaron to gather a pot full of the Manna to be kept for a

memorial to the good provision of God. Notice verse thirty-two of chapter sixteen. *“And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt.”* Then in verses thirty-four and thirty-five, *“As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.”* God did not want his people to forget His goodness to them. We are human and prone to forget. A good habit that I have found to help me to remember the goodness of God is to keep a small booklet. In that booklet I try to write down what God does for my family and me. When He answers prayer, or sends us a special blessing I try to write it down so that when trying times come I can refer back to those times and remember that, yes, God is good. He is good even if I seem to be having a problem. He is working out things in my life to perfect or mature my faith in Him.

The amazing thing in all of this is a fact that is often overlooked. When God allows difficult times He is leading us in His will for our lives. Our lives have meaning because He cares for us. I have often thought how meaningless the life that is lived apart from God and His will is. Most people live their lives day by day without giving a thought to God or what He might want for them. They do not want God in their lives. They prefer to live apart

from God. That is at least until the difficult times come. Then they run to Him for healing or help. What a wasted life this is. If you want your life to have meaning beyond your day to day existence then give your heart and life over to the Lord Jesus. He will forgive your sins. He will fill your heart with his love and set you on a path that will bring you peace, happiness and fulfillment. There will still be hard times, to be sure, but He goes with you to comfort and assure you that your work is not in vain in the Lord. Have you been guilty of murmuring against God and how He has been dealing in your life? Confess it as sin and ask Him for the strength to be an instrument of grace to others through your wilderness journey. Ask Him to help you make His Word your source of comfort and strength. *“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.”* (Psalm 119:165) There is great joy and peace in surrendering to the workings of God in your life. As we obey He shows us great things about Himself. There is great joy in being His obedient servant.

TO AID OUR LEARNING:

1. Have there been times when God gave you special boldness when you were serving him? When?

2. Why would it not be best for us to live at Elim permanently?
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____

3. When was the last time you had a “short memory” or been a “what have you done for me lately” Christian?

4. What three things does Deuteronomy 8: 2 teach about the wilderness experience?

5. According to Arthur Pink what is God’s plan for us in hardships?

6. How will keeping a “Blessings Journal” be a help to you?

