

12. Exodus 15:6-16:36

(4/20/16)

So Israel begins her wilderness journey with a song.

This is the first song mentioned in Scripture—

Exodus 15:1-5 (NKJV)

¹ Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and spoke, saying: "I will sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! ² The LORD *is* my strength and song, And He has become my salvation; He *is* my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him. ³ The LORD *is* a man of war; The LORD *is* His name. ⁴ Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. ⁵ The depths have covered them; They sank to the bottom like a stone.

For those who teach that Moses and the children of Israel didn't cross the Red Sea but a marshy swamp to the north a few inches deep called the Sea of Reeds—this song becomes a problem.

Exodus 15:6-16 (NKJV)

⁶ "Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces. ⁷ And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth Your wrath; It consumed them like stubble. ⁸ And with the blast of Your nostrils The waters were gathered together; The floods stood upright like a heap [a wall]; The depths congealed [became solid as when milk curdles] in the heart of the sea. ⁹ The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword, My hand shall destroy them.' ¹⁰ You blew with Your wind, The sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters. ¹¹ "Who *is* like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who *is* like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders? ¹² You stretched out Your right hand; The earth swallowed them. ¹³ You in Your mercy have led forth The people whom You have redeemed; You have guided *them* in Your strength To Your holy habitation.

¹⁴ "The people will hear *and* be afraid; Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. ¹⁵ Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed; The mighty men of Moab, Trembling will take hold of them; All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. ¹⁶ Fear and dread will fall on them; By the greatness of Your arm They will be *as* still as a stone, Till Your people pass over, O LORD, Till the people pass over Whom You have purchased.

The purpose of God parting the Red Sea allowing His people to cross over on dry ground while He drowned the Egyptian army was two-fold:

1. To teach His people to have faith in His power (that nothing is impossible for God);

2. To strike fear into the hearts of the people of Canaan—

Joshua 2:9-11 (NKJV)

⁹ and said to the men: "I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who *were* on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed. ¹¹ And as soon as we heard *these things*, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He *is* God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

Exodus 15:17-19 (NKJV)

¹⁷ **You will bring them in and plant them In the mountain of Your inheritance, *In* the place, O LORD, *which* You have made For Your own dwelling, The sanctuary, O LORD, *which* Your hands have established. ¹⁸ "The LORD shall reign forever and ever." ¹⁹ For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought back the waters of the sea upon them. But the children of Israel went on dry *land* in the midst of the sea.**

At this point Miriam, Moses older sister, jumped in—

Exodus 15:20-21 (NKJV)

²⁰ Then Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took the timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. ²¹ And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the LORD, For He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"

So they're having themselves a dancing, singing praise-fest there in the wilderness—but it didn't last long—

Exodus 15:22-24 (NKJV)

²² So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. ²³ Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they *were* bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. ²⁴ And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

As I've already said, it only took three days for their joy to be replaced with complaining.

Later that complaining will contain the accusation "*God brought us out of Egypt to let us die in the wilderness!*"

It's amazing to me how we believe God is strong enough to save us for eternity—but doubt if He's powerful enough to provide our daily needs.

Certainly if God is strong enough to save you He's strong enough to sustain you.

In essence God's people were basically saying, "*God can't finish what He starts—He was able to deliver us from Egypt but He isn't strong enough to get us to the Promised Land.*"

I have seen many Christians who believe that God was strong enough to save them—but not strong enough to keep them (‘keep them saved’).

Hebrews 7:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost [all the way] those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Or as John Newton put it in his timeless classic *Amazing Grace*, “*Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; ’Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.*”

Again there are many Christians who think that God was able to save them but not able to keep them—not unless they work like crazy to ‘stay saved’—

Galatians 3:1, 3 (NKJV)

¹ O foolish Galatians!...Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Here (Exodus 15) God’s people are extremely thirsty and they come to a large pool of water in the desert fully believing that it would satisfy their thirst—but when they drank the water it was bitter (undrinkable).

So what they thought would satisfy their thirst didn’t and became a bitter experience instead.

As we follow the Lord (and remember He led them to Marah) we will experience our ‘Marahs’—we will experience our share of bitter experiences (betrayal by a friend, ridicule for doing what’s right, the death of someone close to us etc.).

But take heart God can turn the bitter sweet—

Exodus 15:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast *it* into the waters, the waters were made sweet...

The tree represents the cross—in Acts 10:39; 1Peter 2:24 and Galatians 3:13 the cross is called a ‘tree’.

When you’re facing a bitter experience you can do one of two things—

1. *You can drink it in until you are full of bitterness which will then poison you from the inside out, or;*
2. *You can add the cross to that bitter circumstance.*

When you add the cross to whatever bitter experience you’re going through the ‘tree’ will make the bitter sweet—how?

The cross reminds us that we died to this world when we received Jesus as our Lord and Savior and that whatever we suffer in this life for Him, no matter how bitter it is at the time, it is storing up for us a more glorious eternity in heaven—and that folks makes the bitter sweet!

For the young woman that suffered the bitterness of a father that sexually abused her when she was a little girl but now is using that experience to counsel other young women who have been abused by their fathers.

As they are able to relate to her—she can then share with them the comfort that Jesus gave her when she got saved—and that will allow God to bring sweetness out of the bitter experience she was made to drink from when she was younger.

The only thing that makes the bitterness of losing my mom sweet is applying the cross.

When I remind myself that she embraced the cross of Christ when she received Him as her Lord and Savior and now she is in heaven rejoicing in His presence where there is no more pain or sorrow or tears or death and that someday I will see her again—that makes the bitter experience of her death sweet to me!

And that's why Paul said when a Christian loses a loved one who knew the Lord—we sorrow but not like the unbeliever—because we have the hope that we will see them again—the unbeliever doesn't.

When you add the cross to your situation you're bringing eternity to the situation—and an eternal perspective will often make the bitter sweet. (Explain)

Exodus 15:25-26 (NKJV)

²⁵ So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast *it* into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them. And there He tested them, ²⁶ and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I *am* the LORD who heals you."

Dr. S.I. McMillen in his book *None of These Diseases* noted that many of God's laws to Israel had a direct impact on hygiene and health.

Practices such as circumcision, quarantine, washing in running water, and eating kosher made a real medical difference in keeping Israel free from disease.

Exodus 15:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ Then they came to Elim, where there *were* twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.

After every bitter experience God brings us to our ‘Elim’ (oasis in the desert)—a place of rest and refreshment—“*Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*” (Psalm 30:5)

Warren Wiersbe—

“If life were nothing but tests, we would be discouraged. If life were all pleasure, we would never learn discipline and develop character. The Lord knows how to balance the experiences of life, for He brought His people to Elim where they found plenty of water and opportunity for rest. Let’s be grateful that the Lord gives us enough blessings to encourage us and enough burdens to humble us, and that He knows how much we can take.”

And remember once again they were not at Marah because they sinned—they were at Marah because the Lord had led them there. (Comment)

Certainly God teaches us through our disobedience—but then there are lessons (tough lessons) we learn when we walk with and are obedient to the Lord.

The wilderness was Israel’s teacher.

Charles Spurgeon described it as “*the Oxford and Cambridge for God’s students. There they went to the University, and he taught and trained them, and they took their degree before they entered into the Promised Land.*”

Deuteronomy 8:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ "Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers.

² And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you *and* test you, to know what *was* in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

Chapter 16

Exodus 16:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. ² Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. ³ And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat *and* when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

So at this point they're one month out of Egypt and already they've shifted their murmuring and complaining into high gear looking back longing for the 'flesh pots' of Egypt.

This attitude of focusing on their fleshly needs, complaining and murmuring when God didn't satisfy their physical cravings fast enough will characterized their wilderness wanderings for the next forty years.

It's always very sad and a definite mark of carnality whenever the people of God begin to look back at the world with a longing when things get a little tough in their walk with God.

The problem with Israel back then as well as with God's people today when it comes to this is—we often fall prey to 'selective memories'.

We look back on our old life with a kind of a 'good old days', nostalgic mindset—only remembering the good, the fun but forgetting the horrible bondage. (Comment)

These people were letting their stomachs control them rather than the Holy Spirit.

And that's what the wilderness walk is all about—living on the level of your flesh and not on the level of the Spirit—

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matt. 6:33)

Exodus 16:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not. ⁵ And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily."

Man's extremities are God's opportunities.

God will often test us using our everyday needs—hopefully so that we eventually come to a point where we no longer worry about them.

When we get to that point in our relationship with God where we trust Him to provide our basic necessities—then we can start living at the level of the Spirit.

Now with the promise of the manna God was going to be testing them in two ways—

- 1. To see if they would obey Him and only gather enough for the day and not try to gather extra to keep overnight.*
- 2. To see if they would gather enough for two days only on the sixth day since the seventh day (the Sabbath) no manna would fall.*

Exodus 16:6-8 (NKJV)

⁶ Then Moses and Aaron said to all the children of Israel, "At evening you shall know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt. ⁷ And in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD; for He hears your complaints against the LORD. But what *are* we, that you complain against us?" ⁸ Also Moses said, "*This shall be seen* when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the LORD hears your complaints which you make against Him. And what *are* we? Your complaints *are* not against us but against the LORD."

Moses and Aaron are reminding the people that they're murmuring and complaining about the situation really wasn't directed at them but at God Who was leading them.

Romans 8:28 says—"*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*"

And because of it we are commanded to thank God in all things (1Thess. 5:18).

We need to understand that when we murmur and complain about our circumstances we are murmuring and complaining against God who is leading us in those circumstances—and He takes that personally. (Explain)

Exodus 16:9-15 (NKJV)

⁹ Then Moses spoke to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, 'Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your complaints.' " ¹⁰ Now it came to pass, as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. ¹¹ And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ¹² "I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God.' " ¹³ So it was that quails came up at evening and covered the camp, and in the morning the dew lay all around the camp. ¹⁴ And when the layer of dew lifted, there, on the surface of the wilderness, was a small round substance, *as* fine as frost on the ground. ¹⁵ So when the children of Israel saw *it*, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it *was*. And Moses said to them, "This *is* the bread which the LORD has given you to eat."

Understand that God didn't give them quail everyday but only for that first day.

The Bible records only one other time that the Lord gave them quail to eat (Num. 11:31).

So that meant everyday it was: "*manna in the morning, manna in the evening, manna at supper time!*"

Needless to say they got very creative at cooking and preparing manna.

Realize that the word 'manna' actually means "*what is it?*"

Israel called it "*what is it?*" (manna)—God never called it that; He called it '*bread from heaven.*'

Exodus 16:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: 'Let every man gather it according to each one's need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent.' "

Just to give you an idea of how much of the manna God provided every day—

- *An omer equals 6 pints of manna each day for every person.*
- *6 pints times two million people equals 12 million pints or 9 million pounds or 4500 tons of manna each day!*
- *That's equal to 10 trains with 30 box cars for each train with 15,000 pounds in each car per day—or over a million tons per year for 40 years!*

“...let every man take for *those who are* in his tent.”

I believe what v.16 is saying is this—that every adult had to gather manna for themselves but the head of each family had the further responsibility of gathering for his children that were not yet adults living under his ‘roof’ (tent).

One author—

“The bread from heaven was to be gathered on an individual or a family basis. God did not command the creation of a tribal manna gathering and distribution center. Every household had to provide for itself, and a rich family could not hire a poor family to do their work for them.”

Exodus 16:17-18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. ¹⁸ So when they measured *it* by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need.

No matter how much manna each person collected whether little or much—it was always sufficient for them (a miracle some say).

But many see in this, not a miracle, but the principle of sharing our abundance with those who lack.

One pastor said,

“Those who couldn’t gather much might have been too old or too sick or even handicapped—so others gathered more than they needed and shared out of love (not law) with the others. The principle seemed to be: *‘Gather what you need, share what you can and God will see that you are never in need of necessities.’* This is becoming more and more important and pertinent to us today as many are losing their jobs. The problem for the church is that the government has usurped the responsibility of the Church to show the love of Christ in sharing necessities with those in need out of the abundance God has given to us—and the Church has let the government become ‘god’ in people’s lives. And so now people who receive from the government love the government and depend on the government and not on God (thru His people) to help them in times of need.”

Exodus 16:19-36 (NKJV)

¹⁹ And Moses said, "Let no one leave any of it till morning." ²⁰ Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them. ²¹ So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted. ²² And so it was, on the sixth day, *that* they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. ²³ Then he said to them, "This *is what* the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake *today*, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.' " ²⁴ So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. ²⁵ Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today *is* a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. ²⁶ Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, *which is* the Sabbath, there will be none." ²⁷ Now it happened *that some* of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. ²⁸ And the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? ²⁹ See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." ³⁰ So the people rested on the seventh day. ³¹ And the house of Israel called its name Manna. And it *was* like white coriander seed, and the taste of it *was* like wafers *made* with honey. ³² Then Moses said, "This *is* the thing which the LORD has commanded: 'Fill an omer with it, to be kept for your generations, that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.' " ³³ And Moses said to Aaron, "Take a pot and put an omer of manna in it, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations." ³⁴ As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. ³⁵ And the children of Israel ate manna forty years, until they came to an inhabited land; they ate manna until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. ³⁶ Now an omer *is* one-tenth of an ephah.

The manna began to fall one month after leaving Egypt and fell every day for the next forty years—it stopped the day they entered the Promised Land. (Explain)

Now as we've already said the wilderness was a time of testing and teaching for God's people.

And one important lesson God was trying to teach them was that He was able to supply their daily bread—even in a desolate wilderness!

And while it was true that God gave them bread each day to satisfy their physical hunger—it was also symbolic of another kind of Bread which God would send down from heaven someday to satisfy man’s spiritual hunger and give him eternal life.

John 6:31-35, 47-51 (NKJV)

³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, '*He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*' " ³² Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father 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." ³⁴ Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." ³⁵ And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst... ⁴⁷ Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰ This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

So the manna was a type of Christ—

1. *Manna came down from heaven—it was not a product of the earth.*
2. *Manna was a free gift from God—it was not the result of man’s labor.*
3. *It fell each morning all around the camp and around every tent which meant you either got on your knees to gather it or you trampled it under foot.*
4. *It fell in abundance and was available for anyone—but you had to gather it or you starved.*

God won’t force you to have your devotions and feed on Jesus and His Word—you can starve if you want.

5. *You had to gather it every day—you couldn't gather a lot one day and then take the next 4 or 5 days off—you needed to gather a fresh supply each day or it would stink.*

If we try to get a lot of Jesus one day and think we can sleep in and live off of that for the next few days—it stinks!

The person who says, *“I usually spend 15 minutes reading the Bible in the morning but today I spent an hour so I don't have to get up early to read it for the next 4 or 5 days”*—what is that?!

But that's how we often think about Jesus and His Word—we're lazy and often looking for short cuts in our relationship with Him.

Guys what do you think your wife would say if you tried that with her—*“Honey let's talk today for three hours and then leave me alone for the rest of the week.”*

6. *Manna was white in color (Christ's righteousness) and sweet to the taste (fellowship with Jesus).*

7. *Manna was despised by those who were not the Lord's covenant people (the mixed multitude).*

Beware of those who call themselves Christians but are tired of Bible studies and instead crave 'leeks and garlic'—those things that grow out of the earth and are of the world.

Colossians 2:8-10 (NLT)

⁸ Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. ⁹ For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. ¹⁰ So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.

James 3:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.

God's Word is bread from heaven and it alone can feed our soul and produce health, strength and growth for our spiritual man.

When all that is of the earth is destroyed—the Word of God will live and abide forever.

8. You had to gather it early—once the sun got hot it melted.

There's something about doing your devotions in the morning—is that what the Holy Spirit is teaching us through the fact they had to gather the manna early?

For those of us who are truly born again and filled with the Holy Spirit—we never get tired of feeding on God's Word.

I'm up around 4:30am and the first thing I do is make a cup of coffee and start reading my Bible.

And I can tell you that after 35 years it still feeds me and it still moves me (sometimes to tears!).

After all these years I've never grown tired of it—I still crave it and it still satisfies me.