

Ministry of Grace Church

Exodus 16 – Speaker Notes

What an amazing two chapters we've just been through. First *Yahweh* led the Israelites to Pi Hahiroth where He parted the waters of the Red Sea and enabled the Israelites to walk through on dry ground. Then He released the waters to drown all, that is, ALL the Egyptian army. And, as if that wasn't enough, He then led the children of Israel to Marah where he miraculously turned the water from bitter to sweet and He made sure that there was enough for all the children of Israel - and their animals.

Then, knowing that their faith had been stretched a bit, *Yahweh* led the Israelites to Elim where there was abundant water and plenty of shade. There they set-up camp and stayed a while. So, after having seen their God protect and provide for them in miraculous ways, they will never complain again. Instead, whenever things get difficult, they will just turn to *Yahweh* and His servant Moses and simply ask for help, right? Unfortunately, that was not the case. Their experiences with *Yahweh* were just beginning and their faith was still very weak. We will see them complain again and again. This is clear evidence that our God is long suffering!

But - before we get into the next chapter, I'm going to ask every one of you a very serious question. I want you to think carefully about your answer and we'll come back to it later. Here's the question. Is your faith in God an active faith or a passive faith? In other words, do you have an active relationship with Him or is your relationship a passive one? There are three possible answers to this question: "My faith is Active," "My faith is Passive," or "I don't know." Let's learn about it as we go through chapter 16.

Exodus 16:1

They set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the people of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had departed from the land of Egypt.

This passage seems to indicate that the children of Israel went directly from Elim to the wilderness of Sin. However, if you read through the book of Numbers you discover something else.

And they set out from Elim and camped by the Red Sea. And they set out from the Red Sea and camped in the wilderness of Sin. (Numbers 33:10, 11)

In Numbers we see that the children of Israel went from Elim to an encampment by the Red Sea and then on to the wilderness of Sin. The precise location of the Wilderness of Sin is uncertain. It seems reasonable that it was located on the northern edge of the long, broad coastal plain to the west of Mt. Sinai.

We are told that they got to the wilderness of Sin, "on the fifteenth day of the second month" If you recall, they set out on the day after the Passover, which was the 15th day of the first month. Therefore, they had been traveling for one month since leaving Egypt.

Exodus 16:2-3

And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

Many people have trouble remembering what they did 20 years ago. However, remembering things from a month ago isn't a problem for most of us. That doesn't seem to be the case for the children of Israel. We just learned that it has only been a month since the amazing salvation of the Israelites during the Passover event, and perhaps only a week or two since *Yahweh* rescued them at the Red Sea. To say that these were memorable events is clearly an understatement. And yet – the Israelites are now complaining that they are hungry, wishing that they could return to Egypt, even into slavery, so that they could satisfy their hunger. Once again, instead of using their spiritual eyes (their faith), falling to their knees and seeking God's provision, they use their physical eyes (their flesh) and complain to Moses and Aaron for their own lack.

They even said that they would rather have died, “by the hand of the LORD.” This is an apparent reference to the plagues which killed so many Egyptians. The children were so focused on their stomachs that they failed to remember that it was God's protection in Egypt which kept them from being killed by the last plague in Egypt.

Exodus 16:4-5

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily.”

We notice here the mercy and longsuffering of *Yahweh* for not giving them what they deserved. Although the Israelites were a bunch of ungrateful complainers, God graciously met their needs with bread from heaven. I say graciously because He gave the Israelites something good (food) that they never asked for.

The provision of manna is a picture of Jesus Christ who is given from heaven to mankind as that which will sustain eternal life. See what Jesus said of himself:

Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, 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 said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. (John 6:32-35)

Exodus 16:6-8

So Moses and Aaron said to all the people of Israel, “At evening you shall know that it was the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against the LORD. For what are we, that you grumble against us?” And Moses said, “When the LORD gives you in the evening meat to eat and in the morning bread to the full, because the LORD has heard your grumbling that you grumble against him—what are we? Your grumbling is not against us but against the LORD.”

Since the children of Israel had already forgotten who was responsible for their leaving Egypt. Moses reminded the Israelites that he (Moses) is not the one who brought them out of Egypt, it was *Yahweh*.

Moses told the children of Israel that they needed to realize that *Yahweh* was in control, that He was the one calling the shots, not Moses. Moses was continually challenging the people to turn to *Yahweh* for their needs instead of complaining to him (Moses). He reminded them that although, they thought they were complaining to Moses, it was really *Yahweh* to whom they were complaining.

If you read this passage carefully you will see that Moses tells the children of Israel that it was “the glory” that heard the grumbling, not “the LORD.” But what does that mean? Let's look at the New Testament book of Hebrews where the writer opens his treatise by saying:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (**Hebrews 1:1-3**)

It is clear that the writer of Hebrews is declaring that Jesus is the brightness of God's glory. Therefore, it should also be clear that the glory of the LORD which Moses refers to is Jesus Himself. But also notice that the glory here referred to is not the brightness in the cloud which is referred to in verse ten. That glory in the cloud, that brightness, though also a manifestation of Christ, occurred immediately, whereas the glory that Moses referred to was what was to come in the morning, meaning the manna.

Exodus 16:9-10

Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, 'Come near before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.'" And as soon as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the people of Israel, they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

Observe here something about our God. Even though the Israelites were focused on themselves, even though they were complaining about what *Yahweh* was directing for them, even though they grumbled, instead of offering praise and thanksgiving, *Yahweh* invited them to draw near. The text does not tell us what specific place or thing to which they were to draw near. It appears that Aaron simply withdrew from the camp out into the wilderness a small distance and the children of Israel followed. As they walked toward Aaron, they would have been looking toward the wilderness area and they would have then seen the glory of the LORD appear in the cloud.

Exodus 16:11-12

And the LORD said to Moses, "I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. Say to them, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. Then you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'"

Talk about mercy! *Yahweh*, again, could have just brought the hammer down on the children of Israel for their constant complaining to Moses, who they thought was responsible for their plight. However, instead of chastening the Israelites, Jehovah spoke directly in the hearing of all the people so that they would know that it was the LORD directing the exodus, not Moses. This is corroborated later in Exodus:

And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I am coming to you in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe you forever." ... (**Exodus 19:9**)

Notice what *Yahweh* said to Moses: "I have heard the grumbling of the people of Israel." See how merciful God is! He heard the complaints of the Israelites and yet he did not immediately pronounce judgment on them. Remember that the entire wilderness experience of the children of Israel is a picture of the Christian life. When we are new to the faith, God is most gracious and deals with us as young children. As we begin to mature as Christians, His expectations of us increase, but (hopefully) so also does the closeness of our fellowship with Him.

Exodus 16:13-15a

In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground. When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was.

And, In the evening – True to his promises and in spite of the grumbling of the children of Israel, *Yahweh* provided meat, as much as they could prepare and eat. And in the morning, they were greeted by the bread from heaven. They had never seen such a thing before so they said, “What is it?” This is translated from the Hebrew *man hu*. From this is derived the word, manna. It is here described as resulting from the dew which had settled on the ground. When the moisture of the dew evaporated it left small round grains of manna. Nothing like this had ever been encountered by the Israelites and it has never appeared again since the children of Israel crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land. In this sense it is very much a type of Jesus who came at just the right time in history to live and die. And now that He has performed His sacrificial offering for us, there is no need of His death to occur again. Also note that without the manna, the children of Israel would have died in the wilderness just as without the blood of Christ, we would die in our sins.

Yahweh's provision of manna in the wilderness makes me think about a couple of verses in Revelation:
and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days. (Revelation 12:6)

But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time. (Revelation 12:14)

This is the mid-point of the Tribulation when Satan is cast to the earth and goes after the Jews (pictured as the woman). They will flee into the wilderness where they will be nourished by *Yahweh*. Did you ever wonder how God will provide enough food for all the Israelites for three and a half years? I wonder if it will be manna?

Exodus 16:15b-16

And Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.’”

In response to the question “What is it?” Moses replied that it is the bread which *Yahweh* has provided. Everyone was to gather an omer of manna. The Hebrew word translated omer literally means “a heap.” It is approximately equal to two quarts.

Exodus 16:17-18

And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat.

Notice that the provision of manna produced exactly the amount that was needed for each person. I wonder how many Israelites saw the miracle of everyone having exactly the amount they each needed for the day. Once again, we see a picture of Christ who perfectly provided for our sins, providing sufficient atonement for everyone’s sins. Similarly, God provides for us each day that which we need without the requirement for us to store-up extra to last into tomorrow. We are the ones who think we need to store-up extra for the future because we don’t trust that God will provide for us the way we want him to.

Exodus 16:19-21

And Moses said to them, “Let no one leave any of it over till the morning.” But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry

with them. Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

Back in verse four, Jehovah told Moses that His provision of the bread from heaven would be a source of testing for the Israelites to see if they would be obedient. Here's what He said:

... Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, *that I may test them*, whether they will walk in my law or not. (Exodus 16 4) [HINT: this was a test to see if they had an active or a passive faith]

Then *Yahweh* tested the Israelites by telling them "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning" This means that every evening when the Israelites went to bed, they had nothing with which to prepare breakfast. Instead, they had to trust in God to provide their daily needs. When Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, in an obvious reference to this daily provision of manna, He included:

Give us each day our daily bread, (Luke 11:3)

In spite of all the miracles that *Yahweh* had already performed for the children of Israel, "they did not listen to Moses." Why is it so hard for us to believe God? We seem to be so intent on taking care of ourselves in spite of the fact that we know He loves us and will never leave us nor forsake us. Will we ever learn? Hear now what Jesus said.

And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, *nor be worried*. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. (Luke 12:22-31)

Exodus 16:22-26

On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, "This is what the LORD has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.'" So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none."

On the sixth day, the amount of manna left after the morning dew evaporated was twice as much as on other days. The text does not say that everyone worked twice as hard and/or twice as long in gathering. It simply says that they gathered twice as much. This was such a surprise to the leaders of the people that they came to Moses to understand what had happened.

Moses told the people that the following day would be a "holy Sabbath" The Hebrew words are *qodesh shabbath*, meaning "a holy rest." The word *qodesh* indicates something consecrated and set aside for sacred use only.

The miracle of this “day of preparation” for the Sabbath is that not only did *Yahweh* provide twice as much manna on that day, but there was none provided the next day. No matter what humanistic (scientific) explanations for this manna are put forth, none of them can explain how for forty years the “manna dew” was twice as heavy on the sixth day and non-existent on the seventh. This, in itself, would have been a constant reminder to the children of Israel that *Yahweh* was providing for them and that He expected them to treat the seventh day as holy and set-apart.

Exodus 16:27-30

On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.” So the people rested on the seventh day.

Verse 27 says, “On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather” Can you believe it! In spite of every evidence to the contrary, the people did not believe the words of *Yahweh* as delivered by Moses. What was it about their actions that the LORD objected to? Was it because they were disobedient? Or was it because they didn’t believe Him? Theirs was a passive faith. Even after all that *Yahweh* had done for the children of Israel, showing that He always keeps His word, how could they be so dense as to not believe Him regarding the attempted collection of manna on the Sabbath?

Now that we have laughed at the stupidity of these who refused to believe in *Yahweh’s* total watch care over them, let’s look at ourselves. How often do we pray to God for a situation, then either worry about what will happen or provide the solution ourselves. Are we not told to pray for our needs, and to wait on the LORD? Instead, we pray for our needs and then take matters into our own hands. That’s like looking for manna on the seventh day. Ouch!

Exodus 16:31-36

Now the house of Israel called its name manna. It was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. Moses said, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Let an omer of it be kept throughout your generations, so that they may see the bread with which I fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you out of the land of Egypt.’” And Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the LORD to be kept throughout your generations.” As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron placed it before the testimony to be kept. The people of Israel ate the manna forty years, till they came to a habitable land. They ate the manna till they came to the border of the land of Canaan. (An omer is the tenth part of an ephah.)

The children of Israel were told to keep an omer of manna. This is the first of the memorial gatherings. Other things gathered and kept include the stone tablets with the Ten Commandments and the rod of Aaron which budded. These were kept in the ark of the covenant after it was created:

having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's staff that budded, and the tablets of the covenant. (Hebrews 9:4)

Yahweh continued to provide food for the children of Israel for forty years. All through this time twice as much was provided on the day before the Sabbath and none at all on the Sabbath. This would have been a constant reminder that Jehovah was providing for their needs.

So What?

Complain or Submit - you can't do both.

Can you believe how often the children of Israel complained to Moses? Time after time, *Yahweh* provided for them, often by miraculous means. And six days a week they gather their food from off the ground. The most work they had to do for it was to stoop down and scoop it up. It's obvious that they believed in Moses and in *Yahweh*, his God. They knew *Yahweh* to be real and they were witnesses of his workings in their lives. And, as long as they were receiving from Him, they were happy.

In the beginning of this message, I asked you whether you have an active faith or a passive faith. A person with an active faith has an active relationship with God, but with a passive faith a person has a passive relationship with God. So, what do I mean by that? In this chapter of Exodus, we begin to see the difference between a passive relationship with God and an active relationship with Him. A passive relationship is focused on self. It's all about "give me what I need," whereas an active relationship is more focused on God. It's all about being thankful for all God has done for you. It's giving God what He wants from us and seeking His guidance with little or no concern for our own apparent needs. When the children of Israel had no water, they complained. When they had no food, they complained. Since water was not supplied supernaturally like the food was, it served as a constant source of testing the spiritual growth of the children of Israel. But the manna should have been a constant reminder of *Yahweh's* care for them, particularly on the sixth and seventh days of the week.

A common complaint among Christians today is, in effect, "This Christian life is hard. Why doesn't God hear my prayers and rescue me from this situation. If He really loved me, He wouldn't have let this happen to me." In fact, this is often heard from those who have not followed God's guidance and have gotten themselves in to a mess which they then want God to get them out of. These comments and the underlying attitudes are clearly indicative of a passive relationship with God. That's not to say that these Christians aren't saved, don't pray regularly, or even read their Bibles regularly. Many of them do, but their focus is on getting God's help rather than knowing God better. They want to receive but they don't want to give. Even if we have a passive relationship with God, in His treatment of the complaining Israelites we should derive comfort. After all, *Yahweh* could have just eliminated the complainers. But, instead, He took care of their needs, not because they asked nicely, but because He is a loving and merciful God!

We all need to learn the difference between wants and needs. Paul reminded the Philippians that God is the supplier of needs:

And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.
(*Philippians 4:19*)

Notice that Paul says nothing about wants. And he exhorted the Corinthian believers:

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. (*2 Corinthians 9:6-8*)

But, doesn't God want to give us good things? In fact, He does. When teaching them about prayer, Jesus said this to His disciples:

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your

children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!
(Matthew 7:7-11)

Notice that Jesus didn't say that God will make everything easy for you. He said that we need to ask in order to receive (that was "ask," not complain). He also didn't say that whatever you want or even whatever you need you will find. He said that we have to seek in order to find. We need to put effort into our relationship. He didn't say that every door of opportunity will immediately be open to you. He said you have to knock. And, elsewhere He didn't say that you only have to knock once. He taught that we have to be persistent. That implies continual effort and it means not giving up.

Jesus seems to be saying that the golden rule is not only the basis of how we should interact with our fellow man, but how we should interact with God himself! Is this how you imagine your relationship with Him? In order to get a better understanding of what Jesus is specifically focusing on, however, we need to read this particular teaching in the words of Luke:

What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"
(Luke 11:11-13)

So, we see that this is a specific teaching about salvation and receiving the Holy Spirit. But it is also a lesson about how our Heavenly Father wants us to behave around Him. He wants us to ask Him when we have a need and He will supply all our needs. But He's also teaching us that if we are generous to others, if we treat others with love and respect, if we show God our love and respect by listening to Him and following His leading (in faith), then He will not only provide all our needs, but some of the wants we didn't even know we had. That is evidence of an active faith. Here's what David said in the Psalms:

Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. (Psalms 37:4-5)

Is God your delight? Do you surround yourself with the things (and people) of God? Do you spend each day in constant communication with Him? If you do, then David tells us here that He will give you the desires of your heart. There is a dual meaning to this expression. First of all, if you delight yourself in God, He will place within your heart the proper desires to have. Then, he will satisfy those desires. David also instructs us that if we commit to doing things God's way, if we listen to His still small voice and follow His leading and trust that He will guide us each step of the way, then He will bring it to pass. He will not only give us the proper desires, He will satisfy those desires, He will lead us in the paths of righteousness, and He will do all the work of getting us there. That's an active faith! But ... we have to start out by turning over control of our life to Him and seeking His direction every step of the way. We have to have an active relationship with God.

So, the next time you're inclined to complain to God about the way things are turning out, do two things. First, ask yourself if your current predicament is due to God's leading or your own selfish actions. If it's your own, confess it and then ask God for help. He may get you out of it the slow way, but He will get you out for sure. However, if your predicament is due to following God's leading, think of the children of Israel and put your **complete** trust in Him! He knows what He's doing and He loves you.

That's what an active relationship is all about. It's actively developing your relationship with God by listening, believing, and doing as He tells you to. It's really easier than you think. But in order to get there, you have to give up the reins and recognize who really reigns in your life.

Let's Pray