

Introduction: Every person complains. Some people complain more than others, but all people complain from time-to-time. Humanly speaking, this makes sense because incompetence is everywhere. Even the most competent people make mistakes, and even the most compassionate of people can be indifferent when stressed or tired. *** As often happens to pastors preparing to preach a passage, I was guilty of inordinate complaining this week. *** It is IN-appropriate when God's people who have experienced His amazing grace through His faithfulness, and who know His strong life-transforming LOVE, allow the common failures of people or the 'thorns and thistles' of our environment brought on by the initial rebellion against God to drive them to despair so they complain against The God who has promised to always provide for them (Genesis 3; Isaiah 41:8-16; Psalm 37). *** Throughout the Gospels Jesus challenges 'the people' (Psalm 33:12; 72:1-5; 89:15-21; 95:6-7 ...) to trust God in everything as evidence of having a good and giving heart (e.g. Mark 10:29-30; John 16:33). *** And several passages in the New Testament prohibit followers of Jesus from complaining because it makes them UN-Christ-like (Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Peter 4:9; 1 Corinthians 10:10). *** Some of these passages point us back to the Israelites who, when they were hungry, forgot the eleven miracles by which God delivered them from hard service in Egypt SO they grumbled against Him in ingratitude.

I. Forty five days after praising their God for delivering them from Egypt, the sons of Israel complain against Him.
(*Exodus 16:1-8*)

A. Some one hundred ninety miles south of where they crossed the Red Sea they murmur against Moses and Aaron.
(*Exodus 16:1-3*)

1. Then the congregation of Israel journeyed from Elim to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they went out from Egypt. (*Verse 1*)

Slow progress: It took forty five days to travel the one hundred ninety miles from the Red Sea to the wilderness of Sin (thorns). This is only four miles a day. They were slowed by many children and animals, and they had limited provisions. Elim means palms and Sinai means thorny.

2. Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. (*Verse 2*)

Murmur: Grumble and complain are synonyms of murmur. The word carries all these meanings and is typical of human nature.

3. Then the sons of Israel said to them, would that we had surely died in the hand of Yahweh in the land of Egypt when we sat by the pots of flesh and ate bread to the full, because you have brought us out to this wilderness to kill all this assembly in hunger. (*Verse 3*)

Content-reasoning: They assume they will die so they express the desire Yahweh would have taken them to Himself where they were rather than to die there. They are distorting reality in irrationality.

B. Then Yahweh tells Moses He will rain bread from heaven for the people; and, Moses tells the people. (*Exodus 16:4-8*)

1. Then Yahweh said to Moses, Behold! I am raining bread for you from heaven; and the people will go out and gather the daily portion, that I will prove them if they will walk in My Torah, or not. (*Verse 4*)

Rain bread: With a poetic phrase, Yahweh declares that He will provide bread from heaven for His people, every day.

Gather daily: And, His people will go out to gather the bread every day.

Test-prove: He says He is testing them whether they will choose to live by His instruction, or not. He has yet to speak all His instruction, but He will soon do so to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20-31).

2. And it was on the sixth day when they prepared what they will bring in, it will be twice what they gather day-by-day.
(*Verse 5*)

Day six: On the sixth day God will provide twice as much bread so all His people can rest on the seventh day.

3. Then Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel: (At) evening you all know that Yahweh brought you out of Egypt, and (in) morning you have seen The Glory of Yahweh in that He heard your murmurings against Yahweh; and, what (are) we that you murmur against us? (*Verses 6-7*)

Glory: In just forty five days they have forgotten The Glory of God as He showed them His judgment on Egypt in ten plagues and the dividing of the Red Sea. So, they will see His Glory again.

Grumble: Although they grumbled and murmured to Moses and Aaron, the reality is they were complaining against God! This is not unusual, but is due to their human nature.

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4. Then Moses said, when Yahweh gives you flesh to eat in the evening and in the morning bread to the full, because He has heard the murmurings which you are murmuring against Him, what are we; your murmurings are not against us, but against Yahweh. (*Verse 8*)

Meat evening: As His first gracious act, in spite of their complaining, God will give them meat to eat that evening.

Bread morning: And, He will double down the following morning by graciously giving them their daily bread.

Complain: What grace! They deserve extreme discipline for their over the top complaining. The apostle Paul said that because of His goodness, God leads his people to repentance (Romans 2:4). He does this even though **People complain**.

II. When Aaron spoke to the congregation The Glory of God appeared in a cloud to Moses; and, the next morning bread from Yahweh was on the ground. (*Exodus 16:9-16 & John 6:51*)

A. The Glory of Yahweh appeared and He spoke: I have heard the murmurings – at twilight you will eat meat and in the morning you will be filled with bread. (*Exodus 16:9-12*)

1. Then Moses said to Aaron: Thou must say to the congregation of Israel, 'You all must come near before Yahweh because He has heard your murmurings'. (*Verse 9*)

Aaron: Aaron is Moses' spokesman because Moses is slow of tongue (Exodus 4:10).

Heard: Yahweh spoke to Moses to say He has heard the grumbling complaining of all His people.

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2. Then, as Aaron spoke to the congregation of the sons of Israel and they looked toward the wilderness:

Behold! The Glory of Yahweh appeared in the cloud. (*Verse 10*)

Aaron spoke: Aaron was speaking for Yahweh as Moses was hearing from Him.

Glory cloud: God often appears in a cloud. He was already leading them by a pillar of a cloud in the day and fire at night (Exodus 13:21-22). And He appeared in a cloud to the 'inner three' when His Son, The Savior was transfigured (Matthew 17:1-5). Now He shows His Glory in the cloud of His Presence.

Application: We need to grow deeper IN Jesus, The Savior, accepting the sharing of His Cross to fully share in His Glory when He comes. Until then, He will provide for us IN His Glory.

God provides in His Glory

3. Then Yahweh said to Moses: I have heard the murmurings of the sons of Israel, thou must say to them, 'At twilight, you all will eat flesh and in the morning you all will be filled (with) bread and you all will have known that I (am) Yahweh, your God'. (*Verses 11-12*)

To Moses: Yahweh always speaks to Moses first. He wants His people to know He will graciously give them both creature flesh and bread.

Grumble: Once again, He is responding to what He has heard of their grumbling complaining against Him. No matter how much God does for people, it is all too common that **People complain**.

Knowledge: But, after He graciously provides for their needs and fully satisfies their hunger, they will know Him because they experienced Him being their Covenant God. Jesus also prayed that His disciples would all know His Father (John 17:1-3).

- B. Quails came in the evening and in the morning small round flakes on the ground, bread Yahweh had given them – foreshadowing Jesus, the Living Bread. (*Exodus 16:13-18; & John 6:51*)

1. Then it was, in the evening quails came up and covered the camp and in the morning, dew laying round about the camp. (*Verse 13*)

Quails: So, first Yahweh fed them with the flesh of birds. (See later judgment Numbers 11:31-34)

Layer of dew: After they had slept through the night, they found a strange dew had settled on the ground of their wilderness camp.

2. And when the dew had gone up, behold! on the face of the wilderness a thin being flaking (thing), thin as white hair like frost on the ground; and, when the Israelites saw it they said, each one to his brother, 'What (is)it?' because they did not know what it (was); then Moses said to them, 'It (is) the bread which Yahweh has given to you all to eat'. (*Verses 14-15*)

Flakes: The flakes were like the frost that appears on ground vegetation when the air temperature falls to freezing overnight as it often does in a desert.

What is it: In their ignorance they asked each other, *mahn-hu'*, translated: what it?

Bread given: Moses answered their question by telling them it was bread provided from heaven by their Covenant God.

John 6:51: In our Gospel passage we heard Jesus say emphatically that He 'is The Living Bread which had come down from heaven (and) if any man may eat of this Bread, he will live into eternity; and, The Bread then which I will emphatically give is My flesh being on behalf of the life of the world'. By this He means that His death for our sins will give life to all who will receive it in faith.

Application: We all need to grow deeper in our knowing of The Savior, to accept the sharing of His Cross to fully share in His Glory when He comes again. (Galatians 6:14 – KJV, RSV)

3. This (is) the thing Yahweh has commanded. 'You all must gather of it every man to what he (can) eat, an *omer* (about two quarts) apiece according to the number of souls, each of whom (is) in his tent. (*Verse 16*)

Gathering guidelines: Two quarts of bread is enough to be the daily bread people need.

4. And then the sons of Israel did so, and they gathered more and less, and when they measured: He had no excess (having gathered) much, and (he) few (having) had no lack'. (*Verses 17-18*)

Application: So, we must pray for grace to always remember and be strengthened by THE Truth that God always provides all we need SO we will be less prone to complain.

Conclusion: Forty five days after the Israelites praised God for miraculously bringing them through the Red Sea on dry ground, they continually complained to Him about their hunger and wanted to turn back to serve the Egyptians. Then, Yahweh chastised them through Moses and Aaron, and miraculously and graciously provided them with daily rations of bread every morning. Fifteen hundred years later Jesus came as THE Living Bread from heaven; but still **People complain**.