

## OK Lord, What Now?

Delivered July 26, 2008

Opening Hymn: #608 Faith Is The Victory

Scripture Reading: Exodus 16:4-8

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.

And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt:

And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what [are] we, that ye murmur against us?

And Moses said, [This shall be], when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what [are] we? your murmurings [are] not against us, but against the LORD.

God is love. Amen? And God takes care of His people. God guided the Israelites through the wilderness by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Does God still guide His people today? Sure He does. We may not have a cloud or a pillar of fire, but yet we are confident that He is guiding His people today. Amen?

The Israelites had many good reasons to trust God by this time. He had led them out of Egypt and the shores were strewn with the bodies of their enemies. God had promised to be their God and to lead them to a good land. All they had to do was to trust Him that He would provide for them. Because he WOULD provide for them and He WOULD fight their battles for them.

["But for three days, as they journeyed, they could find no water. The supply which they had taken with them was exhausted. There was nothing](#)

to quench their burning thirst. Moses, who was familiar with this region, knew what the others did not, that at Marah, the nearest station where springs were to be found, the water was unfit for use. I'm sure he felt a little anxious as he watched the guiding cloud. With a sinking heart he heard them shout: "Water! water!" Men, women, and children dashed up to it, when, all of a sudden, they cried out in anguish—because the water was bitter."PP

So all of a sudden, they have no water. Now it's one thing to have no water, but they had no water for three days. How would you feel in a situation like that? Can you imagine going three days without water? In a desert? Would you start to get mad at God? Would you be complaining to those around you? It seems the natural thing to do, doesn't it? And then the guiding cloud rests over Marah, where the water was unfit to drink. Yes, God led them there. After three days without water. There must be a cause for this problem. Why not blame Moses, the leader? Some churches blame their pastor for their churches problems. And I know that not all pastors are perfect, but who REALLY makes up the church? You do, and I do. You are the church; I am the church. Well this is what the Israelites did. They blamed their leader, Moses. How quickly they forgot that the cloud had been guiding Moses as well as them. The blaming game started way back in the Garden of Eden. That is Satan's playground - blaming. Adam blamed Eve; Eve blamed the snake; and the snake blamed God. Isn't that just what the devil wanted? To put all the blame back on God. And nobody would take responsibility for their own actions. Everyone is perfect in their own eyes.

In his grief at their distress Moses did what they had forgotten to do; he cried earnestly to God for help. "And the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet."

From Marah the people journeyed to Elim, where they found "twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees."

After several days, they journeyed on, and their supply of food began to run low. And of course, they started to murmur and complain again.

Even the rulers and elders of the people joined in complaining against the leaders of God's appointment: "Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, 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."PP

Well, they finally got their water, but now they were hungry. Have you ever stopped to realize how constantly dependant upon God we are at every breathing moment of our lives? But for their hunger, they blamed Moses again, saying, "YOU brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. But rather than retaliate, Moses consulted God. That's what we all ought to do when we have a problem. Do you think that God doesn't care for you? Jesus said, **Mt 6:29** "Are <sup>R362</sup> not two sparrows sold for a cent? <sup>F223</sup> And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. **30** "But the <sup>R363</sup> very hairs of your head are all numbered. **31** "So do not fear; you <sup>R364</sup> are more valuable than many sparrows."

Do you fear for the future? Do you fear for your churches future? Well let me assure you, you don't need to. God is in control.

Each one of us faces a great test as we pass through this life, just as Adam and Eve were tested in the Garden, just as the Israelites were tested in the wilderness. And the question is, do we trust God? When things do not seem to be going our way, will we blame God and each other or will we trust Him and turn to Him, knowing that He will provide? Have you stopped to think lately, "Although I do not understand His method, God IS guiding us and God IS providing for us." You see, what we need to do is pray and move forward in faith. God takes care of His people. Does God work through imperfect people? You better believe it. Was Moses perfect? No. The people sure gave Him a hard time too. They made terrible accusations against him. At one point, God was so angry with the Israelites that He was going to annihilate them and make of Moses a great nation. But Moses pleaded with God to spare them and He did. This may come as a shock to you, but none of us are perfect (except Jesus, of course). Yes, some of us are less perfect than others. But God has made provision for all of us. Even your most despised enemies. Some of you may be surprised to see them passing through the gates of Heaven before you. We can't expect to pass straight into Heaven being critical and unkind to our own brothers and sisters. **1 Jn 4:20** **If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, <sup>F12</sup> that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we have not seen? 21** **And God himself has commanded that we must love not only him but our Christian brothers and sisters, too.**

"[Jesus] was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, **never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul.**" (Desire of Ages-The First Evangelists chapter)

We are not to be thoughtless or careless in speech, hurting one another by unkind words. . . .(In Heavenly Places, p. 182)

But why did God allow the Israelites to run low on food? So they would turn to Him. You might think it is such a wonder that they didn't seek Him immediately when they had difficulties, especially after He had delivered them so miraculously. But aren't we the same way? We know that God has led us in the past, and yet we often get frustrated and forget to turn to Him in our difficulties.

At Marah, the promise was given to Israel through Moses, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee." Ex 15:26 He had promised that if they would obey His commandments, no disease should come upon them, and it was sinful unbelief on their part to anticipate that they or their children might die for hunger.PP

God often brings us through difficulties in order to perfect our characters and fit us for Heaven. God had brought them out of Egypt miraculously, and had led them by a cloud, and they were still not ready to trust in Him.

As it says in the great book Patriarchs and Prophets:

"They forgot their bitter service in Egypt.

They forgot the goodness and power of God displayed in their behalf in their deliverance from bondage.

They forgot how their children had been spared when the destroying angel slew all the first-born of Egypt.

They forgot the grand exhibition of divine power at the Red Sea.

They forgot that while they had crossed safely in the path that had been opened for them, the armies of their enemies, attempting to follow them, had been overwhelmed by the waters of the sea.

Yea, they forgot.

Ellen White once said, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except that we forget how God has led us in the past." Let us not forget. We must remember how God has led us – it helps us trust Him for the future.

They saw and felt only their present inconveniences and trials; and instead

of saying, "God has done great things for us; whereas we were slaves, He is making of us a great nation," they talked of the hardness of the way, and wondered when their weary pilgrimage would end."PP

[Do we well to be thus unbelieving? Why should we be ungrateful and distrustful? Jesus is our friend; all heaven is interested in our welfare; and our anxiety and fear grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

The Lord has not said that we would not have problems, but Jesus did say, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Lay off the yoke of anxiety and worldly care that you have placed on your own neck, and "take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Matthew 11:28, 29. We may find rest and peace in God, casting all our care upon Him; for He careth for us. See 1 Peter 5:7.]

[Says the apostle Paul, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." Hebrews 3:12. In view of all that God has wrought for us, our faith should be strong, active, and enduring. Instead of murmuring and complaining, the language of our hearts should be, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." Psalm 103:1, 2.]

Did God provide for the Israelites? Yes. What did He say to Moses? "I will rain bread from heaven for you." And He sent the manna.

I'd like to tell you a story about a man by the name of **GEORGE MULLER, WHO WAS AN INCREDIBLE EXAMPLE OF FAITH.** And ran an orphanage.

One time, George Muller and the kids in his orphanage did not have any food. It came to be supertime, and Muller said, "Let's set the table." The children said, "But we don't have any food!" He said, "God will provide. Let's set the table." So they set the table and sat down to eat. Then they had the blessing. As soon as they finished, there was a knock at the door. They went to the door and a food delivery truck was there. They said, "We had a surplus of food and we just felt impressed to stop here and see if you could use it."

And God provided for the Israelites. He sent the manna. That's what the people called it anyway. "Manna" means "what is it?"

In the morning there lay upon the surface of the ground "a small round thing, as small as the hoarfrost." "It was like coriander seed, white." The people called it "manna." Moses said, "This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat." The people gathered the manna, and found that there was an abundant supply for all. They "ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it." Numbers 11:8. "And the taste of it was like wafers made with honey." They were directed to gather daily an omer for every person; and they were not to leave of it until the morning.

If they tried to gather extra, it would be rotten the next day. But on the sixth day of every week, the people were to gather twice as much so that they would have some for the Sabbath. On Fridays, it WOULD keep until the next day, and on the Sabbath, it would not come. By the way, do you think it mattered what day they kept? As we have just seen, that was critical, wasn't it? Friday is called the Day of Preparation. And we can take an example from this and make sure we have everything ready for the Sabbath so that we can avoid any unnecessary work. Amen?

And did you notice that the Sabbath was already in effect before the law was given at Sinai? The people knew that God had laws. Yes, God meant for them to keep the Sabbath and He meant for them to keep the right day too.

And when some of the people went out on the Sabbath to gather manna, the Lord asked, "How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws?"

Week after week, year after year, for forty years, the people were reminded of God's loving care and reminded of the Sabbath by this miraculous provision. Do you suppose, after say four or five years of this miracle, that a person in the camp would go to bed at night saying, "Oh, I wonder where we're going to get food tomorrow?" "Do you think the manna will come?" They had God's promise, and they were as secure from want as if surrounded by fields of waving grain on the fertile plains of Canaan. PP]

What a perfect lesson that manna was, don't you think? And the fact that it wouldn't keep over each day meant that they had to trust God to provide every day, day after day. And guess what else the manna represents. That's right. Jesus.

[The manna, falling from heaven for the sustenance of Israel, was a type

of Him who came from God to give life to the world. Said Jesus, "I am that Bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven. . . . If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:48-51. And among the promises of blessing to God's people in the future life it is written, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna." Revelation 2:17.]

After leaving that area, they again ran out of water. Yes, they had the cloud leading them day-by-day. Yes, the manna was still coming day after day. Perhaps they were beginning to take these things for granted. Again they got mad at Moses. They said, "Give us water that we may drink!" Moses tried to direct them to seek the Lord. He said,

"Why chide ye with me?" he said; "wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?" They cried in anger, "Wherefore is this, that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?"

They actually accused him of wanting to kill them and their children in order to enrich himself with their possessions. In a fit of rage, they were about to stone him.

[In distress Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do unto this people?" He was directed to take the elders of Israel and the rod wherewith he had wrought wonders in Egypt, and to go on before the people. And the Lord said unto him, "Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink." He obeyed, and the waters burst forth in a living stream that abundantly supplied the encampment.

What an amazing display of the mercy of God! Rather than destroy those wicked people, He kept giving them another chance.

[In their thirst the people had tempted God, saying, "Is the Lord among us, or not?"--"If God has brought us here, why does He not give us water as well as bread?" The unbelief thus manifested was criminal, and Moses feared that the judgments of God would rest upon them.PP]

I hope you never find yourself saying that. Instead we should say, "I know

God is among us, and I know He will provide for all our needs. I have no doubt." Anything beyond that is sin and greatly displeases God.

[And he called the name of the place Massah, "temptation," and Meribah, "chiding," as a memorial of their sin.]

Did Israel go unpunished? No.

[A new danger now threatened them. Because of their murmuring against Him, the Lord suffered them to be attacked by their enemies. The Amalekites, a fierce, warlike tribe inhabiting that region, came out against them and smote those who, faint and weary, had fallen into the rear.PP]

Moses and Aaron and Hur were stationed on a hill overlooking the battlefield. With arms outstretched toward heaven, and holding the rod of God in his right hand, Moses prayed for the success of the armies of Israel.

They soon noticed that as long as Moses had his hands raised, they were winning the battle, but when he got tired and lowered them, the enemy would start winning. So Aaron and Hur helped him keep his hands up until sundown and the enemy was defeated.

What does that tell us? That we ought to support those that are doing the Lord's work. Yes, we ought to support the pastor. We cannot be victorious if we don't.

This reminds me of a something I read recently about honeybees. Honeybees are very loyal to their queen. They go wherever the queen goes and do whatever is needed to make sure their leader is healthy and happy, and they'll work hard to help the queen do her part for the hive. Her main job is to lay eggs so the colony will grow; everyone else really works to feed the larvae and help the queen.

It wouldn't work very well at all if the other bees ignored or even hurt the queen, would it? In fact, it would lead to an unhealthy queen and could even destroy the entire colony!

In the same way, it's not very good for God's workers to be disrespectful or critical of their leaders – which can mean your parents, pastor, and teachers (Exodus 20:12). If you are making their life difficult, it's harder for them to do their jobs, which includes protecting, sheltering, and feeding you!



So I'd like to make a suggestion: Try to be sweet like a bee. In fact, if you're unhappy with someone who has authority over you, instead of saying mean things about them, do like the bees and serve that person even better. If you feel they are treating you unfairly, pray for them instead of rebelling against them. God has placed leaders where they are for a reason – to serve Him and to help you. Remember that when Moses' friends helped him hold up his arms during the battle, the whole nation gained a victory. We would do well to do the same for those who lead us.

By the way, did you know that most honeybees spend almost all of their time feeding other bees, rather than themselves? In fact, not only are they always ready to feed another bee, they'll even feed bees from another colony! Can you think of a spiritual application for that?

And you'll never find a bee saying, "Oh, I'd like to get some nectar, but that flower has too many thorns. No, they look right past the thorns and go straight to the flower. Instead of focusing on the negative, they're always looking for that which is sweet.

Back to the story line. Aaron and Hur are busy holding up Moses' hands, and the battle is being won. What else does the story tell us? God holds your destiny in His hands. As long as you let go your hold on Him, and trust in your own power, you are weak. You may think that you have complete control over your life. But how strange it was that whenever they would raise up Moses arms, they would start to prevail in the battle. Raising Moses arms was an acknowledgement of God being in control. The two events seemed so unrelated, but God really was in control of the battle and He really is in control of your life and mine. Pastor Doug Batchelor tells the story of how he used to be a thief when he was young. And one day, he stole something worth (let's say) \$1.78. I think it was a package of Bisquick or something like that. Later that day, he noticed that someone had used up all of his Tang orange drink mix. When he looked at the lid on the empty container, he noticed the sticker said \$1.78 and he said, "Man! Crime doesn't pay!" There must be a God that is in control. And he decided not to steal after that.

divine strength is to be combined with human effort. Moses did not believe that God would overcome their foes while Israel remained inactive.

What were the people doing while Moses was raising his hands and pleading with God? They were fighting hard and applying all their effort! They were not taking a back seat. Imagine if half of them decided to sit it out on a hillside. They wouldn't stand a chance! And neither do we if we don't do our part.

After the defeat of the Amalekites, as Jethro, the father in law of Moses remained in the camp, he [soon saw how heavy were the burdens that rested upon Moses.PP\]](#)

Moses had to maintain order and discipline among that vast multitude of people and he also dealt with the controversies that arose among them. So Jethro said,...

To maintain order and discipline among that vast, ignorant, and untrained multitude was indeed a stupendous task. Moses was their recognized leader and magistrate, and not only the general interests and duties of the people, but the controversies that arose among them, were referred to him. He had permitted this, for it gave him an opportunity to instruct them; as he said, "I do make them know the statutes of God, and His laws." But Jethro remonstrated against this, saying, "[This thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone.](#)" "[Thou wilt surely wear away,](#)" and he counseled Moses to appoint proper persons as rulers of thousands, and others as rulers of hundreds, and others of tens. They should be "[able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.](#)" These were to judge in all matters of minor consequence, while the most difficult and important cases should still be brought before Moses, who was to be to the people, said Jethro, "[to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.](#)" This counsel was accepted, and it not only brought relief to Moses, but resulted in establishing more perfect order among the people.PP

This is a rebuke to anyone who loves to take a back seat and let the pastor or the elders do all the work of the church. Moses could not do it all himself and neither can the pastor. That's why we have deacons, and administrators, and Sabbath school teachers. Make sure you know what your role is in the church, or how you can help. Or ask the pastor how you can help. And we always need people to do outreach, and to support the outreach program.

From there, the people continued on their journey, following the cloudy

pillar.

You know, the Israelites thought to themselves many times, "There goes the cloud, off in the wrong direction." Surely the Lord knows that this is not the way to Canaan! Do we think the same way sometimes? We may think to ourselves, "Where is God taking our church? Doesn't He know that this is not what we need right now?" You may say, "Lord, what we need right now is a nice new \$2 million church. Why don't you just plop that right down in our lap right about now thank you very much." Does God know what we need? Of course He does! God knows our needs and He IS leading us exactly where He wants us to go. Our job is to pray and move forward in faith. We pray for His guidance and we trust that He will lead us moving forward in faith. Remember, God led them to Marah, where the water was bitter. It didn't seem like the right place to go, but God made the water sweet.

The cloud took them across plains, steep mountains, rocky areas, and places where there seemed to be no way to pass through. But as they would approach, they could see openings waiting for them in the path as if put there just for them. All they had to do was trust God's guidance and His providence as the manna fell nightly upon the camp. They finally arrived at Sinai, which was to be their home for nearly a year.

Is God guiding His church today? Of course He is.

Patriarchs and Prophets tells us that, "The path where God leads the way may lie through the desert or the sea, but it is a safe path."

[The mighty God of Israel is our God. In Him we may trust, and if we obey His requirements He will work for us in as signal a manner as He did for His ancient people. Everyone who seeks to follow the path of duty will at times be assailed by doubt and unbelief. The way will sometimes be so barred by obstacles, apparently insurmountable, as to dishearten those who will yield to discouragement; but God is saying to such, Go forward. Do your duty at any cost. The difficulties that seem so formidable, that fill your soul with dread, will vanish as you move forward in the path of obedience, humbly trusting in God.PP]

PP- Patriarchs and Prophets

Closing Hymn: #319 Lord, I Want To Be A Christian