



Soul Food

September 21, 2025

Exodus 16:1-21

Clint Pressley

16 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. ² And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, ³ 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."

⁴ 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. ⁵ On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily." ⁶ 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, ⁷ 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?" ⁸ 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."

⁹ 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.'" ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ And the LORD said to Moses, ¹² "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.'"

¹³ In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. ¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ When the people 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, "It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶ 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.'" ¹⁷ And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning." ²⁰ 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. ²¹ Morning by morning they gathered it, each as much as he could eat; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.

(Pastor Prays)

One day, the Pharisees said to Jesus, look, our fathers ate manna in the wilderness. As it is written, he gave them bread from heaven to eat. Jesus then said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. Jesus said, for the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. They said to him, well, give us some of this bread. And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life." Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever drinks from me or believes in me shall never thirst. On the front end of the message, it's good for you to hear that it's Christ and Christ alone. It is Jesus, his perfect life in your place, his death on the cross for our sins, and his resurrection for our hope. It is Christ and Christ alone that will satisfy the hunger in your heart. When Jesus said the dialogue that I just gave you, when he said that back in John 6, he was referring to this passage. And

today, I'd like us to just study it. I want us to learn from this story and find out how this food is for us. Because if you're like me, your soul needs nourishment, it needs strengthening, it needs cleansing, and it needs healing. My prayer is that the Lord would use this to open your ears to hear and your heart to believe that God is good and will not let you down. In fact, let's make that the theme of the sermon. Here it comes. If somebody asks you, what did that preacher preach about? Here it is, right here.

The Gospel of God Will Not Let You Down

Let's go back to this passage. There are 21 verses. I am just going to walk through and point out a couple of things in the passage. It will be like a bit of a study, and then we'll go back and make some application. That's our intent.

Right here in Exodus chapter 16. We see them on the move. They set out from a place called Elim, and all the congregation of Israel went to a wilderness called Sin. Now you see that and think, yeah, they're going into the wilderness called sin - no wonder they sin in the wilderness. That wilderness called Sin is not sin like you and I understand it. See that capital S, it is just a name. When we go to the beach, we pass through a place called Tate's Hell. It's an unfortunate name. It's not really hell, it's just the name of the place. This is not really the wilderness of sin as you and I know it. It's just the name of where they're headed.

The Bible has a timestamp right there. You see that in verse one. It tells us exactly when they were going. It is the 15th day of the second month. We know that they've been walking for about 30 days, about a month. They go into the wilderness, and in verse two, they are a month in, and look at them. It's the whole congregation. Eight times in this passage is the word grumble.

It's everybody, not just a few. Now, if you're a Southern Baptist preacher or any kind of preacher and you've got a congregation, from time to time, somebody will come to you and say, "Preacher, some people are saying." I have never found out who the some people are, but some people are saying. That's not what's going on here. This is not some people. This is everybody. It is overwhelmingly discouraging. It's the whole congregation, and all of them are grumbling. What has happened is that a few with a bad attitude have spread that attitude throughout the entire congregation. It spreads. Look, if you have a bad attitude and you're a complainer, that is going to spread. Remember the terrible days of living in COVID? We didn't know what in the world was going on. And they told us all to wear these masks and stand 6 feet apart because it was spreading so quickly. Well, a bad attitude spreads worse than COVID did. Finally, it spread through the whole congregation.

Look what they're saying. They're starting to make up things. They're just dreaming stuff up. This is what happens when you get so negative: you start just exaggerating. Look at the exaggerations. The people of Israel are saying it would have been better if we had died. The Lord should have killed us in Egypt rather than bringing us out into this wilderness. He's going to kill this whole assembly with hunger. And look what they do. They start thinking about the good old days. Now, some of you have been here the whole time. We've been going through the book of Exodus. Do you remember how bad they were whining about how terrible it was in slavery? Everything is terrible. Now they're looking back at being slaves in Egypt, and look what they're saying here in verse three. We wish we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt. There we sat by the meat pots. There were no meat pots, but they are saying we sat by the meat pots. We ate bread to the full. We ate until we couldn't eat anymore. Those Egyptians were so nice to us. It is a complete exaggeration.

This was convicting to me because I sometimes want to exaggerate the positive. This happens a lot when I'm trying to prepare a message. I guess because I'm such a sinner. Anyway, I was under conviction because I was going to say that yesterday's men's breakfast was so great, and we had almost 500 people here. But it was 430. It wasn't quite 500. It's 430. We're 70 off. But I was going to tell you, this is Baptist talk, preacher talk, that we had 500 men here yesterday. You know what exaggeration is? An exaggeration is an absolute lie. It's a lie. Be careful when you look back over the days, and you think how it used to be so good. Especially when you're walking through something now and you remember nostalgically what was behind you. That's what the people are doing. They are fabricating. Not only that, they're impugning the character of Moses and Aaron. You see how they say it in verse three, *you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger*. You remember last time they were going to Marah, they were looking for water. They were starving for some water. It was so bad because of all the livestock they had. Remember, when they came out of Egypt? When they came out of Egypt, they plundered the Egyptians. They came out with their livestock. They have all these animals, all the meat they could eat. They're in the desert. And now they're saying, hey, you're trying to starve us to death. Now look around you, everybody. You have all these goats. You have maybe some cows. I hope some cows. I don't want to have to eat a goat. But they have goats and cows. Who knows what they have? They've got plenty of meat. They can have steaks. They can have butter. They can have cheese. They can have nice warm milk. They're exaggerating their condition. And what's remarkable to me is verse four. Look how the Lord responds to them. *4 Then the Lord said to Moses*. Okay, if you were reading this for the first time and you came across this little phrase: they've been grumbling and grumbling, complaining, and the Lord said to Moses - Here's how I'd fill in the blank - The Lord said to Moses, I am getting ready to strike those people down. The Lord said to Moses, those people are driving me

crazy. I'm wiping them off the face of the earth. But look at the rest of the sentence. The Lord said to Moses, I'm going to rain. The last time you saw that little phrase, the Lord said to Moses, I'm going to rain, was over in Exodus 9. God sent down these giant hailstones and killed everything in sight. But here, what does the Lord rain on his people? The Lord said to Moses, I am going to rain bread. I'm going to feed them. I don't know what to do with this other than to see the grace of God displayed here. Look how patient. That's going to be one of my points: how patient God is with us.

There's the description. Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to test them in verse four. I'm going to test them with provision. Sometimes we are tested by the difficulties we walk through. Sometimes we are tested when things are going really well to see if we will be faithful. So we have a description in verses four, five, and six. This is how it's going to happen. Verse five tells us that you need to make sure that you make provision for worship for the Sabbath. On the sixth day, I'll make it so that you'll have plenty to eat on the Sabbath day. It's a good reminder to prepare for worship. There's a principle right there in verse five. So then the description of verses six and seven is you're going to gather food from the Lord. The Lord is going to show up in such a way that you will see the glory of the Lord.

And then you can hear the frustration in verse seven. Moses is saying, why are you mad at me? I'm just the messenger here. The Lord talks to me, I tell Aaron, he tells you. We didn't come up with this. It's like me saying, hey, I didn't write this Bible. I'm just telling you what it says. That's sort of what Moses is doing. Don't shoot the messenger right there in verse seven.

So then there's a description of how God will do it all. And Moses said, in verse eight, the Lord gives you evening meat to eat and in the morning, bread

to the full, because the Lord has heard your grumbling against Him. Your grumbling is not against us, but against the Lord. You see it, don't you? When you complain about someone else or to someone else, you ultimately are complaining about the Lord. I'm just getting that right here. This is what he says here. So then it unfolds. Look at the provision of verses ten, eleven, and twelve. Verse ten says, we see the holiness of God, his glory. The glory of God is God's holiness on display. You see that in verses nine and ten. They look out in the wilderness and they see the power of God. The Lord can't be seen, but his holiness can be seen. That's verse ten.

Then, in verses eleven through fifteen, look at the Lord's provision there. Verse twelve, I've heard the grumbling of the people of Israel. 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. And then the quail came up. It's the first time we've seen this. This was a special day. They're getting meat and bread. So quail came up and then the bread fell. Verse 13, *In the evening quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning dew lay around the camp. 14 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. 15 When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?"* That's what manna means. Manna is a Hebrew word that means "what is it?" This is how creative these people were. Let's name it the question: What is it? What should we call it? Just eat that. *For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread that the Lord has given you to eat.*

Down in verse 31, you find out that it tastes so good. It tastes like honey. So for 40 years, God will provide manna that tastes like honey. Every morning for 40 years, they got up in the morning and had a honey bun for breakfast. That sounds like the perfect breakfast to me. You imagine every morning, you just look out of the tent, you pull the curtain back, and the hot donuts now sign is

on. So think about it now. Here's this massive, collectible, permanent, daily food source that God is providing for millions of people every single day for 40 years. I mean, it took a monumental effort yesterday to cook all that food for the Men's Breakfast. We had sausage and bacon and biscuits and eggs. We had grits. Look, it's fancy here. We even had shrimp. It was a monumental effort to make that happen. All the deacons walk through to make sure everybody's in the line, and clean up afterward. And that was just to feed 400. That was just to feed 500 men. Do you see the power of God to provide every single day? So he does that. It was pretty good.

From verse 11 through 16, you have God's good provision. And then you'll notice in verse 17, the people did everything. They gathered; some more, some less. When they measured it, it was an omer. An omer is about two liters, by the way. So think about how much that is. And whoever gathered much had nothing left over. And whoever gathered little had no lack. Each one of them gathered as much as he could eat. So there you have, day by day, the Lord doing that. Jesus reaches back, and in John 6, he talks about being the bread of life. I think about when Jesus was giving us the Lord's prayer to teach us how to pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, what, our daily bread.

Or when you were a kid, did you learn that prayer we did at my house? It was real traditional for me growing up with my mom and dad. And so dad's off at work, and my mom would get home before him, and she would start supper. And my dad had a car that was loud, so we could hear him coming down the road. And so by then, all the ice was in the glasses. And when mom heard his car, she would pour the tea. Dad would come in, put his briefcase down, sit at the table, and say, all right, let's say the blessing. And the blessing went like

this. God is great, God is good. Let us thank him for our food. By his kindness, we are fed. Give us now our daily bread.

Every single day, God was providing—every single day. So the story goes on, and you find out that you can't hoard. Look down at verse 20. Don't try to hoard all your riches. What is it going to do? It's just going to rot and stink. And then verse 21 tells us, it was morning by morning, day by day. God's mercy is new every single day. They had enough to eat. And when the sun got hot, it was gone, but with the promise that it would come again tomorrow.

You see, the gospel of God will not let you down. So that's how you go through and read it and think about what does this mean. So now let's run back through and make a couple of brief applications. You can find other ways to apply this. Let me just suggest four. Here's the first one, number one.

God's people are not grateful enough

We are not thankful enough to God. Where I get that from is the whole passage, from verse 1 to verse 21. There is a description; eight times we are told that the people grumbled. They complained. I talked about this last week. I wouldn't have preached so hard on it last week had I known all the grumbling that was here. To complain is the very opposite of being thankful to God. So how do we combat that? Let's think through some things to be thankful for. Man, this whole congregation, we can be thankful for the gospel of Jesus. We can be thankful for the perfect life of Jesus in our place, his active obedience, actively obeying in our place, every command of God. And then Him actively dying in our place on the cross. That's Christianity. Jesus in our place. He takes our place. And dying on the cross, the wrath of God was poured out on Him. Is God a wrathful God? Yes, but all of that is poured out

on Jesus at the cross. What do you get? You get mercy and love and acceptance and forgiveness if you look to Him. That's something to be thankful for. Man, grace is something to be thankful for. If you came out of a works-based religion or even if you came out of the Catholic Church, and you start to grasp grace, there's something to be thankful for.

You know what else you ought to be thankful for? You ought to be thankful for timing. God's timing. God's timing is not the way I would time things out. I got into my car this morning, cranked it up, and headed down the road. I live in Mint Hill, pulled up to Lebanon Road, which is a small two-lane road. I was getting ready to pull out, and a giant 18-wheeler, it's probably 6:30 am, what's he doing here? That giant 18-wheeler comes barreling down the road, and so I'm glad I didn't, but I almost pulled out in front of it. Well, I wasn't worried about that. I was worried about having to get behind it. I got behind it, and I'm trying to get to church, and he's rolling 25 miles an hour. I don't know if he's lost. And my first response is, I'm frustrated. But then I remembered I had to preach to y'all, so I started working through some of those feelings. So what about the timing? Sometimes God just keeps us from things. You don't know what he's doing. You don't know why it didn't happen in your timing. Let's be thankful for his.

Or what if you have work you hate, but you have that job, and it is making it so you can live. Let's be thankful. You have a home, be thankful for that. Survival, some of you, man, some of you, God has brought you through some things. You've survived it by God's grace. Maybe you got saved late in life, be thankful God gave you another chance. Let's say after you got saved, you blew it completely. Be thankful God gave you another chance. Be thankful for long life. Some of you have lived a pretty good while. When you get near the end of life, and the body breaks down a bit, there's a tendency to long back

for those good old days. Don't do that. Be thankful. Be thankful that Christ is our intercessor.

We see the people grumbling. How did God receive that? His mercy there takes their grumbling and turns it into prayer. Some of us here, we don't know what to pray. Their groanings are too deep for words. Look, when you complain, complaining distorts reality. Complaining exaggerates what the truth is. If you're not careful, you overplay the problem. And to do so, it is an accusation and an assault on God's character.

You know what gratitude is? Gratitude is a confession. I trust you, God. Gratitude is a confession of loving God. Gratitude in your tragedy and your hurt and frustration is you saying, I rely on you. So how do we do it? How do we start practicing? Let's say you have trouble with gratitude. There are a couple of things you can do. One, you can start with the obvious things. Look around you. Think about just what's in front of you. You can thank God for that. Then get specific. You can start with small stuff. My wife is in Mississippi right now, and when she goes, I'm a little bit at a loss. And so, if she has time before she goes, she makes about 10 hamburger patties. She cooked them all up for me, put them in a bag, and put them in the refrigerator. So if I want something to eat, I go in there, pull them out, put them on the plate, and put them in the microwave. At lunchtime, I'll use one, put a piece of cheese, put it in there. Sometimes at supper, if I feel extravagant, I'll put two with cheese in there. I'll pull them out and put some BBQ sauce beside it. And I am thankful for Dot's Pretzels. Last night, as I poured them out, I was thinking about this sermon. I poured them out and it was the honey mustard kind. I'm thankful. Be thankful for the small things. Look, get strategic about what you can be thankful for. Think about some of the issues and the problems and the struggles that God has walked you through that you wish you were not in. Be thankful for that. Get spiritual with your thanksgiving. Be thankful for God and

how he has saved you and forgiven you and cleansed you and healed you. Be thankful for his word. Be thankful for the church that God has given us. Be thankful for good doctrine. Try it this week. Try to start practicing being thankful to God. God's people are not thankful enough. I think you can get that from this passage. Let me give you another thing I think you'll pull out of this passage, number two.

God's mercy is astounding

The fact that God has saved and forgiven us is astounding. Look at verses 3 and 4. Look how patient God is. They are grumbling, and he is feeding them. They grumble. God gives. Think about how patient God has been with you. Some of you have lived long enough that you have had some high-handed sins of rebellion. Think about how patient God has been with you. I picked up a book the other day about 15 theologians. It's just a little picture of their biographies. And one of them is on John Owen. He's the major theologian that England produced. He's brilliant, and he's really hard to read. But John Owen and his first wife had 11 children, and not one of them lived to adulthood. And he was a pastor of a church and the major thinker in England. And he wrote that even in that tragedy, he trusts that God is a good father and knows what is best for his children at that time.

Why has God been so patient with you? If you're not saved yet, you're not a Christian, God has spared you up to this point so you could hear that God loves you and will save you today. Maybe some of you are here; you just came out of some high-handed sinfulness, and God has preserved your life. Or maybe you're a Christian, you're a member of this church, and you are living in some sort of quiet, secret rebellion that no one knows about, and God has spared you. He's been patient with you so that you might come to the point

of repentance. Why has God not struck you down? Why have you survived up to this point? Peter tells us why. In 2 Peter 3:9, Peter tells us that the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. His mercy and his patience are astounding, but they're not forever. So come to Him. Come to Jesus today. Turn from your sin. Come to Jesus. You don't have to know or understand everything. Just understand that God is good and holy, you are a sinner, and that Jesus will save you. Put your faith in what Christ has done for you. Just come and repent and believe that Jesus did that for you. Why? Because the gospel of God will not, will not, let you down. So God's people need to be more thankful, and God's mercy is astounding. Let me give you a third that you might pull out of here.

God's provision never ends

He just keeps providing and providing. You see it in verses 4 and 5. You see it again in verses 11-15. It is the actual act of God raining down bread. God would give them enough to get through each day. And every new day, his mercies would be new. He would give you enough for each day, and if you tried to stack it all up, you see down in verses 20 and 21, it's going to spoil. It's rotten. He's providing for you. And that has a spiritual application as well. Spiritually, Christ, who is the true bread, has come to satisfy. In His life, death, and resurrection, when we take the Lord's Supper, we are just reminding ourselves that our souls are nourished by the sacrifice of Jesus. We have been given the Word of God. You have a Bible. That Bible is there not just to read it; that Bible is there to feed our souls. You've been given the church. If you've got a community group and you're in it, and you've walked through something terrible, you know those men and women come around you with fellowship that strengthens your heart. Yesterday, when I walked out of here after the

men's breakfast, men were standing around in groups talking to one another. God has given us the church. God has given you a call. A lot of you have a call of ministry. One of the things that happens when you grow in Christ, the way your soul is fed, is that you follow God's call for your life in ministry. God's provision never ends. Let me give you one last one and we'll call it here, number four.

God's glory is the aim

You see it especially in verse 7, *and in the morning you shall see the glory of the LORD*. Why does God do this? Go down to verse 10. *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*. The Lord can't be seen, but His glory can. In Exodus 24, we learn that the glory of God is like a consuming fire. Near the end of his life, in Exodus 33, Moses will say, Lord, please show me your glory. The Psalmist writes in Psalm 19, "The heavens declare the glory of God." In Isaiah chapter 6, when King Uzziah died and Isaiah has the vision, he sees the seraphim flying in heaven and they say, holy, holy, holy is the Lord. The whole earth is filled with his glory. We are told in John 1 that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen his glory, that glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. And to every one of us, every one of you, Paul says, every one of us who hope in Christ, so we praise his glory.

Look, brothers and sisters, it's the gospel of God, and the gospel of God will not let you down. This whole thing is going to God's glory. How will you do it? How will you, beginning this week, starting today, how will you live for his glory? I'll tell you how. You're going to be grateful to God for everything that comes your way. You're going to run to his mercy. Maybe for the first time,

you will come and put your faith in Jesus. You're going to receive God's good provision each day in your life. His mercies are new every single day. You might even write it down. I'm going to live my life for God's glory. It is my hope that you live your life for the glory of God.

(Pastor prays)