

Introduction

Good Morning. If you have your Bible, I want to invite you to go ahead and get that out with me at this time. Open it up to the Book of Exodus, chapter 16. We're continuing on through the Book of Exodus this summer. We won't be able to finish it, of course, but we're going to get to about the one-half point... just not quite... I'm so excited about that. We'll pick that up another time. God is doing some great things, speaking to us through this. I really look forward to what it is that He has to say to us today. If you don't have a Bible with you, that's alright. You can use your Smart Phone or your tablet... or if you don't have any of that, then... I'm really surprised! If you don't have any of that, that's okay... then you can follow along on the screens here, to either side. Let's pray together and then we will jump in this morning.

"Father, so many people are here today... so many people... and each one of them is needing to hear from You in a specific way. Lord, of my own ability, I could never be able to communicate the truth that You want each of these people to hear in one sermon. Thank you, Lord, that you give Your Word and the Holy Spirit. Father, You are going to be able to speak to every single person in this room, precisely in the place that they need to hear, because You are supernatural. You are not bound by the rules that I am. So, Father, I pray simply for my own obedience and faithfulness right now... God, that I would faithfully render the text open and that I would show how Your Scripture teaches us. God, I pray then that You would speak, Your Holy Spirit, through Your Word, and affect the heart and the mind of each person in this place. Father, for each person who is here, I ask that they would hear precisely what they need, and God I pray that each of us would be changed. Lord, today, begin a revival in our church. Awaken us. Be used for Your might and Your power. God, we pray this in Your Name, the Name of Jesus Christ, the One who saves us. Amen."

Exodus chapter 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. 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."*

"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.'" I am going to read that again: "...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.' 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.

"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. 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.

"In the evening, quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning, dew lay around the camp. 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 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.'" 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. 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.

"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 which 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 the 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 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.

"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.)"

Have you ever had a mountaintop spiritual experience? You went off to youth camp or a retreat, or maybe you were in a revival meeting and you heard someone preach a powerful message or maybe simply by a manifestation of the Holy Spirit through the study of God's Holy Word, the Holy Spirit awakened in you a flame, a desire to know Jesus Christ. If you've walked with the Lord for very long, you've had a mountaintop experience. For whatever reason, God gives those. The Israelites had just had a mountaintop experience. They were delivered from Pharaoh's army through the middle of the sea; God sent a strong east wind overnight, a water wall to their right... a water wall to their left. They were able to go right through the middle on dry ground. Then the water came and crushed all of Pharaoh's army. That was Exodus chapter 14. Exodus 15... they were so delighted at God's power, they broke into rapturous praise.

It is recorded there as Moses' Song. You can go back and read Exodus chapter 15. Starting in verse 1, you read, *"I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea."* Listen to verse 2: *"The Lord is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation."* You just sing and you praise at what God has done. These incredible works in your life. Mountaintop experiences are a part of the Christian experience.

But right after the mountaintop, God carried the people into the wilderness. This actually is pretty common in Scripture as well. Jesus is baptized by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in the form of a dove rests on His shoulder, and then the Spirit leads Him into the wilderness to be tempted. Paul sees Jesus on the road to Damascus, and then he is taken into Arabia for three years where, apparently, he learns and is taught. There are times in Scripture, just like with the Israelites, where people have a very present moment with the Lord, and then things aren't as clear. It's funny because in those mountaintop experiences, you think, "I could never forget God's power. Look how palpable His presence is." Then you go into the wilderness.

Charles Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher from London in the 1800s, said that the wilderness following the mountaintop experience is so prevalent that he began to refer to it as "Wilderness University." It's where God sends us to be taught how to depend upon Him. You see, that's what is taking place in Exodus chapter 16. The Israelites had seen the power of God, and now the Lord knows, "You have seen My power, but will you trust Me? Will you trust Me?" That's Wilderness University... the place where God's power is made manifest in different ways, so that we might come to a place where we trust entirely upon God's provision. That's really what we're going to talk about today because Exodus 16 is all about God's provision. How God takes care of His people in the midst of the wilderness. I think there's some pretty particular things for us to learn here today.

What we learn about The Lord's Provision:

1. It is Gracious (v. 2)

First of all, let's take a look at Exodus, chapter 16, verse 2: *"...the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron."* They grumbled. Now, does this bother you at all? I mean, they just walked through the Red Sea! They sang a song. They probably even did a dance. They were excited about that, and then they get out there and it's been a little while, and they start saying, "You know, it was better to be a slave in Egypt; at least we had meat pots. It was good there." They begin to trick themselves to believe that going back into slavery would be better. And we read this and we go, "Those faithless Israelites." I mean, you have never done that, right? You have never had God appear to you in a palpable, very real fashion, and then a month later you forget. I mean, I know that I have. Why does that matter? ...Because it's important for us to recognize that God provides manna from heaven at the precise moment that the Israelites are grumbling against the Lord. I mean, I don't know about you but what would you do if you were God and you heard the Israelites grumbling? I would kind of say, "Well, you know, I don't know... I kind of remember getting you through the Red Sea on dry ground, so maybe I'll just smite a few of you right now." Boom, Boom, Boom! I just start knocking them down. Right? That would be kind of be my methodology in that particular moment. But that's not what the Lord does. In their weakest place when they grumble against the name of the Lord, He actually provides manna from heaven. And that's a reminder: God's provision is always gracious. Listen to me; I don't care how good you are; I don't care how closely you are walking with the Lord... you will have days when you will become a functional atheist. You will forget about God's provision, you will forget about God's power, and you will grumble against God. And on those days, when you feel tempted to grumble against God, guess what? God is still

graciously providing for you anyway. Why? Because it doesn't depend on how good you are. I need to know that because I have some really bad days. You see, God's provision is something that continues.

In salvation, there's a word that theologians use sometimes called "justification." "Justification" is the moment when, on the cross, a transaction took place. Sin was exchanged for righteousness, and whenever you come to faith in Christ, a great cosmic exchange takes place. You, the sinner, filthy as rags is exchanged for the righteousness of Christ. We use the word "imputed." That means, "placed upon." The righteousness, the holiness, the perfection of Christ is imputed upon you, and it happens (claps) in an instant. Just like that. That's justification. It is complete. It is total and it is immediate. That's justification. That is kind of like going through the Red Sea. It happened just like that.

But then there is a process after that that is also mentioned in the Scripture. It's called "sanctification." What's "sanctification"? "Sanctification" is a lifetime of working and living in the grace that God has bestowed upon you through the cross. "Sanctification" is walking and working out your justification, day-in and day-out. So in the same way that the Israelites walked through the Red Sea and into the wilderness and then had to begin to figure out what it meant to trust God, so too you and I have been justified in Jesus Christ, once we have received His sacrifice on the cross, but then now we too must learn what it means to trust Him in this particular place.

Paul refers to this regularly. For instance, in the Book of Philippians, Philippians 1:6" *"I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."* He began a good work; He will complete a good work. Guess what? There's a time in between where things are being worked out. Philippians 2:12: *"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."* There is a time when you are working things out.

I don't know about you, but I am oftentimes quite forgetful about the way that God has provided for me. If I'm not careful, I will begin to feel quite entitled about the things that God has given me, and I will begin to believe that I simply deserve them because I am, after all, Steve Bezner... so therefore God should give me these things. But grace means that God recognizes, "Hey, you're Steve Bezner; you shouldn't get anything, but I'm going to give it to you anyway. That's the beauty of the gracious provision of God.

You see, forgetfulness is a problem for those of us that walk with the Lord day-in and day-out. That's why I think that God likens the covenant relationship between the Church and Jesus Christ to marriage. You know, whenever I got married... proposed to my wife... I knew that she was going to say "Yes." I mean, we had talked about it. Whenever we looked at each other, we kind of had "goo-goo" eyes and that kind of stuff. We talked to each other in kind of really sweet ways, and when I pulled out that ring and I said, "Would you marry me?"... I knew what she was going to say. Do you know what's funny though? In the last 15-plus years, I bet that there have been days that if I would have pulled out that ring and said, "Would you marry me again today?" ...she might say "No." (Laughter) "You know... yeah... I don't know about all that." Why does that matter? Well, you see, the beautiful thing about marriage is that once I tricked her, she's stuck with me. Right? (Laughter) She can't leave.

That's the nature of a covenant relationship. Listen to me. That's why covenant relationships matter in faith in Jesus Christ because even though you are faithless and forgetful and fickle, God still provides anyway. Even if on that day, if God was measuring you by the right standard, He would say, "You don't really deserve the gifts that I'm going to give you today. I'm going to give them to you anyway because I'm God and I'm gracious. You see, the supernatural provision that comes from the hand of God, we begin to trick

ourselves into believing, "God, I deserve to be provided for." And His message is actually, "No; you don't deserve to be provided for; however, I will do it anyway because I am a gracious and loving and good God." And that leads us to say, "Amen."

2. For The Day (v. 19)

So then, once the Israelites... the complainers... are provided for, what does He tell them about His provision? This is what He says: "Now, I'm going to give you just enough for the day." Just enough for the day. He sends in quail in the evening. Apparently these quail are so easy to gather that you can just go over and grab them. I don't know what was wrong with them. I guess maybe they were just packed in there so tightly they couldn't move about, but they were able to gather up the quail and eat meat in the evening. They wake up in the morning, and there is dew on the ground; except it's not dew... it's a flake. It looks like coriander seed. It tastes like wafers made with honey. It's called "manna." "Manna" comes from the phrase where the Israelites said, "What is this?" That's why they named it "What is this?..." Whatchamacallit... Whatever... This is the stuff we're going to eat" And the Lord says, "You gather it up and you eat it. This is what it is that I'm going to give you." You see, God gives them just enough for the day. I think it's interesting, first of all, that God provides in a way that they would never expect. Right? I mean, if you were given time to think about it... how are we going to provide? You would go, "I've got a great idea. Let's put bread on the ground. That would be awesome!"

You know what? We live in a world... How many of y'all are germaphobes? Let's just have confession time right now. Let's see your hands. My wife would have died in the wilderness. I'm just telling you right now. She would have seen that bread on the ground, and she would have said, "Well... I'm out." (Laughter) That would have been it. Some of you say, "I'm not going to pick that up." But that's what they did. They went out and gathered it. Why does that matter? ...Because God's gracious provision which is enough for the day, often appears in ways that you do not expect. You don't expect it to be done in that particular way but He does it anyway. Now listen to this. Then He says, "But this will just be enough for today." He says, "Go ahead and gather an omer" ...about two liters. So they go out, they gather it, they put it in their omer jar, and they bring it back in. "Now this is the thing. It's going to spoil by the morning, so you might as well use all of it." You can see some of them thinking, "I mean... I'm going to try and save a little bit. I like to have a fresh hot manna cake first thing in the morning. I don't want to go out and get that. I'm just going to go into my supply and then I'm going to make it." What happens? They wake up... maggots. It's gone bad.

Now initially you might think, "This seems cruel." God is actually quite consistent in His character. Matthew, chapter 6... Jesus is teaching His disciples how to pray. He says, "Give us this day our daily bread." What do you think that Jesus was referring to whenever He said "daily bread"? "Give us this day our manna from heaven. Lord, today when I wake up, I may not know how You will provide. I'm sick. I don't know how You'll help me get through this day. I don't have enough money to pay my bills. I don't know how I'm going to be able to do it. Lord, I feel like my relationships are frayed at the edges. I don't know how I'm going to be able to do it, but God today when I wake up, I will trust, believing that You will somehow give me the grace that I need to get through today." Give us this day our daily bread. Give us today our daily manna... our provision from heaven that comes in unexpected ways.

In 1 Kings, chapter 17, Elijah meets a widow... the widow of Zarephath. Whenever Elijah sees her, there's a great drought going on. He goes up to her and he says, "Could I please have a cake of bread?" She says, "Actually, I'm sorry; I've only got enough flour and enough oil back at my house for us to make one cake.

I'm going to make that cake, my son and I are going to eat it, and then we are going to die." She was a very happy lady, the widow of Zarephath. (Laughter) Elijah says, "Actually, you won't." He goes back with her to her house, and he says, "The Lord will not allow your flour or your oil to run out until the drought ends." Every day... can you picture the widow?... she goes into the kitchen. She lifts the jar on the flour and there's a little bit there. She dumps it out. It's empty. She puts it down. She opens the jar of oil. There's a little bit there. She pours it out. She makes the cake. She thinks it's over. The next morning she goes, she opens the lid, and there's a little more. Our God is quite consistent... Our God is quite consistent. He gives us just enough to get through the day.

Now, I don't know about you, but sometimes I try to cheat on that. Even though the Scripture says clearly in Lamentations 3:23 "...His mercies are new every morning," and even though the psalmist says in Psalm 30 that "Joy comes in the morning," I can't make it through another day, but then you wake up and God has given you that new grace again. Sometimes I kind of try to cheat on the whole manna thing. I try to store it up. Has anybody else ever gone through this? I mean, you start to get in good financial place, a little bit of a rhythm. You start kind of saving some stuff, and then you start having conversations, "Hey, we could take this trip. We could buy this for the house. We could do this; we could do that." I think sometimes that the Lord is over there going, "Well, there's Steve; not depending on Me anymore. I guess I'm going to have to break his washing machine now." "Boom." I mean, just like that... it's over. (Laughter) Whenever He does that, He likes to really make sure that I come in tight, so He also says, "You know what? I think his tires need to go out, and let's knock out the air conditioner while we're at it." Alright; Boom. Then you say (pleading) "Lord, I need provision!" And He says, "That's what I'm talking about. I want you right here." Am I the only one who ever goes through that or is that just me? (Laughter) Alright; two other sinners out there. That's good. Alright. That's the way that sometimes I feel the Lord works. He gives you what you need when you need it. I don't know about you, but perhaps my greatest flaw is that I want God to give me exactly what I want, exactly when I want it. In fact, I would like it if He would just give it all to me right up front so I can just go ahead and plan everything out right now. Do you know what's funny about that? Whenever parents do that with kids, we call it spoiling them. But we say, "But we're adults, God; we can handle it." (Laughter) No you can't because He wants you right there. You see, the reason that God provides graciously just enough for the day is actually for a reason. We read this verse twice... verse 4: It says, "Behold, I'm about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day..." "Why did He do that?" "...that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not." God provides for you day-by-day so that you can be tested to see if you will depend upon Him.

3. To Shepherd Us (v. 29)

In fact, whenever He gets over here to the Sabbath, verse 29... Look at this: "See! The Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore, on the sixth day, He gives you bread for two days." The Lord uses His daily provision to teach a point. Moses says, "Okay, it's the sixth day. Today you go out and you gather two omer's worth, and you are going to use it on the seventh day, on the Sabbath day." Don't you know there were some people in the camp, they were like, "Everybody knows it goes bad overnight; it's not going to be good in the morning." They wake up in the morning, they pull back to cloth, they look inside the jar and it's still good. In fact, the Scripture says that some people didn't believe Moses, so they went out on the seventh day to gather some and there was nothing. The manna was not there. You see, I think that the Lord provides graciously enough for the day so that He can shepherd us to the place where He wants us to be. God provides in the way that He provides to teach you. He wants to teach you to walk in the particular place that He wants you to walk, when He wants you to walk there. He wants to teach you about the Sabbath. You're going to take a day, and you're not going to work.

I read in U.S. News and World Report this week that Houston has been named one of the top ten hardest working cities in the United States. I have no idea how they figure that kind of stuff out. I mean... it's probably fake, but we'll use it right now. Okay? So you're hard workers; way to go everybody! Do you know what's funny about being hardworking? It's that if you're not careful, sometimes your hard work will actually bring you to a place where you begin to rely and worship your own ability to provide. Right? What's funny about that is that I think that's the whole purpose of the Sabbath. You're going to take a day not to work so that way you have to train yourself to believe God provides even when I feel like He won't.

I don't know about you, but I struggle with Sabbath sometimes. You're like "Wow... You're a preacher. Aren't you supposed to be able to do that?" I know. Sometimes it's funny. I say, "I'm going to take today off." Email doesn't count though. Right? I mean, I can kind of mess with that a little bit. "Lord, I'm just going to kind of make some things happen." Now listen. This is not an argument for laziness. This is an argument against believing that my provision is what I need to make it through the day. What God is trying to say is, "I'm going to shepherd you; I'm going to train you." It's not just about money. God uses His provision to shepherd us to a place where we depend on Him, whatever it is that we need. If you're sick, God will shepherd you to a place where you depend upon Him for healing. If it's finances, then it will be finances. If you're in a place where you are in need for relationship help, or if you're in a place where you're in need for just extra emotional support...in all of those things, you are trained in the Lord... you are shepherded toward.

A couple of months ago, our men had a gathering... an outing at Top Golf. I went to that and after we were done hacking away at those golf balls, we had a devotional. Bob Kuhn, one of the men in our church, led that devotional. He said something that has been working on me ever since he said it. He talked about Elijah and he talked about how Elijah was feeling sorry for himself in the cave, and he said, "Lord, I'm the only one that hasn't given in to you." And the Lord said, "I'm going to show Myself to you." It says that a mighty wind went by, and the Lord was not in the mighty wind. Then a fire went by, and the Lord was not in the fire. A tornado went by and the Lord was not in the tornado. Then a still small voice came... and the Lord spoke in the still small voice, and Bob said something that really has been challenging me. Are you ready for this? He said, "Why does the Lord whisper?" He said, "The Lord whispers because you can only hear a whisper when you're right up close." You see, I don't know about you, but sometimes I begin believing that I can provide for myself or I can rest in my own provision, and what I really start to do is I kind of functionally begin to push God a little bit further away... not spending as much time in prayer... not spending as much time in the Word. I'm not really listening for what it is that God wants me to do, and I'm a little bit further away and a little bit further away, and God says, "Hey, the way that I talk is I whisper." Why does God whisper? You don't whisper to strangers. I mean... that would be creepy. Right? Think about that. You just kind of go up to people you don't know, (whispering), "Hey... how are you today?" I mean, you'd be arrested in five minutes flat, if you started doing that. (Laughter) But you whisper to people with whom you are intimate. That's something that people who love one another do. That's something that people who are close to one another do. The Lord says, "I'm not punishing you. I'm not hurting you. I'm training you. I'm shepherding you. I'm bringing you right here to this place. I want to draw you up close. I'm going to make you depend on My day-by-day-by-day-by-day provision so that (whispering) right here I can whisper and we can talk, and we can have a quiet together time." Because in that moment when God whispers that we hear. God wants to shepherd us, and He wants to train us to listen and to be close, and He does it so that He can say, "Will we indeed follow the law that He has given... not because the law saves us but because the law is a manifestation of being obedient to the grace that has been given to us?"

You see, whenever you reach the point that you realize that every breath that you draw in is a gift, then God has begun training you.

4. Towards Remembrance (v. 33)

You see, He is shepherding us for a purpose. If you look at the end of chapter 16, Moses tells Aaron, "Go get an entire jar, an entire omer of this manna, and I want you to bring it into the presence of the Lord, and we're just going to leave it there." What is the purpose? Let's read this, in verse 33: *"... Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the Lord to be kept throughout your generations."* Why? Because the Lord wants to shepherd them to a particular place... the place where they will remember who God is. He wants them to remember the thing that He has done, that He has provided for them.

Over the years of being a pastor, I've had the opportunity to meet people who are very strong believers who also happen to be exceptionally wealthy. I mean, crazy successful business men and women who have made more money than I would ever imagine to make. Do you know what's funny? As I've talked to them and I've heard their stories... there might be an exception to this, I just haven't met them yet... but these people tell stories and, you know, every one of their stories has a similar plot point: There was a time financially where they were completely destitute and depending upon God to provide. They were flat. They had nothing. I think it's interesting because those then who come and God provides in this incredible abundant way in their life... those who are believers say the same thing over and over: "Yeah, God has really blessed this, but I know this: It's not mine; it's His anyway." I think, "Wow. How do you get like that?" I'm going to tell you how you get like that.

In athletics there's a thing called muscle memory. If you're trying to learn how to swing a golf club, they're going to have you swing it the same way over and over and over until it's just automatic. If you're learning how to throw a baseball, they're going to have you throw it the same way over and over until your mechanics are automatic. You do the same thing in life, just not from an athletic perspective. Have you ever driven home from work and you don't even remember driving home? Hopefully you were awake. (Laughter) You've done that before, right? Or you're working on the keyboard and you don't even think about how to type anymore. Certain actions become so ingrained within our consciousness that we suddenly are able to give subconscious attention to them but no longer have to give conscious attention because muscle memory is in place. That's the same way that our spiritual lives work. God trains you over time to have a posture of gratefulness and remembrance so that therefore He doesn't have to keep bringing you back in. You see, I think that spiritual maturity with regard, let's say, to financial provision would be someone who is wealthy yet would say, quite openly, "Yes, I've been blessed abundantly, but none of it is mine, and the Lord could take it away." And, you know what? They wouldn't be bitter about it because they know that God has given and God can take away... because it's not theirs in the first place. And do you know what else? I would think that spiritual maturity for those who are not millionaires, people who would say, "I don't know how I'm going to pay my bills this month." Do you know what they would say? "I don't know how I'm going to make it, but I do know this: That my God will supply every need because He always has, and He's always right on time, so I don't have to stress because my God always takes care of me." You see, that's spiritual maturity on either side. If you have plenty or you have nothing, you know that in every circumstance you can still celebrate the provision of God. Well, why does that matter? It matters because God is shepherding you toward remembrance... that He wants you to remember and recognize that God always provides, but He does it to teach us to have the right heart posture.

You know, in John chapter 6, Jesus makes reference back to this incident in Exodus chapter 16. And in John 6:32, this is what He says: *"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."* He's talking about the manna. *"For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."* So, in other words, He says, "Hey, look; do you want to know what real manna is? I'm going to tell you what real manna is. Real manna is God sending someone to bring life to the world. And it says in verse 34: *"They said to Him, 'Sir, give us this bread always.'"* They wanted that. So Jesus says, in verse 35: *"I am the bread of life."* "I am God's manna that you wake up to every single morning, and I provide everything that you need. I am God's manna. I have given to you graciously; even though you do not deserve it, God takes care of you through Me anyway. I am God's manna, shepherding you toward a place of recognizing and walking in God's grace by upending the traditional ways that you thought about the law but now understanding that the law is made complete in grace. I am God's manna, shepherding you toward remembrance of a holy, powerful, awesome, loving God." What happens then is that Jesus completes His ministry by breaking bread among His disciples and saying, "Do this in remembrance of Me." God is shepherding us through His provision to drive us to a place where He doesn't have to hammer it into our hard heads over and over again. He wants us to hear the whisper and to say, "I have taken care of everything you need and His Name is Jesus Christ. (Clapping)

So here's the thing. If you are saying today, "I don't know how I'm going to make it through the day because of financial strain. I don't know how I'm going to make it through the day because of health strain. I don't know how I'm going to make it through the day because of family strain." I can't answer that for you because God works in a hundred different ways, depending on your situation and your time. But I can tell you this: God's provision has been made complete in Jesus Christ. This is the truth: Paul has said it, that "God..." (his God, my God, your God) "...will supply all of your needs in the glorious riches of Jesus Christ." In other words, everything that you need has been completed and given in Jesus.

How does God do that? I don't know. It's a mystery; I can't understand it. It's supernatural. It's like quail that sit there and let you grab them. It's like waking up in the morning and finding flaky bread on the ground. I don't know how God will decide to do it. I just know that He does it in Jesus Christ. Colossians chapter 1 declares that all of creation was made by Him, in Him, through Him, and is held together in His Name.

Listen to me today. If you say, "God has never taken care of me in that way." Guess what? He has; He gave you Christ. He gave you Himself. He gave you His Son. He gave you a relationship with Him. Do not forfeit the great, powerful, and beautiful gift of fellowship with Jesus Christ.

In the Book of II Corinthians, Paul is talking about going about these times when we feel like we need provision but we don't see it. In II Corinthians 4:17, he writes this: *"For this light momentary affliction..."* That is such a great phrase. "This light momentary affliction..." You regularly do not use the word "affliction" if it is light or momentary. Right? Affliction is typically quite severe in our minds. But Paul says, *"...for this light momentary affliction is preparing us..."* It's shepherding us... it's getting us ready... *"...for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison."* The manna in the desert was a precursor, a foreshadowing, of God's great gift in Jesus Christ, and Paul declares, every pain that you walk through in this day will one day be made right and will one day lead you to experience the culmination, the completion, the fulfillment, the full revelation of God's grace. It will be the weight of glory. I love that phrase, *"...the weight of glory."* You finally see who God is... you see His glory. Where have I read that? Oh yeah... back in Exodus. Flip back to Exodus 16, if you followed me over the John. In Exodus 16, before

God provided, what did He do? It said that He showed Himself to the people. It says in Exodus 16:10: *"...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 weight of glory. God showing you entirely who He is, in fullness and completion. And when you see it, Paul uses the word "weight" to describe it because once you see it, it weighs upon you. It transforms you. You can't hold it up. It's so big. It's so marvelous. It's so incredible. You say, "These light momentary afflictions mean nothing because one day I will be completed in the weight of glory."

So, Church, may we please walk day-by-day trusting that God has given us everything that we need and that God will continue to provide because it's in those moments of supernatural gracious shepherding, remembrance, that in that time God is preparing you, not just to make it to tomorrow... it's not just so that you can make it through another day... it is so that you can be prepared to one day experience the coming and the knowledge and the fullness of Jesus Christ. I don't know about you, but I want to experience the weight of glory, so I'll walk through these momentary... these light afflictions... so that one day I can declare, "I see Him... I see Him." So let us walk through these afflictions, and let us say "Yes" to the provision of God, knowing that He has perfected it in Jesus Christ. Amen... and amen. Let's pray.

"God, thank you for the way that You provide. Thank you for the way that it's always unexpected... it's bread on the ground, it's quail that just let you pick them up. It's right there. It's supernatural but it's unlike anything we've ever seen. God, I pray that today we would say 'Yes' to that sort of provision, that we would trust and we would let you shepherd us in the midst of Your provision. God, that we would stop trying to depend on our own ability, and we would just stay right by Your side so that You can whisper to us right here. 'Remember Me... Walk with Me... Sit with Me... Savor Me... Love Me.' Yes, Father; we say we want that. God, for any person who has been far from You, I pray that today they would draw You close and God that You would grab them and pull them next to You and say, 'Right now... right here. I want you to know Me and experience My provision.' God, I pray for any person who has never said 'Yes' to Jesus, that today they would say 'Yes' to Him... and God, that in every way, we would rest in You. Father, we pray this and we ask it in the Name of Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen."