

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY

Exodus 15:22-26

TEXT: *Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the LORD made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them. He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

The Fourth Petition: Give us this day our daily bread. Of the seven petitions that our Lord himself has taught us to pray, this is the one that deals with all our earthly needs. Yet I myself find that I pray this simple petition with such familiar haste that what our Lord Jesus would have us consider when we pray this petition is rarely considered.

When Martin Luther explained the meaning of this special request he correctly points out that God graciously gives daily bread even without our prayers: **God surely gives daily bread without our asking, even to all the wicked, but we pray in this petition that he would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.** This is based on Scripture. David writes: *The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.* Ps 145 Jesus himself declared: *He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.* Mt 5 But here is the rub: my own sinful nature expects SPECIAL TREATMENT because I am a Christian. It is my sinful nature that whines along with Jeremiah: *You are always righteous, O LORD, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease?* Jer 12 My Old Adam wants more than "daily bread" doesn't yours? I know that is does because Scripture reveals that the sinful nature of every human being is equally corrupt.

For this reason, God works on the hearts and in the lives of His chosen people to keep our eyes of faith looking to Him alone for all that we need in this life for both body and soul. Before us is an example from history that illustrates these truths and the purpose of praying this blessed Petition: GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD! I. This is how our Lord tests us; and, II. This is how our Lord strengthens our faith.

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the Desert of Shur. For three days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. (That is why the place is called Marah.) So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?" People are known to go without food for over a month, but after 7 days without water, the body begins to shut down and then soon dies. The Israelites saw this serious situation looming before them as they began their trek into the wilderness. But not to worry! Look! There's an oasis up ahead! Water! But when they arrived, thirsty and with little water left to survive, they find that the water there was not drinkable.

Here was a test. Would this people whom God had chosen to be the nation from which the promised Savior would be born continue to rejoice and praise his name, or would they break the First Commandment by grumbling and complaining about their situation?

They choose to break the very First Commandment that commands that we should always "fear, love and trust in God above all things." And it is interesting in how they do this. They do not shake their fists at God, for that would make them look like the heathen. Instead, they give God "the universal gesture of discontent" by grumbling against Moses: ***So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we to drink?"*** In this way they can still keep their pride as being the people of God by blaming Moses.

Add to the sin of grumbling, complaining and whining the sin of worry and anxiety, and you have the reason why God must give us "daily bread" and not an abundance that winning the state lottery seems to promise. If God were to give us all that our hearts desire, we would never have enough. And anyone who thinks that they would be content with all that the world has is already arrogant and self-confident. The Apostle Paul wrote about how God tests His people in his letter to the Philippians: ***I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*** Php 4 The operative word in this statement is this: ***I have learned to be content*** . . . This learning comes from God's testing Paul so that he finally reached that state of faith and trust that in whatever the circumstances he could declare: ***I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*** Php 4

When we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread..." we are actually praying that our Lord will test us daily in order that our faith, like Luther writes, will erupt in daily thanksgiving and praise for all His grace and goodness toward us. But to pass the test, we also must learn about God's grace through His Word. For without God's Word there is no power of God's Holy Spirit to do what God would accomplish through His special tests.

As the Israelites complained, God instructed Moses to throw a piece of wood into the water and immediately the miracle happened. Water for all! Then the Bible tells us WHY the waters of Marah were bitter: ***There the LORD made a decree and a law for them, and there he tested them. He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you.*** After Jesus was born, suffered, died and rose again from the dead, God revealed again who is His chosen nation of Israel: ***Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will... And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment*** ... Ep 1 As He told these ancient Israelites to pay close attention to His Word, so should all modern-day Israelites living today. We are ones to whom the Holy

Spirit has revealed the awesome grace of God in the forgiveness of sins that He won for us on the cross, sealed to us by His resurrection and by the water of baptism that has God's own pledge of this forgiveness, and even by feeding us His true body and blood for the on-going assurance that He is our God and each of us belong to Him and His body, the Church.

Since we are this people of God, we also will be tested to keep us in the saving faith. But like ancient Israel, His command to them is for our spiritual good: ***If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you.*** God does not need our prayers to know our situations in this life. He doesn't need us to tell Him that we are in pain or in sadness. He doesn't need us to advise Him of our financial burdens, our health burdens, or what ever brings us to tears. But He does not want His children ever to forget Him. So He tests us so that we exchange the temptations to whine and complain into opportunities to remember who it is that heals us and to pray to Him as dear His dear children.

If God would command us to pray, than we can be absolutely certain that He will answer us. Scripture says: ***God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?*** Nu 23 And if He would care enough for us that He would redeem us with the blood of His own Son, will not the tests of life that He uses to bring us to Himself in prayers and conversations not be those urgings of a loving Father?

None of us will get to heaven without our own personal stops at Marah. Marah means "bitter." That's why the place was called Marah. No one could drink the water. But it was a blessed place of God's testing, teaching them to trust Him and reminding them that He is their personal Savior and Redeemer. And so we who also are God's people will be tested because this same God and Savior knows us and loves us. Amen.