

## INTRODUCTION

Too much of the good things can be bad. Money is God's blessing. But too much wealth in an instant may not be a blessing. The problem is not with money, it is with our hearts. Many people buy lottery, despite a close to zero chance of hitting the jackpot. People are fooled by the false idea that they will never win if they do not purchase a ticket. The Bible clearly tells us that wishing for instant wealth is greed. Therefore, brothers and sisters, do not even think about buying lottery. Yes, you still need to go to work when you get up tomorrow morning. It is estimated that an average American spends \$200 on lottery tickets each year. Now you know where the prizes come from. Does the grand prize really bring people happiness? Not necessarily. According to one study in 2018, 70% of the big winners go bankrupt within five years of receiving the fortune. How do those people lose all the money they won? Jack Whittaker's story is an example of a sad ending. He was born into a very poor family. He worked hard all his life to build a successful construction company. On the Christmas morning of 2002, Whittaker woke up to perhaps the biggest gift of his life. He won the \$315 million Powerball jackpot. Whittaker had a good heart to help people. He gave away \$15 million to build two churches. If you ask me, I would not suggest any church to receive money that comes from people who waste on lottery. Problems started when everyone learned that Whittaker is a rich nice guy. They swarmed around him to ask for money wherever he went. People looked at him like a Santa Claus. Some of them even tried sneaky means to get a share of his fortune. Whittaker lost \$3 million just to resolve over 400 lawsuits filed against his company. Whittaker wanted to use the money to bless his family too. He bought four cars for his only grand-daughter. Unfortunately, this young lady became a target for some bad company. Later, she was hooked on drugs. In less than a year after Whittaker won the lottery, his grand-daughter was found dead. Whittaker began drinking heavily to console himself. As he looked back, Whittaker commented: "I think there is no control for greed... I wish I'd torn that ticket up." Whittaker believed the huge sum of money was more of a curse. Craving is a strong desire to get more of the things you want. Besides money, people may crave for success or fame. In Numbers chapter 11, the Israelites craved for meat. They were tired of the manna God provided for them. They wanted to go back to Egypt. As Christians, we have to watch out for the same sentiment. If we are discontented with God's blessings, we may think that it is better if we do not know Him! Rather, we have to trust that God always has the best intent for us.

## EXPLANATION

### 1. 錯誤的慾望 Bad Desire

The Israelites had a bad desire for different food. Let us hear their complaint again in **verses 5-6**:  
5 "We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost - also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. 6 But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!" The Israelites were unhappy when they compared the manna they now had to what they used to eat. The phrase that is translated "lost our appetite" in the NIV Bible literally means "hearts dried up" in Hebrew. It is a vivid description of the people's negative feeling. Was there anything wrong

with the manna? No, God gave His people a fresh supply every morning. It was always timely and always sufficient for everyone. If your kids are like mine, they will ask their mom by late afternoon about the dinner menu. Sometimes they may grumble: "Mom, not that again! You have better learn some new recipes." Sisters: the problem is not your cooking or the food. Your kids simply get tired of eating the same thing again. However, the issue with the Israelites was not just craving for different food. There was a deeper spiritual problem. Let us look at **verse 18**: "... The Lord heard you when you wailed, 'If only we had meat to eat! We were better off in Egypt!' ..." The real problem was that they did not like the situation they were in. They thought they had a better life in Egypt. They would rather exchange hard labor and no freedom for better food. How quickly they have forgotten God's saving grace! God pinpointed the core issue in **verse 20**: "... you have rejected the Lord, who is among you, and have wailed before him, saying, 'Why did we ever leave Egypt?'" They questioned God's plan for them. They did not want God to lead them. The Bible tells us that God used a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night to prove that He was always with His people. It had only been two years since they left Egypt. They should still remember God's mighty power - the Ten Plagues, the dividing of the Red sea, gushing of water from a rock and so on. God did everything for them. But now they grumbled that God should not have taken them out of Egypt. How ungrateful they were! This discontentment gene was passed down to their descendants. Many years later, the Israelites asked for a king. Samuel, their spiritual leader was upset. Listen to God's comment in **1 Samuel 8:7-8** - 7 And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. 8 As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you." Notice that God used the exodus from Egypt as a reference point. God was saying to Samuel: "Don't get mad. This bunch of rebels have been like that since day one. Nothing has changed." Samuel warned his people that their future king would be a dictator. He would draft their children to serve him and levy heavy taxes on them. Also, God would not answer them as they cried out for help when things turned sour. The Israelites insisted: "We don't care. Give us a king!" God is full of wisdom. He knew ahead of time what troubles His people would get into. The irony is, the most loving way for God to deal with His disobedient children is to give them what they want. The parents among us know this clearly. It is useless to warn your adventurous kids a thousand times not to do anything dangerous. You have to allow them to touch that hot stove and sharp knife, or fell off from a chair. Then they realize: "Ouch! That really hurts." But next time they may try something different. It is part of the growing process. To the Israelites, God was saying: "You want it? You got it!" When people do not want God to be their Master, they will look for an alternative. The Israelites reaped the consequence of their rebellion. But the sad thing was, they never learned despite one lesson after another. Aren't we all like that as God's children? I am one of them! How many times does God have to say to us "I told you so!" before we will obey Him? Discontentment will enter in when we doubt if God is treating us the best way. But the truth is, God has given us the best gifts and He will continue to care for our needs. Paul put it this way in **Romans 8:32** - He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Our Heavenly Father is not stingy to withhold the greatest blessing we can receive in this life, namely, Jesus Christ, His Son. Is there anything God is not willing to give us? The desire for more puts ourselves above God. We think that we deserve something better than what God provides for us. For example, why do I have to get stuck in this tedious job when I can get a better pay elsewhere? Why do I have to drive this rusty tin can when I can buy a brand-new car?

Why do I have to wear these old clothes while my friends always catch up on the latest fashion trend? The fact is, you do not need the fanciest and newest stuff to be content. What we truly need is more faith in God. We must believe that God loves us more than we can imagine. He knows our needs better than we do. If God does not give us certain thing, it may be because He knows we do not need it now. God's way is higher than ours and His plan is far better than ours. His timing is always perfect. We have to get our hearts right before we can be thankful to God, whether we have a lot or little. He is the ultimate source of all of our blessings.

## 2. 悲慘的結局 Sad Demise

The Israelites had a bad desire for more. The result was a sad demise. God would give His people more meat than they could handle. Read **verses 19-20**: 19 “You will not eat it for just one day, or two days, or five, ten or twenty days, 20 but for a whole month - until it comes out of your nostrils and you loathe it - because you have rejected the Lord...” The Israelites asked for meat because they despised God's leadership and provision. But when they had too much meat to eat, they would despise their food. Whether you are a fan of donut, fried chicken or buffet, you will find the food you love repulsive if you have to eat it meal after meal! Where did the meat come from? The Creator of the universe manifested His power over nature, just like He caused locusts, flies and frogs to infest Egypt. Look at **verse 31**: Now a wind went out from the Lord and drove quail in from the sea. It brought them down all around the camp to about three feet above the ground, as far as a day's walk in any direction. I find it interesting when the author says that the wind was “from the Lord.” Bible scholars told us that the quails are seasonal birds that migrate between Europe and West Asia to North Africa. God steered the direction of the wind to bring the quails. He used what was available locally to achieve His plan. Remember how Jesus fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish? A little boy contributed the meager food he had, then Jesus added His blessing and multiplied the portions. God can also change the course of history and work in people's mind to fulfill His purpose. Once a missionary had to submit a certain application in a foreign country where he served. He knew that he was missing some key documents to support his appeal. But he needed an approval urgently. Therefore, he prayed for God's intervention and he went ahead and gave it try anyway. The government official examined the stack of paper. He pointed out that some necessary documents were missing. The missionary explained that he did not have enough time to get those records. Then he prayed silently and waited for God's help. The clerk mumbled something to himself and wondered if he should approve the application. Then a colleague walked by and asked him something. After the distraction, the official did not think for a moment and put a stamp to accept the request. God worked in the circumstance to answer the prayer of the missionary. Back to the wilderness. The Israelites must be very excited to see so many birds. There came meat delivery! The quails were hovering in the air with a radius equivalent to one day's walking distance. Can you imagine how many birds there were? For sure you will avoid driving through that area! God's people immediately started bird hunting. **Verse 32** tells us how enthusiastic they were: All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. Then they spread them out all around the camp. They caught the birds non-stop for 48 hours! How much is ten homers? If we convert that to a liquid volume, it is at least 1,000 liters. That is a lot for just one person! The verse says people spread the birds out. At that time there is no refrigerator. It is possible that people cleaned and salted the quails after they killed them, then dried them under the sun to preserve the meat. It is like how people make

Chinese sausage, dried shrimp or salty fish. The Israelites were greedy. They were afraid that they did not have enough meat for later consumption. They were also worried the birds might not come again. They forgot the lesson they learned for storing extra manna overnight when God clearly told them not to do so. The manna turned bad the next morning. If we do not trust the Lord, we will take business into our own hands like the Israelites did. If you are concerned that you do not have enough money, you may volunteer to work overtime or look for a second job. Single people may hurry to get married if they believe that boy or that girl they meet is the remaining endangered species available. The question is whether or not we have the Lord in our plan. Do not get me wrong, without a doubt it is a Biblical teaching to plan for our future. One day you will retire and stop earning regular income. If you have children, they may pursue college education. There may also be emergency spending like air-conditioner failure or a major surgery. All that needs money. It is wise to make plans but it is a lack of faith to worry. If your anxiety is affecting your appetite and sleep, eventually your health will deteriorate. The cure is not to look for a better financial advisor but to commit your fear to the Lord. You pray to God: “Lord, I make preparation for the future. I cannot predict the stock market or the Social Security. But I trust that you will continue to provide for all of my needs.” Back to the story. Just when the Israelites thought that they now had a lasting supply of meat, God’s discipline came. Look at [verses 33-34](#) – 33 But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the Lord burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague. 34 Therefore the place was named Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had craved other food. Before the Israelites could enjoy a meat party, God cast His wrath toward them. The food they craved for became a means of God’s discipline. Some people perished. They remembered the incident by naming the place “Kibroth Hattaavah,” which means “graves of the craving.” Sin has its consequence. God taught His people a tough lesson. They moved on to the next stop. They still had a long way to go before they learned to obey God.

## CONCLUSION

We have to trust that God always has the best intent for us. The Israelites disliked the way God led them and they craved for something else. They put their focus on the comfort of the here and now, but forgot that they were heading toward Canaan. Ultimately, it is a trust issue. If the Israelites truly understood that it was God’s plan to lead them to Canaan, then they should have faith that God would take care of their needs. Today, God calls us to a life journey to walk with Him. Yes, there will be ongoing challenges. But difficulties should also be opportunities for us to know God. As Christians, we do not live for ourselves but we should live for God. You may have many goals you want to achieve. However, you have to clearly distinguish greed from ambition. A major difference between the two entities is whether or not God is in your planning. There is nothing wrong about pursuing a higher education, a better career or a bigger house. But you need to ask yourself if you are chasing after those dreams for your sake or for the glory of God. If your goal stops at enjoying a more comfortable life or even to brag about your accomplishment and your possession, then you have to watch out if greed has taken over your heart. It does not matter what role we play in the society or what social status we have. We should let God use us to achieve His purpose, rather than using God to achieve our purpose.