



**"No Cross,  
No Crown"**

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# The Cross and Crown

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I am fascinated by manna. Think about it: For forty years, wherever the Israelites set up camp during all their wandering through the desert, manna was there. It appeared every morning, when the dew melted, and any that was left on the ground evaporated when was high in the sky. Actually, if you remember the story, this didn't happen every morning. There was no manna on the Sabbath, because God had set aside that day as a day of rest. Instead, the manna that the Israelites had collected the day before (which ordinarily had a shelf-life of zero days!) miraculously stayed fresh for another day.

Eventually, Israel grew tired of manna and grumbled against God, telling him that they were so sick of it that they'd lost their appetite.

At what point did manna go from miracle to mundane to miserable? Keep in mind that it was never God's plan for the Israelites to subsist on manna for forty years; – had they obeyed him and taken Canaan when he first led them there, they would have been enjoying the fruit of the Promised Land for many years by that time, with manna a distant memory.

Still, despite their disobedience and rebellion against God, he continued to provide them with life-sustaining manna throughout all their years of wandering.

When I see Israel's response to God's grace, I'm prompted to examine myself. Have I gotten so used to God's miracles that I take them for granted – or, worse, complain about them? And do I mistake God's grace and provision for his stamp of approval on my disobedience?

The Bible makes it clear that Israel's experience is an example for us. It is sometimes easier to notice their folly than our own, but their story should be our reminder to check our attitudes.

Here's a final thought: There was nothing wrong with the food from Egypt that the Israelites were craving. However, they had forgotten or chosen to ignore the circumstances under which they partook of that food. Similarly, when we look longingly at the things that the world has and does, we must not forget the cost. Instead of asking, "Is it okay for Christians to do that?" we must consider whether it would mean sacrificing our freedom in Christ and returning to the bondage of the world. Choose liberty! Appreciate your daily bread.



*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then,  
and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)*

# Thanks for Praying!

The new year brings new opportunities – and new challenges! Please join us in prayer for:

- a real move of the Spirit in our church and our mission field in 2024,
- finding a new insurance company (before March!),
- several who are mourning family members lost this year, and,
- God’s direction and provision as we move ahead.







Closing out Week of Prayer with praise!

## We’re praying with you!

If you’re on our mailing list\*, you’re on our prayer list! If there’s anything specific that we can join with you in praying about, please let us know.

Thanks so much to those who keep in touch! It’s so encouraging to hear from you!

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\* **Important:** If you’d rather not be on our mailing list, we won’t be offended! Just call or drop us a note, and we’ll remove you. (We’ll still keep you on our prayer list!)

If you’d rather receive this letter via e-mail, please let us know!

## Did you know?

Snow is back in Philadelphia! After more than 700 days without significant snowfall, our region was hit with two storms in the past week. As a small church with a sidewalk on two sides (not to mention our parking lot!), we’re scrambling to stay on top of the shoveling. Pray with us!

God’s voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding. He says to the snow, “Fall on the earth,” and to the rain shower, “Be a mighty downpour.” (Job 37:5,6)



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