

Exod 03-03-09a

Let's continue our worship this morning by turning for our scripture reading to Luke chapter 21. Luke chapter 21. We'll take just a moment at the beginning to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God's spirit as we go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank you for the opportunity once again to spend time in fellowship in your word. We pray specifically that God the Holy Spirit will minister these things to our hearts and impress them on our souls in such a way that we will be drawn closer to you and more closely conformed to the Lord Jesus Christ and that our lives will have impact and make a difference in the forward progress of your plan. We know that this reflects your glory as well as bringing blessing to us and accomplishes the purpose for which the Lord Jesus Christ died.

We thank you again for the gift of your word and your spirit and we pray that they will be effective among us this morning. We ask it in Jesus name, amen. As we read our scripture reading this morning, it will look familiar to those of you who are following our Luke study because we were just here Friday night.

But there is a great intersection of our studies here and the principle that we saw Friday night is going to be directly illustrated in our Exodus study this morning. So I want to review what the Lord Jesus says in Luke chapter 21 beginning in verse 20. The Lord Jesus is telling the disciples, this is just a few days before the crucifixion, what the signs of the end time will be.

For them this is very important because measuring by the clock of Israel this is just a few years away. Within a generation Jerusalem will be destroyed, the temple will be destroyed and because the clock for the nation of Israel and the dispensation of Israel is stopped, the church age is going to interrupt but if you subtract that out then the end times are also very near at hand for those who are in the age of Israel. So here Jesus is telling them this is what you can expect.

Things are going to get bad and regardless of all the dispensational timing and so on, if you don't get anything else out of the context in Luke 21, Jesus is telling the disciples bad times are coming. There is a great disaster that is going to befall the people of God. He says in verse 19, if you will have patience and keep possession of your soul you will be fine but you have to keep a clear head, you have to have the word of God, you have to remember what Jesus has said and apply it.

Then he goes on to say, he tells them you are going to see things that are just incomprehensible. Jerusalem will be surrounded by armies and when you see that then know that it's desolation is near. You are going to see things go from bad to worse and when you see that draw a conclusion.

The desolation, the foretold destruction is near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let those who are in the midst of her depart and let not those who are in the

country enter her.

For these are the days of vengeance that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days. There will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people.

Sometimes in the providences of God it is necessary to bring about disaster. It may be on pagan unbelievers as took place in the land of Canaan when the Israelites came in and wiped them out, men, women, children, animals, burned the cities, completely eradicated the population. Why did God command that? Why did God instruct the Israelites to kill children? It's a horrifying thought but God commanded it and God is not unrighteous.

Why did He do that? Because they were godless pagan savages and God knew that that generation of children that was growing up would be corrupted and led down the same evil path as the generations that preceded them. And it is actually a deliverance. It seems cruel at the time that that generation of children was wiped out in many of the cities of Israel but it is a deliverance.

They didn't grow up being sacrificed to Baal. They didn't be born and reach the age of a few months or a few years and then find themselves being burned alive, being passed through the fire because of the Phallic cult and the Baal cults and the Asherah cults that were widely prevalent. Child sacrifice was common.

They have found graves at places like Beth-El where they've done excavations, archaeological work and have found pits full of children's bones that were the victims of sacrifice. And if they survived into their adulthood, they were steeped in this paganistic culture. The Canaanites knew of the God of Israel.

They were aware from the presence of the Shemites as early as the Melchizedekian presence in Salem which would later be Jerusalem and on down. There was a gospel available, if you will, to them and they rejected it and chose this idolatry and this very sexually oriented and death oriented kind of religion. So God said, I'm going to wipe them all out and I'm going to take the children out also.

You say, well why didn't he have the Israelites adopt the children? God is going to make a point with those children and it's going to happen in the Millennial Kingdom, I believe. I believe that those individuals are going to be brought up. There was a pattern in Canaan where they were brought up under pagan culture and adopted that pagan culture.

They're going to be delivered out of it. Some might say, well those people would have come to God and been great believers if they just had a different environment. Well, I think God has reserved the generation that Israel destroyed when they went into the land.

God has reserved them and he's going to have them grow up in the Millennial Kingdom. There are many passages, we've talked about this in some of our other classes. You go to Isaiah

where it pictures the Lord's return to Israel at the second coming and it says he has the lambs in his arms.

You have many references to children in the Millennial Kingdom. Where do they come from? If everybody is glorified and there is no marriage and giving in marriage, where do the children come from? I think this is in the form of a resuscitation. The great question that has always plagued especially dispensational theology is if the Lord returns and sets up his kingdom, all the Old Testament saints are resurrected and in their glorified bodies.

All the New Testament saints are resurrected or translated, transformed in the twinkling of an eye and they're all in their resurrection bodies. Then where do all the people come from at the end of the Millennial Kingdom that rise up in rebellion and join Satan when he's released from the pit? Where do all of these terrors come from that have been growing amongst the wheat and they suddenly are so numerous that they can surround Jerusalem and surround the camp of the saints and bring about this huge Gog Magog rebellion? Where do they come from? Well, there are children who grow up. The Old Testament says that a man who dies at the age of 100 will be said to have died in his youth.

There is death and therefore people in non-glorified, non-resurrection bodies, there will be capital punishment. There will be other afflictions that take place, but they will be very minimal in the Millennial Kingdom. But there will be death because there are people in natural bodies.

The Gog Magog rebellion poses a huge problem for people who say, well, when Jesus comes back, everybody's glorified and all the unbelievers are unresurrected and awaiting the great white throne judgment. Then where do you get your Gog Magog people? The answer that's commonly given is, well, you have this tribulation period and the seals and the trumpets and the bowls and the great devastation, but the people who are faithful and follow Jesus' instructions here and flee when they see the wrath coming, they'll survive. Now, they may have been tortured and they may be missing an arm or a foot or an eye gouged out or something, but if they are obedient and they survive the tribulation, their great reward for their faithfulness is that when Jesus comes back, they are alive and go into the kingdom, but it doesn't happen like the church rapture where those who are alive and remain are transformed in the twinkling of an eye.

Instead, your reward, it would be better, in my opinion, to get killed in the tribulation because then Jesus will raise you when he comes back and starts the kingdom and you can do that 1,000 years in a resurrection body. But your reward for being faithful and obedient, according to this theology, is that you go limping, maimed and blinded into the kingdom and then these people suddenly have offspring or turn sour or something and that's what makes the Gog and Magog. The Bible says in Hebrews 11, 6, Without faith it is impossible to please God.

He that comes to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. The doctrine of infant salvation that is widely believed and taught prevalently throughout the modern world today is erroneous. And where it fails, it says if a child, these

children who were killed in Canaan by the Israelites were transported directly to heaven, those who could not believe.

In fact, Dr. Leitner down here at Dallas Seminary has a book called Heaven for Those Who Can't Believe and he makes the case. If you want to understand the classic traditional theological case for infant salvation, get Dr. Leitner's book, Heaven for Those Who Can't Believe. He talks about those who never reach the mental capacity to make a responsible decision.

He talks about infants who die. And of course this is given as a great comfort. If the horrible experience of bereavement that takes place to a family that loses a child in infancy, sudden infant death syndrome and accidents and this sort of thing, it's an awful thing.

And the comfort that is given to them is, well, your child has gone straight to be with Jesus. They never had to face the volitional test that God just takes them home to be with the Lord. Well, that sounds great and it's very comforting, but the Bible does not offer that as a comfort and never says that.

And if you think about it, if volition is truly free and independent, if our decision for or against the Lord is environmentally independent, is culturally independent, is hereditarily independent, think about this. You've got little Meshach out here in Canaan and he's a little toddler. He's a year old.

And if he grows up there in Hebron or Bethel or one of the places that was occupied by the Canaanites before the Israelites came in, he's going to grow up and be a godless pagan, bale-worshipping, child-sacrificing evil man. He's against God. Well, I've edited out all of my really bad ones.

I have to pick like every fourth one and skip all the others. He's a godless pagan savage and he grows up that way. But, little Meshach happened to be born in the generation where Joshua comes across the Jordan and as they go in the conquest of the land, little Meshach gets a sword in the neck and is no more.

And you think, oh, how cruel, how terrible. But, in the traditional theology, infant salvation, he gets to be a believer and go to heaven and be with God forevermore. Well now, has Meshach lost his volition when he gets to heaven? Is his free will somehow welded on positive where had he lived it would have been negative? Has this particular circumstance where he died in infancy changed his eternal destiny? I would submit to you that a Meshach-type child killed at the age of one before he was responsible, if he would have grown up to be an unbeliever on this earth, but died before he made that negative decision, when he goes to heaven and sees God face-to-face, he's going to go just as negative as he would have down here.

If you say anything else, what you're saying is, the ability to believe in God depends on how much revelation of God you have. If I could go to heaven and see God face-to-face, I would believe like little Meshach. But if he's down here and grows up in Canaan, he would not have

believed.

And so then you get this idea of degrees of light. And if you get a high enough degree of light, you'll believe in God. A lesser degree of light and you don't.

That is not the nature of free will. Satan himself in the throne room of God, closer to God than anyone, flipped to the negative side. He rejected God.

Adam in the garden. The Lord comes and walks in the breeze of the day in the garden. He sees him.

He's had fellowship with him, gotten instructions from him. Flips to the negative side. The whole purpose of the different dispensations and the different economies that God has built into human history is to demonstrate that when you have a perfect man in a perfect environment and you give him free will, he can choose against God, just like Satan did in a perfect heaven.

The highest and grandest creation of God, given free will, has the option of choosing against. One third of the angels joined him when he rejected God and thought he had a better solution. Perfect man, perfect environment, can choose negatively.

Now, throughout history, we have imperfect men in a fallen environment choosing positively or negatively. You get into the millennial kingdom and you have fallen men, i.e. these who are resuscitated and those who are in still human bodies in a virtually perfect environment, ruled by the Lord Jesus Christ himself. You can't blame culture.

You can't blame government. You can't blame justice system. You can't blame the environment.

And you're going to have people who choose positively and negatively. This is illustrated in the parable of the sheep and goats judgment, where Jesus separates the sheep from the goats. That takes place at the end of the millennium and that is a judgment of millennial mortals, if you will.

Anyway, I say all of that to say, when you talk about the generation of Canaanites that Israel went in and removed, it sounds harsh that they would kill the children, but it is a part of God's plan. God has a purpose for them. God is going to use them because we've already seen what they do in the Baal culture.

We've got that very same type, that very same sort of generation, removed from that and placed in the opposite extreme. Now they're in the millennial kingdom. You've got all these little Philistines taken out of that culture and put into the millennial kingdom and let's see how they choose.

And God is going to demonstrate throughout human history that we are responsible for our choices. We are accountable for what we choose. You cannot blame your circumstance.

You cannot blame your heredity. You cannot blame your environment. You can't blame somebody sitting near you.

The whole point of God changing the dispensations and letting children die before the age of accountability is not to show how gracious He is in letting billions, I calculated this once for a paper at seminary, just since Christ, just in the last 2,000 years, if you look at infant mortality statistics and apply them conservatively over the last 2,000 years, there are upwards of 6 billion people who have died before the age of accountability. People say, oh, well, you know, there's like a couple hundred little infants here that God's just going to give a bye, give a free pass, get out of hell free card and they just go right to heaven. Six billion, and that's conservative.

It could be two to three times that much just in the last 2,000 years. I didn't feel justified in applying infant mortality statistics to civilizations prior to Christ, but with the Roman Empire and record keeping and reasonable amounts of knowledge, conservatively speaking, six billion people, do you really think that God has taken that large a chunk of the human race and just sovereignly assigned them salvation when the Bible says without faith it is impossible to please him? He that comes to God must believe. You must believe.

So, if you take the doctrine of infant salvation only removes the problem one step back. It reminds me of people who think that life on earth came from aliens. Aliens came and seeded the planet with clones or something and then flew off in their spaceships and let us develop.

And this is where human life came from. Aliens put it here. Okay, fine.

So, where did the aliens come from? How did their life begin? Is there just an endless chain of aliens going to planets? Where did the first ones come from? All you do is remove the problem out of sight. If you go back to the source you have the same problem. Where did life come from? Somewhere there had to be a creation.

The same thing is true with this infant salvation. If you say, well, what about their salvation? If you say they all go to heaven, well, what about their volition? You create huge, you create more problems than you solve. If you say that God can take someone out of human environment who would have been an unbeliever, put them in heaven and now they will automatically be a believer.

It just will not comport with scripture. Well, why are we even talking about that? Because the Lord Jesus is telling these Israelites right before he leaves what's going to take place in the end times. It's going to be awful and people are going to be killed.

They're going to be given up by their own families. The brothers and sisters and fathers and mothers will betray them into the hands of the authorities. And from a Jewish perspective, skipping the church age, this is near at hand.

Within a generation, 39 years from now, when Jesus is speaking, Jerusalem will be destroyed. And seven years into the final seven years of the age of Israel, the 70th week of Daniel, the far

fulfillment of this, the actual end times will take place. So, why are we even looking at it in connection with Exodus? He says in verse 22, These are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.

People on the earth will be tested. They will have to choose. Some generations choose in a complete absence of supernatural activity.

Other generations see great signs and wonders, see healings and oceans parted and clouds and thunder on mountains and the top of Mount Carmel consumed and this sort of thing. The dead are raised. No matter what the conditions, human volition carries with it an accountability, a responsibility before God.

There is nothing we can blame. They will fall by the edge of the sword. They will be led away captive.

He says, Woe to those who are pregnant, those who are nursing babies, great distress in the land, great wrath upon this people. And Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. Verse 25, There will be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars and on the earth, distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring.

The troubled sea is always a picture of chaotic, unrestrained evil. Man can't control the sea. Men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Powers of the earth, the powers of the heavens, everything that we base our security on. You say, Well, no matter what else happens, the sun will still rise tomorrow. Well, not in this case.

The powers of the heavens themselves will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud of great power and glory. Verse 28, Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads because your redemption draws near.

The upshot of this is the people of God, those who in this generation who are going to see the destruction of Jerusalem, 70 AD, those in the tribulation period, the 144,000 witnesses and those who come to faith in that time are told, just because you come to faith, the problems are not going to go away. It's going to go from bad to worse. He says, When you see things going from bad to worse, when you see the city surrounded, when you see the powers of the heavens shaken, lift up your head.

Look up. Your redemption draws nigh. You think it's as bad as it can be? It's going to get worse.

But don't be discouraged. Don't let your heart be dragged down. Look up.

Your redemption draws nigh. He tells the example of the fig tree in verse 29. Look at the fig tree and all the trees.

When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So

you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. Let me ask you something.

Here are days that are so bad that pregnant people and nursing mothers are particularly pitiful and Jesus compares that to the budding leaves of a tree. Now, how does that work? Could I write a poem and get it published and say, well, death and woe and nuclear winter and holocaust and flesh falling from the bones and it's like a tree with the leaves budding forth in spring. There are the signs of hope.

Lift up your head. I mean, this is the kind of incongruity that Jesus has introduced here. Just think of the death and devastation and the Nagasaki effect here as a tree with leaves budding forth.

I mean, it does not follow. It's a non-sequitur. But Jesus says, when you see things getting, you didn't think it could get any worse and it has.

It's been ratcheted up another notch. Look up. Lift up your head.

Get excited. Look up and be happy like a farmer who sees the budding and realizes that a new planting and plowing and harvesting season is at hand. Well, how can we do this? We've got to have faith.

Human knowledge and human wisdom says when things are going from bad to worse, it's going to end up, you know, the graph is trending downward. We don't expect a sudden spike. And that's important because it is a consistent Biblical theme.

Turn with me now back to Exodus chapter 3. Exodus chapter 3. We just have a few verses in this area here. We're going to look at something right quick in 3 and then go to 4. You remember when Moses sees God at the bush in chapter 3 of Exodus and God says, take off your shoes. Verse 10, I'm going to send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

Well, this is a grand and glorious thing. Nobody would argue, who is a Hebrew, that getting out of Egypt and going to the land of promise would be a wonderful thing. But Moses sees all the intermediate difficulties, doesn't he? He says, what if the people don't believe me? What if Pharaoh won't listen to me? I'm slow speech and have a slow tongue.

He sees all of the obstacles and impediments and it's getting him down. And God says, look, I'll be with you. I'll send you your brother.

It'll be fine. Trust me on this. Yes, there's going to be some intermediate rocky shoals to navigate, but the end result will take place.

And Moses, after some resistance, finally concedes. And this goes all the way into chapter 4. Suppose they won't listen to my voice and so on. Well, we've worked all the way down to verse

27.

Because last time we saw that God had to straighten Moses out on the circumcision of his son and make sure that his house was in order before he tried to lead a larger house. This is a New Testament principle found in Timothy and Titus. If an elder cannot rule well his own household, he has no business ruling the household of God, i.e. exercising any sort of authority in the realm of spiritual things in the church.

So that example is given. But now look at verse 27. The Lord said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses.

So he went and met him on the mountain of God and kissed him. Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him and all the signs which he had commanded him. Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.

And Aaron spoke all the words which the Lord had spoken to Moses. Then he did the signs in the sight of the people. Do you remember the signs? You get the rod to a serpent in back.

You get the hand leprosy hole again. And if they don't believe the first two, then you take the water of the Nile, pour it on the ground, and it turns to blood. So he did the signs in the sight of the people.

So the people believed. And when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel and that he had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped. Now, let's take stock of the Exodus project at this point.

If we had a little advisory committee meeting, a little board of directors meeting of the Exodus project, and we say, well, let's see where we are so far. The leader has been commissioned. He's been given encouragement.

He's been given some convincing pieces for his advertising campaign. He's going to go promote and sell people on this idea. So where do we stand right now? He himself is encouraged.

Aaron's on board. Aaron is his spokesman, gives the multimedia presentation. Wins people over.

They say, this is great. Enthusiasm is building. There's a groundswell of support.

They worship God. Everything is on track. And so we should read in the next few verses now that then the Lord parted the Red Sea and the children of Israel marched out with a mighty thunderous cloud of dust and off they went.

But it does not happen. Take a look at chapter 5. Afterward, the big launch was a huge success. Afterward, Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.

Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go. So they said, The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Please let us go three days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or with the sword.

I think this is a little bit of an ad-lib. God didn't say anything about pestilence or sword falling on the Hebrews if they didn't go worship. What is it that God did tell Moses and Aaron to say to Pharaoh that has not been mentioned at this point? Do you remember that? Verse 21.

When you go back to Egypt, do the wonders before Pharaoh. I will harden his heart. Then you shall say to Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord, Israel is my son, my firstborn.

I say to you, Let my son go, that he may serve me. If you refuse to let him go, indeed, I will kill your son, your firstborn. This was supposed to be the response if resistance was met.

But I think Moses and Aaron waffle a little bit here and they say, Well, we don't really think threats are the way to go against the Pharaoh. We'll tell him that danger will come to us rather than danger coming to Pharaoh's son. So they modify the plan.

They start kind of losing faith in the strategy and in the instructions that they were given by God. God said, and did God reinforce this lesson a little bit about the firstborn son and the importance of the firstborn son with Zipporah and slinging the foreskin and that? I mean, this ought to be kind of a point in Moses' mind. But he says, it's going to be bad for us if you don't let us go.

God will put a sword or a pestilence on us. So we really have our own interests at heart here. And Pharaoh says, Well, from my point of view, I'm going to be losing labor.

I'm going to be losing productivity in the land. King of Egypt, verse 4, said to them, Moses and Aaron, why do you take the people from their work? Get back to your labor. All you're doing is wrecking the gross national product here by distracting people and getting them riled up and taking their mind off their work.

Pharaoh said, Look, verse 5, the people of the land are many now and you make them rest from their labor. If you distract five people for an hour, that's five man hours that's lost in a company. If you distract 100,000 people for an hour, that's 100,000 man hours that you've taken away.

He says, Look, the people are many and when you stand up and make a speech, every single one of those people is not doing their job. This is a huge divot out of our productivity. Now, from a secular point of view, I would say Pharaoh is perfectly within his rights.

If I was the leader of a conglomerate like this, if I was trying to get things done and I had my labor force there and somebody was off trying to give them an Amway pitch or something during business hours, I would say, Look, knock it off. We don't allow that kind of thing during our work day. So, it's not like this is some big evil response.

This is a natural human response. Isn't it? So, the same day, Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their officers saying, You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before. By the way, let me say that Exodus chapter 5 is one of the most overlooked chapters in the whole Bible.

When you think about the movies that have been made and the stories that have been told and your own mental knowledge of this process, do you assign an entire chapter to the fact we know that he took away the straw? Moses and Aaron went and said, Pharaoh, let the people go. He said, I won't let them go. Make them work harder.

I'm going to take away their straw. God devotes an entire chapter in Exodus to this episode. So, it behooves us.

Any time the Bible slows down and gives us a great amount of detail, we figure, it's like old, you know, Mr. Holland's opus there. You've got Richard Dreyfuss, the football player, with the helmet on and he's trying to get him to learn how to drum. I think of that quite often.

I think God is standing behind me like Richard Dreyfuss with a big drumstick. And I've got my helmet on and he's going, thump, thump, thump, thump. Can't you get that beat? Can't you hear the rhythm? Don't you see the pattern? Well, this is what Exodus chapter 5 is trying to drill home to us.

And it links to what we just saw in Luke chapter 21. Sometimes, for deliverance to be effective, for deliverance to be complete, for deliverance to make its point, because there is a point to deliverance. Deliverance isn't just all about us.

We have a problem and we get delivered and boy, are we happy. Deliverance is about God. Deliverance teaches us about God.

It demonstrates things about God. Deliverance is primarily for God's benefit and for God's glory. We are secondary beneficiaries.

We have an ancillary or auxiliary benefit that comes from God's implementation of salvation, God's bringing about of deliverance. But when you look at any episode of deliverance in the Word of God, anything that's a part of spiritual life, it's about God. Work on the cross is not primarily about us.

Christ's work on the cross is about Christ. What does John 3.16 say? For we had such a problem that God sent His only begotten Son, so that whosoever believes in Him would not have their big problem anymore. That isn't what it says.

For God, God so loved the world, God sent His only begotten Son. Whosoever believes in Him would not perish. Salvation and deliverance are about God.

We tend to look at it, what can I get out of this? Where is my benefit? Because of that, we can

get very impatient with deliverance because we want it to affect our benefit right away, regardless of what the consequences are to God. We say, God, I want you to save unconditionally. I want you to save immediately.

I want you to save effectively. I want you to save permanently. I don't want to have any more problems.

I don't want to see any more shenanigans. I've got a problem. I want it fixed.

And I want it to be done. Well, if salvation was all about us, that's probably how God would do it. It would be like Jesus walking up to the lame man at the pool of Bethesda.

Rise, take up your bed and walk. And we'd rise and take up our bed and everything would be resolved. But that's not the pattern.

What did Jesus tell the disciples in Luke 21? There is a day of vengeance and God is going to be making a point. And he's going to take things from bad to worse. And when they're worse, they're going to get worse.

And when they're worse, they're going to get worse. It's going to progressively get worse and worse. And yet there are obedient, faithful believers who are caught up and enmeshed in this environment.

And he says, you're going to be in this. But when you see it getting worse and worse, look up. And remember, your deliverance is drawing nigh.

God is going to do His thing. And when He has made His point and accomplished His purpose, you're going to come out on the other side of that much better than if He had just snapped His fingers and instantly transported you from difficulty to deliverance. We learn in the process of going through difficulties, we learn things about the character of God.

I will never forget learning in grade school about Daniel Boone. And you remember Fess Parker and he had Rebecca there and the little log cabin and all. Well, Daniel Boone, and this is a true story, when he was courting, when he was going to woo and marry Rebecca Boone, I don't know what her maiden name was, but he went over to see her.

And of course, courting in those days was very formal. There were always people around and you could hardly get a moment alone. But he managed to get her out on the front stoop of the cabin where she lived with her parents.

And they were sitting there and she had been baking and so on. And he pulled out his great big hunting knife with no warning whatsoever, grabbed her apron, and ripped the thing from top to bottom. And she looked over at him and she said, Daniel, what on earth is going on? And he said, basically, and I'm paraphrasing here, but essentially he wanted to see what she was like under pressure.

How do you cope with the unexpected? Would she fly into a tantrum? Would she throw a fit? Would she go stomping off and have a conniption? Because in those days, courting was very formal and everyone had their best foot forward and all you ever saw was the ideal. And he said, this is the frontier. I've got to marry a woman who can function under pressure.

I need to know what she's like when things are not ideal. Well, he couldn't set the cabin on fire or conjure some Indians to come and attack. So he pulled out his knife and just ripped her apron from top to bottom to see what she would do.

What's she like when the unexpected and the not so pleasant takes place? And evidently her reaction was satisfactory because he married her and they had a long and happy marriage. Well, that always comes to my mind when all of a sudden I'm motating through life and a big hunting knife flashes out and something is ripped from top to bottom that I wasn't expecting. And I think, well, God is testing the fabric of my soul.

What am I like under pressure? Is what God tells me in His Word just an academic concept? Is it something I can look at and write down and teach but I can't really apply myself when it comes to the rubber hitting the road? This is what God does. And there is a place for distress and there is a place for difficulty and adversity. We talked Friday night about the fact that deliverance is not so great when the problem is simple.

Your deliverer doesn't have to be very powerful if you've just got a minor problem. You break down at the side of the road. Your tire is flat.

Somebody pulls over and says, Oh, I can fix that. They pull out the spare and put it on. You're on your way in 10 or 15 minutes.

You think, well, that was a nice person. Well, what if you pull over the side of the road and open the hood and there's a fire and wiring is crisped and hoses have come unglued and somebody stops to help you. And you think, I don't think there's any way.

But this guy happens to be a mechanic and he gets under the hood and he happens to have a roll of electrical tape and a couple of lengths of tubing and hosing and he repairs your engine and you're able to go back down the road after an engine fire. Well, now, who is the greater deliverer? The guy that was able to put the donut spare on or the guy that repaired an engine that had been on fire and got you down the road? The greater the problem, the greater the opportunity for the deliverer to demonstrate his deliverance. Now, if I had a choice between an engine fire and a flat, I'd pick a flat every time.

But that's me. That's my interest. That's what I'm looking for out of life.

If there is a deliverer whose purpose it is to show his power and his mighty hand, then he's going to let my engine catch fire and then he's going to come in and fix it. This is the idea. So, with that in mind, everybody follow me this far.

Suppose our engine catches fire and then just about the time we think we're going to get past that, the whole car bursts into flames. It goes from bad to worse. And our suitcase was in the trunk and our computer was in the front seat.

And the whole thing goes up in a giant conflagration and we're rolling on the grass beside trying to put our clothing out. And about that time, it causes a massive traffic accident because people are looking over at us instead of paying attention and they crash into one another. Now there's all kinds of conflagration all around us.

And we think, how could this possibly get any worse? And then it begins to rain. Well, God says, pay attention. When you see things are bad and you're looking to the Deliverer and then it goes from bad to worse, take it in stride.

Lift up your head. Look, your redemption is drawing near. It's not going to continue to degrade and get worse and worse.

But God is going to allow this because what kind of deliverance is that going to entail when that problem gets resolved? It's all about God. Deliverance is about God. Now we're not going to want any part of that if we're self-centered.

If we don't love God and if we don't think His plan is the most important thing, we're going to say, I just don't like that whole scenario. I don't want to be the guy with his car on fire. I don't want to be rolling around putting out the flames.

I want to be the guy with the flat that I can fix myself and drive on my merry way. To rail against our problems and to allow frustration to overtake us and depression to drag us down is to say, I really don't care about God accomplishing His purpose. I don't care about God having a situation where He can demonstrate His mighty power and His character and His ability to save.

He is the mighty God. He identifies Himself as the Savior. But I don't really want Him to demonstrate that in my life.

So I don't want any big problems where He can manifest Himself. I just want little problems I can fix myself. So this forces us to conclude one of two things.

Either we will commit ourselves into the hands of Almighty God and say, Lord, not my will but Thine be done. Or we're going to opt out. We're going to say, I don't want any part of that.

And by saying we don't want any part of it, we are going to miss. That is where we don't have the faith and patience and endurance that leads to inheritance. God will say, that's fine.

If you want to captain your own ship, if you want to abandon ship and get in your rowboat and row yourself in a different direction, that's fine. But in the eternal future, your portion, the division of the inheritance that would have come to you is going to go elsewhere and you are going to be saved yet so as by fire. And because you wanted something else in this short span

of human life, for all eternity, that potential that you could have had is unfulfilled.

Because we learn about God in this life. And we learn about how His plan works. And it equips us and prepares us and enables us to serve in the eternal future.

This is such a small span of time in which to endure tribulation. And we have an eternal future that is perfect where we won't be tribulated. We won't be harassed.

We won't be oppressed. And we put up with a little oppression now to learn what we need to learn so that we can serve God in a bright and glorious future. Or are we going to opt out now and lose that for the entire eternal future? It's a very serious choice.

The nation of Israel here is going to go through this. Take a look again at chapter 5. Moses and Aaron go in and tell Pharaoh, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast for me in the wilderness. Pharaoh says all the things we've just read and you get down to verse 6, That same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying, You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before.

Let them go and gather straw for themselves. What do you think this is going to do? They were already oppressed. They already were worried about their firstborn.

Now, as a result of the incursion of God's deliverance and the appearance of God's prophet who's announcing deliverance, things have gone from bad to worse. What do you think the reaction of the people is going to be? Well, we're going to pause and take our break. And when we come back, we're going to look at the reaction of the people and see a powerful illustration of what we've been talking about.

But this is a good place to pause and take our break.