

Exod 03-03-09b

We're ready now to resume our study in Exodus chapter 4 and as we continue our study, we have seen up to this point the main idea from our scripture reading in Luke chapter 21 and of course many other places we could go in the Bible, but there's something we need to know about tribulation and deliverance, about difficulties and about the resolution of those difficulties. We think that it's a very simple matter of here's a problem, please solve it, but God has a purpose in the problem and in a lot of cases that problem is going to have a duration, it's going to have an ongoing component and God is going to work out his purpose and manifest his character and make an emphasis on the teaching points for the believers that are involved before that problem is resolved. If it was just a matter of preventing problems or solving problems, God could do that instantaneously.

He lets them exist, he lets them get worse because he has a greater purpose than just running around solving problems. His purpose is going to be fulfilled regardless of our participation. The difference is are we going to be on the blessing side of God's purpose or are we going to be on the discipline side? We could take a show of hands vote, how many of us want to be on the discipline side of God's plan? How many of us would like to be on the blessing side of God's plan? I think most of us would want to be on the positive side and in every situation that God allows to come into human experience, there is a blessing side and there is a discipline side.

Jesus says, he who is not for me is against me. We are divided. It's like a light switch or like a little spot in a RAM chip.

It's either a one or a zero. It's either off or it's on. There's no gray, there's no middle ground.

You can't cling to an edge and be sort of one and sort of the other. In a circumstance, whether it's prosperity or adversity, if there is a temptation, if there is a challenge, if there is a set of decisions to be made, we are either going to be advancing in God's plan or we are going to be declining. When you're on a slippery slope, the girls and I were on our way up to Grandma's for Christmas a couple of years ago.

In the last few miles, there's a very steep hill on a country road. We were in the Volkswagen van and had made it through all kinds of tribulations getting to that point, had made it through traffic and great big chunky, bumpy ice patches on the highways. Trucks and people were scattered all over the shoulders and had stopped and were pulling off into rest areas.

We made it all the way through and got to the final stretch, the last. We're in Rogers County, just five miles from Grandma's house. There's this great steep hill.

I knew it was going to be slick. We got a good running start, made it up the hill, but that hill gets steeper and steeper and steeper. It is steepest right before you get over the military crest and get up to the actual crest of the hill.

Well, just at the critical point, we ran out of traction and our momentum ceased. Well, on a slippery slope like that, you are either going to advance or you're going to go backward. You can't just stay there.

Advance, and that's how it is in our spiritual life. You either go forward or you slip away, one or the other. How about now? Can you hear me now? Very good.

Good thinking. That was a creative solution. See, if we didn't have video, we couldn't do that.

Okay, I'm going to take my tape off pause now. Well, in the situation where we found ourselves on the side of the hill, I could not gain any more forward momentum and I had to use a creative solution to swing the van around and try to go rather than backing down. But our lives are like that grade, that slope, where you cannot stand still.

You're either going to be advancing or you're going to be declining. We want to be on the advancing side. We know that the only way to have a meaningful life, a truly happy life, rather than a life that is one constant frantic search for happiness and one jumping from one stimulation to the next or one distraction to the next or one quick fix to the next, the only way to have a satisfying, fulfilled, and productive life, a life that has eternal fruit and eternal consequences, is to be on the blessing side of God's deliverance.

God is going to deliver. God is going to accomplish His purpose. We choose which side we're on.

Are we on the up escalator or the down escalator? You can't straddle the two. So we saw in our first lesson this morning, in Exodus and in Luke, that the Lord says you need to know something about problems and deliverance from them. It's not just a simple matter of here's a problem and cast about, cast about.

Oh, here's the solution. Now the problem is gone. God uses the process of working through the problem.

The problem has a duration. I was reminded of this because our educational TV station is once again showing Mr. Bean, and if you've ever seen Rowan Atkinson as Mr. Bean, one of those episodes is called Goodnight Mr. Bean. He's laying in his bed trying to figure out a way to get himself to go to sleep.

He tries all of these different things. Toward the end of it, he says, oh, I remember. And he goes and he gets a great big cardboard thing and sets it on a chair by his bed, and it's a picture of this flock of sheep.

And so he starts counting them, one, two, three, four, five, and then he loses track and he has to start over and he gets frustrated. So he digs around in a bedside table drawer and gets a calculator. He says, ah, now.

So he counts ten or twelve of them and punches them in the calculator, and then he gets a few more and punches them in the calculator. And as he finally gets the grand total, he looks at it and he says, oh. And then he immediately goes unconscious and falls asleep.

And that is kind of a reminder of the fact that, you know, what is it that puts you to sleep when you're counting sheep, at least theoretically? It's the process that you go through. You get bored and drowsy by trying to keep track. It's not that if you can come to an efficient solution of the problem of how many sheep are there that you will suddenly be not cold and fall asleep.

But in a way, we think if I could just calculate the result and get the answer to my problem, why, that would be the solution. The reason God gave us the problem was not so that it could be solved, but so that we would learn as we go through that challenge. It's a teaching point.

If you want to know one train leaves Chicago and another leaves Boston going at these different speeds and you want to know exactly where they meet, well, call the rail station people and say, hey, where do these... The purpose of giving you the story problem is to embed and ingrain and give you practice in rate, time, distance, formula, manipulation. The problem has a teaching purpose primarily. Every problem that God allows through the wall of fire that he puts around every believer, if he lets a problem in, it has a teaching point.

There's something we should learn. We think the reason this problem's not going away is I can't find the answer. I would submit to you that the reason some of our problems don't go away is we're still learning.

God still has something more to teach us. It may not be that we are failing. It just means that there may be a series of teaching points and we haven't gone through all of those teaching points yet.

We think, well, I must be doing something wrong because my problem hasn't gone away. My difficulty's not been overcome. My deliverance is not in sight.

You may be doing everything perfectly right. It's just that God is not finished yet. There is a future purpose to which God is going to put those circumstances.

We think, well, but I don't want to learn that lesson. Don't say that. Yes, you do.

We want to learn the lesson. It's important. It's critical.

Think about it. Who knows more about what's best, me or God? Well, God does. If God says it's best for you to go through this difficulty or this challenge and learn these points, who do you think has got this figured out? Who knows what you're going to be doing in the millennial kingdom? Who knows what's coming up in the future days and weeks and years of your life? Who knows best what you're going to need? When I was a midshipman and they were telling me to do this and run there and solve this and survive that, I thought a lot of it was a waste of time because I had no frame of reference.

I didn't know what the future held. But people who have been in the Naval Service and in the Marine Corps and know what it takes to have good thinking skills and good leadership skills and to function as a commissioned officer in the Naval Service, they do know. And so they construct these ridiculous things that let upperclassmen give you a hard time and haze and harass and get petty and ridiculous with you.

And I thought, what is the possible purpose of all of this harassment? Well, it is an artificial form of pressure. I didn't fully understand it at the time. I had an inkling of why they let people do that.

But when you get out and realize that there are a variety of pressures that you face as an officer that you cannot duplicate in an educational environment, then you have to use a substitute. You use some other problem, some other pressure to teach you to think under pressure. God does the very same thing with us.

We are learning as believers, as Christians, we are learning to think under pressure. Not just any old thinking, but think the thoughts of God. Think the principles and the promises and the doctrines of the Word of God.

And it takes a situation that puts pressure on us to give us the opportunity to think. How do you resist the devil so that he will flee from you if God never lets him in? The Word of God doesn't say, be of good cheer, I've overcome the devil so you'll never see him. It says, resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Well, this would be, I would like to see the devil's hindquarters receding in the distance from me. I would like to see that. I would like to see God run the devil off and watch his departing backside disappear over the horizon.

I think that would be great. But if I want to see that and if I'm going to let God accomplish that in my life, he has to come in first. He cannot retreat if he has not first advanced, right? The devil cannot flee unless he has gotten into your personal space.

And that is a scary thing. It's a challenge. It's not a pleasant little tea party if the devil gets close enough to you that he's got to turn around and flee.

And to be resisted. How do we resist the devil unless he's there putting some kind of pressure on us, trying to drag us down some road? Well, God doesn't say, oh, don't worry about the devil. I've got him licked.

We've defeated him at the cross. He says, he's going to be there. What did Jesus tell Peter? Satan has asked for you that he may sift you like wheat.

But don't worry, Peter. I've overcome the devil. He won't get anywhere near you.

It's not what he says, is it? He says, hang on to your faith. And after you've gone through that

experience, you'll be able to encourage your brothers. Peter, to be an encourager and to be an apostle, was going to have to go through an actual defeat by the devil where he denies the Lord three times.

Jesus knew it was coming. He didn't say, well, I know if I let the devil in, you're going to deny me and we can't have that, so we just won't let the devil in. He let him in.

And even in his failure, Peter learned something that lasted his lifetime. And countless millions of believers in the 2,000 years since have learned something. And it was a part of God's plan.

But it never would have happened if God didn't let the devil sift Peter like wheat. Jesus says, I have prayed for you that your faith will not fail, that your faith will not be extinguished. It doesn't mean he had an unbroken record of faith, but it didn't extinguish his faith.

He didn't resign as an apostle and go back to being a fisherman. He picked himself up, dusted himself off, talked with the Lord. Peter, if you love me, feed my sheep, feed my lambs, feed my sheep three times.

He affirmed that he loved the Lord three times, just like he denied the Lord three times there at the end of John. And the Lord brought him back. And that has been a huge part of the Word of God and the provision of God for believers in every generation since.

It wasn't that pleasant for Peter, but necessary. And Peter, looking back, do you think Peter would change any part of that, seeing how God has used it? Do you think Paul the apostle would change his imprisonments or his scourgings or any of the other difficulties that he suffered, seeing the way that God has used it all through history? It wasn't pleasant at the time, but look at the result. If you love God and if you love the fulfillment of God's plan and purpose, you say, Lord, if you can use me in any small way, let's go for it, let's do it.

I know that there is deliverance on the other side. It may get dark. Jesus says, when you see Jerusalem compassed about, know that her destruction is near.

He says, when you see all of these terrible calamities, look up, lift up your head. Your redemption is drawing nigh. What's more real to you, the circumstances and the problems or the redemption that's right behind it? If we are so short-sighted that we can't look for and wait for and be patient for that deliverance and know that the reason we're going through the trial is to work patience, the trial of your faith worketh patience.

That's what Israel is going to be going through. Let's go back here to Exodus, chapter 5. Everything sounds great, they do the rod and the hand and the water turned to blood and the people say, we believe, praise God, let's have a worship service. And Moses and Aaron are buoyed up by the positive response which God told Moses.

He said, the people will believe you. He says, okay, let's go talk to Pharaoh. This deliverance deal is underway.

Moses and Aaron come to Pharaoh and they say, thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, let my people go that they may celebrate a feast to me in the wilderness. Pharaoh says, who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord and besides, I will not let Israel go. They said, the God of Hebrews has met with us.

Please let us go a three days journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God. Otherwise, your firstborn son is in peril. It's the difference between God's firstborn son Israel and your firstborn son Maramneptah or whatever the heck his name might have been as an Egyptian.

Did they say that? They did not. What did God tell them to say? Tell Pharaoh it's going to be a swap of firstborn sons. He gives me mine, I'll let him keep his.

If he doesn't give me mine, I'm going to take his. That doesn't come up. It will, but it doesn't come up here.

So, the king of Egypt said, Moses and Aaron, why are you drawing the people away from their work? You are distracting the people. I am going to make them pay for paying attention to you. So, he takes away the straw.

He talks to the foreman. The taskmasters over the people and their foreman, these are Egyptian taskmasters, right? Just like the one that Moses killed. Pharaoh calls in his supervisory staff over the worker bees and he says, you know how we've been bringing these truckloads of straw in so that the Hebrews can make bricks? Well, stop the deliveries.

You can't make bricks without straw. They've got to have straw. We're going to stop bringing it.

They're going to have to go get it themselves and since they don't seem to be busy enough that they've got time to listen to these rabble-rousers, Moses and Aaron, why, I'll just make them a little busier. I'll let them go gather their own straw. Now, let's say that, once again, you are a typical Hebrew and you heard the speech of Moses and you say, boy, deliverance sure sounds great.

Let's worship the Lord. Thank you, Lord, for sending Moses and Aaron. I'm happy to be going to a land and not be a slave.

And then you hear through the grapevine, you know, they didn't have Dan Rather and they didn't have Tom Brokaw, so this comes by word of mouth. Somebody comes in and says, oh, did you hear what happened when Moses and Aaron went and talked to Pharaoh? Pharaoh said, not only no, but heck no. And he stopped the straw deliveries.

And we've got to make the same quota of bricks that we're making now, but they're not bringing any straw. We've got to come up with our own straw. Well, now you consider and you say, I am beginning to rethink my position on this whole deliverance strategy here.

I thought this was going to be a good thing and things are going from bad to worse. Now I have to make a choice. Am I going to continue to trust that the God of Israel knows what He's doing when the first phase of His plan seems to have run totally amok? This doesn't look like deliverance.

This looks like hardship. Think about some of the arguments that are going around about war with Iraq right now. This is our big current event of the last many weeks.

What are people saying? Well, look, you're talking war and the stock market's going down. You're talking war and the unemployment rate is rising. You're talking war and our allies are splitting away from us in the Security Council and in the United Nations.

All kinds of bad things are happening because you're trying to bring about this deliverance from this nutcase that's over there. We just want to inspect him. We want to play hide-and-seek with him.

As he continues to build and increase his stock of biological and nuclear weapons, we think this would be a great time to play a game. He can hide him and we'll look for him. If we find a few, he'll have to destroy them and then he'll move his stuff around.

We'd rather just keep on doing that because he hasn't used one against us yet. We're trying to be delivered from this. The President and the people who understand what's going on are trying to wipe this guy out before he pulls another 9-11.

People say, no, look, your solution is bad. You're talking about war and look at all of the things that are going from bad to worse. He's not the problem.

You're the problem. What are the Israelites going to say? We've gotten where we can handle the Egyptian thing. God, you're the problem.

You sent this Moses rabble-rousing around here. Now look what's happening. This is why it's important for us as believers to understand the way God works.

If it was a matter of getting the Israelites out of Egypt and if God had no other purpose, all of the Egyptians would just wake up one morning dead. Do you remember the 186,000 Assyrians that were outside Jerusalem? Everybody woke up one morning and were quaking in their boots. The price of wheat was so high you couldn't afford a cup full.

A couple of lepers staggered out there and they said, we've got nothing to lose. We're dead anyway. Let's go see if we can find something to eat.

Maybe we'll scare a few people with our leper's condition. We'll go out there and the Assyrians will run off and leave us a few morsels from a cold campfire. So they go out there and they find all the Assyrians gone.

Dead and gone. They packed up in the night and left. God can accomplish deliverance in a

night.

God can accomplish deliverance immediately. Why is he going to do the whole ten plague thing? Why does he let things go from bad to worse? Why does he let the Egyptians put this hardship and pressure on the Israelites? Because God has another objective than just getting them out of Egypt. Obviously he does or he would have just done it the short way.

What does this do to your average Hebrew? Once again, we're that man and we hear, oh Moses went in and now there's no straw. Every Hebrew, every Israelite in Egypt had to make a choice there. How committed am I to this salvation thing? It sounds like it's a big benefit for me.

But what if it's not such a benefit? What if it costs me something? What if it requires something from me? What if I have to endure a little bit to get this salvation? Then do I still want it? Or do I only want it if it's quick and easy and costs me nothing? That's the decision every Israelite has to make. Why do we have a whole chapter devoted to this? Because it's important. Let's read that chapter.

Pharaoh says to the taskmasters and the overseers in verse 7. Seems pretty clear what the Pharaoh's strategy is here, right? And his rationale. So, verse 10. The taskmasters of the people and their officers went out and spoke to the people saying, Thus says Pharaoh, I will not give you straw.

Go get yourselves straw where you can find it. Yet none of your work will be reduced. So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw.

Now it doesn't mean that there's stubble in the place of straw. This means they have to go out to the fields. This straw is the leavings after a harvest.

It's the stalks and the stems and that which is cut down and left after the threshing. And instead of it being delivered, they've got to scatter throughout the whole land and go to each field that's been harvested and each place where they made these haystacks. And they've got to get it.

They've got to transport it back to the brick areas. By the way, they're not brick kilns. The construction in Egypt was done with sun-dried bricks.

So it's not like they're cooking these bricks. If you ever see kilns, it's an anachronistic type of thing. The sun is so hot in Egypt, they just sun-dry the bricks.

And to this day, you can find buildings in Egypt constructed from this sun-dried brick. And if you break one of those bricks apart, you'll see that it's got this straw. It's like rebar in concrete.

It does the very same thing. Well, you can imagine how long concrete would last with no rebar. You can imagine how long a sun-dried brick is going to last if it doesn't have straw holding it

together.

They have to have the straw, and they have to go gather it themselves. So the people were scattered throughout. Now, here's another thing.

The elders of the people are going to come to Moses and say, you know, God's supposed to be gathering us up and delivering us. But instead of gathering us and uniting us and getting us ready to pack, we're having to scatter over the whole land of Egypt trying to gather this straw. How is God going to bring the people out? So all of the naysayers and people with second thoughts and with doubts look at this and say, there is no way this can be good.

Where is the upside of Moses talking to Pharaoh? What good came of that? None whatsoever. Everything went worse. Work is harder.

The people are scattered. God's plan is called into doubt. How can this possibly be good? We ever had this experience where we say, you know, I really want to try to do this in a way that's pleasing to God.

I'm going to hold my tongue. I'm not going to defend myself. I'm not going to get into the game that people want to play, whatever it might be.

I'm just going to persist. I'm going to do what I know I'm supposed to do from the Word of God. And we just see things getting darker and darker and more dismal.

And we say, ooh, I wonder, maybe I didn't quite understand. Maybe I didn't scope this out right. Maybe this is one of those times when God helps those that help themselves and I better get busy helping myself.

It gets darker. God allows that. God plans for it.

God teaches us about it right here. Expect it. Expect that it will be darker before the dawn.

Expect that your problem is going to be a process. Expect that a circumstance or a situation or a pressure is going to last. And when it starts getting darker and getting more dismal and bleak, think about this passage.

Think about Luke 21 and lift up your head. Because the darker it gets, the closer a great deliverance from God is to us. The only way we can believe that and the only way we can be encouraged by that is if we believe what God says.

But look at the pattern. Look at what happens here. This is why he gives a whole chapter to it here.

Verse 12, the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt to gather stubble instead of straw. Now, if they took a poll in Israel, a little popularity poll, Gallup went around and said, well, what do you think of Moses? How do you like the Moses-Aaron leadership here?

What do you think his numbers would have been? Not too good. President Bush's numbers are dropping as he tries to implement the deliverance that is appropriate and proper and needful by any objective measure.

That's not even a political statement. That is just a practical common sense declaration. You cannot let someone who sponsors terrorists, who is actively building weapons that are designed to be offensive and designed to take out large numbers of people, you cannot allow that to continue with any kind of rational sense.

That's what happened in Egypt. The taskmasters forced them to hurry, saying, fulfill your work. Fulfill your daily quota as when there was straw.

And there's pressure. And because of that, the officers of the children of Israel, whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had set over them, were beaten and were asked, why have you not fulfilled your task in making brick both yesterday and today as before? They get beat up. They are clobbered.

They're knocked around. So, naturally, the officers of the children of Israel in verse 15 came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, why are you dealing thus with your servants? There is no straw given to your servants, and they say to us, make brick. And indeed, your servants are beaten, but the fault is in your own people.

Your people have stopped supplying the straw, and they're hammering us for not making the bricks. This is your fault. Your people are doing this.

Pharaoh says to them, you are idle. Idle. Therefore, you say, let us go and sacrifice to the Lord.

Now, these people have to make a decision when they're talking to Pharaoh. Are they going to say, we don't hold with this Moses character. We didn't tell him to come represent us.

He doesn't speak for us. Let's go back to the way we were before. Compromise with the world.

Accommodation to the secular realities of life is always our temptation when this phase takes place. You're in a difficulty. You look to the Lord for deliverance.

God says, deliverance will come, but I've got some things to accomplish. You've got to wait. You've got to be patient.

You've got to have faith. Things deteriorate, and we are tempted to say, I have got to do something. I've got to act.

I'm going to have to make some sort of compromise here and accommodate myself to the realities. It's going to be over for me. This is going to be an awful calamity.

That's the temptation. God put them in this position. What do these elders do when he says it's because of Moses and his request to sacrifice to the Lord? So you go now and work, Pharaoh

says in verse 18, for no straw shall be given you, yet you shall deliver the quota of bricks.

And the officers of the children of Israel saw that they were in trouble after it was said, you shall not reduce any bricks from your daily quota. They saw that they were in trouble, more trouble than they were before. The one thing they managed to do, though, is they held their tongue.

They did not disavow the Lord. They did not disavow Moses, but you can bet as soon as they saw the last of Pharaoh, they went, in verse 20, to meet Moses and Aaron who stood there to meet them. Moses and Aaron are outside saying, well, I hope they don't crack.

I hope they don't give in and disavow the whole thing. And as they came out from Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron who stood there to meet them. And they said to them, let the Lord look on you and judge, because you have made us abhorrent in the sight of Pharaoh.

This literally is, you have made us to stink in the sight of. Now, wouldn't it be to stink in the nose of? But he says, you have made us to stink in the sight of. Why? Because this stinking is reputation, standing before the eyes of Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh's opinion of them has dropped. His willingness to work with them has dropped. But it literally says, you have made us to stink in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants.

And you have put a sword in their hand to kill us. You're supposed to be delivering. You've given them just what they need to wipe us out.

They've been looking for an excuse. Remember the little baby thing and killing the males? Bad to worse. So, Moses, verse 22, returned to the Lord and said, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Why is it you have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done evil to this people.

Neither have you delivered your people at all. Now, this is a pretty gutsy thing to go to the Lord and say. First of all, how many times has God answered this question? Why is it you have sent me? How many times has God told him? He told him at the mountain like three times.

He told him on the way. He told him in Midian. He told him when he got back.

He performed the signs and the serpent and the leprosy and all. But, in the face of this very real and present danger, and the loss of support from people around him, Moses begins to question God's command, God's call. And that's our chapter here.

When you get to chapter 6, the Lord said to Moses, Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh. For with a strong hand, he will let them go. And with a strong hand, he will not only let them go, he will drive them out.

He is going to do a complete 180 here. Instead of wanting them to stay, he is going to want them to go. This is a process.

All of us, all of us, have challenges in life. We wouldn't be here if we didn't. That's why we're here, is to be challenged.

And as we face those challenges, sometimes as we seek to do God's will, we pray, we meditate on God's word, we're trying to do the right thing, it all seems to go to hell in a handbasket. And we think, I'm just not sure that this is the right way to go. This is what we need to remember.

It's not about us and our deliverance. It's about God and His glory. It's about God and His purpose, God and His plan.

He will deliver us in due time. There is not a shadow of doubt. Jesus told the disciples, Not a hair of your head is going to fall to the ground if you'll just relax.

Be patient. It is by faith and patience that you inherit the promise. And the promises include deliverance.

But it's a test. Anybody can latch on to something that sounds good and then fold as soon as it looks a little ugly. God is looking for the people who, not having seen, believe.

He's looking for the people who will lift up their heads and look for that tree that's putting forth its leaves of deliverance, even at the time when it seems so dark and dismal. Who don't focus on the problem, but who look at the things that are worthy of praise, looking for the incipient signs of deliverance. Are the Israelites going to look at the lack of straw and the hardship? Or are they going to remember that rod and that hand and that water turning to blood and the fact that after hundreds of years, God is speaking and God is acting and God's prophets are on the scene in the first stages of their deliverance.

Are they going to believe God when He says, I have come to deliver you out of bondage and take you to a land? Or are they going to believe, all I know is today I've got no straw and I've got to make just as many bricks. It's a test. It stretches us.

It makes us learn to exercise faith. Easy to have faith when there's no challenge. Easy to have faith when you can see the thing right there in sight.

It's easy to be downtown and walk across a skywalk that's five or six stories in the air when it's glassed in and got a big wide concrete pad and all. You take a little two-by-four and run it across two buildings and walk across that where you can't see and God says, I've got an angel on each side of you. You can't see him.

I want you to walk across this two-by-four. You say, wait a minute. Where's the glassed-in sides? Where's the big wide way? What if a gust of wind comes along? I don't see how I'm going to be sustained and keep my equilibrium across this two-by-four.

Well, can you trust what you don't see? Can you trust what God says is true when there's no evidence to your senses? That's the test. That's the challenge. There are some of us who will do

that and there are others of us who won't.

We hurt ourselves because we lose the opportunity to show forth and reflect the glory of God in deliverance. Let God have his way. There's a great hymn, His way with thee.

Let him have his way with thee. His grace will make you what you ought to be. His blood will cleanse your heart and set you free if you let him have his way with thee.

We have to place ourselves in the hands of God and trust that he knows what he's doing. And like Job and like so many others in the Word of God, we will find on the far side that it was worth it. It was worth it to survive boot camp.

It was worth it to sit in the dentist's chair. It was worth it to go through a patch of bad circumstance to get to the other side and have the benefits that come from it. It was worth it.

God asks us the question, do you think it's worth it? Is it worth it to be pleasing in God's sight? Is it worth it to receive his grace and his deliverance when it entails enduring through some suffering? That's what he's asking his own people here in Exodus chapter 5. Your life is going to get harder. Some of these people were physically beaten for their faith and they come back and they say, look, God's going to judge you for making our situation worse. They're wavering a little.

But God tells Moses, notice God doesn't speak to the elders. He doesn't come to a bush for them. He speaks to Moses because God has sent Moses to them and they've got to listen to Moses.

They've got to listen to the Word of the Lord as it is delivered through Moses. Well, this is quite a bit to chew on. We're going to pause here and resume our study next time in chapter 6 when the Lord says, now you shall see what I will do.

If you'll be patient, you're going to get to see the mighty hand of God in ways that have never been seen in history. If we endure to the end, we will reign with him. We will see things that the eye has not seen, that ear has not heard, that haven't even entered into the heart of men.

But we've got to be willing to let God deliver us in his way and in his time. And we've got to stick when we see this dark phase that God says will come in our challenges. It is a challenge, but Jesus says, be of good cheer.

Even though you have tribulation in this world, I have overcome the world. If you believe that, then you'll rest. The boat may be on the stormy sea, but the Lord's on his way.

He's walking across. Remember the disciples? We're all going to die. These professional fishermen, these professional sailors, we're all going to die.

Jesus comes and he says, Peace be still. Flat as an ironing board in no time. All they had to do was wait.

Well, let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you that you've given us the privilege of participating in your plan and of being vessels that can be filled with your grace and with your mercy. We thank you that you convert cursing to blessing.

You use our fallen condition and the sin and evil that is in this world to provide occasions to show forth your glory and your power, your strength and your deliverance. We pray that we can remember and apply these truths in the days ahead as each of us faces our assigned tasks and our assigned challenges. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will find our hearts willing and will be able to remind us and impress on our souls the importance of patience and faith so that we can live in a way that's pleasing in your sight and glorifying to our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray it in his name. Amen.