

Exod 03-04-27a

Let's take a moment at the beginning of our worship this morning to clear our minds, and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God's Holy Spirit as we nourish our souls and strengthen ourselves from what God has for us in His Word. Shall we pray? Father, we recognize that we have no strength apart from You. We can only make a mess of situations and our lives in general.

We can only do things that corrupt and degenerate and fall away. We are like the grass that springs up and then withers and fades away. And yet, because of Your love for us and because of the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have been entered into eternal things.

We have been made heavenly citizens. We have the opportunity to reflect Your glory and to learn and grow, both in this life and in the life to come. We pray this morning that our study in the book of Exodus will contribute to our progress, that it will equip us for every good work, that it will show us the clear path that You have charted for us through this life, through each day, through each situation and each decision.

We thank You for the country in which we live. We thank You for the structure and the type of government that we have that gives us freedom and opportunity and protects us from crime. We thank You for our President and our senior leaders who are creating policy, both foreign and domestic.

And we ask that You will continue to guide them and lay Your hand upon them in blessing and encouragement to stay a course that is consistent with Your word. We pray for our military and all those who are traveling and who are serving in the uniformed services and serving in all the capacities that our Constitution and our form of government allow to preserve freedom and privacy and property, those things which are a part of the establishment. You have provided for us so that we can concentrate on our growth.

We ask Your blessing again on us as we study together. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, we have been away now from our study in Exodus for a couple of weeks. Two weeks ago we were out of town and last week was Resurrection Sunday. So this week we resume once again in Exodus.

And we have arrived at the beginning of chapter 8. And in that connection, our Scripture reading gives us one of the other accounts in the Word of God of what is taking place. What is taking place here? We have the deliverance of Israel from the nation of Egypt, from bondage and slavery in Egypt. And there are actually some details both in Psalm 78 and in Psalm 105 that shed light by the use of synonyms and such on what is happening in what has come to be called the ten plagues.

We will view these more as nine plagues and then a final act of deliverance. But we want to turn

for our Scripture reading this morning to Psalm 78 because this gives us an overview. We have been away for a couple of weeks.

We will just remind ourselves of what God is doing. Why do we care about the plagues? Excuse me. No, it is over here.

Our tapes are secure. Psalm 78, a contemplation of Asaph, gives us the big picture. And this will provide the backdrop, the context for our study.

It says, Give ear, O people, to my law. Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. How many times does the Bible encourage us to pay attention? This incline your ears is also found in Proverbs 2. My son, if you will receive my words and lay up my commandments with thee so that you incline your ears.

This is a choice we make, isn't it? We can incline our ears or we can disincline our ears. There is a noise being made. There is a sound being put forth.

There is a message being communicated. We choose. It is one of several points of volition.

It is one of several points at which we make a choice. We make a choice whether or not to be in a place where the Word of God is presented. When it is presented, we make a choice whether or not to hear.

Once we have heard it, we make a choice on whether or not to accept it or reject it. Once we accept it and we say, yes, I think that is the Word of God, we make a choice whether or not to ever call it to mind again. You can hear something and bob your head like the dog in the back of the car window, but if you never call it to mind again, it is going to do no good.

We make a choice as to whether or not we are going to recall it and think about it. At that point of recall, we have another choice, whether or not we are going to make it the object of our faith and act upon it. Think about this in a secular context.

Someone can tell you the steps of CPR or the Heimlich Maneuver, some life-saving procedure that you can do for someone who is in physical distress of one form or another. You don't want to mix those up. If somebody is having a heart attack, you do CPR.

If they are choking on food, you do the Heimlich Maneuver. You don't reverse those. But you might take a class or someone might send you as a part of your job requirements to a class in one or another of those procedures, maybe both.

You choose whether or not you are going to go. Sometimes it is voluntary. Once you get there, you choose whether or not you are going to listen and learn the procedure.

After you have gone to the class, do you ever think about it and say, well, now if someone in the restaurant chokes here, do I know what to do? If someone has a heart attack, do I know how to perform CPR? How many breaths? How many pumps on the chest? How far above the

breastbone so I don't break their ribs in the process? Do we ever recall it and review it and keep it fresh in our mind? Then when a situation occurs where it is necessary, we see someone having a heart attack, we see someone choking, do we say, well, I have been trained in the Heimlich or in the CPR procedure. I think that is what is required here. I better go apply it.

Or do we not and say, well, surely there is a doctor in the house. I just don't remember it that well. Maybe I better not mess with it.

And then when we say, yes, I am going to apply that, do we actually follow through and do it in the way that it was prescribed or do we decide, well, this isn't working. I need to change it. I'm going to throw in the Sam Hall variation of the CPR procedure and I'm also going to slap them upside the head or I'm going to yell loudly in their ears and try to wake them up or try to add to it and embellish it.

This is a decision. Do I have enough faith in this procedure that I'm going to follow the thing step by step all the way through? Well, all of these pertain in our spiritual life as well. We have several points of choice.

And this is an encouragement in verse 1 of our scripture reading to perform the first step. Incline your ear to the words of my mouth. Give ear, O people, to my law.

They're already in the place where it is communicated. That's almost not by choice because in ancient times, Israel was the place of the presence. It was the place of the residence of God, of his prophets, of his priests, of those who communicated his words.

So they sort of got the first part of choosing to be there for free. He says in verse 2, I will open my mouth in a parable. I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord. He established a testimony in Jacob. He appointed a law in Israel which he commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children.

Now notice, he doesn't say, well, when their children are born, they're not going to be interested, so we're going to get praise choruses and we're going to get overhead projectors and a band and drums and Kleenex boxes and we're going to change it from generation. As each new generation comes, we're going to have to modify it. He says, what the fathers told us, we are declaring.

We're going to declare it to our children. When they grow up, they will declare it to their children. It's the same message.

It's the same worship. It does not need modification. The lily does not need to be gilded.

The Word of God is not insufficient to hold people's attention and requires human help. But that's what happens. I heard on the radio this morning, I was trying to listen to a different station because I got tired of the one I was listening to, so I switched over to a different one.

I was listening to The Word FM. They have a whole different slate of programs on there. You don't have to listen to the Christian scientists for one thing.

And Dr. Johnson is on there. They switched over from being on the classical station. He's over on The Word now.

I think the time was cheaper. But after him comes on, they feature a church each week. They have the Church of the Week.

And I didn't hear the name of the Church of the Week, and I'm glad because I'm upset with them. He said, well, we're some sort of Baptist church. And he says, we're hip, we're contemporary, we're up to date, we've got the latest thing.

Children and families and young couples love us because we're contemporary. We sing praise songs and we have overhead projectors. He didn't say word one about teaching the Word of God until the very final, just almost before they cut him off to say, and that was the Church of the Week.

And he said, oh yes, by the way, we teach the Word of God. We try to make it applicable for people's lives. But all of the rest of his little 30-second advertisement for his church was the environment, how appealing it is for people to come.

What does this say? God established a testimony. God appointed a law. The Fathers got it and gave it to us.

We give it to our children who will give it to their children. It doesn't say anything about wrapping it in sugar coating or somehow modifying it and changing it around so it will be palatable. And what is the purpose? Look at verse 7. The purpose is not that they may feel good and have a song on their lips as they walk out into the sunshine of the parking lot on Sunday afternoon.

The purpose is that they may set their hope in God. Of course, you can't sell somebody something in which you yourself do not believe. You can't say, do as I say and not as I do.

In order to encourage the next generation of believers, which is what a church is supposed to do, we ourselves have to be setting our hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments. Notice that there is a link between remembering the works of God and keeping His commandments. Sometimes we have trouble with obedience.

We have trouble with motivating ourselves to walk the narrow road. Why is that? Because we forget the works of God. If we remember God, who He is and what He has done, that is a

motivation.

We say, well, I remember what happened to Gehazi when he got more interested in the gifts that Naaman, the former leper, was trying to give to the prophet. You remember that story? Naaman dipped himself in the waters of the Jordan seven times and was cleansed of leprosy because of the testimony, by the way, of a child, a young servant girl, in his household in Syria who had been trained, who knew what God could do, and said, there is a prophet in Israel who can address your symptoms. And he came and he approached the prophet and he said, well, this is going to cost me a lot.

So he brought donkeys and camels laden with treasures and silks and gold and silver and such like. And the prophet says, you don't need all that. Just go dunk yourself in that muddy creek over there seven times and God will heal you.

And Naaman is outraged. He says, look at this. I brought all this stuff.

You're telling me to go sit in the... You know, the Jordan is not a very impressive river if you've ever seen pictures of it. They don't call it the muddy Jordan for nothing. You can't see through the water.

You can't see six inches down into the water. It doesn't flow very quickly. It goes from the Sea of Galilee and goes through that Jordan Valley down into the Dead Sea.

And it's just not much of a river. And so Naaman is outraged. He says, I'm not going to do that.

He turns around in a huff and his servants have to calm him down and say, look, sir, if he had said go climb a great mountain or go do some tremendous feat of heroics like the Hercules things, you know, go slay the Gorgon and do these things, would you not have done it to be healed? All he's asking is go dip yourself. And so Naaman, when he's in a calmer frame of mind, he says, well, what can it hurt? So he goes and dips himself seven times and he's cleansed. And he is so thrilled.

He says, look, I brought all this loot. I want you to have it. And he says, no, I'm not going to accept it.

He says, well, I can't leave my job and come here to worship the God of Israel in whom I now believe. So let me take a little bit of the dirt of Israel with me so that I will have a symbolic ability to worship God in his own land. And that's what he does.

Instead of giving something, he takes some dirt with him. He decides that mud in the Jordan is not all that bad after all. He takes something with him.

But then after he's gone over the hill, Gehazi, the servant of the prophet, says, boy, I hate to see all that loot disappearing over the hill. I mean, what a waste. He was ready to give it away.

What's the matter with my master? And so he chases him down and says, you know, my master

changed his mind. He said you really could use just a couple of camels here. You know, I want you to divert a few of these.

It will be for the work of the ministry. And Naaman says, sure, great. I would have given him the whole thing.

And so then Gehazi is struck with leprosy. This is something we should remember. If we decide that we're going to pervert, if we decide that we're going to adulterate, I just want to change the plan a little bit.

I just want to add one or two steps to the CPR. It will give it more zing. Some theatrics so that people will remember how I brought this man back to life.

I'll raise my hands in between the breathing and the pumping on the chest. I'll say an incantation, and people will believe that I'm invested with great powers. Well, it's nuts in the case of CPR, isn't it? I mean, who would believe? But this is what we try to do in Christianity.

We want to add to it. We want to change it. We want to spice it up, make it more appealing, more interesting, more contemporary.

The purpose is to set our hope in God and not forget the works of God, keep His commandments, and may not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright. Lots of talk about Pharaoh's heart being hardened. God says, you know what the guilt was of the Israelites that fell in the wilderness and never made it into the promised land? What was their failure? What was their sin? It's right here in verse 8. A generation that did not set its heart aright.

God gives us the power to set our hearts. Once we set our hearts, God can stay our course. Pharaoh had set his heart and God stiffened it.

God left it in that condition. God caused it to remain in that condition and not change in order to get out from under circumstances. Of course, that's what he does time after time.

As soon as the plague leaves, that's why he's back to his old way. A generation that did not set its heart aright and whose spirit was not faithful to God. It talks about the children of Ephraim who turned back in the day of battle.

They were cowards. It's like the red badge of courage. They did not keep the covenant of God.

They refused to walk in His law. They forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them. Notice again the relationship between verse 9, 10, and 11.

Do you want to be obedient? Do you want to be a success in God's plan? Don't forget God's works. How do we do that? We've got to set aside a little time to think about them, don't we? Think about something. What applies in my situation? Who do I know in the Bible that was tempted to compromise or tempted to turn back? Who can I think of that was a failure in the

Bible? Why did they fail? Where was their point of departure? As we've talked about before, it's much better to learn from somebody else's goof-ups than to repeat history, remember? Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

That is all the more true in the spiritual realm. God has given us 66 books of history. How are we going to excuse ourselves of the judgment when we make the very same mistake that Gehazi made, or we make the very same mistake that these Israelites are going to make in the wilderness? God says, look, I put the whole book of Exodus there.

You came to class. You heard the thing. What's the matter with you? And we won't have an answer because we failed to set our heart aright because we didn't stop and think about the works of God.

If we believe that God exists, and that's a first-class condition, if and it's true, and if we believe that God is paying attention to human history, which is also true, then it should form a conclusion in our logical mind that God is going to hold an accounting for whether or not we pay any attention. That's what this is saying. Marvelous things, verse 12 of Psalm 78.

Marvelous things He did in the sight of their fathers. Now, see, we can sort of build an excuse for ourselves. We say, well, I never saw the Red Sea part.

I didn't see the Nile turn to blood. I didn't see... Well, we're seeing it right now, aren't we? We're studying it in the pages of Scripture. Is Scripture true? Is the testimony of someone telling you as good as seeing it? In God's world, it is.

The Word of God is alive. The Word of God is powerful. It's sharp like a sword.

And when the Word of God tells us something, that is as good or better than the evidence of our eyes and our ears. So guess what? We don't have any more excuse than the Israelites because we have seen, we have heard these wondrous works. That He did in the sight of their fathers.

In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan, He divided the sea and caused them to pass through. He made the waters stand up like a heap. In the daytime, He led them with a cloud.

In the nighttime, with a light of fire, He split the rocks in the wilderness, gave them drink in abundance like the depths. He brought streams out of the rock and caused water to run down like rivers. This is provision and protection.

Are we alive? We have been provided for by God. Are we in imminent physical danger for our lives? No, we're not. We have been protected by God up to this point.

They sinned even more against Him by rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness. They tested God in their hearts by asking for the food of their fancy. Well, if you're really God, I'd like some onions with this manna.

If you're really God, I'd like some of those spices that we had back in Egypt. Now think about it. You're in Egypt.

You spend your day stamping mud into bricks and hauling them around and gathering straw and doing all the stuff that's involved in forced labor slavery in the construction field. One of the few ameliorations is once in a while, you can sneak down to the market and grab something to make your food taste better. So when they think back on Egypt, what's the one thing they remember? Oh boy, we used to have onions.

Do we ever do this when we start trying to walk the path of God? And the only thing we can remember about the sinful life and the evil path that we used to live in was the one or two moments of stimulation that we got. Boy, I remember that good flavor. You know, people hark back.

Might have been happily married for 20 or 30 years, but they say, oh boy, I remember back in high school. I dated so and so, and wasn't she pretty or wasn't he handsome? Going back and forgetting all of the misery and the double-dealing and the deception and the backstabbing and the shallowness and the immaturity that was a part of that time. You just remember, oh, you know, I remember watching her cheerlead on the field.

Or I remember him running down and making the touchdown. Oh, I wonder whatever happened to him. People will actually go back and call up their old high school sweethearts after years have gone by because they're remembering the leeks and garlics of Egypt and the pleasures of sin for a season.

Now, God has written this down in His Word. Why? Because we can see how stupid there is no other English word but stupid the Israelites are when they get out in the wilderness. God is leading them to the land of promise and sure, it's slim rations.

They're on manna. They're out there in a temporary camp moving around, trying not to be slain by armies and things, but they're heading toward a promise that is just as sure as the one that God made to Abraham, and they have left behind hard bondage where their male children got thrown in the river where they could be slain for the smallest offense, and all they can think about is, boy, you know, we had some good food back there. Wish I had some of those leeks and garlics.

They sinned even more. They asked for the food of their fancy. They spoke against God in verse 19.

They said, can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Well, let's see. What has God done so far? God protected them from eight of the ten plagues. God parted the Red Sea.

God delivered them from the Amalekites. God sustains them over and over again from all kinds of pestilences. He provides water.

He provides food. And they say, yes, but can God set a really fancy table? Can God give me onions and garlicks and leeks? I don't even know what a leek is. I think I saw them at the grocery store.

Is that some kind of a bulb-type thing like a green onion or something? Well, whatever it is, they wanted it. It tasted good to them. They said, where are the leeks? Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? And it says in verse 20, behold.

Anytime you see the word behold in the Old Testament, it is the Hebrew word hineh. And hineh is the command that says look. In the New Testament it is the Greek word idu from horao.

It's the imperative that says look. We use this in English all the time, don't we, when we're trying to get someone's attention? Someone's mind might be wandering and we're trying to make an argument. We can tell they're already forming their next argument in their mind.

They're not really listening to us. We say, look! And then we make our point. When you see behold, it's not like an angel on a mountain somewhere saying, behold.

It means, look. Pay attention to the next thing that's being said. It means, think practically here.

That's what he says in verse 20. He says, look, he struck the rock so that the water gushed out. What was the matter with these people? Well, we ought to ask ourselves that question.

What is the matter with us when we do this very same thing? The streams overflowed. Can he give us bread also? Can he provide food for his people? It says meat but it means food. Therefore the Lord heard this and was furious.

Well, surprise! God has knocked himself out doing this mighty work of deliverance and all they can say is, well, but where's the fancy food? Where's that really good stuff we had back in Egypt? He was furious. A fire was kindled against Jacob and anger came up against Israel because they did not believe in God. They did not trust in his deliverance.

He had commanded the clouds above and opened the doors of heaven. He rained down manna for them to eat and gave them of the bread of heaven. Men ate angels' food.

He sent them food to the full. This reminds us of Jesus feeding the 5,000 and feeding the 4,000 in the New Testament. When they've been out there and they came to listen to him and they're way out they're too far from the market.

They didn't bring their lunch boxes and so they're hungry. The disciples say, Lord, you know these people have been sitting out here all day and they're kind of getting restless. I was walking through the crowd and I heard people's stomachs growling.

The kids are crying. They're getting cranky because they're hungry. And Jesus says, well, give them something to eat.

And the disciples look back at him with a dull, blank expression and they say, Lord, do you know how far it is to the next village? Do you know how long it would take us and how much money it would take to go and buy food for all these people? Well, why did Jesus say you give them something to eat? These are the people that went out two by two and invoked the power of the Holy Spirit. If Jesus says give them something to eat, remember the old thing, if someone says jump and you say how high? When you say yes sir, three bags full and that kind of thing. If you're a disciple of the Lord and you've seen all these tremendous miracles and he says you give them something to eat, say aye aye, Lord, if you're in the Navy and you turn around and start figuring it out.

But, of course, they don't make any use of that authority. But he gave them abundance of food, enough food to fill them, and yet they didn't partake of it. They took up all those baskets of fragments.

And the same thing here. The Israelites have been provided manna. It says he sent them food to the full, but they're dissatisfied.

Why? They're not happy with the manna. They don't like the way it tastes. So he caused an east wind to blow in the heaven.

By his power he brought in the south wind. He rained meat on them like the dust, feathered fowl like the sand of the seas. And he let them fall in the midst of their camp all around their dwellings.

Be careful what you pray for. God may give it to you and you may initially be happy, but it may in fact be a time of teaching. A time of discipline.

God says, you want meat? I'll give you meat. The meat was so thick that it was knee high. They had so much that they could hardly wade around in it.

And then while it was still between their teeth, it tells us, they ate and were well filled. He gave them their own desire. Verse 30, they were not deprived of their craving, but while their food was still in their mouths, the wrath of God came against them and slew the strongest of them and struck down the choice men of Israel.

Just because something shows up and seems to be everything you wanted, if you don't apply a little bit of wisdom, you can be sowing the seeds of your own destruction. Oh, I've waited and waited and waited for this thing, and here it finally is. Well, have you stopped to see if it's a part of the plan of God? Have you stopped to see if it comports with what you've learned from the Word of God? If you haven't, in laying hold of that thing that you've longed and dreamed and thought about, you can be bringing down on your own head the judgment of God.

These people should have known. A, not to ask, and B, when this showed up, not to partake. That's why God struck them down.

In spite of this, God gives them this object lesson and says, look, you really need to stick with my plan here. Don't be adding embellishments like fancy food and so on. They still sinned and did not believe in his wondrous works.

Therefore their days he consumed in futility. What a disappointing thing. Have you ever known someone who got up into their 60s or 70s and found out that they were about to check out? Their doctor says, well, you've got a couple of months or whatever.

And they begin to review their life and begin to wonder, well, what did it all really mean? Maybe the guy was a career marine or maybe he spent 30 years with the same company or maybe someone has traveled the world and done this and that. But when they get to the end and they start reviewing and saying, well, what did it all really mean? What legacy do I have? What mark did I make? What will survive me? Sometimes it's a very painful review because we realize that we've consumed our days in futility. We've spent day after precious day doing things that were not helpful, didn't contribute, didn't build.

There's no eternal fruit from it at all. And it's a painful, painful thing. We are not at that point, hopefully, yet.

And now is the time to think about that day and say, I want to spend my days not in futility and not spend my years in fear. Verse 34, when he slew them, then they sought him. And they returned and sought earnestly for God.

Then they remembered that God was their rock. We just had our study on building your house on the rock and how that is done. They finally remembered that God was their rock and the Most High God was their Redeemer.

Nevertheless, they flattered Him with their mouth and they lied to Him with their tongue. For their heart was not steadfast with Him, nor were they faithful to His covenant. He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them.

Yes, many a time He turned His anger away and did not stir up all His wrath, for He remembered that they were but flesh, a breath that passes away and does not come again. How often they provoked Him in the wilderness and grieved Him in the desert. Again and again they tempted God and limited the Holy One of Israel.

They did not remember His power. They did not remember the day when He redeemed them from the enemy. Notice how He is kind of working backward.

He started with them in the wilderness and now He is going back to the part that we are in. They did not remember the day when He redeemed them from the enemy. Verse 43 When He worked His signs in Egypt and His wonders in the field of Zoan, He turned their rivers into blood and their streams that they could not drink.

That is the first sign that we just studied. He sent swarms of flies among them which devoured

them and frogs which destroyed them. He also gave their crops to the caterpillar and their labor to the locust.

He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamore trees with frost. He gave up their cattle to the hail and their flocks to fiery lightning. He cast on them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, indignation and trouble by sending angels of destruction or messengers of destruction among them.

He made a path for His anger. He did not spare their soul from death but gave their life over to the plague and destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt, the first of their strength in the tents of Ham. But He made His own people go forth like sheep and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

He led them on safely so that they did not fear and the sea overwhelmed their enemies. He brought them to His holy border, this mountain which His right hand had acquired. He drove out the nations before them, allotted them an inheritance by survey and made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents.

Notice the potential for inheritance is there. He has given it to them. All they have to do is travel to it and lay hold of it.

That's our situation now, isn't it? We have been given an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, that is obtainable by faith and patience. Faith and patience is what it takes to traverse the wilderness. If we throw up our hands, if we get distracted, if we start thinking back on the fun of the early days before we were redeemed, what's going to happen? Well, remember God's mighty works.

This is the pattern. This is the type of thing that God does, has always done, and will always do. They tested and provoked the Most High God.

They did not keep His testimonies. They turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers. They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

Have you ever shot a bow and arrow? Have you ever done any archery? The worst thing, I mean, you can hurt yourself just with the string and that's if everything stays intact. Can you imagine the damage that can be done if you pull a bow back with that much tension and that bow breaks? The two wooden pieces will fly back and do you serious bodily harm. I have seen this happen and it's ugly.

That's the deceitful bow. You think you're pulling something back. You think you're going to fire an arrow and hit the bull's eye and instead your bow breaks and you yourself receive damage rather than inflicting damage on the target.

They provoked Him to anger with their high places. They moved Him to jealousy with their carved images. Now this is talking about later days after they've gone into the land and gotten

into the idolatry of the Canaanites.

Why did Israel fall into idolatry? Why did they go in for the Baal and Ashtoreth and all the other cults that were prevalent? God sent them into a land that was full of that kind of stuff and they got entrapped in it. How did that happen? God said, wipe the people out. Do not intermarry with them.

Do not spare them. Utterly destroy them. Their women, their children, their cattle.

Kill everything that lives and breathes in the land. Why did He say kill the cattle? What did they have to do with anything? They were part of the sacrificial cult. They were part of the cult worship.

The purpose for which they had been bred, the industry, the commerce, people coming in from the outside, other idol worshippers who would come in and have truck and traffic and trade with the Canaanites. If you maintain their flocks and herds, why are you going to inherit the customers? The customers who travel from afar are going to come in and corrupt you with their idols and with their thoughts and things. That's why God said, wipe out their industry.

You bring your own in. You start fresh. Don't inherit the old environment.

The old contacts. They didn't do that. They said, oh look.

We've got built in Look at these people coming over. Look at these caravans who arrive yearly and who arrive every quarter trading and all of these wonderful things. We'll just keep these herds and we can pick up the business.

Look at how beautiful these women are. We shouldn't kill them all. Let's save a few of them.

All the children. Bless the beasts and the children. They sang a little song and then they didn't kill them.

And what happened? They became corrupted just as God said they would with those things. This is what it's talking about here. They provoked him with jealousy and anger with their high places and carved images.

When God heard this, he was furious. Just as furious as he was when they were demanding fancy food instead of manna. He greatly abhorred Israel and he forsook this tabernacle.

The tent that he had placed among men. He delivered his strength into captivity, his glory into the enemy's hand. He let Israel be taken over by forces beyond their control.

Fire consumed their young men. Their maidens were not given in marriage. Their priests fell by the sword.

Widows made lamentation. After they had absorbed this blow of judgment, this blow of

discipline, the Lord awoke as from sleep, like a mighty man who shouts because of wine, and he beat back the enemies. He put them to a perpetual reproach.

He rejected the tent of Joseph. He did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loved. He built his sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which he has established forever.

He chose David, his servant, took him from the sheepfolds, from following the youths that had young. He brought him to shepherd Jacob, his people, and Israel, his inheritance. And this is a foreshadowing of what God did when he brought the Lord Jesus Christ.

After the entire nation of Israel had gone out in captivity and then been brought back in humble circumstances and been oppressed by the Babylonians and by the Persians and by the Romans, here came the Lord Jesus with the promise of the kingdom. And they missed that also. Well, all of these things have been written for our instruction.

And what is the point? As we return to looking at these plagues, we're not just interested in what's the difference in a fly in a louse, or what about the blood in the river, and how did the magicians do it? These are things we should remember because they are signs. They are memorable events in the scripture that say, look, don't screw up. Don't get busy in the details of this life and miss crossing the Jordan into the promised land, into the land of inheritance, into the place of blessing.

It's worth the trip. Stick with the manna. Stick with the water that God supplies from the rock.

Build your house on the rock. Look to the pillar of fire and the pillar of smoke. Don't be led astray by your cravings.

Don't be led astray by memories of the past where, like Barbara Streisand says, what's too painful to remember, we choose to forget. They forgot about the bondage and the slayings and the dead infants and all of the oppression for hundreds of years. All they thought about was, boy, sure was good food back there.

Wish I had an onion right about now. We used to do that going to the field. Back when I was active in the Marine Corps, we still had sea rations that came in cans and you'd lug these things around and they would get issued to you from the truck.

It was not the greatest food that ever was coming out of a can. Canned meat, canned potatoes, things like that. You'd want to try to spice it up.

If you had malice of forethought, you would put a bottle of Tabasco sauce in your Alice Pack. You might try to bring a couple of fresh onions that you could chop up in there and bring something to help the food get down. You could even mix and match.

You could find other sea rations and mix it together. You could cut the instant coffee and put

your hot chocolate and cream in there. You could get together with other guys that had sea rations and make a stew that was pretty decent by combining the meat and some of the other things.

People like tasty food. Some people really like tasty food and have a hard time because of it. Well, this is a desire.

It's a craving. What's wrong with that? There's nothing intrinsically sinful about food. There's nothing intrinsically sinful about leeks and garlicks and onions, is there? Why did it become a sin for Israel? Because it was a substitute.

And it was evidence of dissatisfaction with what God had provided. It was symbolic of their dissatisfaction. God's given us man and we don't really like this.

This is not what I desire. The plan of God doesn't match my desire, my goal, my pleasure and happiness. It's bland.

It's dry. It doesn't meet my needs. That's when it becomes a sin.

And this is what we have to watch out for. Anything can deflect us. It doesn't have to have a copyright Satan 1991 on it or something.

It can be something good. It can be a hobby. It can be a relationship.

It can be people. It can be a goal or desire that we've cherished for a long time. It doesn't matter what it is.

If it deflects us from the guidance of God, from the pattern of God, from that path through the wilderness to the promised land, look at the mighty works of God. That's why we're studying Exodus. That's why we're looking at these plagues in detail.

It ought to make a difference. What's the point of being a Christian? What's the point of learning and knowing the Word of God if it doesn't make a difference? If you don't have something in your soul that distinguishes you from the person who pulls up next to you at the traffic light who knows nothing of God and cares nothing for Christ and doesn't even own a Bible, if there's not a difference between that person and us, we're wasting our time. If we don't have hope, if we don't have faith, if it doesn't manifest itself in love, love for God and love for fellow believers, love for the things of God, His Word, looking to the future and expectation for the kingdom and the inheritance, if you're not motivated and changed by that, something is dreadfully wrong and something dreadfully wrong is going to befall us.

We will lose our inheritance. We will drop in the wilderness. Look at the pattern of God throughout Scripture.

God does not take that lightly. It makes Him furious. I, for one, do not want to fall into the hands of a furious God.

There's just no percentage in it. So, hopefully, having been away for a little while now, we have some expectation of profit and of hope and of good things to come from our study. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to resume in the first triad of plagues.