

Exod 03-05-11a

Our worship this morning, let's take just a moment at the outset to clear our minds and prepare our hearts. We have acknowledged God's place in our lives by coming here, by obeying the command to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For us it is not an option, it is a command.

Our soul needs nourishment in the same way that our body needs nourishment. And when we find ourselves flagging in hope, when our joy seems to be dissipated, when our outlook doesn't seem that bright, many times it is because our soul is hungry. We can't always drop what we're doing and go attend a Bible class.

What we can do is dig into the reservoir of what we have learned, what God the Holy Spirit has made clear to us and has stored for us in our soul. They talk about camels of the desert and how they can store nourishment, including water, in their bodies and go for days and even weeks without a blade of grass, without a drink of water. When they reach an oasis, they store up, they take in what they need for life and they carry it with them.

And when the time comes and the hot desert sands and the climate are afflicting them, they draw on what they have taken in. And that's what we are called to do. We are not supposed to be in church seven days a week, eight hours a day.

I have sometimes fantasized what a great life that would be, to just do nothing but look at the Word of God all day long every day. And for someone with a calling to teach and to learn and to try to make things clear, that would be a great thing. But God doesn't call us to that.

He puts us in a real life with circumstances and issues and relationships and personalities and ups and downs. Why does He do that? Because we are supposed to come to the oasis, get our nourishment, and then draw on it in times of decision and in times of setting priorities and accomplishing things. So that's why we are here.

We are at the oasis. We have the opportunity to replenish and nourish and nurture our souls. And in order to do that, because it is something that partakes of the heavenly and of the spiritual, we need God's power to do so.

And that is God the Holy Spirit. He is always with us. That is His role and function, one among many, is to take the Word of God and convert it into something that we can use.

We are not set up to partake of angels' food. Notice I said angels' food, not angel food. Lots of people eat angel food, angel food cake, and also eat devil's food cake.

But the spiritual nourishment, the things we are going to look at in God's Word this morning, require something beyond the human mind to make sense of and to convert into good that is pleasing in God's sight. And that's the power of God's Spirit. And we are wasting our time if we

just try to use our human brain.

This would be like putting... You've got a transistor radio that runs on batteries, but you say, you know, my car is much more powerful than a radio, and it runs on gasoline. I believe I'll pour gasoline into this radio and it ought to really go. Well, it's an incompatible fuel.

It just doesn't work, right? Well, the human brain and heavenly fuel from God's Word are incompatible. We have to have something to convert that energy into what we can use, and that's what God's Spirit does. The only way He can do His work is if we have made our soul a compatible place for Him to work, and that is to acknowledge our sin and our failures and to go before the Lord and say, these are the things where I have fallen short, I have failed.

I claim your forgiveness and cleansing that's based on Christ's work. Once we've done that, God the Holy Spirit can do His work. So we pause at the beginning of each lesson to go before the throne of grace, to claim God's cleansing and God's forgiveness so that the Holy Spirit can minister these truths to our hearts.

We're here. We are going to spend the time in some fashion. Why not take it and make it a source of strength and a source of eternal righteousness and eternal treasure in heaven during our study? So let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, thank You for assigning us this age in which to live, to be partakers of a particular part of Your plan where we belong to Christ. We share His inheritance. We have all of the fullness of Your Word before us to draw upon and to see Your mighty works throughout history.

We ask Your blessing on us as we study this morning. We have been given every opportunity. We live in a great country.

We have a wonderful form of government. We thank You for our president. We pray that You'll continue to guide and bless him and his advisors as he makes very difficult decisions and navigates through the criticism of people who do not understand the higher and greater goals and principles that should guide a nation as it pursues its destiny.

We thank You for answered prayer in preserving and protecting the lives of our service people, both at home and abroad. And we pray that You will continue to bless especially those who are believers and who may have a difficult time finding ways to worship and to renew their study of Your Word. We pray that You'll grant them the grace to find what they need, either in their memory or in what is available to them, wherever they may be.

And once again, we ask Your blessing on us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will minister these truths to our hearts in such a way that we will live in a way that is pleasing in Your sight and in a way that is glorifying to the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray it in His name.

Amen. For our scripture reading this morning, we're going to break from our pattern of drawing on the Psalms to look at Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy chapter 32.

Now, Deuteronomy 32 is a long chapter, so we're not going to read the whole thing. Of course, I'm actually kind of sneaking up on you because portions of this chapter are in Psalms. The great song of Moses here.

But we're going to look at a particular section, and I want to look at it in Deuteronomy. These are the final words of Moses. If you look ahead in the latter part of this chapter, you will find Moses dying on Mount Nebo.

When someone is on their deathbed, think about it. It's your last chance to tell people what's important. It's your last chance to impress on them your desires, everything you've learned in your life, what you think is most important.

Typically, people's final words, their final exhortations, are reflecting the most significant things to them, what they consider to be most important. It's kind of one of those, if you don't remember anything else, remember this. Then they leave their last and they're gone.

Well, he rehearses the history of Israel in the first half of Deuteronomy 32, and he talks about their deliverance that we're studying even now in Exodus. And he reminds them that they wax and wane. They surge forward and then they fall back, and they're inconsistent.

When they get into stress, they decide that maybe they ought to listen to the Lord, and then as soon as the stress and the pressure is gone, they fade back. And we're going to see that pattern as we look at the plagues and look at Pharaoh's reaction to them this morning in Exodus chapter 10. But, he begins up in verse 15 and he says, Jeshurun grew fat and kicked.

We've been through this passage before, and you know that Jeshurun is another nickname for Israel. And he talks about how they provoked God to jealousy with foreign gods and abominations, sacrificing to demons. And in verse 18 it says, Of the rock who begot you, you are unmindful, and you have forgotten the God who fathered you.

Now, this is the theme. This is the key decision that you and I make every single day. Think about yesterday.

What was yesterday? Saturday, May the 10th? Yesterday, all of us, everybody listening to the sound of my voice, made decisions about whether or not to remember or forget the God who fathered us. Every one of us. Think about it.

Think back to some of the things you did yesterday. In what sense did we remember or fail to remember the God who fathered us? Well, that day in God's books will be evaluated on that basis. When that day comes up at the judgment, it's going to be judged based on did you remember or did you forget the God who fathered you.

Well, he says Israel in this phase of their history that he's talking about, they forgot the God who fathered them. They did not remember the rock who begot them. We talked about building our house on the rock, building our life on something substantial, something that will

make it last.

When the Lord saw it in verse 19, he spurned them because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters. Notice, it isn't that they're pagan, savage, godless unbelievers, is it? It's his own sons and daughters that he is going to spurn. Now, God is the God of the universe.

He is the God of provision. He is the God who gives us the air we breathe, the food we eat, the job that we have, the family we have, the health that we enjoy. Every good thing comes down from above, from the Father of lights, the New Testament tells us.

So if that God decides that it is time to spurn us, what do you think is going to happen? Well, all of the areas of provision, potentially, can dry up. If God is going to spurn... I personally think being spurned by God is probably not a good thing. Don't you? Well, if I knew that there was a cause where God would spurn me, I would hopefully remember that cause and not invoke it, not create the situation where God would spurn me.

It is the provocation of His sons and daughters. He says in verse 20, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no... What? Are you reading along with me? What's the last word in verse 20 of Deuteronomy 32? Children in whom is no faith. What is faith? Hebrews 11.1 Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for.

It is the evidence of things not seen. We think we are not going to suffer a consequence when we forget the God who begot us and our Father in Heaven because things go on as they have before. There's still some food in the cupboard.

We're still breathing air. We haven't suddenly developed an aneurysm or an embolism or some other ism that ends our life, right? And the promise of God that He's going to turn His back on us is invisible. Faith knows that those things are true and acts accordingly.

Faith says there is a record being kept in Heaven. Faith says every thought needs to be taken captive for Christ. That's what Paul says.

Every thought captive to Christ. If I start letting my mind run on unhealthy things, if I start letting myself get distracted, if I let myself get apathetic and indifferent to who I am and why I'm here, it's kind of like, if you've been down at the mall lately, up here at Richardson Square Mall, they've got a whole section of nothing but video games. Almost every mall has one or more of these little arcade deals.

It used to be you would go in and it was mostly pinball. Back in the mechanical pre-computer days, it was mostly pinball machines and skee-ball and little miniature bowling and that kind of thing. Now, they're pretty much all computer games.

Very lifelike simulations of foo fighters and boxers and race car drivers and different kinds of things. I've even seen this one where they have to dance. There's a pattern of things that comes

down like the Matrix screen or something and wherever there's a color you have to put your feet so people are bopping and dropping and trying to conform to this pattern that drops down.

But what I find interesting is the level of computer simulation that the designers, they are pushing the frontiers of virtual reality. The adventure games where the guy has to go through and fight different adversaries and so on is so real and it's rendered in such graphic detail that it's sort of total immersion. You've got stereo sound.

You've got these incredible graphics. You've got lots of control over the character. Of course, you have to spend about \$75.25 to reach the level where you can get past the opening screen.

But people really get immersed in these games, don't they? And there are people who get just hooked on them and want the home version to play on their PC and will spend hours and days and network with other people and they can be characters and enter this virtual world and have these virtual things. Well, that's fine within reason. There's nothing evil, satanic or bad about video games.

I play one every now and again. I don't plunk quarters in down at the mall. But here's the point.

What if someone got caught up in one of these games and just never came back to reality? Never came back and realized that, you know, it's been like six hours since I ate last. I haven't slept. I mean, it's, you know, I'm getting on.

I'm at my PC at night. Now it's 2 a.m. and I'm playing on through the night and I'm not sleeping. I'm not eating.

I'm not engaging in any real life. I'm just totally immersed in this game and I can't extract myself. Well, faith is the evidence of things not seen.

If you want to think of it this way, and I use this analogy carefully because I don't mean to say that life is not real. It is. But there is a more real life for us than this earthly existence.

The more real life is the eternal life that we have been given by God. It is the eternal future. And if you compare eternity to this life, it's sort of like real life versus a video game.

I can get in there and play Star Trek, Voyager, Holomatch or Quake or one of these and play that for a little while and I can even apply things that I know in my mind. I can be crafty and I can shoot, move and communicate and do the different things you have to do to survive in the game. But sooner or later I turn the game off and I go back to real life.

Well, we are going to turn the game of this life off one of these days and go back to real life. This is like the driver training simulator where... Do they still do that? Do they still have driver training simulators where you go in... I mean, it's been 30 odd years since I did driver training. But in the old days, in the prehistoric times of the troglodytes when they had driver's ed, you

went in a thing that was like a bus.

Our school couldn't afford a permanent one so the county or somebody brought in a bus and it was all set up in this bus. And so you would sit in seats that were like a driver's seat and they had pedals, brakes and clutch and gas because we were driving standards back then and they had the turn signals and the steering wheel and all of this and it's all hooked up to a big computer with lots of fans back in the back. This was pre-PC days and so the thing was much more primitive than whatever they have now.

But in the front was a big screen and they say, okay, you are driving in a town and they would start the film and here you would see a street and you'd hit the accelerator pedal and the film would move and you would be going down the street and then they would say, oh, here's a red light. The light just changed from green to yellow to red and so you're supposed to push the brake and back in the back, it's making a record of everything you do in time with the film to see did you hit the brake when you were supposed to, did you allow enough time to stop, did you slam them on. Then it says, okay, now you're going to make a right turn on Elm Street.

So you're going down, you see the sign for Elm, did you put your blinker on at the right time, did you slow down, did you turn the wheel to the right and you're graded on all of these things. Then you're driving around and there's a safe way over on the right and a lady just suddenly pushes a shopping cart out into the street and it's unexpected and you're supposed to slam on the brakes and stop and not run over the lady. Of course, everybody thought it was really funny to just hit the gas and run over the pedestrian in the practice rounds.

But when you're going for a grade, passing driver's ed lets you start driving six months sooner than if you don't. And so when it came time to be serious about it, everybody was really serious because everyone wants to drive, right? That's the goal. I want to get my license, get my permit when I'm 15 and a half and be able to drive.

It's also you get a discount on your insurance for that. So there is a reward for being faithful to execute and you see the analogy. We, in a sense, in one sense, this life is a dry run for eternity and we're learning how to apply the principles that will apply throughout all eternity now.

We have the lady with the shopping cart run out in front of us. It creates a crisis. What do we do? Do we panic and take our hands off the wheel and scream? Or do we take a hold and press the brake and solve the problem? That's what this life is.

We have to remember the Father who has begotten us. We have to remember the real life that surrounds and goes far beyond this momentary run through earthly history, however long it lasts for us. It's so short.

60, 70, maybe 80 years. And then we enter eternity and whatever we learned here, however far we got, whatever we achieved, that's what we go into eternity with. And there's not like a makeup exam.

There's not a second earth where you can go and do it better the next time. We get like the old beer commercial. You go around once in life, so you better grab the gusto because there are no do-overs.

There's nothing in the Bible about a do-over for human life. And if you mess around and don't get serious about this life and learn, then in the next life, what's going to happen to us? We're going to be in a lowly estate and we will be kicking our... How long do you want to kick yourself over a mistake? You know, I was thinking about this the other day. Somebody I know made a mistake and just felt horrible about it and was just sick over it about having failed to do something that had been promised.

And you know how that is. We've all had the sick realization that we were supposed to do something or had promised to do something. We utterly failed and we just kick ourselves over it.

And you have to go through a period of time before you get over it, right? But a day or two goes by. You kind of put it in perspective. You pick up and move on.

You say, well, do better next time. There is no get over it for this. We will kick ourselves for eternity if we mess this life up.

We'll always have... Every time we think back on this life, we're going to say, I was a complete and total doctor minus mind all the way through my life. No brain, no thought. It told me over and over how many different ways.

66 books, 70 years, pounding on my head, wake up, get ready, and look, I'm down here weeding the garden for some person that I thought was a useless individual. And I'm going to be the earthworm collector now for a thousand years in the millennial kingdom because I didn't wake up and pay attention to what scripture says. Well, now, suppose you were in that situation and somebody says, you can go back.

We'll give you time travel. We'll drop you back into your life and let you have another chance. That's how I think of this day.

I often tell myself, suppose I got to the future and God said, alright, just for you Sam, I'll make an exception. I'll drop you back into your life and let you do it differently. Here I am.

I've got some unknown number of days left and I have a chance to change that bad future. I'm back here in this life. I'm still breathing good air.

I've got the word of God. I've got some days here. I can do this right.

You and I can do this right. We are given the instructions. We're told everything that we need.

Have you seen this commercial where a guy and his family walk into the hamburger joint and the sign drops down and it says 1 million and he says, oh, am I the millionth customer? And the

guy says, no, this is the millionth time you've been here. And he says, try something new. Don't just keep eating burgers.

Well, I was thinking about that because I thought, now could somebody really visit a burger joint a million times? And so I thought, well, if you went once a day, how many days are there in a 70-year life? Let's say we have 70 years of life. So how many days is that? Well, even if you said there's only 300 days in a year, that would be about, what, 21,000 days? That is not very many days. Throw in the 65 and do the math.

Maybe you have 30,000 days in your life and we've already used up however many. You can sit down and do the math. We don't have very many days.

We ought to make them count. We ought to do something with them. Well, how do we make them count? Look at what Moses says here.

He says here in verse 20, God's going to hide His face. They are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith. God is looking for faith.

He's not looking for how many scalps did you hang on your belt because you evangelized? How many people did you win to the Lord? How many homeless people did you give a \$5 bill to? How much money did you put in the offering plate? How many prayers did you say? You just quantify things. It's not it at all. Children in whom is no faith.

They have provoked me to jealousy by what is not God. We are supposed to be trying to live in a way that pleases God. And whatever else we pursue, whoever else we try to please, including ourselves, the big earthly trinity, that's instead of God.

And He says, they have moved me to anger by their foolish idols. I will provoke them to jealousy by those who are not a nation. He's talking to Israel here.

He says, Israel looks down on the Gentiles. They look down on the Goyim. I'll take those Goyim and I will elevate those who have faith above my own people.

That's what's going to happen to us. There are people who are quietly trying to live their life day by day to please the Lord. And God is going to raise them up.

And He says, you're going to be jealous of them. That's why I use that analogy of chopping cotton on somebody's plantation. You're going to be looking down at the big house saying, I wish I was out there on the front porch with a mint julep with two or three people waving fans at me instead of out here chopping cotton.

It's a crude analogy. And I don't mean to suggest that we won't be glad that we're saved and that we won't have a measure of happiness. But when we look at what we could have had, when we look at what we could have done, we're going to wish we'd done it differently.

Now, run the tape back and here we are. Let's do it differently now and not enter into that

future. A fire is kindled in my anger, God says in verse 22, and shall burn to the lowest hell.

It shall consume the earth with her increase. It consumes all the productivity, all the fruitfulness, all the accomplishments, all of the possessions. God says, my anger is going to light a fire that's going to burn the stuff up all the way down to hell.

In Revelation, it talks about people who frittered away this life doing evil practices, self-centered practices, and it says their inheritance is in the lake of fire. Their portion. All the things that God had set aside to give them that were potential got loaded up in the truck, backed up the truck, beep, beep, beep, beep to the edge of the lake of fire, hit the hydraulics, down it goes.

Slides into the lake of fire. There it goes. Everything that you would have loved to have in the millennial kingdom into the lowest hell.

That's what He's saying. It shall consume the earth with her increase and will set on fire the foundations of the mountains. We think some things are so certain and so important in this life that they're like mountains.

Jesus said, you can go speak to a mountain and your faith can move it. Faith will change what seems to be a solid, immovable object in this life. If we fail to pay attention to this, look at verse 23, I will heap disasters on them.

I will spend my arrows on them. How many arrows do you think God has? Like 12? God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. I think He's probably got arrows in abundance.

And He says, I will exhaust my arrows on them. I will not cease to fire ammunition. God has an inexhaustible supply of ammunition.

He says in verse 24, they will be wasted with hunger. They wanted to pursue their own kind of food, the quail meat and the leeks and garlicks. They're going to be hungry.

They will be devoured by pestilence and bitter destruction. I will also send against them the teeth of beasts with the poison of serpents of the dust. God will take down the wall of defense and let enemies have their way with us.

And we're believers. We are those who ought to be hiding in the rock in the fortress and the God of strength massacring our enemies. And instead, He withdraws.

He pulls out and leaves and we're just at the mercy of those who hate us. Look at verse 25. The sword will destroy outside.

There will be terror within for the young man and the virgin, the nursing child with the man of gray hairs. Nobody gets spared. You don't get an out or a bye.

You can't say, well, I'm just young. That's why I have an excuse. Or, I'm old.

I have an excuse. I would have said, I will dash them in pieces. I will make the memory of them to cease from among men had I not feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should misunderstand, lest they should say, our hand is high and it is not the Lord who has done all this.

Our very salvation would hang in the balance. You know what keeps our salvation intact? God's integrity. God's Word.

God says, I will not let it be spoken of Me that I went back on My Word. But this is how close we come. If it wasn't for God's glory on the line, He would just evaporate us.

We've talked about this before. If God's mercy did not endure forever, as it says in Psalm 100, He could revoke our salvation. He could say, you know, I'm just sick of looking at you.

And your molecules would disperse. Forever. But He says, My glory is on the line.

I've made a promise and I will keep it. Why is He upset with them? Verse 28, They are a nation void of counsel. Now, what's counsel? Lots of people want a counsel, don't they? We have counsel and advice from all over the place.

All you have to do is watch Oprah. Oprah has got counsel for everything. Here's how to lose weight.

Here's how to achieve self-fulfillment. And Oprah fulfills herself. I saw a program the other day.

I don't know, they've changed the times of the programs. Now I wind up seeing Oprah and it's an affliction. But she was showing, you know, it's not like she didn't, she doesn't have to break her arm patting herself on the back because she's hired people who will do it for her.

But she finds these people that are, oh, pining, I am huge. There was a man that weighed 550 pounds. And he said, you know, my dream is that someday I could lose enough weight to sit behind the wheel of a Ferrari.

And so he buckled down and he lost, you know, 400 of his 550 pounds or something like that. And he came on Oprah and was waving and saying, Oh, you've inspired me. I lost all this weight.

And she says, Well, we borrowed a Ferrari. Come see if you can sit behind the wheel. So he crawls in and sits behind it.

He says, Oh, this is great. They took a picture of him. He got back out and then she handed him the keys and said, It's yours.

And, of course, this was an old episode, but she was repeating it and showing it how she gets her fulfillment. But what she has forgotten, and I don't mean to pick on Oprah, but it's a good example, is that accomplishments in this life and the feel good from that sort of thing, if it

doesn't hook into the glory of God, there is nothing of God in that, it's going to vanish away. It means nothing.

It signifies nothing. They are a nation void of counsel. It's not Dr. Phil counsel.

It's not Ten Step counsel. It's not Alcoholics Anonymous, Big Book counsel. It's not even Christian counsel.

It is the Word of God. They are a nation devoid of the Word of God. There is no understanding in them.

God says, Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider... What does it say in verse 29? What should we be considering? God says the cure for all this. Oh, that they would consider the end, the future, what they are going to come to. How could one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight unless their rock had sold them and the Lord had surrendered them? Ten thousand Israelites standing on the plain.

One enemy pops his head up over and they all flee. Is that the way we want to live? Do we want to live in fear? The tiniest thing upsets us. It goes on to talk about the difference between the enemies and what they depend on and our rock.

Their vine is the vine of Sodom, the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are grapes of Gaul. Their clusters are bitter.

Their wine is the poison of serpents and the cruel venom of cobras. Is this not laid up in store with me, says God, sealed up among my treasures? Vengeance is mine and recompense. The foot of the enemies will slip in due time.

Their day of calamity is at hand and the things to come hasten upon them. The Lord will judge His people, verse 36, and have compassion on His servants when He sees that their power is gone and there is no one remaining bond or free. He will say, Where are their gods, the rock in which they sought refuge? Who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise and help you and be your refuge.

What's His point here? There's going to come a time when all the things that we use instead of God fail. And God says, Well, where is it now? Are you learning something here? Well, we can either learn the easy way or learn the hard way. I vote for the easy way.

I vote to look at the nation of Israel and see the mistakes they made and not repeat them. So, how do we do that? We have to pay attention to who we are and why we're here. We have to consider the latter end of things.

It's easy for us to live in the present. Live for the moment. But God encourages us to look ahead.

That's why hope is one of the three great Christian virtues. Hope is looking ahead. Well, why are

we here when we're studying Exodus chapter 10? Turn back with me now to Exodus chapter 10.

I'm going to make one quick point before we break. Exodus chapter 10. We have already seen five plagues as we got through the first part of chapter 9. We talked about the sixth plague of boils and the seventh plague of hail last time.

But I told you that we would stop and look at the pattern of these plagues and the way they are repeating themselves and making points. And one of the things we see here is that God gave warnings ahead of time for the first plague. Remember, He warned about the Nile turning to blood.

He told them when He threw the rod down, and because you're not listening to me, bad things are going to happen. He gave them a warning. He warned on the first plague, warned on the second plague, and then the third plague came and there was no warning.

It just descended. Remember that? These swarms, whether they were mosquitoes or gnats or fleas or ticks or whatever these swarms were, they were some sort of vermin that bit and plagued people. They could not match it.

The magicians could not match it, the wise men of Egypt. Then, after those first three plagues, we had a second cycle of three. We had the flies.

Some have speculated that these are the scarab beetles. You see Egyptian scarabs all the time in archaeology. They were very common in iconography, in the tomb paintings and so on.

These flies come. Then you had the death of the cattle and Pharaoh's heart became hard. He still wouldn't let them go.

So then, there's no warning when the boils come. We looked at the boils last time. We'll look at them a little bit more this morning.

So then, when the hail comes, again, there is a warning. At the beginning of each cycle of three, God tells Moses and Aaron, go to Pharaoh early in the morning. Go to him early in the morning and tell him this is what's going to happen if he does not relent.

Pharaoh has all day to think about it. This is a period of grace before judgment. We are told and then we have time.

We have a warning. We have an opportunity to respond and do something different. Each time, plague one, plague four and plague seven, Moses and Aaron go to Pharaoh early in the morning and say, look, you better let the people go.

If not, this is what's going to happen. This seventh plague begins the most intensive. When things come in threes, and this is three sets of threes, the third thing is really intensive.

And these last three of the first nine plagues are very intensive. Sometimes it takes very

intensive pressure to make us wake up and smell the coffee, so to speak. Early in the morning, we get the warning.

But what's the point? Israel had a choice in each generation to heed the warning of God, to remember His name, remember what He's done, both His wonderful acts of deliverance and His awful acts of discipline. We should wake up each morning with the same thoughts. We can live this day.

We have decisions to make. We have been given the warning. We've been given the opportunity to live in a way that pleases God.

But we have to remember who we are and why we're here. If we get so soaked up in the video game that we forget... It reminds me, I was telling... I forget, one of us was talking a week or two ago about the mazes that they construct with little white lab rats. You know, they're trying to test their brain responses and things.

And so they'll give them little choices. They can go one way or another. And then they come to these buttons that they can push with their nose.

They push a button, and maybe fresh water comes out and they can get a drink. They push another button, and maybe a thing opens and they can get some food. They push another button, and it opens up, and there's a little lady rat in there.

And they can go in and have a good time with the lady rat. So they figure out, well, what does this rat consider most important? Does he want to be with the lady rat? Does he want to eat? Does he want just drinking water? And so then they started looking at substances. And they said, well, we'll give him a little shot of a hallucinogen or a, you know, happy drug here.

He pushes the button, and he gets a rat-sized dose of cocaine. And when the rat got to the button with the cocaine, and the cocaine came out, he really liked that. So he pushed the button again, and again, and again.

Well, you laughed, but the rat died in front of that button because he could think of nothing else. They were demonstrating this is how addictive that stuff is. Animals, their most basic instincts is to live and to survive, to eat, to reproduce.

These are the most fundamental basic drives. And to know that there is a substance that will override all of your common sense, all of your basic instinct to survive, and will kill you because you are obsessed with it in this way, that is a frightening thought. If we get too caught up in this life, if we get addicted to its pleasures, addicted to its stimulation, we can die in front of the button.

And we will miss things that God has for us. Remember Omani Hall and Door No. 1, Door No.

2, and Door No. 3? And you have to make a choice. You know, well, do you want to trade this for

something better? Do you want to trade this for something that is unknown? We face decisions every day.

And to wake up and realize that this life is short, it is temporary, it serves a purpose for training, it serves a purpose for testing, and it is determining, even as we speak, who is going to rule and reign and who is going to serve, who is going to be inside the city and who is going to be outside. And it may go against our prejudices and it may go against our likes and dislikes. We may have certain things that we hold near and dear to our heart.

We look Friday night at the words of Christ on the cross and people just consider those sacred and make it their life's verse and things like that. And you find out, well, they're not really in the Bible. Can I, in the light of what the Word of God teaches, give up things that are sacred cows, things that are near and dear that I've thought and held to all my life? Well, this is a little higher form of test.

This determines. You know, they have a tiebreaker sometimes. People all get in the same group and they have too many and they have to have a harder question.

Did they ever do this when you were in school? They'd have the regular test and then there would be two or three bonus questions. And so the people who competed for the best grades, they figured, you know, I'm going to ace the test. But here's the tiebreakers.

Here's the bonus questions that are really hard. And those, typically, only one or two people might get one or two questions. You find out, well, everybody got 100 on test, but who really was the smartest? Well, some of the more difficult tests in our life of discernment and of being willing to let go of things, God brings our way because He is sorting people out.

He is ranking. He is categorizing. He is evaluating each one of us.

And the goal is the future life. That's where we're headed. So Israel forgot that, and we've talked about it many times, but out of this two million that leave Egypt, only two are going to walk across the river.

That's the degree of sorting out that took place in that crowd. Well, you and I have been given a great opportunity. We don't want to lose it.

So hopefully we'll remember those things. We're going to pause and take our break. When we come back, we're going to look at some characteristics of these first nine plagues before we move into the tenth that I think you'll find very interesting.

There is a pattern here that actually is reflected in what you and I face in our lives down at this day some 3,500 years later. But let's pause here and take our break.