

Let's resume our study now in the book of Exodus. We have arrived at chapter 11. We have seen God instigate, perpetrate the nine plagues, beginning with the Nile turning to blood, culminating with the darkness for three days.

Pharaoh relents and says, "Serve the Lord, but leave your flocks and your herds behind. Even your little ones may go with you." Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings. Our livestock will go with us. Not a hoof shall be left behind."

One of the things you notice is that Pharaoh keeps trying to find an intermediate position, something less than complete deliverance, something less than complete departure, something to keep a hook in the Israelites to reel them back into the land after this time of worship.

And there is and there can be no compromise. It is the time for separation. It is the time to leave behind the life of slavery, the life of bondage, the life of oppression, the life of fruitlessness in Egypt, and to go to the place of plenty, to go to the place of testing, to go to the place of growth, to go to the place of conflict and conquest.

There is nothing further to be learned from Egypt. There is no need to return to Egypt. Indeed, it is essential that they separate themselves from Egypt.

And we find this in our own lives. We cannot compromise. We can't keep one foot in the world and one foot on the path that goes through the narrow gate. It just doesn't work. It's an all-or-nothing proposition. To leave one foot in Egypt is to be reeled back into Egypt.

And Moses says, "Not a hoof shall be left behind." And this ought to be... You know, they put plaques on the wall. When I was a young lad, there was a plaque on the wall that said, "Christ is the head of this house, the unseen guest at every meal, the silent listener to every conversation." And it was a fruitful thing to meditate on.

We have different verses that we put up. We have a wonderful piece of needlework in here that my great-aunt did that quotes Isaiah: "Wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." We have a verse here in this room that talks about the things that are pure and noble and lovely from Philippians 4.

One of the verses that you don't find on plaques very often that ought to be there is this one, from Exodus chapter 10 and verse 26: "Not a hoof shall be left behind." That ought to be our motto. We just put it up there and let people ask, "What do you mean, not a hoof shall be left behind?"

Not the smallest item in the inventory. Not one calf, not one goat is going to be left in the region of darkness, in the kingdom that is unproductive. Not a hoof shall be left behind. We will take them to serve the Lord our God.

Of course, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. And we should not quail; we shouldn't be discouraged or surprised about this, because a lot of ink has been spilled, a lot of tortured argumentation has taken place over God hardening Pharaoh's heart.

Did Pharaoh harden his own heart? We've covered this in the past, and it's worth reviewing at this time and in this context, that Pharaoh put himself in the place where God is free to do His will. It is not as though Pharaoh did not have opportunities to recognize the authority of the God of Israel. Pharaohs before him did that. The Pharaoh who knew Joseph did that. He was a Pharaoh. He was an Egyptian. He had no problem with the God of Israel.

Indeed, he embraced Him and the people who worshipped Him, encouraged the worship, brought them into the land, cared for them in a time of famine, recognized the integrity and the quality of the people who worshipped that God, and there was great freedom.

It is not as though this Pharaoh could not have done the same, but he made a series of decisions that left him in the position where God would work His will. And this is true of believers just as it is true of unbelievers.

As I pointed out in the past, remember, this hardening of the heart does not prevent Pharaoh's salvation. It is because Pharaoh has rejected salvation that God is free to harden his heart. If he were a believer, if he were

someone who might respond or had the potential to respond, God would never harden his heart. It is not the will of God that any should perish, not even Pharaoh, but that all come to repentance.

Pharaoh has rejected that, consistently rejected it, rejected it over time, has had ample opportunities, ample testimony, and because he is a rejecter, because he has chosen darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil, God is free to do with him what He wills. It is not a violation of his free will. It is not an assignment or a predestination to destruction. It is a result, a predicted result, an intended result of his rejection of God.

So there is no problem. There is no theological crux. Yes, God hardened Pharaoh's heart because Pharaoh rejected God. You find this principle beautifully described in Romans chapter 1.

Now, verse 1 of chapter 11: "Now the Lord said to Moses, 'Moses, one more plague I will bring on Pharaoh and on Egypt. After that, he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out from here completely.'"

Now, this is not news to Moses, at least it shouldn't be. Turn with me back to Exodus chapter 3, verse 19. Exodus chapter 3, verse 19. God is telling Moses to address Pharaoh and go before him with the elders of Israel and say, "The Lord, the God of the 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. But I know that the king of Egypt will not permit you to go except under compulsion."

That's how it translates it in the New American Standard. "Not even by a mighty hand" is a more literal translation, as we have it in the New King James. "So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in its midst. And after that, he will let you go."

Look at the next verse, in verse 21. "I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, and it shall be when you go that you shall not go empty-handed. But every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing, and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."

Now, this is way back in chapter 3. So we have an early prediction of what we're about to see in chapter 11, right? But this is not the first prediction. You think, "Well, my goodness, you can't go back much further than Exodus chapter 3, because Exodus 1 and 2 is Moses and the bulrushes, and how can there be an earlier prediction?" Well, turn with me back to Genesis chapter 24, verse 53.

Genesis, when Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The thing comes from the Lord; we cannot speak to you either bad or good," the proposition of taking Rebekah to be the wife of Isaac. "Here is Rebekah before you. Take her and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as the Lord has spoken."

"And it came to pass, when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth. Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother."

The departure of Rebekah from the household of Laban was accompanied by these gifts. And what I want you to notice here is that these were freewill gifts, and this was not a borrowing by Rebekah. These were things that were given to her to keep, and they weren't necessarily happy about her leaving, but they said, "This is from the Lord," and so it is appropriate for us to send you away with gifts. It is an appropriate thing because it is God's will. This thing is from the Lord, right?

Most of the time, if you have a child departing the household, a daughter departing to be married, you have a lot of mixed feelings. You're glad that they're moving on in life, but there is a measure of sorrow, and so you can kind of balance out. But they say, "Well, it's an appropriate time to give gifts." So it is from the Lord, it is recognized, and that's a point to which we're going to return.

But go back even earlier in Genesis. Go back to Genesis chapter 15. I believe it's where it is. God is speaking to Abraham. This is where he cuts the sacrifices up and has to wait all day, shooing the buzzards away, and at night God comes.

Verse 12: "When the sun was going down"—this is Genesis 15:12—"a deep sleep fell upon Abraham; and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. Then he said to Abraham, 'Know certainly that your

descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. Also the nation whom they serve I will judge.”

What does it say next? “Afterward they shall come out with great possessions.” This coming-out party, this new phase of life, is going to be accompanied with great possessions. It says, “In the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

Okay, well, back to Exodus chapter 11, because all of these concepts are bound up here. There are people who try to say that there is a problem because the King James says that the Egyptians lent jewelry to the Israelites and they ran off with it, never brought it back. And that's not the case.

It is a custom in the ancient Near East when someone departs for a new phase of life to send them with gifts. So we saw in Exodus chapter 3, “I will give you favor in the sight of the Egyptians. When you go, that you will not go empty-handed. Ask of your neighbor articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing. Put them on your sons and your daughters. So shall you plunder the Egyptians.”

Now, it would have been inconceivable. You think about the situation back in Exodus chapter 3. Here are the slaves, the brickmakers, the ones who have the infrastructure of making bread and food and so on for the workers and the laborers. They are domestic servants and so on. To propose that they ask their taskmasters and their owners for jewelry and clothing and so on, and expect to receive it—this would just be unheard of.

They could not in their wildest dreams imagine that they would say, “Well, Mistress Bezalel, whatever her name is in Egyptian, I would like that nice gold necklace I see you wear on the feast of Isis. It's such a beautiful thing. It's got lapis lazuli and jade and all that on it. I really have admired that thing. I wonder if you'd let me have it.” I mean, this would just be ludicrous to the point of ridiculous. They would fall down laughing at the thought.

And yet God told them, “You will ask these articles of gold and these valuable treasures of the Egyptians, and you'll dress your sons and daughters in them and in this finery.” By the way, think about it. There is also a little bit of a foreshadowing, because who is it that is going to go into the land, the land of promise? Who's going to survive the 40 years and make it into the Promised Land? It's the sons and daughters.

And He says, “You need to give this stuff, the articles of silver and gold, to your children.” He doesn't say why, but they're the ones who are actually going to inherit it sooner or later for various purposes.

Now, why does God choose to do this? We've seen that it's a custom. We've seen that it was a prediction and a prophecy. What is the purpose of plundering the Egyptians? I would submit to you that it is twofold. There is a twofold purpose in the plundering.

A, it is another form of judgment on the Egyptians. It is a dispensation of God's justice. Why? How did the Egyptians get the money to buy all of this fine stuff? Well, they literally took it out of the hides of their Israelite slaves. And so, this, in a sense, is justice. It's recompense. They've unfairly and in an evil way taken advantage of the Israelites and have prospered financially because of it. And God says, “Give it up. Give it to the Israelites.”

And the transformation in the attitude of the Egyptians has been entirely by God's almighty hand. Egyptians who would have probably beaten or killed a slave if we're even daring to ask the question, “Could I have that earring?” or, “Could I have that necklace?” by the end of the ninth plague are happy, are happy to give them these articles.

Now, the word translated “articles of gold” is keli, or kelim, K-E-L-I-M in the plural. And some want to say, “Well, this is just a general word for articles,” but it specifically means small objects, generally jewelry. We know that because that is the word used of Rebekah in Genesis 24:53.

You also find it in Exodus 35:22. And I'd like you to turn there. We will, Lord willing, get there eventually. But we want to see, because this passage tells us two things. It tells us what kelim means, and it also tells us why, the second reason why God had the Israelites plunder the Egyptians. One was judgment and justice for the unfairness of the Egyptians, and the other is here.

“The men and women of Israel come, as many as had a willing heart, and brought earrings and nose rings, rings and necklaces, all jewelry of gold, that is, every man who made an offering of gold to the Lord. Every man with

whom was found blue, purple and scarlet, fine linen, goat skins, red skins of rams and badger skins brought them. Everyone who offered an offering of silver or bronze brought the Lord's offering. Everyone with whom was found acacia wood for any work of the service brought it.

“All the women who were gifted artisans spun yarn with their hands and brought what they had spun of blue, purple and scarlet and fine linen. All the women whose hearts stirred with wisdom spun yarn of goat's hair. The rulers brought onyx stones and the stones to be set in the ephod and in the breastplate, spices and oil for the light, for the anointing oil and for sweet incense.

“The children of Israel brought a freewill offering to the Lord. All the men and women whose hearts were willing to bring material for all kinds of work which the Lord, by the hand of Moses, had commanded to be done.”

This, of course, is the preparation for the construction of the tabernacle. So, this plunder is the source from which freewill offerings come. Who is it that offers the freewill offerings? Is it a demand? Is it a tax? Is it a levy? Each one is made to pass under the rod and to cough up? Who is it that offers this? It is entirely up to them, over and over again.

Everyone came whose heart was stirred. Everyone came whose spirit was willing. What does the New Testament say? Everybody knows the verse about God loving a cheerful giver. Let him give not grudgingly or out of necessity.

There is no command to give. There is no request made of a binding nature, like “give or else,” as you often hear in churches. It is a result of one's heart being stirred. It is a result of a willing spirit. Those in whom the spirit stirs, those who are gifted, those in whom is found wisdom.

It says the women whose hearts were stirred in verse 26 spun this yarn, made something with their hands. If you look at your text note there in the New King James in verse 26, it says, “All the women whose hearts literally lifted them up.” Something in their heart lifts them up, and they desire to lift something up to the Lord.

It is a beautiful picture of one of the ways in which we can offer an offering to the Lord. It is not the only way by any means. Our time is a valuable commodity. We offer our time to the Lord. Our diligence in being obedient and in speaking the truth to our children and passing on to them the things that belong to the name of the Lord, as we have seen in recent weeks. All of these we make of ourselves offering to the Lord.

There is such a great emphasis on financial giving in a lot of churches because they have a huge infrastructure. They have a bank note to pay and utility bills to keep and parking lots to pave and baptistries to clean and fill and many other such things. We are very blessed to be free of much of the overhead that a lot of churches have to contend with.

But the real emphasis of Scripture is in Romans chapter 12: “Offer yourselves a living sacrifice.” We have been bought with a price. We are not our own. And yet we are still called to give ourselves. Even though God owns us, even though God has purchased us, He still asks us to give ourselves to Him. He does not seize possession by force.

Everything we have comes from God, and yet He doesn't take it from us for offerings. He asks us to contribute it, whatever it may be: our time, our opportunities, our gifts and talents.

So there is a point here in Exodus chapter 11 when you see the plunder in verse 2: “Speak now in the hearing of the people, and let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor articles of silver and articles of gold.” The Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

Well, I would expect so. After these nine plagues and everybody else in Egypt has been discredited and shown to be incapable, after all of the gods of Egypt that were reviewed last time have been shown to be impotent and false, here is Moses, the representative of God. And yes, he is great in the land of Egypt and in the sight of Pharaoh's servants and in the sight of the people.

Then Moses said, “Thus says the Lord: ‘About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt. All the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne even to the firstborn of the

female servant who is behind a handmill, and the firstborn of the animals. There will be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt such as was not like it before nor shall be like it again.”

Now, we have a little bit of a past perfect tense here in the first few verses because you remember at the end of chapter 10 Moses is before Pharaoh. Pharaoh says, “Get away from me, take heed of yourself and see my face no more, and the day you see my face you shall die.” Moses said, “You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.”

But the interview is not over and Moses has not finished speaking. Moses has not left the throne room of Pharaoh yet. But the narration here goes back to what the Lord had said to Moses in chapter 11, verse 1. There is no construction difference, there is no grammatical difference in Hebrew with the past tense and the past perfect tense: “The Lord said to Moses yesterday,” or, “The Lord had said to Moses yesterday.” So, sometimes we have to help ourselves in the English.

The Lord had said to Moses, “I will bring one more plague, he will let you go, you will ask of these articles.” So, verse 4 resumes where we left off in chapter 10. Then Moses said—this is right after he says, “You will see my face no more”—“Thus says the Lord,” and he is still talking to Pharaoh.

How do we know that? Look at verse 7. “Against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue against man or beast, so that you may know that the Lord does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these your servants shall come down to me and bow down to me, saying, ‘Get out, and all the people who follow you.’ After that, I will go out.” Then he went out from Pharaoh in great anger.

Well, he can't go out from Pharaoh if he is never going to see his face again. So, it's clear from the context. And this is a very typical thing. We have a hard time adjusting to Semitic storytelling patterns where it will tell you what it's going to tell you, and then it will tell you, and then it will tell you what it told you.

Or you have the general account of creation in Genesis 2 and then the specific account of creation in Genesis 3 of the man, and this type of thing. And this is very typical. There are other places in the Bible we could see the same type of thing happening where you jump forward and then jump back, or things are a little bit out of sequence for a thematic reason.

And here, when it says Moses went out from Pharaoh in great anger, this is a representation of divine anger. The anger of Moses as an individual is not the issue. This is a reflection of God's wrath that is going to be poured out on Egypt.

I want to back up a little bit, though, and take a look at this phrase in verse 7: “Against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue.” There is a phrase for you. I don't think we need to put that one on a plaque.

Your text note there says, “A dog sharpen its tongue,” but this really has the idea of point. Against none of the children of Israel shall a dog point its tongue. And the expression has the idea of a dog... If you have been out—we run in the neighborhood—and I remember one time back not long after we were married out in Rockwall, Patty and I were going down a road and somebody's dog was out and came down and... Big dog. Big, big dog.

And you know how they do when they take an unhealthy interest in you and they're going to growl or they're going to bark. The worst kind of dog is not the one that yaps and barks and dances around. It's the one that looks at you and does not bark. Those are the ones to watch.

We were just going down the alley here yesterday, I think, and there was a dog three days ago, a dog poking his head through a broken slat in the fence, and he was not barking and he was not growling. He was trying to get through there to bite us. This is the dog pointing his tongue. When a dog takes an unhealthy interest in you, it doesn't say against none of Israel will a dog growl or will a dog bite. To point the tongue, that's when he's getting ready. His plan is to do you serious bodily harm.

But a dog bite is a minor reflection. You think about the plagues and you think, “Well, how hard is it to get away from a dog?” You get a big stick, you get a big rock, just give him a swift foot in the right place and he'll lead you along. Against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue.

So he says, although this is the greatest plague to strike Israel, it's not going to be any worse than a dog looking at you with unkind intent if you're in Israel.

Now think about this for a minute, because there is a far deeper point at work, talking about the decree of God, talking about election. What has God said here? “Against none of the children of Israel shall a dog so much as point its tongue.” In other words, this plague is not going to touch Israel, right? God has decreed it. None of the children of Israel, against man or beast, so that you may know that the Lord makes a difference between Egyptians and Israel.

Well, wait a minute. If this is a decree of God that not one is going to be harmed, then do they really have to slay the lamb? Do they really have to put the blood on the lintel? Hasn't God said that not one in Israel will a dog so much as point its tongue, much less have the firstborn die?

So if God has decreed it, is there any necessity for obedience? Hasn't it already been graven in the will of God in eternity past? Not one? It seems like a small point. Let me take you to another passage where we will be someday in the far future. Turn with me to Acts chapter 27. Acts chapter 27, beginning in verse 9. This is Paul's voyage to Rome.

Remember, he appealed to Caesar. They are going to take him to Rome for a trial. “Now when much time had been spent and sailing was now dangerous because the fast was already over, Paul advised them, saying, ‘Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship but also our lives.’”

He says there is going to be loss of life on this voyage. Nevertheless, the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul. Because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there.

“When the south wind blew softly, supposing they had obtained their desire, they put out to sea, sailed close by Crete. Not long after, a tempestuous headwind arose, called Euroclydon.” You know you're in a bad way when they have a name for this storm.

“So when the ship was caught and could not head into the wind, we let her drive. And running under the shelter of an island called Claudia, we secured the skiff with difficulty. When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship, fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis sands. They struck sail and so were driven.

“Because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship. On the third day we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands. Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days”—sort of a three-day darkness kind of a thing—“no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.”

But after long abstinence from food, Paul stood in the midst of them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss. Now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.’”

What this tells me is God revealed to Paul that this voyage would end in disaster and that there would be loss of life. Paul fasted and prayed for those on board, and God, in essence, changed His mind and said, “Because you have prayed, I will give you the lives of all of these who are on board.” Right? Initially He said there will be loss of life; now He says not a life will be lost. This is the decree of God. This is the answer to Paul's prayer. No life will be lost.

Okay? So they're home free. They can do no wrong, right? They can jump into the water with a brick tied around them and they're still going to survive. Not so. Look at this. He says in verse 25, “Take heart, men. I believe God that it will be just as it was told me. However, we must run aground on a certain island.”

“When the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land. They took soundings, found it to be twenty fathoms. When they had gone a little farther, they took soundings and found it to be fifteen fathoms. Fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for day to come.

“As the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they let down the skiff into the sea under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow, Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, ‘Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.’”

What did he say earlier? God has given me all the lives in the ship. Not a man will be lost. Now he says, if you disobey, lives will be lost. God decreed salvation for all, but it requires obeying the word of the prophet of God, here the apostle of God. “Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved.”

“So the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off. As day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, ‘Today is the fourteenth day you've waited and continued without food and eaten nothing. I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you.’”

When he said these things, he took bread, gave thanks to God, broke it, began to eat. They were all encouraged and took food. Two hundred seventy-six persons on the ship. They had eaten, they lightened the ship, threw the wheat into the sea.

They get near Malta there. They don't recognize the land. They observed a bay. They let go the anchors, loosing the rudder ropes. They hoisted the mainsail to the wind, made for shore. Striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground. The prow stuck fast, remained immovable, stern was broken up.

The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, verse 42, lest any of them should swim away and escape. The centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard and get to land. The rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. So it was they all escaped safely to land.

They obeyed the centurion. They swam when they were told to swim. They cut away the skiff when Paul told them to. So you have this reflection here of the relationship between the decree of God that says, “Here is the gift I'm giving you. All will be saved, not a life will be lost,” but you've got to do what you're told. Don't let the sailors leave the ship. Swim when you're told to swim. Otherwise, Paul says, you will not be saved. Paul says, “Eat this bread. It's for your survival.” If you don't eat, you're going to die, right?

So did God make a decree that all would be saved? Yes, He did. But what if these men had disobeyed at any one of these decision points? They opt out of this election of God, don't they? That's exactly the case back in Exodus chapter 11. God says you're not even going to get a cross look from a dog in Israel during this firstborn plague. However, we know that there's going to be the slaying of the paschal lamb. We know that there's going to be the splashing of the blood in the doorposts, and anyone in Israel who fails to obey those instructions opts out of this election of God, doesn't he?

It is not the will of God that any should perish but that all come to repentance. That is the decree of God. That is the will of God. But we can opt out of the will of God. It's our choice. Could it be any clearer than in the pages of Scripture that it is God's will that none perish?

Many of these in Egypt are going to follow the example of the Israelites. Many of them are going to splash the blood on the doorposts. Many of them are going to walk out of the land and be a part of that mixed multitude heading for Canaan, because they too have the opportunity. This word is promulgated. This opportunity is communicated, and everyone has a chance to enjoy the salvation of God. It is a matter of response. It is a matter of obedience. And that is the decision. That is the opportunity that we face every day.

You look at the promises in Revelation 2 and 3 and throughout the epistles to the church of what God has in store for those who love Him. It's decreed. It's our inheritance. It's our birthright in the spiritual world. But we can opt out if we become distracted, if we're apathetic, if we're indifferent, if we do not treat the Word of God as reality. It is entirely dependent on what we choose as to whether we avail ourselves of God's grace and whether or not we take possession of what He has promised and what He desires to give us. It could not be any plainer.

Well, this is where we're going to have to close for this morning. When we resume next time in Exodus, we will see the institution of this memorial supper, and we will see that it is the great demonstration, the great foreshadowing of Christ's work on the cross for us.

But in closing, think about this. We talked about John the Baptist. We talked about the Lord Jesus. What is the measure of success? What does it mean to bear your fruit in your season and to prosper in your way, as it says in Psalm 1?

I read to you the account of T. J. Jackson's wounding and death and departure from this life, and you think about it. His cause was lost. The South did not win the Civil War. Do you think that T. J. Jackson prospered in his way? Do you think that he did obtain a rest under the trees in the kingdom of Christ? I think so.

It is not the earthly measure that counts. It is the measure of God and the possessions that we will take away from our time of hardship and our time of oppression. The things that we inherit and take forward with us into the kingdom will be those things that are imperishable, that are given to us by God, that we lay claim to by faith.

And keeping that in mind will give us that peace that Jackson talked about, the man who has made his peace with God and can have peace in any circumstance, regardless of how it is trending, regardless of how it turns out in human circumstance.

It is the battle of faith that is won or lost. It is the treasure of heaven that we either claim or lose. And it isn't the way things look. It isn't the way it appears. It isn't what people say. It isn't the earthly circumstantial outcome that is the measure. It is what we do in faith and by faith. It is how we claim to and obey the Word of God to lay claim to that which He has decreed and that which He has elected for us. That is what counts, and that is what we can remember in terms of a memorial in this Memorial Day.

Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank You for the tremendous opportunity You have placed before us, the clear communication of that in Your Word, the illustrations, the exhortations, the examples that You have given us. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress these truths on our hearts so that we can live in a way that pleases You and truly become living sacrifices, a sweet-smelling savor, pleasing in Your sight, glorifying to our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray it in His name, Amen.