

Exod 03-06-01a

Let's take a moment before we open our Bibles to clear our minds and prepare our hearts. Make sure that God the Holy Spirit finds us ready to receive the implanted Word as the phrase goes in the New Testament. It is a seed that is planted.

We don't always see the roots or the plant itself for a while. But when we hear the Word of God, when we store it away in our souls, sometimes at the most unusual times or the most unexpected places, God the Holy Spirit can bring it back to our minds and make it a source of blessing, a source of comfort, a source of application. But that only happens if we receive it and are able to store it away simply because we were susceptible to the ministry of God's Spirit when we heard it.

To simply have the words enter our minds and even to give intellectual assent is not enough. It has to be processed into the storage areas of our souls by faith. And that requires concentration and it requires the active ministry of God's Holy Spirit who translates it for us.

If you've ever gotten an email attachment that you could not read, I think almost everybody has had that experience at one time or another. Somebody sends you a note and says, Oh, this is the greatest thing. I wanted you to see it.

I've attached it. And when you click on it, your computer says, I don't know what to do with this. I can't make heads or tails out of it.

I don't know what program to use to open it. Well, you've received it and it's there on your computer, but you can't do anything with it. You can't process it or get any benefit from it.

And that can happen to us when we hear the Word of God without appealing to God for the ministry of His Spirit and being ready to receive His efforts on our behalf. So this is an important time. It is brief, but it's important.

What we do in the next 60 seconds will determine whether or not the next 30 or 40 minutes are of any benefit to us. So let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, what a privilege it is to live in this country and to have access to Your Word through many different forms of media.

We thank You for the printed Bibles that we have in plenitude and abundance and variety with many, many kinds of helps and aids and concordances and cross-references. We have never in history had the accessibility of Your Word as we have it today. And yet, Lord, we know that in a lot of the Christian world, it seems that the more accessible it is, the less accessed it is.

And we want to ensure that that is not the case with us. And we ask Your blessing on us this morning as we seek to look into the truth of Your Word and be edified and built up and strengthened in the faith, to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We know that of any generation in history,

we have the least excuse for not understanding Your Word, remembering it, and applying it in our daily walk.

And in this generation and in this time, we know that as Americans living in a free environment without pressure, at least without pressure in the form of persecution and oppression and affliction for our faith, we recognize the opportunity that You've given us. We thank You for our leadership. We pray for our President and the leaders in our Congress, in our judiciary, in our military, and our law enforcement branches, local and state and national.

We ask that You will continue to preserve the structure of our country, the values upon which our country was founded, so that we can make the most of the days that You have allotted to us in this life. We pray that You'll give us insight and understanding in the passages we look at this morning. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen. For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Psalm 90, or as we would say in the artillery, Psalm 9 or 0. Psalm 90. It's an amazing thing, but 18 years after I went off active duty, I still have to go to my second choice of saying certain numbers, because you get so ingrained in the artillery in speaking numbers in a certain way, so that they are clearly understood over wire or over radio.

But Psalm 90, you will notice when you get there and read the superscription, it tells us who wrote this psalm. Some psalms we know who wrote them, some psalms we don't. Who wrote this psalm? Moses.

Moses has a little adjectival phrase attached to his name. Some people have this. We have Judas, the one who betrayed him.

We have John, the baptizer. Some people have these little phrases associated with their name. I can't think of a phrase that would be greater to be associated with your name than this one.

Moses, the man of God. What does that mean, man of God? If it's a genitive of source, man from God, well, all people receive their life and breath from God. What does it mean to be a man of God? Today, and in the previous generation or two, people would talk about pastors and say, well, he's a man of God.

He wears the cloth. He's a clergy. He's a reverend or some such.

But that may or may not actually be the case. What does it mean to be a man of God? I think that this is a man who reflects God, a man who communicates God, a man when you look at him, you immediately think about God. And what a great attribute, what a great characteristic to be ascribed to a believer.

A man of faith, a woman of faith, a man of God, a woman of God. Wouldn't it be great to live in such a way that people began to think of us and say, that's a person who really reflects God. You can't spend very much time with them without realizing that they have a relationship with

God and it's active and it's meaningful and it makes a difference in the way they function.

A prayer of Moses, the man of God, that's what Psalm 90 is. This is an old, old piece of poetry. This thing has been around for about 3,500 years, give or take.

You figure if it was written in, say, 1440 B.C. or thereabouts, 3,400 years ago, that's a long, long time. The plays and the poetry we have from the Greek playwrights, Euripides and some of those, are not that old. This is some of the oldest literature we have.

What does he say? Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations, before the mountains were brought forth. Now here's a man speaking 3,400 years ago and he's harking back thousands of years before his time. He is going back to the very dawn of creation.

You have been our dwelling place in all generations, before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting. You are God. You turn man to destruction and say, return, O children of men, for a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, and like a watch in the night.

You carry them away like a flood. They are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up.

In the morning it flourishes and grows up. In the evening it is cut down and withers. For we have been consumed by your anger, and by your wrath we are terrified.

You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins, in the light of your countenance. For all our days have passed away in your wrath. We finish our years like a sigh.

The days of our lives are 70 years, and if by reason of strength they are 80 years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away. Who knows the power of your anger? For as the fear of you, so is your wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Return, O Lord, how long? I think in English you could add in italics, how long will it be? That's the sense of it in Hebrew. Return, O Lord, how long will it be? And have compassion on your servants. Satisfy us early with your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Make us glad according to the days in which you have afflicted us, the years in which we have seen evil. Let your work appear to your servants, and your glory to their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us.

Yes, establish the work of our hands. Well, this is quite the grand scope of history thought, isn't it? He looks at time, he looks at human history from God's perspective and says, from God's point of view, it's not that long. It passes away a thousand years or nothing in his sight.

He is above and beyond. And yet, we live, we grow up, and pass our time, and then we are cut off. We fly away.

Whether we live 70 or 80 years, if we don't die accidentally or in battle or in some other way, the most of our years left to ourselves is only labor and sorrow. You get to the end and you say, that's a lot of trouble. Reminds me of that Hank Williams Jr. song from back in the 50's when he first started out singing.

It's on a 45 I've got up there in my archives. I went to all that trouble for nothing. It's a good old honky-tonk jukebox song.

I went to all that trouble for nothing. 60 or 70, 80 years of life, and if all you can boast of it is a lot of work, they had another song, work your fingers to the bone, what do you get? Bony fingers. A little bony fingers song.

That's kind of what Moses is saying here. You can work and work and work, and at the end you just don't have much to show for it except labor and sorrow. And he says, it is because of God's wrath.

Now how can that be? Is a 60, 70, 80 year life that has travail and hardship in it, is this because of God's wrath? What kind of wrath is he talking about? Well, why does a life end after a certain number of days? It's because of sin. It's because of Adam and Eve in the garden, disobeying God. That disobedience brought sin and death upon all men.

For all have sinned. And the fact that we wrinkle and sag and bulge and start falling apart, even we still think we're relatively young, and yet stuff starts conforming itself to the second law of thermodynamics, which tells us essentially everything put together falls apart. That entropy, that disintegration is a manifestation of God's punishment for sin.

It is a consequence of sin. It is the destruction of the perfect divine order. That which is not of God tends toward destruction, tends toward dissolution.

And that's the definition of evil. Evil is that which comes apart, falls apart, destroys, tends toward death. So that's what we see in the first part of this song.

We finish our years like a sigh. Who knows the power of your anger? So what should this do? Why does God let this continue? Couldn't God fix this? Couldn't you get saved and then be immortal and live forever, be like the sword-slinging guys? What was that TV show with the Highlander? The Highlander guys, they're the immortals, unless some guy comes along with his sword and whacks your head off. Other than that, you can be shot.

You can be dropped out of airplanes. You can be stabbed and run over and have all kinds of bad things happen, and you just kind of heal up and you're knocked out a little while. You're like Mannix.

How many times did Mannix get? Of course, some of you don't remember Mannix, but it was a detective show back in probably the 70s. That Mannix got knocked cold like two or three times an episode. I would like to see the total number of times that Mannix got knocked out because

no man could have lived and had his brain intact after being clubbed over the head so many times.

But he just came back episode after episode. You think, why can't God, after salvation, kind of take away the curse? Hasn't Jesus conquered death? What is the purpose of seeing our wrinkles? Well, it isn't so that we can go watch Extreme Makeover or keep track of all the latest cosmetics and what can I get injected into my body in various places. I saw somebody.

I can't think now who it was. Oh, I do know who it was. It was Captain Kirk.

It was William Shatner. He was on a show the other night, and I thought, you know, that man is kind of getting up there in years. But look at his face.

He has no wrinkles. His creases, I mean, even the ones he had when he was in his 30s don't seem to be there anymore. But then he would tell a joke and laugh, and his face didn't move.

He has been Botoxed. I promise you. He has Botoxed every line in his face because he would smile, and you would see his teeth, but nothing else in his face would move.

And I thought, gracious sakes. Well, when we look in the mirror, most of us are not availing ourselves of that technology, and I'm not saying boo on anybody that does, but here's the point. Look at verse 12.

What does the aging and the passing of time and the obvious progress of this form of the wrath of God on us, what is it supposed to do? Teach us to number our days. When some of us were midshipmen, especially fourth-class midshipmen, cleaves, and the same is true of the little lower-than-the-bottom-of-the-sea types at other service academies, one of the things you have to do is memorize the days because the first-class midshipmen want to know how long before they graduate, how long is it for the second-class midshipmen until they get to go to the ring dance and get their academy ring and baptize it in the waters of the Seventh Sea and all this kind of thing. How long is it until Christmas leave? People want to know, what do I have to get through until I get to the good stuff, until I get to this goal that I'm trying to attain? And so all cleaves, at any given moment, you can walk up to any cleave and say, how many days is it until Christmas leave? He will tell you.

How many days is it to second-class ring dance? How many days is it to first-class graduation? Along with a whole lot of other both useful and useless information that he has to remember and be able to spew forth at any given time. Why? Numbering the days, you measure out your effort. You figure out, what have I got to do? How long do I have to wait? And you have it as a goal.

How many people have had a calendar waiting for some big event and cross off the days as they pass? You say, oh boy, only so many more days. Numbering our days, keeping track of the time. When you look and you see, and you're in school, and you say, well, I've got midterms and finals.

Most of us who want to graduate and want to pass are going to keep track and say, well, I've only got this many days left to finish my paper. I've only got this many days left to master this subject and pass the test. We number our days because it's important.

Well, there's nothing more important than the test you and I are taking right now. This time will soon be cut off, and we're going to fly away. And there is no make-up test.

There is no second chance. We don't get to come back and do it over again. So teach us to number our days.

Why? What are we supposed to be doing during these days? What is the goal on these numbered days? What if I told you I have a charismatic gift of prophecy, and I can look at each one of you, and when I look at you, on your forehead, glowing in giant green LED digits, is the number of days you have left on this earth. As I look across at you, some of you have a four-digit number. Some of you only have a three-digit number.

Some of you might only have a two-digit number. Or, heaven forbid, a one-digit number on your forehead. This is how many days you have left in your life.

If I prophesied to you and said, fill in your name, I see by your forehead that you have this many days left. You have 17 days left in this life. Do you not think that that thought would be uppermost in your mind from now until that deadline? Do you not think that you would start thinking, I've got to make plans here.

I've got to put my affairs in order. Do you not think that that thought would color every waking moment? Well, why should I waste my time doing that? I can't sit here and watch a rerun of the Beverly Hillbillies. I've only got 17 days left.

I can't sit here and fritter away this time playing a video game or doing some mindless bubblegum-for-the-brain type of activity. I've only got 17 days left. I've got to make these minutes and hours count.

I've got some letters to write. I've got some things. I want to leave some kind of a memorial to myself so after I'm gone people will remember that I was here.

You know, your mind starts working because that deadline is approaching. Well, what does it say here? If you're going to number your days, what you ought to have uppermost in your mind is gaining a heart of wisdom. Now let me ask you this.

You've got 17 days left. You say, well, the Bible says the best way I can spend my time is gaining a heart of wisdom. Well, why? If you're going to die in two and a half weeks, what difference does it make if you have a wise heart or not? I mean, it would only do you good.

Well, my heart is twice as wise next week as it was this week, and I can use that wisdom in the final week and a half of my life. But then once I die, well, who cares? I mean, why do you need a

wise heart? What did we sing about earlier this morning? Up from the grave he arose. Up from the grave you and I are going to arise, and the one thing we take with us into the next life, the thousand-year kingdom of Christ and the eternal kingdom of the Father, is whatever level of wisdom we have accumulated, it is the one transportable item that goes with us.

What could be more important than gaining as much wisdom as possible? It's the only thing you take with you when you go in terms of what we accumulate in this life. No wealth. No relationships.

It is the wisdom. You know, it's not like you can say, well, I'm a member of the board of thus and so. When you get to the millennium, that board will no longer exist.

You can't say, well, I'm on speaking terms with a lot of famous people. It doesn't matter in the millennial kingdom. There's only one famous person we want to be related to in the millennium, and that's the king.

That is the ruler in Jerusalem, the son of David. Relationship with him will mean something. Relationship with anybody else in terms of influence or leverage or whatever will be meaningless.

Teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom. Return, O Lord, how long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. Now, he's talked earlier.

He says our days pass away, and they're like a sigh. We're like grass that withers up. We have nothing to show but labor and sorrow.

But look at the verses after 13. Once the Lord returns, when the Lord has compassion on his servants, now what? We can rejoice and be glad all our days. We no longer have days that accumulate only travail and sorrow.

Now we can be made glad by our days. This is a supernatural transformation. How does that happen? How can you take days that trend toward work and sorrow and turn them into days that make us glad and rejoice? He says, make us glad, in verse 15, according to the days in which you have afflicted us.

This is the conversion of affliction into gladness. Now, God has a lot of miracles attributed to him in the Bible. But I would say there is none greater than the turning of cursing to blessing, the turning of what seems to be disaster into victory, what seems like travail and trouble and sorrow into a valuable possession, into something about which we are glad.

Only God can do this. It does not seem happy at the time. I have never, and skill and chemicals notwithstanding, I have never enjoyed the feeling of a drill bit biting into my teeth.

I just can't ever get excited about that prospect or that experience. But I can be made glad and I can rejoice afterward. I can be Mr. Happy Mouth after it's all over because I am free of pain.

I have a bad condition remedied. Someone who has an appendix that is inflamed and infected and on the road to bursting doesn't look forward to surgery, doesn't enjoy the process, but afterward is it a source of gladness and rejoicing that the surgery was done and the afflicted organ was removed? It absolutely is. We have experiences in this life that partake of the problem of the world, that partake of sin, that partake of evil, that partake of everything that is not of God, that is not a part of His righteousness and not a part of His plan.

It happens. Four-letter word type of things happen. It's a part of the fall.

It's a part of the curse. It is a part of what we bring on ourselves through sin and what others bring on us through sin. We sometimes feel like we are about to be overwhelmed.

We're like Jonah. Have you ever read the prayer of Jonah over in the book of Jonah? It's after he gets swallowed by the fish. He's in the digestive system of a large marine organism surrounded by digestive juices, dark as pitch.

I don't know what kind of sounds went on. I can't even imagine. You'd have to put a microphone inside a fish and let it swim and listen.

But he's in there, and I think it must have been sort of a tight fit. I know it was a large fish, but I don't think he had freedom of movement. It's not like Geppetto that they show in Pinocchio where he's got this cavernous dwelling with a table and a candle.

I mean, think about it. He's probably inside some sort of stomach type of thing, and it's a membrane, and it's tight, and he's all squished up, and there's juices trying to digest his skin, and he's not dead. And maybe the fish had gas or something.

There's enough for him to breathe because he's not smothering. But I can't think what it would smell like, what it would be like, what it would feel like. You know what Jonah did? He said, God has not snuffed out my life.

Maybe I ought to talk to him about this situation. And so Jonah has this prayer. You'll have to go read it.

It's not our scripture reading this morning. But he talks about being dragged down to the depths. There's also pressure.

You know, fish are pressurized so they don't collapse under the water. He says, I've been carried down to the bottom. I've been carried to the gates of Sheol.

There's seaweed wrapped around my head. You know, the fish got a lot of flotsam and seaweed and stuff in there. He says, I got seaweed.

And he probably can't even move his hands up there to take it away, so he's got seaweed wrapped all around his head. That had to add to the experience. But this is sometimes how we feel in this life.

Does it have a point? Does it have a purpose? God is the God who can take what seems to be only travail and sorrow and turn it into, and notice this is the prayer in verse 15. Moses, the man of God, says to God, Make us glad according to the days in which you have afflicted us. Take our affliction and convert it to blessing.

It is a miracle of God. Only God can do it. And God can only do it for those people who know that it happens, who ask for it, who look for it, and who recognize it when it's taking place.

Make us glad according to the years in which we have seen evil. Let your work appear to your servants. How does this encouragement and turning around of experience happen? We start seeing the work of God in and through the evil world around us.

We get a glimpse of what God is up to. We see how God is working. That happens by metabolizing, by internalizing, by understanding God's word, and seeing that what God has done for people in the Bible, He still does.

Did you know that there's nothing special about being in the Bible in terms of having unique experiences? God's work and God's power is not restricted to just people that made it into the top 500 and got into the Bible. The same God with the same power lives and dwells in us. Let your work appear to your servants and let your glory appear to their children.

This should be something that is evident in our lives so that the next generation sees it and says, there was something different about my mother. There was something different about my father. How many times have you heard people, the lady I work with talks about her mother, who wasn't a great theologian, wasn't a scholar, or didn't have any particularly noteworthy intelligence, but she was a lady who knew the word of God and who believed it and would take no truck with viewpoints that didn't conform to the word of God.

And even when she got old and entered into a sort of senility or stages of Alzheimer's, there were some things that never left that lady's viewpoint and never left her mind. She always had peace. She might get disoriented.

She might not know where she was. She might not know who she was talking to anymore, but she was always calm. And it was something that impressed her daughter, who cared for her in her last years of life.

And I could give you many other examples in my own personal observation. There is a peace and there is a strength and there is a calm and a gladness that is in the souls of people who have committed themselves by faith to God's plan and purpose that nothing can take away. And the next generation sees that.

This is what Moses prays. Let your glory appear to their children. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.

You know what this means? You can get old and you can sag and wrinkle and deteriorate and

your joints don't work like they used to and your skin discolours. One of the things I notice is as you get older, when you're young you get out in the sun a little bit and you have a beautiful golden tan and you look like, you know, I wish they all could be California girls, that kind of thing. When you get older, your skin, that accumulation of scars and just the aging process, pretty soon you get darker spots and you get lighter spots.

They say some things continue throughout your life. Your ears continue to grow throughout your life. Did you ever notice that old people have got the biggest ears in the world? And you look at them and you say, how did their ears get so big? Did they have ears like that when they were young? I mean, gracious sakes, your ears keep on growing.

And your skin keeps on growing. Pretty soon, even if you maintain the same weight and the same body shape, you've got more skin than you had when you were young and it's just going to kind of hang and fold and flap. You get more freckles.

Did you ever notice that you get more freckles as you get older? Just new moles and things will pop up. You say, I don't remember black spots being there before, and they just appear, they come. And also white spots.

In places where you used to tan, you don't tan anymore. You wait, if you're not there yet. You look at your form and you say, gracious sakes, there's a white spot there.

Man, the rest of me is dark and I've got white spots all over me. How did that happen? It's age. It's the passing of time.

And you say, I don't look as good as I used to. I don't feel as good as I used to. I don't think I am as good as I used to be.

I can't think as well. I'm not as quick on my mental feet. I can't even find my mental feet.

I think I've got two left mental feet. And it's depressing. It's discouraging.

And see, midlife crisis and all that, there is some substance to the thought process behind that. So what do you do? Look at this verse. Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.

Everybody knows the verse in the New Testament. Let women not have their adornment be with their apparel and their jewelry and their outward beauty. Let it be the inner person of the heart.

Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us. It doesn't matter if this world and the passing of time and entropy and deterioration and disintegration gets to work on us. It can be an advantage.

It can be a source of gladness. Establish the work of our hands for us. You know what I think about aging? If you look at an enlisted man in the Marine Corps and I think also in the Navy and the Army, they get hash marks on their sleeve for a certain period of time of good conduct, no

office hours, no court martials, no bad feedback.

I think in the Marine Corps it's every four years you gain a hash mark. My brother could correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that's the case. And when you look at someone who is a master sergeant, you look on his sleeve and he's got mark after mark after mark going down his sleeve.

You say, there's somebody that's been around and has done a good job consistently over time. When you look at someone who may be aging and getting older, but they have that gladness, they have peace at the center of their soul, that's the beauty of the Lord our God on them. That is the mark of a soul that is getting stronger and stronger even as the body gets weaker and weaker.

And it's kind of like a well bucket. Let the old body sink and start unraveling. The further it sinks, the more strong my soul gets because my soul has learned to cope with that reality.

My soul has learned to number its days and to look for a heart of wisdom because I'm not taking this body with me anyway. Let the thing fall apart. It's a temporary dwelling.

It's a temporary habitation. I want to concentrate on that which is permanent, that which is going to go with me through all eternity. That's why he can say in verse 17, let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us and establish the work of our hands for us.

When we move into that mode of thinking and that mode of operation, the things we do, now I can go out here, I can fix bicycles, I can build fences, I can paint things, I can work on my cars, but that work is not established. I fixed a flat on the van a couple of weeks ago, but so many people have had hail damage and there's so much roofing going on, you cannot drive down a street in Dallas without picking up shingle nails in your car tires, and it won't be long. Several of us have had flats and will have more because these trucks full of shingles and nails are just rattling up and down the roads and nails are falling out and people are picking them up.

A lady I know had a flat and got to work late, and she said, well, I took it down to the tire place to get fixed, and the guy said, we are covered up. He said, we have got more people. We can hardly keep tires in stock and keep materials in stock because everybody is getting flats.

Well, you fix a flat, that tire is going to wear out and need to be replaced. A lot of what we do, I mean, think about cleaning up the kitchen. Think about doing laundry.

Think about vacuuming. I mean, that's just a never-ending, that work is not established. It's not like the pyramids of Giza or something where you do it once and it lasts forever.

How can you establish the work of your hands? You do it by the work of your hands being a part of gaining a heart of wisdom. We do what we do as unto the Lord and not unto men. It may be the same activity.

Maybe it is fixing that flat that's going to need it again. Maybe it is doing those dishes that are just going to get dirty again. But when we do it with a heart of wisdom, when we put things in perspective, when we are made glad according to the days because the beauty of God is upon us, that accumulates, that adds up.

It is established. It is a treasure that doesn't go away. It is bars of gold in your personal Fort Knox.

And we transform. We take these fleeting days that are like a breath and like grass that withers, and we convert them into something permanent, something that counts. You cannot lose it.

That's worth thinking about. That's a miracle of God. That's what Psalm 90 is all about.

And as we return now to Exodus Chapter 11, where we pick up our study, the Lord says to Moses, I will bring one more plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt. Afterward, he will let you go from here. When he lets you go, he will surely drive you out of here altogether.

Speak now in the hearing of the people. Let every man ask from his neighbor and every woman from her neighbor articles of silver and articles of gold. And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians.

You know what I notice about Verse 3? People get all upset about God hardening Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let the people go. How could God do that? How could God get in there and change somebody's mind? They don't get upset about God putting favor for the Israelites in the hearts of the Egyptians so that they would give up their stuff. Now this is the very same thing, isn't it? Here I am, and I've got a gold amulet, and I've got a big idol of Osiris or the frog goddess Hecate or something sitting there in my house.

And God, here I am an Egyptian, I've got these expensive... I may have had to save up for a year to buy this idol, this solid gold idol I've got sitting there on my mantel shelf. And now God has put it in my heart to be kind to the Israelites, and I say, Hey there, Egyptian man, I wonder if you'd mind giving me a few of your trinkets. And I say, Boy, you know what? I've got a great idol of Hecate.

Let me give you that. You can melt it down and do something with it. And God put that in my heart to do.

That's the very same thing. But you don't hear anybody complaining about God granting favor to the Israelites in the hearts of the Egyptians. But it's the very same thing.

And what is it for? Here are oppressed people who have been in bondage for years and years and years. They are getting ready to depart. And why is this here? I'm going to bring another plague on Pharaoh and on Egypt, and after that he's going to let you go.

And the very next thing he says is, tell the people to ask the Egyptians for loot, for plunder, for

booty, the pirates would call it, for treasure. Why? Well, think about it. I'm an Israelite.

I'm Jobob, J-O-B-A-B. It's a good biblical name. I'm Jobob.

I've been down there stamping mud into bricks, gathering straw. Moses stands up and says, God's going to do one more wonder in Egypt, and then we're all leaving. So go ask your taskmaster over there if he's got any spare stuff he'd like to give you.

What's the thinking process for Jobob? Well, let's see. On the one hand, I don't like having to say any unnecessary words to the Egyptians. But on the other hand, the God of my fathers has appeared, and he brought that water to blood thing, and the frogs, and the flies, and the crawly creepies, and the locusts, and the hail, and the darkness.

And now that God is saying, go ask the Egyptians for stuff and they'll give it to you. Okay. I'll do it.

Normally this would have been a very risky behavior. Taskmaster says, You want something from me? I got something for you. Turn around.

Let me just lash you to this post over here. You asking something from me? I'll give you something. I'll give you something you'll remember.

It took faith to believe that God had changed their hearts. God said, I'll give you favor with the Egyptians. He told them that back in chapter 3, if you'll remember.

But they've still got to apply what they have seen. Here is God at work on their behalf. Now they are not delivered yet.

But he says, you're going to be delivered. And if you believe you're going to be delivered, you'll believe enough to go ask for this stuff. And when people went and asked to their great delight, the Egyptians were just generous as could be and gave them all kinds of things.

Now is this for their personal benefit? Did the Israelites then turn around and say, Well, I'm going to go set up business for myself. I'm going to invest and be self-employed and fabulously wealthy. This stuff has a purpose.

And we'll see what that purpose is a little bit later. But he gave them favor. And Moses had great prestige and honor in Egypt.

And this was brought about by God. Now there's a very interesting thing that happens in this regard that we're going to talk about right after our break. But here's the point.

You think about our Scripture reading. You think about the situation right here, before the Passover, before the Exodus, before the great deliverance, before the slaying of the firstborn. It is as dark as it can get.

God's supernatural darkness has reigned for three solid days in Egypt. A darkness where a man could not see his hand in front of his face. The Egyptians couldn't strike a light.

They couldn't light a lamp. It was thick darkness. They felt like, I've got a lit candle in my hand and I can't see it right in front of my face.

It was a supernatural darkness. The same kind of supernatural darkness that prevailed between noon and 3 p.m. on the day that the Lord Jesus was crucified. Three hours of darkness.

It is always darkest before the dawn. It is darkest right before the time of deliverance. That's when our faith is tested.

That's when we have the opportunity to find out who is trusting the Lord, who believes what the Song of Moses says, that this time of sorrow and this time of travail can turn into something great. When things look bleakest and things look darkest, that is the time to look up because your redemption draws nigh. It has never been worse in Egypt than it is right now.

And yet, there's already a glimmer. Look at this favor the Egyptians suddenly have. This is a hopeful sign.

And right after that three hours of darkness, there is suddenly this glimmer of hope on the horizon. That's what we want to watch for. That's what we want to look for in our experience.

All of us, in some area or another, maybe in many areas, we have a bleak prospect. We have almost supernatural darkness in some area. And it tempts us to hopelessness.

It tempts us to give up and say, you know, I just don't see where God is doing anything good. Remember the God who worked the miracles of the Bible. Remember the God that Moses is talking about in his song.

This is where He does His best work. It is in the hopeless. It's in our weakness that His strength is made manifest.

And we ought to get excited. Sometimes it just almost makes you chuckle. You say, you know, I just didn't think it could get any worse, and it just got worse.

God must be getting ready to really do something special because I've just never seen it quite this bad. And you watch, and invariably in the lives of believers, that is that three hours of darkness right before good things begin to take place. All of a sudden, the Israelites who have been poor slaves find themselves rich, and they haven't even left the land yet.

And it is a harbinger of good things to come. And God will give us that which sustains us. He will give us a sign of hope.

He will give us an encouragement. Even before we are fully delivered, if we know where to look, if we have the faith to claim it, if we don't say, well, I'm not going to ask the Egyptians for

anything. They'll whip me.

They'll beat me. I've had enough of the Egyptians. I stay away from them.

God says, go ask, and you'll be amazed at what you get. Ask, and it shall be given. Seek, and you shall find.

Knock, and it shall be opened unto you. That's a great application, a great illustration, a great principle for us. Let's pause here and take our break.

When we come back, we'll resume in verse 4.