

Exod 03-06-08a

As we continue our worship this morning, let's take a moment at the outset to clear our minds. Acknowledge the role and place of God's Holy Spirit in our worship and in our daily function. We know that this time is essentially wasted without His enabling ministry.

And it is a wonderful thing to be reminded on a regular basis that God dwells in us. God has personally taken up residence in our souls and gives us the strength that we need. Gives us the guidance that we need.

Gives us the conscience that we need. The discernment to see right from wrong. To find not only what is good versus what is sinful, but also to find what the Apostle Paul calls ta deferenta.

To see the difference. To discern the better things. The things that God has for us that are... It takes a little more maturity to identify.

It's one thing to see out of five possible options that three of them involve sin. It is something else to take the remaining two and see which one is better. And this is the mark of the mature.

To be able to discriminate and to discern. Power is given to us by God's Holy Spirit. And He uses the Word of God that is resident in our souls to guide us.

That is His voice. So we equip ourselves. We nourish ourselves.

We supply ourselves with God's Word. We pay attention to it. Apply faith to it.

And it becomes a part of the library. The collection in our souls of things that God the Holy Spirit can bring to our mind. And give us wisdom.

Give us a heart of wisdom as we saw last week. So we pause at the beginning of our worship. And every time we come to this part of our worship I am tempted to discourse on it.

Because although it is brief, it is probably the most important thing we do. To be susceptible. To be what the denominational churches sometimes call yielded to the ministry of God's Holy Spirit.

Is essential. Not only when we worship, but all the rest of the day. So let's take a moment at the outset to acknowledge God's presence.

And to claim His grace as we worship and fellowship together. Shall we pray? Father we thank you for the privilege of being called by your name. Of being saved by grace.

We thank you for the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. That paid our penalty. Purchased us out of the slave market of sin.

We thank you that not only have we been entered into your family and into relationship with

you. But also into the household of the saints and to the fellowship of believers. Especially believers of like mind who value your word.

We thank you for the fellowship and the uplifting grace that comes to us through the spiritual gifting that you have granted to each one of us. We pray that each of us will find the exercise of that gift in such a way that others will be blessed. We pray that Christ will be reflected in our thoughts and our conversation as we go forth into whatever remains to us of this life.

We thank you for the country in which we live, our leadership, our president, our armed forces and the great prosperity that we enjoy. We recognize Father that our prosperity is also a test. We are distracted, we are drawn and we are attracted by the things of this world that tend to make us forget our heavenly citizenship.

And we ask that God the Holy Spirit will be ever active in our souls to remind us of who we are and why we're here. We pray that the portion of your word we study this morning will contribute to that goal by rebuking, correcting and instructing us in righteousness. We know that your word is able to make us a workman that does not need to be ashamed.

And we pray that as we study this morning we will rightly divide it. We will see and remember and meditate on those things that you have for us in this life to prepare us for the next. We thank you most of all for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who died for us, who sits at your right hand interceding for us and awaits the day to return and bring us to be with himself.

And that we may ever be with him. We ask your blessing on those who are not with us that you will grant them safe travel and a return. And we ask all these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. For a script reading this morning, turn with me to Psalm 26. Psalm 26.

If you know where Psalm 23 is, you can just apply the perfect number three to it and arrive at Psalm 26. This is subtitled in the New King James, A Prayer for Divine Scrutiny and Redemption. And already, without even getting past the subtitle there, you can begin to have thoughts form in your mind.

Do we really want to pray for divine scrutiny? Do we go to God and say, Lord, look all around, shine the light in the dark corners of my soul, lift up the rug, look on top of the refrigerator, look behind that piece of furniture that hasn't been moved. It takes some perspective and some courage to pray this prayer. This is the Psalm of David.

You can expect that any of the first 40 or 50 Psalms are going to be Davidic in their authorship. Let's read this great Psalm. Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity.

I have also trusted in the Lord. I shall not slip. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me.

Try my mind and my heart. For your loving kindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in your truth. I have not sat with idolatrous mortals, nor will I go in with hypocrites.

I have hated the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked. I will wash my hands in innocence, so I will go about your altar, O Lord. That I may proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving and tell of all your wondrous works.

Lord, I have loved the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells. Do not gather my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men, in whose hands is a sinister scheme, and whose right hand is full of bribes. But as for me, I will walk in my integrity.

Redeem me and be merciful to me. My foot stands in an even place. In the congregations I will bless the Lord.

I would love to take about a month and do four lessons out of this psalm, but I won't. You'll notice, and the reason is that it is so rich and full of doctrinal content that cries out for elaboration. David understood so much, and you see it reflected in his prayers.

You will notice that so many of the psalms are prayers, and they are directed to God, and they address God in the second person. You, O Lord. And yet they are rich with doctrinal truth.

This is a point with regard to our own prayers. If our prayers consist primarily of requests and problem elaborations, we miss the opportunity to do what David does, and what Moses does, and what Hannah, and what Mary, and what Simeon, and so many of the other great prayer warriors of the Bible did, which is to reflect before God what they know of His plan and purpose, and to, in His presence, put it together and draw conclusions, and ask God for things based on what God has promised. We so often communicate something to children, and then we wait for them to synthesize it and to apply it.

We say, around the house. If you finish your chores, you can play. You have certain assigned tasks.

I'm not going to walk behind you and just nag, nag, nag, nag, nag. I'm not going to be your external brain. I'm going to tell you what you need to do, and once it is done, these privileges and these enjoyable benefits will follow.

Well, if the child becomes distracted, if the child dollies and doesn't perform the work to standard and so on, what happens? They are not permitted to go do these other things. And why do we do that? It isn't that we couldn't go in and do in five minutes what it's going to take them an hour and a half to do. If my goal was just to have their little room straightened up, I could go in and clear it away in about seven minutes.

And there would be a couple of large trash bags out in the alley as a result. But why do we do that? We set a standard, and then we back away, and we wait for them to think, well, if I am diligent, I can have a much longer play time. It all depends on how diligent and how thorough and how energetic I am in doing this request.

We set this sort of condition to train a child in the way that they should go. This is what God

does with us. He says certain things to us, and then He steps back and waits for us to apply.

And we can do that in our prayers. We take what we have learned, and we bring it before the Father. Many times God has an answer to a prayer all wrapped up with a bow and a tag, but He doesn't hand it to us until we ask.

Other times, He just gives it to us right away. But you will notice that in the great prayers of the Bible, there is tremendous, we're going to see this in 1 Samuel, tremendous doctrinal application. Our next lesson in 1 Samuel on the Song of Hannah is a combination prayer and praise.

And that's what this is. He begins with a very strong request. Vindicate me, O Lord, because I have walked in my integrity.

Now this is David. This is David of Bathsheba fame. This is David of Uriah the Hittite fame.

This is David of numbering the people fame. This is David of I'm about to kill Nabal fame. This is David of my spits running down my beard in Gath fame.

How can he say I have walked in my integrity? It isn't that we are sinless. It isn't that we have never failed. It is knowing how to be cleansed.

One of the most popular household products is spot remover. You've seen the infomercials where they say we're going to create a really nasty stain. And they take pasta and they take chocolate sauce and they take wine or grape juice and they smear it all on this and then stick it in the washer, pull it back out.

And they say, look at this shirt tail. You can't even see the spot. It doesn't mean that the shirt has never had a spot.

It means that we know how to get it clean. And a clean shirt is the goal. If you have a clean shirt, you can't say, well, I can't wear that.

It used to have a spot. I can't wear that. It used to have an awful ugly red stain on the front.

If you can get the stain out, it is, what do we say, good as new? Good as new. Do you think if God does spot removal, it's a halfway job? Do you think that there's still a shadow? I've got several things. I was working the other day with a chainsaw up over my head and I filled up the chainsaw, fired it up and was cutting and it ran out of gas.

So I went and filled it up, put the lid on, went back up there. But the lid is old and warpy and didn't seal well. And this is gas oil mixture.

So when I put it up over my head, gas started dripping down on me. But, of course, I had this branch I couldn't really stop. And so on one of my favorite shirts, my Sam's Restaurant Green Eggs and Ham T-shirt, one of my favorite shirts, I got this enormous black gasoline oil stain.

I gave it to Patty. I said, you know, I hope you can get this out. She put spot remover on, put it in the washing machine, came back out.

It's almost gone, but it's not completely gone. If you look, you can still see the stain. It was not a complete cleansing.

It's not a God-like cleansing. When God vindicates, when God forgives, when God cleanses, it is total, it is complete. There is no shadow of the remainder of that infraction.

David murdered Uriah the Hittite. David committed adultery with Bathsheba. David numbered the people, which resulted in the death of some, what was it, 70,000 in Israel.

And yet, he says, I have walked in my integrity. How can he say that? We'll look at the next line. I have trusted in the Lord.

I shall not slip. If David was depending on his own knees and his own sure-footedness, he would be at the bottom of the cliff in many pieces. But, he says in another place, the Lord has set my feet like hinds feet, and I walk in the high places, like a mountain goat.

It's over in Habakkuk, and it's also in the Psalms. It's two different places. It talks about the Lord setting your feet like hinds feet.

He says, examine me, O Lord, and prove me, test me. Try my mind and my heart. For your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in your truth.

Now, all of us have sins in various categories. We have the classic three categories of sins of attitude, sins of the tongue, and overt sins, sins of activity. At any given moment, I suspect we could probably stop and say, well, I've got an unconfessed sin here or an unconfessed sin there.

I had a little flash of impatience. I had worry. I had fear.

I had a bad attitude of bitterness or jealousy or spitefulness or some other sinful attitude. Sins are the ones that get us the most because you don't even have to blink to commit one. You can just have a series of thoughts pass through your mind and say, presto, sin has been committed.

So, to go to the Lord and say, examine me, test me, try my mind, and try my heart. Now, what's the difference in the mind and the heart? The mind is the place where we reason, isn't it? And I'm talking about from a biblical perspective. And this is emphasis.

You can find overlap in the Word of God. But the emphasis, the center of thinking when you talk about the mind, is your thought processes, your reasoning, your logic. The heart is the seat of motivation.

There is a process of thinking that is deceitful. You can use false logic. I've got an entire textbook up there called Introduction to Logic that teaches you about logical fallacies, about starting with a false premise and inevitably arriving at a false conclusion, and the different ways

in which you can introduce error into your mental calculations.

But what does Jeremiah 17.9 say? It doesn't say the mind is deceitful above all things, does it? It says the heart is deceitful. Our motivations, our sense of something needing to be is deceitful. We think something ought to be a certain way.

And when I say think, we feel like we have the impulse, we have the sense that it ought to be a certain way. And we don't often go against our heart. All of the modern movies, oh, follow your heart.

That is the big theme. Ignore logic. Ignore experience.

Ignore your better judgment. Ignore the advice of people who know better. And just follow your heart.

Well, your heart may say, I really want what's behind that jewelry store window. I believe I'll just throw a brick through it and grab it. The heart is deceitful.

David says, look at both areas. Examine in the harsh light of the fire of judgment that burns in God's eyes. He says, look at my mind.

Look at the way I think. And look at my motivations. Look at the thoughts and intents of my heart.

And test me. Determine my status. Try my mind and my heart.

And he says, I am ready for this examination because your loving kindness is before my eyes. Loving kindness in Hebrew is hesed. C-H-E-S-E-D.

He says, because, he says, ki hesed ka. And hesed is one of the great words of the Bible. Without God's loyal love, without his being true to his promise, our condition would be hopeless.

He says, your hesed is before my eyes and I have walked in your truth. Grace and truth. The name of our church, by the way, is in verse 3. Grace is before my eyes and I have walked in your truth.

David can ask for and be ready for this examination because he has claimed God's grace. It is by grace that 1 John 1.9 takes place. Have you ever wondered, you watch these stories that are being concocted and they get ever more strange with vampires and witches and wizards and Harry Potter this and Charmed that and there's a lot of mystical supernatural stuff that is passed off as entertainment today.

And one question that these shows don't address and don't answer is what is the source? Why is it that the talisman works? Why is it when you reassemble the three pieces of the idol that suddenly great power bursts forth? Why is it that someone can change themselves or transport

themselves or invoke different magical supernatural effects because where does the power come from? What makes this happen? Who says that if you think of something that's what the big demon king is going to return as? You remember Ghostbusters? The guy tried to think of the most innocuous thing and so he thought of marshmallows and so the demon guy comes back as the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man. Where is the power that makes these things take place? And they just leave that unaddressed. Well, there is power.

There is power for forgiveness of sins. There is power to discern the right from wrong. There is power to discern the better things.

There is power to be cleansed and to be spotless. What was the goal that Jesus had in dying specifically not only for the nation of Israel but for the church? What does it say? That he might present to himself a glorious church that is without spot, without wrinkle or any such thing but that it should be holy and without blemish. That's us.

No spot, no wrinkle, nothing even approaching it. Holy and without blemish. Which of us can claim that description? On our own.

We can only claim it by looking at God's grace. Your Chesed is before my eyes. I have walked in your truth.

What if we are saved and we don't keep our eyes on God's grace? What if we are saved and we don't walk in God's truth? Notice he doesn't say, and I know your truth. He doesn't say, your grace is before my eyes and I have heard your truth. I took notes on your truth.

I can answer questions about your truth. I can engage in discussions about your truth. What does walking mean universally throughout the scriptures? Halak in the Old Testament, peripateo in the New Testament.

This is our lifestyle. It is not a point in time. It is not like an heiress that just looks at an activity apart from time.

This is a present tense, an ongoing pattern of considering God's truth. Applying God's truth. Seeking to be in the center of God's will in everything that we do.

For this category of believer, Old Testament or New, to be grace oriented if you will. The first floor of Bob Thame's edification complex was G slash O, grace orientation. Kesed orientation.

To walk in God's truth and keep his grace before our eyes. This is how we are cleansed and this is how we can come before God and say, examine me. I know I am clean and I know you will find no spot because I have claimed your grace.

What does 1 John talk about? People like to bring up 1 John 1.9. Homo logeto your sins and he is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse. But what about 1 John 1.7? Which precedes it, which conditions it that says if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship each

with the other. That's us with God and God with us.

And the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin. Reverse the clauses in 1 John 1.7. The blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin if we walk in the light as he is in the light. David says the very same thing here.

He says, look at what I have not done. I have not sat with idolatrous mortals. I do not fellowship with darkness.

I don't countenance, encourage, enjoy those who have some other God. Who don't have their eyes on God's grace. I will not go in with hypocrites.

I won't even fellowship with those who act like they believe God. Act like or claim God's name but don't really live that way. You can really narrow down your social life by the way.

But what happens? What fellowship hath light with darkness? The old thing you hear from the time you're small. If you take a barrel of good apples and drop one bad one in, which way does the transformation go? Do the 49 good apples turn the bad one good or does the bad one turn the other 49 rotten? The Old Testament in the New tells us you've got to be careful about associations. There is guilt by association.

There is the principle that Paul quotes, bad company corrupts good morals. And there is a principle of separation. It doesn't mean we don't have any truck or any contact but this isn't where we have our enthusiasm.

There are people who have an enthusiasm for an evil environment as much as for the people who inhabit it and perpetrate it. There are people who love to jump on the internet for certain things. There are people who love to jump into video games that have crummy themes and poor values.

The way to get ahead is to slaughter everybody else. This is in all your shoot-em-up videos. I'm not saying we should never play a video game but we want to be careful about the philosophy.

Do we want to be addicted? Do we want to spend hour after hour after hour in movies or entertainments or other things that are not a part of the light? He says, I don't sit with idolatrous mortals. I don't sit in the environment. Why did people sit in the ancient world? What were they doing when they sat? This is the fellowship meal, isn't it? This is converse.

You've seen the movies of the Bedouin in their tents and in the ancient Near East. This is what people did to converse and fellowship and spend extended periods of time. That is to sit.

Psalms 1-1, Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. I will not go in with hypocrites. Not only will I not sit down, I won't even cross the threshold.

I will stay outside with these who are false professors. Now, in modern theology, a false

professor is an unbeliever masquerading as a believer. But biblically, a false professor, a hypocrite, is someone who is saved and tries to appear as though God is first in their life, but he's not.

And we require discernment to identify and separate from those. Look at what he says in verse 6. He says, I will wash my hands in innocence. Well, this kind of fits our picture, doesn't it? It doesn't say, my hands never get dirty.

I am the man who never soils his hands. He says, I will wash my hands in innocence. This is why we keep Gojo in the garage, a waterless hand cleaner.

Because when we go out and change our spark plugs or check the oil or basically, well, on my cars anyway, maybe the new cars. I've seen new cars, you raise the hood and everything looks like the inside of a computer. It's clean and oil-less and grease-less and smoke-less and you can fry an egg and eat it right off the engine block.

But my cars, if you open the hood and touch anything, you now need some form of Ajax or waterless hand cleaner. I will wash my hands in innocence. And so will I go about your altar, O Lord.

This is why, as I mentioned earlier, we begin our worship by going to the Lord in prayer and taking a moment to acknowledge any unconfessed sin. Because He says, I don't come to the altar, I don't come to the place of worship until my hands are clean. There is a sequence, there is a priority.

Is it more important to confess your sins or is it more important to make sure you worship? Well, one thing has to precede the other. One is no good without the other. I will wash my hands in innocence and in that status, with that having been done, I will go to your altar, O Lord, so that I can proclaim with the voice of thanksgiving and tell of your wondrous works.

How many of God's wondrous works is David familiar with? How many of them is he going to proclaim? I will proclaim three wondrous works. Creation, the flood, and the deliverance from Egypt. All your wondrous works.

This is a catalog, this is a repertoire, this is a long, long list of wondrous works. Why does he proclaim these with a voice of thanksgiving? This is worship. This is what we sang about in the doxology.

And you know what it does? It restores our objectivity. Because we tend to come to God with our agenda, with our priorities, with what's weighing on our mind. We have an issue or two issues or three issues or five issues.

And that's what we want to bring to God. We were busy and we've kind of hit a stopping place. This can happen with your computer.

You're going along and you're doing something and suddenly your computer locks up or it won't do a certain thing. It won't print, it won't display, it just seizes up. And you try a few things and it doesn't work and you say, well, I need to call somebody that knows about computers.

Well, when you call them up, you don't say, well, hi there, tell me how your day is going. How's your family? What's the news on the employment front? And they don't call you up, they don't call me up and ask me a lot of personal questions. Somebody calls up and says, hey, I can't print.

What do I do? Well, we tend to have this same sort of pattern when we go to God. Dear Lord, thank you for this day now. Here's my problem.

What does David say? When I come to the place of worship, when I come to the altar, remember the altar is the meeting place. You can't meet God without the sacrifice. Picture of Christ, picture of the opening through the veil, the blood sanctifying and atoning, making fellowship and communication with God possible.

The altar is the meeting place. The cross was lifted up between heaven and earth because that's the bridge. I will go to your altar so that I may communicate my petitions.

Is it legitimate to communicate petitions? Go look at Solomon and the dedication of the temple. He says this is the place where people need to come and bring their petitions. Jesus said, ask and it shall be given.

Whatever you ask in my name, my Father will do for you. There's nothing wrong with petitions. As a father, if your son asks you for bread, what will you give him in return? It's fine.

But what is the pattern? What is the regular climate of relationship? It's not, well, I don't talk to you unless I have a problem. The only time the phone rings is when something's broken. The pattern is I want to come to the altar and proclaim with a thankful voice your wondrous works.

This is objectivity. It's a reminder that the world is running on God's timetable with God's objectives and not ours. Our life is only significant to the extent that it is a part of God's plan and God's purpose.

To the extent that we are off, I can't remember if I mentioned this last time or not, but it always makes a big impression on me. We got the DVD version of Kelly's Heroes and watched it again last week. I hadn't seen that movie in a long time.

And it is the classic case of going off in your own direction. There were a lot of things in the subplot of that that I have forgotten and they all contribute and reinforce that main idea. David says in verse 8, Lord, I have loved the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells.

Where is God's habitation in the place where he dwells now? Is it in Jerusalem? Is it at the local

church with the steeple in the parking lot? Is it this living room? Where is the habitation of God's house and where is the dwelling place for his glory now? It's us. It's our soul. Do we get out our Whitney Houston records and say the greatest love of all is to love myself because I'm the habitation of God? What is it talking about? The place where your glory dwells.

This is an encouragement to us in this day for meditation. When people went to the tabernacle or went to the temple, they would go there to consider God and his mighty works, his plan and his purpose. We have that walking around with us and we are to visit God's holy habitation with a view toward his plan and purpose.

My problem is only significant and only needs a solution if it is inhibiting God's plan and God's purpose. My goals and desires, if I want to build a fence or build a deck or fix my car or sell my car or paint my walls or fix my broken appliances or any other thing I can think of, that only has significance in the context of God's plan and purpose. What is the point? Unless it attaches in some way to God's plan and purpose.

Do I need security for my family? Do I need transportation for my family? Do I need to be a good steward of my groceries? Therefore, my refrigerator needs to work. Otherwise, I waste money on food that spoils. It all attaches back to God.

It is God's habitation. It is the place where God's glory dwells that gives significance and meaning to anything. Do not gather my soul with sinners nor my life with bloodthirsty men.

This is the harvesting of the faithless. This is the rooting out of the tares, if you will. This is God's discipline and judgment on those who are far afield.

He says, and this request is not that he is fearful that he is going to be somehow scooped up. It is an acknowledgment that God does this. And he is affirming that God is not going to discipline him.

God is not going to judge him or send him out of this life unto the sin unto death. In whose hands is a sinister scheme and whose right hand is full of bribes. The two things that characterize the sinners and the bloodthirsty men are that they are running their own agenda.

They have their own evil schemes. And they are using what they have in their hand to accomplish those schemes. It is not used for the glory of God.

It is not set in the context of the plan of God. It is, there are only two plans. For me, it is either the plan of God or the plan of Sam.

And whatever resources I have, whether it is time or materials or influence or clock cycles in my brain, the time I spend thinking, I am either going to be devoting those to God's plan, or by default, if it is not God's plan, it is my plan. Well, a lot of you have seen the results of my plan. My plan is not so hot.

Mine is limited and short-sighted and has earthly, useless, futile, short-term goals. God's plan is everlasting and eternal and glorious. So, it is not a real hard decision to make in the analysis of it as to which plan we ought to follow.

David concludes by saying, as for me, there are people who are going to pursue their own sinister scheme. By the way, even your best intentions are a sinister scheme if they are not a part of the plan of God. You can devote your day to making a great present for someone to give to them on some occasion, and if it is not a part of the plan of God, if you have not woven that into the fabric of your life before God and in the light of Christ, it is a sinister scheme because you are wasting God's time.

As for me, I will walk in my integrity. Isn't that how he began? Vindicate me, for I walk in my integrity. Redeem me and be merciful to me.

My foot stands in an even place. When do we slip? It is when our foot is not in an even place. In the ancient world, it is not like they had pools of oil around that they could slip in, or banana peels that they could slip in.

In the ancient world, in the ancient Near East, if you slipped, it is because you stepped on uneven ground, faulty ground, rocky ground, and something gave way. My foot stands in an even place. He says, I am on the rock.

My thinking, my life plan, my plan for this day, for this afternoon, is grounded on the rock, so I can go before God. My eye is on Him and His glory and His plan, and I can come with confidence. I have taken care of business, the spots, the defilement, the corruption that has crept into my life.

I have claimed God's grace. I am absolutely and utterly cleansed. I can come before God in my integrity, and I can claim His grace.

I can proclaim His wondrous works. And in the congregations, I will bless the Lord. Well, the great thing about this is, as we turn back now to Exodus chapter 11, or chapter 12, actually, the tail end of 11 and the beginning of 12, is that as the Passover comes, the tenth of the mighty wonders of God, you have had nine plagues, three sets of three, and this one stands apart and alone.

And as God describes what's about to take place, He specifies that a ritual will be observed in Israel, a ceremony that, if you clear your mind, just reboot, clear everything out, pretend like you don't know anything about Israel, Egypt, the Passover, none of that. God comes and says, I am going to separate, I'm going to distinguish. There are two peoples intermixed.

You've got Egyptians and Israelites. And I'm going to come in, and I'm going to slay the oldest son in every household, every clan, every family. I'm going to come in, I'm going to slay the oldest.

Even their animals. Whatever calf was born first, if it's still in the herd, I'm going to kill it. Every firstborn thing.

Unless you observe a ritual. Does He say, I want you to go and hang a brass bell around the neck of every firstborn that you want to spare? I want you to kill a sacrifice and take the blood and smear it on the forehead or the right earlobe or the right toe and the right thumb of the firstborn. It's nothing like that.

It's a very unique ritual. He says to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, this month shall be your beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year to you.

This is the month Abib, A-B-I-B, later known as Nissan, not like the car brand with one S. N-I-S-A-N, Nissan. This is the name. This is the name that was acquired during the captivity.

Abib, the beginning of months, the first month of the year to you. Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying on the 10th of this month, every man shall take for himself a lamb according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household. If the household is too small for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next to his house take it according to the number of persons.

According to each man's need, you shall make your count for the lamb. So what do we find out about this? Well, this signifies a beginning. What is it the beginning of? Well, this is the beginning of Israel as a nation rather than a people.

This is the birthday. This is the July 4th, 1776 for Israel. This is their Independence Day.

And as such, it would be like people saying, from now on, July is going to be your first month, your chief month, because that's when your country came into being. This also, if you start your calendar, if the first page on your calendar is Abib, what's going to be the first feast you observe? Well, there's nothing that happens between the 1st and the 13th. So feast number one in Israel, first one on the calendar, i.e. the head, the most important, is going to be Passover.

Nothing is going to precede Passover when you look at the calendar in this way. Secondly, on the 10th of this month, which is four days before the 14th, every man shall take for himself a lamb. It doesn't say every woman or every child. The man, the head of the house, will take a lamb according to his house.

A lamb per household. If the household is small, maybe he's recently married, doesn't have any children yet, then he finds other people and they go together and apportion out. The rabbis later decided that this was a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20 people per animal.

At least 10, no more than 20. It was the rule of thumb and it was adopted in practical terms. Why? It is essential, A, that no meat remain.

The entire lamb is to be consumed. God is very big on us accepting His provision, accepting all

of His provision and leaving nothing over. The condemnation that you see in the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000 is that when God provided food, there were leftovers.

God doesn't believe in leftovers. There were leftovers that weren't eaten. They didn't have a refrigerator.

They didn't have a deep freeze. It would spoil. It would corrupt.

And this lamb, which is going to foreshadow and picture the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, is not to be associated in any way with corruption. So to ensure that, we make sure that it is exactly apportioned out. If one believes in Christianity, this verse is used to support the idea of limited atonement.

That there is enough lamb to go around and none left over. It's not that God sent Christ to die for the whole world but only some accepted Him. So there's sort of leftover work that wasn't applied.

And there was blood of Christ that went to waste, so to speak. Well, this is a specious argument because God never pictures His work as a quantifiable thing where there is a quantity of His work and it has to be a certain quantity to cover a certain number of people. The atoning work of Christ on the cross is significant for its quality.

It is the quality that is effective for all who believe. And if you do not believe, it doesn't mean that some portion of Christ's work is wasted. His work is perfect and complete and pegs the meter any way you look at it.

You can't diminish His work and say, well, it's only... Do you see what I mean? It's apples and oranges. It's a wrong perspective to say that if there are people who don't claim Christ's work and if you believe that there is atonement available for all, that if it was unclaimed, this would be like my daughter baking a cherry pie and saying, as many people as want cherry pie, come in and have some. Well, out of a house full of ten people, six of us, I would be one of them, we would divide it ten ways.

If there were all ten of us, we'd divide it ten ways. Either way, the entire pie is consumed. The only flaw in that analogy is that the work of Christ is not quantifiable in that way.

It is just as available for me as it is for the unbeliever down the street. If he avails himself of it, it is perfect and complete for him. If he does not, it doesn't mean that there is something wasted.

It's just a wrong... It's not to eat any lamb. Don't have one person or two people in here trying to eat a whole lamb. It is to ensure that they don't... This is a practical means of ensuring that there is no waste.

God is efficient. There is not excessive slaughter of lambs. There is nothing left over.

There is nothing wasted. In essence, it is one lamb. Right? To press this into the Calvinist mold

would be to say, well, they should really have only had one lamb and everybody should have come up and gotten one little bit.

There is lamb or kid. This is flock animal, male of the first year. It can be a goat or a sheep.

But it is to be applied to everyone who will claim it and there is to be no waste. That's the principle. Moving on now to verse 6. Now you shall keep it until the 14th day of the same month.

This is the month that is now the first month of the year for Israel as we saw earlier. What is the significance of this timing? These four days? We looked at this in detail studying crucifixion week and the career of the Lord Jesus. The four days of examination of the lamb corresponding to 4,000 years of human history beginning with the revelation of the seed of the woman in the garden coming forward 4,000 years to the birth of Christ.

You see this in crucifixion week itself where the 14th Nisan falling on a Thursday. The Thursday crucifixion that we have studied many times. If you work backward, if the 14th Nisan in that year was Thursday, then the 13th was Wednesday, the 12th was Tuesday, the 11th was Monday, and the 10th was Sunday.

What happened on that Sunday? That is what we call Palm Sunday. They often call it the Triumphal Entry. We refer to it as the Tragic Entry because the Lord Jesus comes in riding on the foal of a donkey.

He has the palm branches and everyone is saying Hosanna, but he goes on in to the temple and looks around and then leaves. He looks. He does not find what he is looking for there.

What was that? This is equivalent to the presentation of the lamb, the lamb without spot and blemish, but he goes unrecognized. At the temple, there is not the attitude, there is not the understanding, there is not the recognition of who and what the Lord Jesus is, but this is pictured in this interval between the 10th and the 14th. You also think about the history of Israel, the beginning of their national identity where they begin to possess land takes place when Joshua takes them across the Jordan into the land.

What year does that take place? We have the Exodus taking place here in 1445 B.C. 1400 years later, you are going to be at approximately 5 B.C. and this is the 40 years of wandering. You get down to 1405-1404 or so when Joshua takes them into the land. Exactly 1400 years later, you have the birth of the Lord Jesus.

This timing is significant and we have studied that in more detail in the past, but all of this takes place in what is now to be for them the first month of the year. Abib as the first month and this feast as the first feast. We are not Jewish.

We don't keep a Jewish calendar and even the Jews themselves had really two New Years. They had one in the spring and one in the fall and they still maintained their civil calendar. This was

thought to be the religious calendar.

But what does it mean to us if we think about Passover and say well, how am I to take this? How should I apply it? Think about this. This is their deliverance from Egypt and their birth as a nation. Old things are passed away.

All things are become new. What does the New Testament tell us? If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away.

All things are become new. Do we not remember that we were crucified with Christ? The death that he died, he died to sin. The life that he lived, he lives to God.

Every day we should wake up and say I am delivered. I am bought with a price. It is my job this day, these next few hours to glorify God in my body, in my walk, in my lifestyle.

To walk not in the counsel of the ungodly, to not stand in the way of sinners, to not sit in the seat of the scornful, to walk in the light because he is in the light because he is God the Father. Have fellowship with the Father through the Son, through the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanses me. If I do soil and corrupt and defile myself through sin during the day, I need to go to God.

I have his chesed ever before my eyes and I claim his truth. And I let him remove my spots, remove my blemish, remove my wrinkles and my corruptions and my failings. And having done so, I look at myself as walking in integrity.

I don't sit and beat myself up. I don't get a spiritual inferiority complex. I don't compare myself to others and say, you know, I am just nowhere near as faithful or as dedicated or as glow in the dark as this other person I know or this person I read about or this person I see.

David could probably outclass all of us in the area of sin and he says, I walk in my integrity. God has cleansed me and my standing doesn't depend on me. It depends on him.

He is perfect and his cleansing power is perfect. And so I do not have an inferiority complex. I don't walk around saying, well, you know, I could never proceed in the plan of God because I've got this past.

I've got this baggage. I've got these things where I've failed. He says, look, I walk in my integrity.

God has cleansed me. His grace is before my eyes. I will proclaim his glory.

I will fellowship at his altar. And it's actually a species of arrogance to keep our sins before our face and to hold up our t-shirt and say, you know, I think I can still see that spot. I don't think I'm really as clean as I need to be.

It impugns the grace and the power of God. And it's essential that we do this. It's essential that

we claim for ourselves our portion of the land, not only its salvation, but to recognize that this is the birthday of our independence from the slave market of sin.

We are freed. And to the extent that we let sin exert power over us, whether through guilt or shame or dragging us back and preventing our forward progress down the narrow road that goes through the straight gate, to that extent, we undo the work of Christ. What does Galatians 1 tell us? Christ died to do what? To deliver us out of this present evil age.

The evil of this time. The Bible says that there is evil in each day. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

So what are we to do when we think about this Passover land? Each man had to analyze. He had to look at what was necessary and claim what he needed. He had to do some thinking.

How many people are in my house? I need to maybe have some fellowship with my neighbor, others in my father's household, and work out together how to implement God's guidance. And I will avail myself and I'm going to be obedient and do what God says, but I've got to think about it. I've got to make some application.

I have to figure out exactly what is going to come to me and what is going to apply to others so that we fully avail ourselves of the land. We do the same thing. We look at the work of Christ and at different times, sometimes we're in prosperity.

We like to talk about problem times, sometimes we're in prosperity. We have to look at the land. We have to decide what portion we claim and what applies to us.

Wasting nothing. Corrupting nothing. Fellowshiping with others in the process.

There are some things we do as a group. There are other things we do individually. But this is entrance into the family of God, claiming the grace of God through Christ.

It is all resonating in this sacrifice. Well, that is a fruitful meditation to think about our day and our circumstances and stop and think, how do I approach my opportunity here to walk in integrity? Well, let's pause and take our break here. When we come back, we're going to look at the other aspects of this observance.

We're going to see that some of these were perpetuated and some of them were unique to the first observance. And that's where we'll pick up when we return.