

Exod 03-07-20a

As we continue our worship this Sunday morning, we pause at this point to recognize the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. We do it regularly, but I don't want it to become a mindless routine. It is exceedingly important for us, not only at times of Bible study, but also throughout our day and as we undertake each task, as we enter into each conversation, as we sit down to contemplate every issue in our lives, to begin that activity by acknowledging the role of God's Holy Spirit.

Otherwise, all of the time that we have spent in Bible study will be for naught, because if He is not able to speak to us, if we're not listening, when He endeavors to counsel us and guide us and lead us into all truth, then we are going to be sallying forth in our own wisdom and in our own strength. We will draw faulty conclusions, make wrong assumptions, take wrong and invalid courses of action, from which God will have to bail us out at a future point. So much better to begin on the right foot, to step out in the military.

If you're standing at attention and they say forward march, everyone in all of the units should step out left foot first. Your left foot falls on the beat of the cadence, and everyone has to step out on that same foot. And if you step out on the right foot for some reason, you're out of step, and you've got to do a shuffle step or do some other adjustment to get in step.

And our New Testament verse that says walk by means of the Spirit or walk in the Spirit, the Greek verb there actually means keep in step with the Spirit. It was the word used of military marching. Well, the best time to make sure you're stepping out on the correct foot is at the outset, at the beginning.

And so we pause before our Bible study, and I hope it is a habit that we'll carry over to other activities in our life. That as we begin an activity, as we go into a new issue of the day, we stop and just acknowledge the presence of God's Holy Spirit, pray to God the Father, that He will be able to be heard over the noise and the din of everything around us, that we will heed what He has to say from God's Word. Let's take a moment now and go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, it is a wonderful blessing to know that we have not been issued the high calling in Christ Jesus to try to execute it in our own strength. We know ourselves, we know that our hearts are deceitful, we know that we are weak, we are easily distracted, we are easily led into error, and we know that it is only through the power that You give us that we can even approach the living of the Christian life that You have called us to. We thank You for the presence of the Holy Spirit who resides with us, who is the seal of our redemption, who will remain with us until that day when we are united with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank You that we have the gift of Your Word. We thank You for the faithfulness of men who down through the centuries have copied it, have been diligent to preserve it, have risked their lives and indeed given their lives so that we could hold a copy of it in our own hands. We thank

You most of all for the Lord Jesus Christ about whom every passage of Scripture focuses and centers.

We thank You for His love for us, His obedience to You, His willingness to go to the cross and rescue us from our hopeless and fallen condition. We pray that as a result of our worship this morning our lives will reflect His glory and in doing so reflect Your glory and accomplish Your plan and purpose. We pray for those who have the rule over us, our governmental leaders, our president in particular, as he faces continuing attacks and assaults from those who seek to unseat him politically or diminish his position for political gain.

We pray that as he deals both with domestic issues and in foreign policy challenges that face him that You will be with him. We know that he is a believer and that he actively pursues his relationship with You. We thank You for allowing our country to have such a man as president.

We pray not only for him but also for those in his staff and cabinet who share the Christian faith and for those in our other branches of government that You will be with them all and lay Your hand upon them, support and sustain them so that our country will reflect those values upon which it was founded, values that come from Your Word. Once again we ask Your blessing on us as we study in fellowship together. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. It seems a prayer for old age, but when I think of old age these days it doesn't seem so far off. And in reality it is a prayer in anticipation of old age.

It is a reminder that our life is brief, that the time we have here is precious, the minutes that are ticking by even as I speak are irrecoverable. We spend them and they are forever gone. We can't get them back.

We can't do them over. We can't just reboot and start our lives over again. We have to use whatever time remains to us in the light of God's Word and God's plan.

That's what this psalm is about. And it is also a song of deliverance, a recognition of God's saving power. And that of course is the issue in our study in Exodus where we are going to resume this morning in chapter 13.

Psalm 71 says, In You, O Lord, I put my trust. Let me never be put to shame. May I never be put to shame.

Deliver me in Your righteousness and cause me to escape. Incline Your ear to me and save me. Be my strong refuge to which I may resort continually.

You have given the commandment to save me, for You are my rock and my fortress. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man. For You are my hope, O Lord God.

You are my trust from my youth. By You I have been upheld from birth. You are He who took

me out of my mother's womb.

My praise shall continually be of You. I have become as a wonder to many, but You are my strong refuge. Let my mouth be filled with Your praise and with Your glory all the day.

Do not cast me off in the time of old age. Do not forsake me when my strength fails. For my enemies speak against me, and those who lie in wait for my life take counsel together, saying, God has forsaken Him.

Pursue and take Him, for there is none to deliver Him. O God, do not be far from me. O my God, make haste to help me.

Let them be confounded and consumed who are adversaries of my life. Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor who seek my hurt. But I will hope continually and will praise You yet more and more.

My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day, for I do not know their limits. I will go in the strength of the Lord God. I will make mention of Your righteousness and of Yours only.

O God, You have taught me from my youth, and to this day I declare Your wondrous works. Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me. Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.

Also, Your righteousness, O God, is very high. You who have done great things. O God, who is like You? You who have shown me great and severe troubles shall revive me again and bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

You shall increase my greatness and comfort me on every side. Also, with the lute I will praise You and Your faithfulness, O my God. To You I will sing with the harp, O Holy One of Israel.

My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, and my soul which You have redeemed. My tongue also shall talk of Your righteousness all the day long, for they are confounded, they are brought to shame, who seek my hurt. Well, this is a wonderful song written, I think, by David in the latter years of his life.

And you'll see in verse 2 when he says, Deliver me in Your righteousness. This is a preposition in Hebrew that means in, by, or with. And the preposition is a single letter, Beit.

Beit, of course, is also the word for house. The letter itself is shaped like a little house. And he says, Deliver me by Your righteousness.

You remember our Isaiah passage? I will strengthen Thee, yea, I will help Thee, yea, I will uphold Thee with the right hand of my righteousness, God says. And there is a great connection in Scripture with deliverance and God's righteousness, which we wouldn't immediately think of. When I get in trouble, when you and I face some sort of terrible adversity,

we say, I need someone to remove this enemy, to resolve this problem, to fill in this lack, to take away this danger.

But the first thing we don't think of is, I need the righteousness of God. Where is God's righteousness? But throughout Scripture you find that it is the righteousness of God that secures deliverance. God delivers us, not because we need it, per se, but because it's right.

The fundamental motivation in God's deliverance is righteousness. Now, how can it be right for Him to deliver us when we are undeserving? It tells us that our deliverance, our salvation, is based on something other than us. We do not merit deliverance.

It's not right to deliver us just looking at us. We are condemned. We are guilty before God.

But, in sending His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, God made it right to deliver us. And it is an expression of God's righteousness. Now, this should lead to objectivity on our part.

We can get swamped in guilt. We can get swamped in the shame that we feel over a failure or over a lack or over some malfunction on our part. And the reason God tells us about His righteousness is to remind us that it is not by works of righteousness which we have done.

It's His mercy that saves us. So, when you see this verse 2, deliver me by your righteousness, deliver me in your righteousness, and cause me to escape, David is not saying, I'm such a deserving guy, you really need to deliver me from my enemies. He is claiming the righteousness of God.

And that takes the focus off of us, who and what we are, what we have done or failed to do, and puts the focus where it belongs, on the Lord Jesus Christ. David looks forward to Him in prospect, we look back to Him in retrospect, but God delivers based on Christ. That's the short answer.

It is because of Christ that there is any deliverance at all. When you go to Hebrews and he talks about the Israelites in the wilderness, which we're studying in Exodus, he says, they all ate the same spiritual food, and they drank the same spiritual drink. And he talks about the rock that followed them, and he says that rock was Christ.

The sustaining, the mercy, the deliverance, the ongoing grace of God for Israel from Egypt to Canaan, is based on that rock, Christ. So, we should not wallow in self-pity, we shouldn't say, oh, I'm unique, I'm special, my problems are more egregious than someone else's. It's just not true.

All of us are subject to the slings and arrows of sin and evil, and all of us are delivered by God's righteousness. He says, be my strong refuge to which I may resort continually. You are my rock and my fortress.

Remember our memory project a year or two ago? Uses the very same vocabulary, doesn't it? He who abides, dwells in the shadow of the Almighty, the secret place of the Most High, talks

about God being the rock and the fortress, from the perilous pestilence and all that. Well, he says over and over again in this psalm, you are my hope, you are my trust. Verse 5 says, you are my hope, O Lord.

Verse 14 says, I will hope continually and will praise you more and more. Verse 16 says, I will go in the strength of the Lord God. That's what we talked about at the outset before our prayer.

It's one thing to say, I will go in the strength of God, it's something else to know where that strength is and how to access it. He concludes talking about musical instruments. And this puts some of your denominations out in the weeds who say, well, it's only vocal music that is appropriate.

David says, I'll play the lute, I'll play the harp, I will sing along, I will have instrumental accompanied music. But the primary thing that is in view here is consistency. David says, you have been my hope from my youth.

Now in my old age, do not forsake me. I am still hoping in you. I am still trusting in you.

Evil is defined as a pattern of sin that stretches over a period of time. You can commit the occasional sin or isolated sin, but when sin becomes a pattern, when it becomes a habit and a perpetuating pattern, that takes on the label of evil. In the same way, we can have sporadic instances of faith.

Usually when we're under extreme pressure, we go to God and say, Lord, please get me out of this jam. But in the same way that evil is the perpetuation of sin as a pattern, faith and obedience and a life of hope is perpetuation of looking to God over time. It is the antithesis, it's the opposite of evil.

Instead of perpetuating sin as a pattern, we want to perpetuate faith and hope and love as a pattern. That's what David indicates here when he talks about perpetuating his faith into his old age. He says, By you I have been upheld from birth.

The interesting thing about that is there is a recognition of God's grace even before our salvation. We can see that God laid the groundwork and set up the circumstances of our life anticipating the days of our life before him as a believer. Then he concludes by saying that the enemies will be confounded and will be brought to shame, the ones who seek our hurt.

This can include human enemies. It also includes the principalities and powers and the rulers who as a policy and as a program sponsored by Satan are trying to undo us, as Martin Luther said in A Mighty Fortress. The forces that threaten to undo us, remember that phrase? It is the active policy of Satan to use whatever means that his minions can perpetuate to knock us off track, to distract us, to dissuade us, to discourage us.

I'm not saying that there are individual demons assigned to attack us, although that may happen. But it is a force in our society. It's a force in our culture.

It's a force in our environment. That's why he's called the prince of the power of the air and the principalities and powers that rule in the air. The air is all around us.

Sometimes the wind comes. You don't know where it came from. You don't know where it goes.

The things of the spirit surround us and yet are invisible. The Bible in a couple of different contexts talks about it in terms of air. But what's the idea here? We need deliverance from our surroundings.

Those who seek our hurt are both general and specific. It's both a general attack and a specific attack. And the Bible says this.

The more diligent we are to follow the plan of God, the more we are going to skyline ourselves in the conflict between God and Satan. And the more you can expect and look forward to opportunities for combat. This is why we are encouraged to put on the full armor of God in Ephesians.

Because we need it. Do you want to be sitting on the sidelines? Do you want to have a press card and just be talking about reporting on the conflict? Or do you want to have a weapon and be engaged in it? Do you want to have a means of defense and a means of advance and a means of making a difference? That's what God gives us. Even when we're old, even when we're gray headed.

I pastored a church full of retired missionaries and pastors and things. And I got the sense sometimes that they felt like their time of service was behind them. And that now that they were retired, they weren't real sure why they were still here.

And you read a psalm like this and David says, I still have the opportunity, in verse 18, to declare your strength to the next generation. To declare your power to everyone who may come. And as we get older, we don't have to be old.

But as we get older, we have the opportunity to communicate the truth of God by our example, by our lifestyle, as well as by our words. Well, all of this plays into our study as we return now to Exodus, beginning at chapter 13. Because God is instituting memorial activities.

What I find surprising is He has done the nine plagues followed by this tenth mighty wonder. He did three sets of three and then here is the knockout punch of the death of the firstborn. But even as this mighty victory takes place, even as the Israelites are plundering the Egyptians, taking the spoils of gold and silver and are walking out of the land, it's one of the greatest episodes in all of Israel's history.

It is the birth of their nation. It is the thing to which God will refer back dozens and dozens of times. It is the act by which God will identify Himself countless times in the Old Testament.

What does He say? I am the God who brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And we know

that this, in the representative sense, means I am the God of your salvation. I am the God that has delivered you from bondage and slavery to sin.

Well, in the midst of this, we have these digressions. We saw it at the end of chapter 12, beginning in verse 37. It talks about the mixed multitude that comes out from them.

The children of Israel are journeying out. We've already seen in the earlier part of the chapter, the beginning of chapter 12, for the first 36 verses or so, He gives them the memorial observance or ceremony of the Passover. Verse 14, This day shall be to you a memorial.

You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. If this was a movie and the director was going forward, and you think about the Ten Commandments, Charlton Heston, and he's ranting as he leaves the throne room of Pharaoh, we will go forth with our flocks and with our herds and with our oxen and with our asses and with our she-donkeys and we will do this and we will do that.

And he goes out. Did you notice that there is nothing in that movie about the observance of Passover? There's nothing in that movie about the institution of the seven days of unleavened bread. It's not a dramatic moment.

It doesn't play well as a movie. Why does God spend so much time in His Word on it? Well, we take a look at this, and we're just going to look at it in general terms. You've got all the details here.

Many of these are repetitions and will be repeated again and again in the pages of Scripture. Repetition is good. Repetition plants things in our mind as long as it's not taken to excess.

But we're going to see three memorial institutions here. The first is Passover. Passover speaks of the blood.

If you want to just summarize and condense these memorial observances down, Passover has to do with the blood. This is the means by which the deliverance is effected. This is the turning away from life in Egypt, that sacrifice as God judges Egypt, that blood exempts the household from that judgment.

Sin is judged. We are exempted by the blood. Isn't that what our salvation is all about? God judges sin.

We are exempted by the blood of Christ who is our Passover. That's memorial number one. What's memorial number two? Unleavened bread.

Verse 19, For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses. Whoever eats what is leavened will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native. You shall eat nothing leavened.

In all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread. What was the origin of this? Well,

normally, day by day, people had bread every day, these things that looked kind of like a pizza crust, just about the size of a, if you go to Pizza Hut and get a small pizza, the bread I've seen in the Middle East is about that size. What is that, a 12 or 14 inch pizza? It's about that big.

And the bread normally would rise and be this round loaf. It would be kind of like a giant hamburger bun. If you go to, I'm trying to think of comparisons, you go to Schlotzky's and get their biggest piece of bread for your sandwich, if you about double that biggest one, that's what the leavened bread looked like.

It was baked in round cakes. And so day by day they would keep a little bit of dough. When they made the bread, they didn't cook all of the dough.

They would always keep a little piece. And they would cook the rest of the bread. Bread, as you can imagine, in that climate wouldn't last very long.

It would dry out and go stale. It could easily become inedible in a short period of time. So they baked their bread fresh day by day.

Well, here you come up to this day and they have baked their bread for the 14th of Nisan. And they set aside their lump of dough. And so now they're going to take that little lump of dough, that's where the leaven is, that's the life, that's where you get what's going to make the bread rise.

Well, they have to leave in such haste that they don't get a chance to take that and make up their new dough and let it rise. I've tried making, in my younger days, I thought anybody ought to be able to cook, so I would try it in my own self. And I tried making bread.

And the thing about bread is you have to do things just right. If you get the water too hot or something, it kills the yeast. And I had bread that ended up kind of like brick because the yeast got killed.

I used too hot a water or something and it died. And so it didn't make its little gaseous emissions to form the air bubbles. You have to have conditions that are within a certain tolerance and range to get bread to rise.

Well, because of the haste with which they're leaving Egypt, those conditions do not exist. And so they had to put their unraised bread dough in their kneading bowls and tie it to their shoulders and just go along. And so the bread did not rise.

Leaven in Scripture always, always, always symbolizes corruption and sin. Those gaseous bubbles that are produced by the yeast that cause bread to rise are the product of corruption, digestion, of breaking down the bread dough. And in the same way that when we cook meat, why does it turn dark on the outside? You start out with a nice red piece of meat.

Why does it turn dark? It's oxidizing. It would do the same thing if you left it out. It is a rapid

form of corruption, if you will.

The only difference is that the heat of the fire kills microorganisms who would be in there breaking it down and doing their thing. But if you leave meat out for any length of time, that will take place. You can't leave meat or blood or any animal body effluvia laying around for very long without getting that kind of corruption.

So, what is it about the leaven and the lack of leaven? The leaven is the product of generation after generation after generation of bread dough that came from Egypt. God says, purge out the old leaven. You're not going to bring that leaven out.

It doesn't mean they'll never eat leavened bread again because unleavened bread is a pretty tough diet. But it is symbolic that for a week they eat this purified bread that has no byproducts of corruption in it. And so, it is a symbol.

It doesn't mean that leaven is actually evil and they should never have it. But it speaks of the same thing that you have in Hebrews chapter 6. The foundation of change of mind away from dead works and faith toward God. The blood separates them from the judgment on sin.

That's memorial number one. The unleavened bread is a representation of dedication to a purified life. Bread is something that you eat several times a day.

The blood is a one-time judgment. Right? And even in Israel, they're only going to observe this once a year. It's a one-time thing.

There was one Passover in Egypt. But the bread, this is your ongoing life. This is what sustains your life.

Jesus is going to use that same figure when you get over to John. Long about chapter 7 when he talks about unless you eat of my flesh and drink of my blood and so on. He brings the bread from heaven.

And when you look at that in context, you find out that what he's really talking about in terms of his body is the word of God. But we'll draw that comparison at a future point. Here, memorial number two, the unleavened bread for a week for seven days.

Passover is just one day. Why don't they observe Passover for seven days? It's a one-time event. Why does the Feast of Unleavened Bread last for seven days? Because that speaks of the entirety of human history.

It speaks of a perfect period of time, completion. In other words, it symbolizes your entire life. This spiritually ought to be true for your entire perfect period that God has assigned to your life, whatever that may be.

So that's memorial number two. Memorial number three is coming up in chapter 13. And we'll see it in just a moment.

But as you see in verse 37 of chapter 12, the children of Israel journeyed from Ramses. Now, there is no city Ramses in this day. And the pharaoh named Ramses has not yet come on the scene.

This town, actually Pi-Ramses, is going to be built on the site of an earlier town called Avaris, A-V-A-R-I-S. Avaris was the capital city where the palace and the courtyards and so on of the pharaoh were located. It's right on the edge of Goshen.

And this is where Moses' mother lived and the reason she could take her baby down to the river. This is right where the Nile River comes up as a single thing and right where it begins a fork. It's the first fork as you start getting into the Nile Delta.

That little crook, if you look at it, it would be like the letter Y bent over to the right. If you had a single stem going northwest and then you bent a Y over to the northeast, that's what this river does. And in the little crook formed there, a little left-pointing, pointy bracket there, that's where Avaris was.

And that is also the edge of Goshen, which extends further to the east. The temple was there in the 12th Dynasty, which is the time that we're talking about, the time of the Exodus. And near the shore, the northern part of that pointy bracket, is where the temple was.

This is where the Pharaoh lived and his daughter. And that bend of the river, she would go down to the river to bathe. And also, because it's the edge of Goshen, you have Hebrews living there and Moses' mother took the basket down.

It floated downstream to where it was in front of the royal residence. And this is where the princess found Moses. Well now, here we are, 80 years later, seeing the children of Israel leaving that area.

So they're journeying from Avaris. Ramses is the later name that people would recognize that town by. And this was no doubt a scribal substitution that took place in some early time, from Ramses to Sukkot.

And we don't know exactly where Sukkot is, but Sukkot means temporary dwellings, huts. There's a feast in Israel that has this name, the Feast of Booths. And it means temporary dwellings.

This was probably originally a place of shepherd encampment near the border of Egypt. They probably had some sort of customs station there controlling what came in and out of the border. This was a way station, a border stop, where people would dwell temporarily until they could get their livestock checked in and out or pay their import, export taxes and so on.

So it is a border town. And it says there were about 600,000 men on foot besides children. This is 600 Eleph.

And we're going to find that there are some other passages that talk about how many men in Israel left at this time. It will say something on the order of 602,550 in a couple of places later on. When you look these passages up, I think they list them there for you if you have a New King James in your cross references.

Numbers 1, 46, Numbers 2, 32, 11, 21, and 26, 51 make reference to the number of Israelites who leave. The one thing you might bear in mind is the word Eleph in the early days of Israel did not necessarily mean 1,000. It means a battalion size unit.

A company is roughly, in latter days, even in our day, a company is usually 300, 350 strong. And so if you have three companies in a battalion, you're going to have about 1,000 men. And this goes all the way back to the days of the Romans.

Well, in earlier days, the units were not so large as they were in later days. And there are some difficulties that we'll talk about at some point in terms of taking this as a literal 600,000. Not so much that this number is extraordinary or not possible, but in some of the other numbers that we're going to see.

We already ran across it in 1 Samuel where the number of individuals who are slain when the ark returns from Philistia and so on. But it is a large number of people. We can safely say that it is 600 battalions, whatever a battalion was in those days.

I think they were about half the size. I think this is probably literally about 300,000 people. But we'll talk about that more in the future.

A mixed multitude went up with them also, flocks and herds, a great deal of livestock, this is because the Israelite livestock was spared from the 10 plagues and they still had fodder with which to feed them because the hail did not destroy their crops. They baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they had brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared provision for themselves. Now, the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was 430 years.

That's more of a problem than it might at first appear. We're going to address that here in a moment. It came to pass at the end of the 430 years, on that very same day, it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.

It is a night of solemn observance to the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is the night of the Lord, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generation. You'll notice that the name solemn observance occurs twice there in verse 42.

This is the only two places in the whole Old Testament where this word occurs. It is called a shamurim, S-H-A-M-U-R-I-M. Now, shamar means to heed or to observe, to take note of and act on something.

But shamurim in the plural and used as a noun is only found here in these two cases. The first

time, it is used of the Lord. It says a solemn observance to the Lord in your English, but it is actually solemn observance of the Lord.

This is God's fulfillment of His promise. This is God's observance of the covenant that He made with Abraham years and years before, back in Genesis chapter 15, when He said, I will bring them out.