

Exod 03-08-17a

Continue our worship this morning by pausing for a moment as is our custom to go before the Lord in prayer, ensure that we are susceptible to the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. There is nothing more frustrating than to know how the Christian life is supposed to be and how it is supposed to bear fruit and then be unable to do so. And when we begin to troubleshoot and try to determine what is the problem, why am I powerless, why am I miserable, why am I lacking the fruit of the Spirit, it will always come back to one of two things, because the power of God comes into our lives through His Word and through His Spirit.

We need the information that is contained in God's Word. It is supernatural in nature. It carries its own power and its own authority.

It is alive and active, as it says in 2 Timothy. And we need to not only hear it, but also bring it to remembrance, spend time in meditation, spend time in conversation with one another about the things of the Spirit and the things of the Word, because that is where the viewpoint is. We know that the Apostle said bad company corrupts good morals.

Why is that? Because when you spend time with bad company, the ideas and the conversation is constantly down a bad road, and you wind up being drawn down that bad road. What is the opposite of that? It is to have up-building and uplifting content for thought and conversation, and often we have to consciously make an effort to steer our mind down a different road, the road of peace, the road of spiritual productivity. That is God's Word.

The other element that has to be present is God's Spirit. He will fold His hands and wait if we go into sin, if we willfully depart from the path, if we walk out of the light into the darkness, He will move away from His comforting, encouraging, and guiding ministry, fold His hands in that regard, and then He will grab the sword of the Spirit and start hacking and slashing in a convicting mode. I don't know about you, but criticism of any sort is hard to take, and criticism that's actually right is even harder to take, that points out our errors, and we often find ourselves at odds with the Spirit of God, because He is convicting, He is pointing out where we are failing, and we are not always as quick to respond as we should be.

So we always stop at the beginning of our study of God's Word, and we should do the same thing before we meditate on God's Word, and ensure that if there is any unconfessed sin, if there is any pattern of evil thought in our minds, that we lay it aside, that we shuck it off, as they say in Oklahoma, and make sure that our life is not wasted, and our time is not wasted. He that sows to the flesh will only reap corruption. If we sow to the Spirit, we reap life everlasting, life that is eternal and divine in its quality, and in its richness, and in its permanence.

Let us pray. Father, we thank you for the opportunity to spend time in the study of your Word under the ministry of your Spirit. We thank you for the fellowship of believers who share our enthusiasm and our recognition of the importance of your Word, and the importance of a right

understanding in order to live a meaningful life, and a life that has consequences that go far into eternity.

We pray that you will be with us and guide us in our search for understanding, and in our desire to find how the Old Testament passages we study this morning have applicability in our own lives. We thank you that we have the environment to do so. We are not in fear of someone breaking through the door and arresting us, and persecuting us for our faith.

We live in a wonderful country. We thank you for our leaders. We thank you for our President.

We pray that you will continue to be with him, and for all of those who are in positions of authority in our judicial and legislative branches of government. We ask that you will encourage them and strengthen them as they face opposition from all corners of the realm of evil and darkness. We pray that you will enable them to prevail and to continue to guide our country down a path that recognizes our Christian heritage and our Christian roots, and our reliance upon you for our national identity and our national future.

We pray now that you will be with us as we fellowship together, bless our conversation, and enable us to go forth with resources in our souls that will reflect your glory and the glory of our Savior. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

For our scripture reading this morning, we're going to look at a passage in Isaiah that relates to a verse that we feel like we gave a little bit short shrift. That verse is Exodus 14, 14. As Israel finds themselves backed up against the Yam Suph, which for convenience sake we'll continue to call the Red Sea.

Just remember it's actually Sea, the Reed Sea. Doesn't mean that it was ankle-deep, but that is in fact what its name was. There's no getting around it.

But they're backed up against it, the Pillar of Cloud, the Pillar of Fire. On the other side of that you have the Egyptians. The people immediately fade.

A little bit of consternation there, a little bit of threat on the horizon. They have not seen an Egyptian. No one has died from an Egyptian spear or sword.

The Egyptians are many hundreds of yards away, on the other side of the cloud, on the other side of the pillar. But the thought that they are actively pursuing, the thought that they have animosity in their hearts toward the Israelites and want to bring them back to Egypt and want to re-enslave them, just that prospect immediately melts whatever small amount of backbone had developed in the Israelites when they marched out. So what do they say in verse 11? Were there no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Your big plan is unraveling and we haven't even got outside of the border yet.

Why have you so dealt with us to bring us up out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we told you in Egypt? Didn't we tell you this was going to fail? Didn't we tell you this was a bad idea? Let us

alone that we may serve the Egyptians. Now these are the people that have just in the last few days packed up, taken the loot from the Egyptians and marched out. But now that it doesn't seem to be going so well, I told you this wasn't going to work.

Didn't I say it would be better to stay here and be a slave? Would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness. You know people say it's better to be a living dog than a dead lion. Why be brave and die when you can be a craven coward and live type of thing.

So Moses said to the people in verse 13, do not be afraid. This talk, and by the way if you're ever in a discussion with someone and you start having something that transmogrifies from a discussion into an argument or an I told you so or why did you bring us down this course and then you start hearing this static coming. Notice what Moses says.

He doesn't say don't complain. He doesn't say quit your gritchin. He doesn't say stop being critical.

Can't you be supportive? What does he say? He says you all are afraid. This is coming out of fear. A lot of our negative ammunition that we throw at one another is rooted in fear.

There is a fear of loss. There is a fear of danger. There is a fear of some consequence.

Formless, shapeless, nameless. We just have a bad feeling which is fear and that fear causes us to lash out. We want to blame someone.

We want to make someone feel as bad as we do. Especially if you look at someone else and they are not fearful and they don't seem to be concerned and you want to try to raise their concern level to the altitude of your own. You start throwing this stuff.

Don't you understand? And that's what's happening here. So Moses said do not be afraid. The problem is fear.

If they were not afraid of the Egyptians would all of this negativity be floating up toward Moses? Would they be saying well this has been a wonderful three or four day walk here but I'd really like to go back to Egypt to be a slave again. They wouldn't be saying it except that they're afraid. They're afraid to die.

They're afraid to be captured. They're afraid to be dragged back to Egypt. They say well why didn't we just stay in Egypt? I told you we should stay in Egypt.

Well what are they so afraid of? Why don't they just walk toward the Egyptians and say I surrender. Take me back. Make me a slave.

I mean this doesn't even make sense. This is the problem with emotions. Strong emotions cannot think.

They can't reason. They have no logic. What are they afraid of? The Egyptians do not want to slay them.

The Egyptians want to recapture them and march them back to Egypt. They're saying why did we ever leave Egypt? It was better for us to be a slave. Well if you really feel that way stand still.

Let the Egyptians come and go back. They're not going to kill you. They might shake their finger at you for marching out with a high hand.

But you see it makes no sense. Moses says look you people are afraid. Don't be afraid.

Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. See the deliverance of the Lord which he will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today you shall see again no more.

La olam. Unto the ages. Same as it's the equivalent of the Greek phrase we studied Friday night.

Unto the ages. One for one equivalents. You will see them no more forever.

Now look at verse 14. Exodus 14. The Lord will fight for you and you shall hold your peace.

If you have a new American standard they translate it this way. The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent. The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.

If you'll just put a cork in it. If you'll just put a sock in it here. Quit crying the blues.

Quit telling me how many graves there were in Egypt. Quit moaning and groaning and saying I told you so. If you'll remain silent God will save you.

And I like that translation. This is once again the versatile Hebrew particle wow. The single letter that looks like a shepherd's staff.

That is a conjunction. A multi-purpose conjunction. It is translated and, but, now, for, then, while.

Very versatile conjunctive particle here. But the idea is the Lord will fight for you. Then you have the conjunction and, now, while.

And then we have the word for remaining silent. And this is a hyphial which is causative. You will, you need to be caused to be.

This is from harsh. C-H-A-R-A-S-H. Harash.

Harash has a original meaning of to scratch or engrave or plow. So you think, well, let's just go back to the root. The Lord will deliver you and you will be scratched.

You will be plowed. You will be furrowed. Engraved.

But what this had the idea of is someone engraving on a tablet or scratching on a tablet.

Someone who knows how to write. Someone who can devise a plan or draw a blueprint.

When you're getting ready to go into battle, every movie that's ever been made, you know, they're out and they clear a piece of ground and the guy draws with a pointed stick and he says, well, they're here and we're here and you go around this way and I'm going to go around this way and we'll head them off at the pass and they're scratching in the ground. It has the idea of a plan or of writing and intelligence. And this is a secret.

Your plan is a secret. You have to follow the progress of Hebrew thinking and how this word came to be used. It starts out to scratch or to plow.

It means to devise or to scheme and that's a secret. And so it means to be hushed and silent about something. You're not going to divulge anything.

And what's the idea? If you have a big plan, whether it's a wonderful plan like a surprise party or whether it's an evil devious plan, you're going to sneak out and violate authority, whatever it may be. If it's any kind of a plan that you want to have success, you don't tell everybody in the world. A lot of good plans have an element of secrecy.

You unfold it with the element of surprise. So you have something going on in your mind, but you don't speak it. That's what's in Kairash.

So what's he saying here? He doesn't say you're not going to be able to get rid of all of your objections. You won't be able to resolve and dissolve all of your fears. You're going to have concerns.

You're going to have issues. You're going to have things boiling in your soul. But he says put a cork in it.

Be silent. Yes, you've got something that you're wrestling with, but don't let it come out in the form of words and actions. Deal with it in your soul.

Don't uncork it and spill it all over the area. That's what he's saying. I know, I'll talk to you later.

The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent. Now, what is the arena of this? Because sometimes people say, well, the problem in marriages that fail, the problem in organizations that fail, the problem in relationships, human relationships that fail, is bad communication. People don't say what's on their mind.

They don't spill the beans. They just keep it all bottled up inside. This is not a human relationship that is in view.

Good communication is essential for good relationship. This is an area of faith. God has made a promise.

God told the Israelites in Egypt, I will bring you forth out of your chains. I will take you to a land

flowing with milk and honey. This is a promise of God.

It is rock-solid. It is as certain as the movement of the planets and the celestial spheres. It is as solid as every atom and molecule in the universe.

What God says happens. He says, I will bring you up. I will take you to this land.

If you ever wanted to be invincible and bulletproof, this is it. These people cannot be captured. They cannot be killed.

They cannot be diverted because God has said, I will bring you up. I will take you. The only ones that the Achilles heel for the Israelites is themselves.

The only way they can not arrive in the land is to willfully jump off the train, which is what this generation is going to do. God has promised. Did God not say? Did he not prepare a man for 40 years in the wilderness, go to great lengths to have him learn leadership and be trained in the greatest palace in the world in that day? Egypt was the number one empire.

Moses spent 40 years getting all of the training he would need to lead a nation in the finest academy, the finest of art and science and literature that could be had. Then he was sent for 40 years to chase goats around the hills and learn humility and learn the other aspect of leadership, which is to be a servant and to be operating in humility. This is one of the great things about the service academies where they are training officers.

They first teach them to be subservient. When your first year and same thing happens in boot camp, you learn how to be a good follower so that you have empathy and sympathy for your followers when you become a leader. You say, well I've served those enlisted watches.

I've walked those posts and done those unhappy, unpleasant duties and I have some insight into what happens when I give an order. This is what Moses learns in his first 80 years of training. God went to a lot of trouble to arrange for the Israelites to be delivered, to be delivered with prosperity, to walk out with a high hand, the Egyptians shooing them on the way.

They immediately forget all of this. You just brought us out here to die. This complaint and this fear flies in the face of a divine promise, flies in the face of divine provision, flies in the face of ten plagues, flies in the face of everything that God has done for them because of fear.

Fear will untrack your train. It will derail the engine of your spiritual life. We have to get a handle on fear.

Now we cannot always eliminate fear, but what we can do is harash. We can stop it from coming out our mouths. We can stop it from changing our actions.

Most heroes, most Medal of Honor winners, if you read the citations, it doesn't say he was fearless and unconcerned as he rushed forward from his fighting hole and went up the hill and killed all the guys in the machine gun nest and then went on forward and did it to three more

nests. If you ever get a chance to read those Medal of Honor citations, that is a fascinating read. Those men, when they did those things, were scared to death.

Nobody wants to die. When you see people dropping all around you, nobody wants to take one in the head or in the chest or have half your face ripped off by a hail of bullets, but something needs to be done and you do not let that fear control you. Either we master our fear or fear will master us.

Harash says yes, you've got these ideas and thoughts running around in your soul, but you mash them down and you continue to speak and you continue to act as you should in faith, not in fear. What did Paul tell Timothy? God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind. Well, we choose.

Remember when John and James wanted to call down thunder and lightning on the Samaritans and Jesus said, you do not know what kind of spirit you are of. What kind of spirit are we of? Are we of the spirit of fear or are we of the spirit of faith, the spirit of God? We choose. We decide.

We have the ability to choose. We have free will. So when he says the Lord will fight for you and you will cause to be silent, you have to cause this to happen.

You have to push that stuff out of the way and let God do what God has promised to do and trust. And it takes a conscious decision many times. It takes a conscious effort many times to do so.

Well, we have some scriptures that go along with this and that's a lengthy introduction to our scripture reading over in Isaiah chapter 30. Isaiah chapter 30. Isaiah, of course, is God's instrument to preach, to rebuke, correct, and instruct the rebellious house of Israel.

They're on the verge, they're on the brink of going out under divine discipline the way the Northern Kingdom does. Look at verse 1 of Isaiah 30. Woe to the rebellious children, declares the Lord, who execute a plan but not mine and make an alliance but not of my spirit in order to add sin to sin, who proceed down to Egypt without consulting me to take refuge in the safety of Pharaoh and to seek shelter in the shadow of Egypt.

Therefore the safety of Pharaoh will be your shame and the shelter in the shadow of Egypt will be your humiliation. For the princes are at Zoan and their ambassadors arrive at Hanes. Everyone will be ashamed because of a people who cannot profit them, who are not for help or profit but for shame and also for reproach.

Then he gives us a little oracle concerning the beasts of the Negev. This is the desert. Through a land of distress and anguish from where comes lioness and lion, viper and flying serpent.

They carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys and their treasures on camel's humps. To a people who cannot profit them, even Egypt whose help is vain and empty. Therefore I have called her Rahav who has been exterminated.

Now go write it on a tablet before them and inscribe it on a scroll that it may serve in time to come as a witness forever. Now what is happening in these first eight verses? There is a threat. The Assyrian crisis, the Rav Shaka and all of the armies are coming down.

They've already taken away the ten northern tribes of Israel and they're threatening the southern kingdom of Judah and Benjamin. They're knocking at the door. You've got King Hezekiah and all the people are saying what are we going to do? Kind of like when the Egyptians came over after the Israelites at the Yom Suf.

What are we going to do? There are too many for us. There are too much for us. Look at what they've done up north.

We need allies. We need help. We need chariots.

We need horses. Who can we turn to? Let's go make an alliance with the Egyptians. What had God told them? We saw this in 1st Samuel talking about horses and chariots.

You shall not go to Egypt for anything. God says I brought you out of Egypt. What does Egypt represent in the spiritual analogy? It is the world.

It is the realm of darkness. It's the place we've been delivered from. God says don't go there.

Don't go back there. Don't start making flesh your strength. Why do you need Egyptians if you have the God of the Red Sea? If you have the God of the plagues? If you have the God who has promised to strengthen and help and deliver and secure all those who put their faith in him? Why would you need Egyptians? Why would you go back to the land of slavery and ask your former taskmasters to come up and help you? He says they're crossing the Negev.

They have to cross the desert with their camels and their donkeys laden down with riches. They're going to pay them. Let us give you these riches and you come up and help us.

Write it on a tablet. Inscribe it on a scroll that it may serve in the time to come. You know when the time to come is? Now.

This has been written for our instruction. When we have difficulties, when we have problems, where do we turn for our answers? Do we decide that there's something out in the world? Well what do normal people do in this situation? Where do they turn for their support? Where do they turn for their answers? Where do they turn for their power and strength? That's where I'll go. Or do we go to the Lord? Are we going to stand? Are we going to bottle up our fear? Push it back down into its proper place? There's nothing wrong with being afraid.

It is not a sin to be afraid. It is a sin to let your fear overwhelm you. It is a sin to have fear master us.

It is a sin for fear to become our motivation. The Word of God is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And if we are motivated by fear, if we are driven by fear, that is a sin.

The parallel thought there, it is not a sin to be tempted. Right? I mean I don't want to be a master of the obvious here, but it is not a sin to be tempted. We find ourselves tempted a lot of times.

The Lord Jesus was tempted. It is a sin to give in to temptation. Fear tempts us to fail.

Fear tempts us to take a different path, to speak as we should not speak, to act as we should not act. The presence of fear in and of itself is not a sin, but letting it over master us is. This is written on a tablet and inscribed on the scroll to serve in time to come as a witness forever.

Look at verse 9. This is a rebellious people, false sons, sons who refuse to listen to the instruction of the Lord, who say to the seers, you must not see what you see. And to the prophets, you must not prophesy to us what is right. Now, speak to us pleasant words.

Prophecy illusions. Get out of the way. Turn aside from the path.

Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel. Therefore, thus says the Holy One of Israel, since you have rejected this word and have put your trust in oppression and guile and have relied on them, therefore this iniquity will be to you like a breach about to fall, a bulge in a high wall whose collapse comes suddenly in an instant, whose collapse is like the smashing of a potter's jar, so ruthlessly shattered that a shard will not be found among its pieces. To take fire from the hearth or to scoop water from a cistern is going to be shattered so completely even the pieces won't be useful.

For thus the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel has said in repentance and rest, you will be saved. In quietness and trust is your strength. But you were not willing and you said no, for we will flee on horses, therefore you shall flee.

You said we will ride on swift horses, therefore those who pursue you shall be swift. One thousand of you will flee at the threat of one man. You will flee at the threat of five until you are left as a flag on a mountaintop, as a signal on a hill.

What's that talking about a flag or a pole on a mountaintop upon a hill? It's isolated, it's all by itself, there's nothing anywhere near to help it. It's alone and isolated. You'll find yourself as isolated as a lone tree or a lone flagpole up on top of a mountain.

Now look at verse 18. Therefore the Lord will wait that he may be gracious to you and therefore he will be exalted that he may have mercy on you. For the Lord is a God of justice.

Blessed are all those who wait for him. And really I would have put the little section divider after that verse. That should have been up with the first 17 verses.

Do you see the parallel between this situation in the southern kingdom of Judah in Isaiah chapter 30 and Israel at the beginning of their national existence? There is a threat, a military threat. It is a significant threat. There's nothing wrong with being concerned, with having a

healthy level of recognition that there is this severe threat, but it's what you do in the face of that circumstance that determines whether God is going to be able to be gracious or whether he is going to bring destruction like that high wall that suddenly develops a bulge and then collapses.

A wall that develops a crack or a breach and suddenly crumbles into its individual component pieces that are so small you can't even use one to... you know people used to use when a pot would break. You'd have these curved shards and it was almost like a little bowl or a saucer. You could use it and saucer out some water out of a pool or a well and drink from it.

Or you could use it as a little writing tablet or something. People used to... they call them ostraca, O-S-T-R-A-C-A, like the post-it notes of the ancient world. You'd take these shards and use them to write on a nice smooth surface.

They have found these, found caches of these stacks of them that were sent back and forth between generals and their lieutenants out in the field that send military messages back and forth. It says the wall is going to be crushed so severely you won't even find a piece big enough to scoop a sip of water with. Well that's our choice.

Fear, threat, bad circumstance is going to come. Jesus promised in this world ye shall have tribulation. But he said cheer up.

I've overcome the world. God says yes you're going to have the nations surrounding you. You're going to have the Egyptians.

You're going to have the Amorites and the Arkites and the Hivites and all of the other ites that are in the land of Canaan. You're going to have the Egyptians behind you. You're going to have people who don't like you coming in taking their land in front of you.

But be of good cheer. I have given you this land. I promised it to Abraham.

I promised it to Isaac. I promised it to Jacob. If you will just trust, you will inherit.

You will have your own land with your own vine and your own fig tree. A land flowing with milk and honey. But you can't fade when danger appears.

You can't falter and wilt and say oh I should never have tried going down this road. It was all a big mistake. What does this say about God? I just don't trust him.

I don't think what he says is really true. He says he's going to take us to a land. He's just brought us out here to die.

It's blasphemy. And God doesn't take kindly to being blasphemed. And he will crack the earth open and swallow people up when they do that kind of thing.

He will send the snakes. He will send disease. He will give them defeat.

Military defeat in battle. And you know there are people who will say see I told you we couldn't win. I told you we'd die in the wilderness.

And it's sort of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Yes you will be defeated and you will die in the wilderness when you don't operate in faith. When you let fear overmaster you.

It's a self-fulfilling prophecy. There is only one source of deliverance. There's only one source of sustaining grace.

There's only one source of power for our lives. And that's God's power through his word and through his spirit. So in Exodus 14 14 he says you will be delivered if you'll squelch yourself.

Calm yourself. Concentrate on your faith not on your fear. Concentrate on the promise not on the problem.

That is the way to victory. That is the way to deliverance. That is the way to reflecting the glory of God.

Is God glorified when he has to slay his own people in the wilderness? When we think of the glorious victory of God in delivering the Israelites do we concentrate on the ones that dropped in the wilderness? Or do we think about Caleb and Joshua and the next generation who go in and see the walls of Jericho crumble and who take possession of their heritage? That's our focus. That's our goal. But it often takes a conscious act of will to remember it.

Well we're going to pause here and take our break when we come back and have a little long promised discussion that we'll go into related to our study in Exodus. But let's pause here and take our break.