

Exod 03-08-31a

Let's continue our worship this morning by taking a moment at this point to avail ourselves of the opportunity to recognize the presence and the ministry of God's Holy Spirit. You know there are three co-equal and co-eternal members of the Trinity. We pray to God the Father in the name of God the Son by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

If it were not for Him there would be no communication between us and God. He is the one that ministers God's Word to our souls. He takes things of Christ and makes them understandable.

There are a lot of people in church this morning. There are a lot of people listening to preachers, a lot of people hearing Sunday school lessons, a lot of people listening to the radio or watching television, thinking about God, but it is meaningless, it is hopeless and useless and a complete waste of time, even here, if God the Holy Spirit is not able to take truth from God's Word and plant it in the soil of our souls so that it can grow and bear fruit. There's nothing more frustrating than hearing all about Christianity and God and the Bible and this life you're supposed to lead, but not really being able to get a handle on it.

How does it become real? How can I get concerned? How can I get interested? How can I actually have this gain some traction and start going for me in my day-by-day existence? It seems like once I quit looking in my Bible, once I leave Bible class, once I stop thinking about it, I just kind of get immersed back in my life again. Well, people struggle with this. I've struggled with it, especially when I was a teenager.

I thought, what is the point? I've been in church all my life and I just don't get it. I don't see where it really grabs and takes hold and means anything, because I've got school and I've got people and I've got all these other things. I've got to try to figure out what to do with my life, make decisions, and it's just hard to do.

I know I'm supposed to do it. People are telling me all the time, you're supposed to be doing this. You ought to be praying.

You ought to be reading your Bible. You ought to be interested in church. You ought to have joy, and I thought, I just do not get it.

I don't know what these other people think they've got, but I haven't got it, and I've been in church all my life. Well, I will tell you what God revealed to me when I started sending up some pretty angry prayers and saying, look, which you really shouldn't do. It's very disrespectful, by the way.

But the frustration of soul that we express is genuine. It's frustrating, and in some cases, it's kind of annoying. Why does this exist to just cause me to feel guilty? Well, this is what I learned, and this is what the Bible teaches.

It is the power of God in the person of God's Holy Spirit that makes this happen. I was trying to generate my own steam. I was trying, you know, you can set a pot of water out here and stare at it all you want, trying to make it boil.

Have you ever been able to boil water just by thinking about it, just by wishing for it? You stare at a pot of water, and you get that thing to boil with your own strength. You can't do it. We have no ability to boil water with our human physical abilities and energy from the outside.

You've got to put that thing on a stove. You've got to get a burner or a flame or something to infuse that water with energy so that it will boil. Well, the energy that boils our spiritual water, if you will, is God's Holy Spirit.

And if you don't understand the way the Spirit works, Christian life is going to be nothing but frustration. It is going to be nothing but annoyance. It's going to be nothing but guilt and something that is bothersome.

So this is an important time when we recognize that this is the enablement God has given us. The Holy Spirit is the comforter. He is the encourager.

He is the enabler. He is the *energeo*, in Greek, that makes our Christian life work. And we are not hand-waving, gibbering charismatics.

They recognize that the Holy Spirit has an important place in God's plan, but they've missed the other part, which is God's Word that tells us how the Spirit works, what He does and does not do, and what our gifts and what our responsibilities are as believers. And so those two things have to be in balance. Yes, they're on the right track in recognizing and acknowledging and cultivating the Holy Spirit, but they haven't got three biblical facts in their mind related to His ministry and His presence.

We are fortunate. We are blessed. We are providentially enabled with both of these gifts from God, the Spirit and the Word.

So we pause at the beginning of our Bible study to make sure that it is going to be helpful. We're going to spend the time. We're here.

Lord willing, nobody's going to get up and leave in the middle, so we're going to spend this time. Let's make it count. Let's let God use it to transform our souls, to enable us and to give us the life that He wants to give us.

Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, neither has there entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who love Him. How do you love God? Jesus said, the one who has my word and keeps it, guards it, He's the one that loves me. And I and my Father will come to Him.

We'll make our home with Him. And you cannot get a better life than a life that has the

pervasive presence of God in it. So let's take a moment here to clear our minds, to acknowledge any unconfessed sin, to recognize that we are nothing.

We accomplish nothing. We have no future apart from what God provides. Shall we pray? Father, we thank you for this day.

We thank you for the country in which we live and the opportunity that we have to worship and to study your word, to pursue our life before you without fear of persecution, without harassment. Even in this modern, supposedly enlightened day, we know that there are believers in South America, there are believers in Muslim countries, there are believers in communist countries, there are believers throughout the world who do not enjoy the freedom that we have. You placed us at this time and this place in your eternal plan before the world was ever created.

You wrote our names into your plan and decided when and where we would be born, when and where we would dwell, and we have this great opportunity that has been created in your providence and in your sovereignty to learn and to grow and to advance in your plan. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, without whom we would have no hope and would be completely unable to approach you. But through him we have access to your throne of grace.

We walk in where no Israelite could tread, where indeed no angel could tread, which is into your very presence by the blood of Christ. We are sanctified, we are cleansed, we are qualified to address ourselves directly to you. We pray that you will be with us as we study your word this morning.

We pray that your word will be ministered to the hearts and souls of those who rule over us, who exercise authority in government. We pray for our president, our congressional leaders. We ask that you will be with them and our military leaders who are making strategic and tactical decisions in many places throughout the world.

We ask your special blessing on them. We pray that the efforts and the down-tearing that is being attempted by the enemies of our country and the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ will be thwarted and that terrorists will not hold sway in our nation and in our lives. We thank you again for the privilege of studying your word.

We pray that you will minister it to our souls. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

For our scripture reading this morning in our study of Exodus, where we're going to resume in chapter 15, turn with me to Hebrews chapter 3. Hebrews chapter 3. The author of Hebrews, I think it was Paul, but if it was important enough to know for certain, God would have put it in there. But the author gives us an exhortation in chapter 3 that is based on the experiences of the nation of Israel that we are studying in Exodus. And it is well worth a look on this holiday weekend, our Labor Day weekend, to talk about what it means to labor, whose work we should be depending upon.

Hebrews chapter 3. Therefore, holy brethren. Anytime you see the word therefore, what should you ask yourself? What is it there for? Right? Therefore. He has stated some facts and now he's going to draw some conclusions.

What are the facts? The facts are the work of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus is bringing many sons to glory, it tells us in chapter 2 verse 10. And he perfected him through suffering.

The Lord Jesus lived the human life that you and I are living, and he did it in the same power. I used to be rather blasphemously unimpressed with the Lord Jesus in his earthly life. When the Bible would hold him up as an example, I tried to say, well, yes, that's wonderful.

But in the back of my mind, I was thinking, well, of course he lived a holy life. If I was God, I'd live a holy life too. But what I discovered is that the Lord Jesus is a worthy example because he did not use his deity, he didn't use his standing and his power as God to live his human life.

He laid that aside and he operated with the very same tools, the very same provision that you and I have, which is the Spirit of God and the Word of God. He gave us an example. If you watch the television, and they advertise Ginsu knives or the amazing Vegematic or whatever, they have a man there, spot remover, you know, there's a dozen different products that you can see.

And they'll have a man there who's a glib talker, and he's telling you all the wonderful things that he'll do. And then he picks up the Ginsu knife, and he expertly chops a green pepper or a tomato, and he shows you, here's another knife, and it squashes the tomato and makes a mess. And then he gets his Ginsu knife, and it just slices it paper-thin, looks like a roll of potato chips there.

He's an expert. He shows you how the thing works. He takes the Vegematic, and he slices, and he dices, and he puts on attachments, and he does this, that, and the other.

He demonstrates. He shows you this is the optimum. And of course, he has spent hours practicing so that when the cameras roll, he's perfect.

He never makes a mistake. He doesn't slice the end of his finger off and have arterial spurting blood on the camera. Oops, excuse me for a moment.

These sharp knives do have their downside. You know, sometimes you want kind of a dull knife. If you tend to hit yourself with them a lot, it's better to have a dull one.

I've known people like that, that had to learn knife handling from scratch. Well, the Lord Jesus demonstrated the perfect way to live the Christian life that we are called to live, and He did it using the same things that are given to us. He didn't cheat.

He didn't borrow from some hidden reserve of divine power that was available only to Him. The life that He lived, He lived to God, and He did it with the very same things. He said, you know what? You can't live on bread alone.

You've got to have the words of God. Every word that proceeds from His mouth, that's what we live by. The Holy Spirit enabled Him.

The Holy Spirit empowered Him. The Holy Spirit sustained Him. It's the same Spirit that you have.

It's the same Word that you have and that I have. So, when the Holy Spirit in the Scripture lifts up Jesus Christ as an example, don't think, well, of course He's perfect. Of course He did a great job.

Of course God is pleased with Him. Look at it as here is the expert demonstrating how these resources are to be used. So it says, therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.

We could put a little blank here and fill in our name. Therefore, Sam, holy brother, partaker of the heavenly calling. Did you know that you are a partaker? You have a share in the heavenly calling? Your name is on the list of those who have been called by heaven.

You're not anonymous. You're not a blurry face in the middle of the crowd. God knows you by name.

God has an assignment for each one of us. It is a holy and a heavenly calling. We are partakers.

He says, consider the apostle and high priest of our confession, Christ Jesus. Why would Jesus be called an apostle? I thought Peter, Andrew, James, John, and the rest of those guys, Paul, Thaddeus, and Nathanael. I thought they were the apostles.

Why does it call Jesus an apostle? Remember what apostello means in Greek? Stello means to send. Apa means fourth, send out, a sent forth one. Jesus was the one sent forth with regard to our confession, with regard to our faith.

God sent him to show us how this life is lived. And he is also the high priest. He is the mediator.

He is the one that is attached to God and attached to us. He is the conduit or the pathway for this life to make any sense. He was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all his house.

Now what does this mean by house? A house is an area of responsibility, right? They have the Apollo thing and a soul singer will come in and they'll say, well, Aretha Franklin is in the house, or Elvis is in that, you know, they wouldn't say that now. Elvis left the building and never came back. But they say we've got so-and-so in the house.

What do they mean? In the area of performance, in the area of view, in the area they're going to have to carry the entertainment for the next few minutes. So-and-so is in the house. Well, honestly, the biblical use of this word here is not that different.

Moses was faithful in his house. When Moses was the man on the scene, when he was the one

responsible to carry the program, he was faithful. God said, Moses, you are the man of the hour.

You're the man that I'm giving the plan. You're the man I'm giving the leadership responsibility. And Moses had a little bit of quibbling, a little bit of problem undertaking it.

But once he shouldered that load, he was faithful to the end. He didn't quit. He didn't give up.

He had his down moments. He had the times when he says, Lord, how am I supposed to lead this people? How am I supposed to fulfill this obligation? But as a pattern, as a climate of life, he was faithful in all of his time, his arena. For this one, Jesus, has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses inasmuch as he who built the house has more honor than the house.

The Lord Jesus designed the plan. And there's nothing better than the designer to show you how something works, to explain it, to make it real and meaningful. Every house is built by someone.

He who built all things is God. Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant for a testimony of those things which would be spoken, which would be spoken. That means in the future.

But Christ as a son, now this is the contrast. Moses was a servant. Christ is a son.

Moses is in a slave position. The Lord Jesus is in an ownership and an inheritance position. Now, which would you rather be heir to? Would you rather be a follower after? Would you rather inherit the job of Moses? Or would you want to be associated with the family? Do you want to be the butler? Or do you want to be the man who holds the title deed to the mansion? Moses was the butler.

He performed works of service in the house that was owned and designed and run by another. The Lord Jesus Christ, as the son of God and heir of all things, owns the house, manages the house, runs the house. Now, God had a choice with us in the church.

He could either associate us with Moses like the ancient Israelites, or he could associate us with Christ. And we in this age are associated with the family. We are not staff.

We're family. That's what this is saying. Christ was faithful as a son over his own house, whose house we are, if.

Now, this is optional. You know, there's a lot of times there's the black sheep of the family and he says, I don't want the family fortune. I want to go out and make my own way.

And he goes out and spirals into oblivion and makes himself and others miserable. We do have a choice. You can walk out of the house, or you can drift out of the house.

You can pass out and be carried out of the house. Lots of different ways to leave. We are the

house if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

We saw this in Peter last time. Remember, you have need of endurance so that after you have received the promise you inherit. Therefore, verse seven, as the Holy Spirit says today, if you will hear his voice and he doesn't even finish that thought, he says, you need to hear the voice.

Don't harden your hearts as in the rebellion. This is Meribah in Hebrew. And Meribah, there's a root word in Hebrew called Reeve.

R-I-B. And of course a B sounds like a V when it doesn't have a little dot in the middle. So it's Reeve.

You pronounce it R-I-V. Reeve. Reeve is I've got a bone to pick with you.

I've got a lawsuit. I have a case against you. I've got an issue, a negative issue with you.

Something that needs to be resolved. That's the word Reeve in Hebrew. Well, you may remember that you can put the letter M in front of a verb and make it a noun.

So Ma Reeve means a court case, a suit, a lawsuit. Meribah, Meribah. This is an issue, a conflict that rose in Israel.

Do not harden your hearts as in the conflict, as in the cross purposes that took place in the wilderness where your fathers tested me, tried me, and saw my works for 40 years. Therefore I was angry with that generation and I said they are always going astray in their heart and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath they shall not enter my rest.

This goes back to Psalms. If you look at your footnote there, Psalm 95, 7 through 11, this is basically quoted from the Old Testament. So now look at verse 12.

This is to us. Be careful brethren, watch out brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of faithlessness. This is Ah Pistia, an evil heart of faithlessness in departing from the living God.

But rather, exhort one another daily while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Why does he say while it is called today? Because today is the day of opportunity. You go back to verse 7. Today if you will hear his voice, you can avoid all of these bad consequences if you respond today.

It doesn't say anything about tomorrow. It doesn't say anything about next week. It says you have an opportunity now.

I can't say if you're going to have an opportunity tomorrow. The opportunity exists today and you can't put off this decision. You can't wait because today doesn't last forever.

So exhort one another daily. Now we cannot exhort one another unless we are in contact with one another, unless we are having fellowship with one another. Who do we typically have the

most contact with on a daily basis? It's our family isn't it? It's our near at hand believers, those that we see in a regular basis.

And we need to be an encouragement to one another. The Bible says this is an imperative. Exhort one another every day.

Encourage one another every day to hear his voice. What is the content of the exhortation? Let's pay attention to God. Let's try to live our lives in a way that is pleasing in his sight.

Let's not let our hearts get hard. Let's not get distracted and deflected and just start living to please ourselves. Exhort one another daily while it is called today lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Now hardening in Greek is sclerosis. Just like hardening of the arteries. Arteriosclerosis.

What happens when something is hardened? If you work, I dug a big hole in my backyard and used a shovel and even with gloves using that shovel over time put calluses on my hand. What happens when you get calluses? It's insensitive. When I used to play the guitar all the time I had thick calluses on the fingertips of my left hand and it was very insensitive.

I couldn't feel the little raised button on a keyboard that tells you that you got your hands in the right place. On the F key and the whatever that other one is, J or whatever it is. It's got a little raised bump on the keyboard.

Well I couldn't feel it with my left hand because it was calloused. The difficulty is we can't hear every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. We can't operate in God's will and God's plan if we're calloused over.

If we're hardened. He says you've got to listen today otherwise you're going to get hardened. Every time we put off, every time we reject, it's like rubbing on your hand.

It's like building up a callous over time and it gets less and less sensitive. We're less and less likely to turn. Lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Sin promises what it cannot deliver. It promises happiness. It promises fulfillment.

It promises satisfaction and it does not deliver. It's nothing worse than getting up on eBay and buying something and sending off your money and it never comes in the mail. There's nothing worse than putting in and expecting something great and it never comes.

This happened to me when I was a child. I saved up seven box tops and a dollar fifteen, sent it off to get some prize in the back of the cereal box. Never came.

God, I don't know what happened. Got lost. Got mishandled someplace.

But you know, little battery-operated submarine or whatever it is, looks like the greatest thing

in the world on the back of the cereal box. Save up your tops. Send them off.

Watch the mail every day. You're waiting, you're waiting, you're waiting. It does not come.

How discouraging is that? Well, this is what sin does. Sin says, hey, go down this path and that path does nothing but lead to death. You can be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

If you keep going after that deceit, if you keep falling for that lie, you become less and less sensitive to the truth and you get in this perpetual cycle of what's called a frantic search for happiness. You keep waiting for the happiness and it doesn't come and so you just get more frantic. You get more energetic.

You find new and creative ways to try to obtain it and you go further and further outside the bounds of what is normal and away from the bounds of what is right or legitimate or proper or taught in the Word of God. Look at verse 14. We have become partakers of Christ if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.

Calvinists will say, see, unless you persevere, the pea and tulip, unless you persevere, you're not a partaker of Christ, i.e. you're not saved. What a shallow, what an ignorant view of Scripture. People that flatten down Scripture to be nothing but heaven or hell, nothing but saved or lost, anytime they see something related to Christ, that's salvation.

If it's not related to Christ, it's hell and damnation. I used to read Peck's Bad Boy and he thought that this was a woman who lived in town because his dad was forever talking about hell and damnation. I have a great 78.

I'll have to play for you sometime talking about a lady and this guy is singing about this other woman. He says, well, she looks like Helen Brown. She knocks him dead when she's dressed in red, but she looks like Helen Brown.

Think about that for a while. But it says, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, if we hold fast our confidence, we are partakers in Christ. Looks like hell in Brown.

We have become partakers of Christ, if. Now this does not mean that if you're not a partaker of Christ, you're not saved. Partake, partaking, this is receiving a share of the inheritance.

If you go to a birthday party and you really love cake and they start carving up the cake and you don't get up there to the table in time, the cake will be gone and you did not partake of the cake. Doesn't mean you didn't come to the party. It means you didn't belly up to the table there and get your share.

You didn't do what was necessary to get a piece of the cake. And so you come and leave empty-handed. The saved are not all partakers.

In fact, most of us as believers will not be partakers with Christ because most of us do not endure. Most of us do not hold fast the beginning of our confidence. Most of us settle for the

lie.

Most of us get fooled. We get distracted. We get apathetic.

We get wrapped up in ourselves. We get ingrown. We get the unholy trinity of me, myself, and I. That's all we think about.

And we're going to miss. And we think, well, but if I'm saved, I mean, won't that be okay? I mean, surely God's not going to be too upset. I mean, at least I accepted Christ.

And, you know, it's kind of like at school. These people are always going across getting the honors and getting the valedictorian and the award. I was never one of those people.

Anyway, I just want to be in the middle of the crowd, the comfortable center. Spiritual life and heavenly judgment do not work that way. It works more like, are you Korah, Dathan, and Abiram being swallowed up by the earth? Or are you Caleb and Joshua? You either enter the land and inherit and take your mountaintop like Caleb, receive your leadership opportunity like Joshua, or you're going to die wandering around, waiting for your sandals to wear out.

And they never do. You wander and you wander and you wander. Where is the water going to be this day? I'm so sick of eating this manna.

When are we going to get something fresh? You wander around in circles until you drop. There is not this sort of happy, comfortable, well, won't we all just be praising Jesus? And, you know, there'll be these stellar apostles and Billy Graham types, but the rest of us, it's just the comfortable middle. The Bible, listen to me now, the Bible does not teach a comfortable middle.

You find me a comfortable middle in the Bible. It says those who by faith and patience seek for glory, honor, and immortality, God grants eternal life. For those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, there is tribulation, wrath, and anguish.

I do not find a comfortable middle in Romans chapter 2. I do not find a comfortable middle in Hebrews chapter 10. Don't think that you're just going to be a lost face in the crowd and everything will be okay. Each of us, it is as if there wasn't anybody else, just us.

Think of it as an individual judgment. At the end of time, when the Lord comes back, judgment seat of Christ, it's just me. The room is empty.

I walk in and stand before the Lord, and I can't say, but Lord, look at all the people just like me. They're not there. It's us before the Lord, and He says, look, I gave you my spirit.

I gave you my word. I put you in the United States of America. You didn't have the shining path chasing you down and murdering you in the middle of the night.

You didn't have the Khmer Rouge slaughtering you and burying your carcass in a slit trench. You didn't live in Nazi Germany. You didn't live in Poland.

You didn't live off in a Muslim country or a Hindu country. I put you in the United States of America, where you had freedom. You had opportunity.

You had the teaching of the Word of God. You had as many different Bibles as you wanted to stack in your house. You had software.

You had radio. You had television. What more could God have done for us than He has done to give us every opportunity to live the life and to be a partaker with Christ? And what do you think God is going to say at the judgment when we take all of that provision and we say, but you know, Lord, there was the Internet.

You know, Lord, there was the video games, and there was this job satisfaction, and there was the standing with the people in the community, and there were all of these things that I just really thought were cool. And God says, well, where are they now? They have been rolled up like a scroll. They've been burned with the fire that is going to incinerate the heavens and the earth.

And now here you are with your naked soul, rusty old halo, skinny white gown. That's an old southern gospel song. Rusty old halo, robe that's so woolly it scratches.

You get in just by the skin of your teeth, and now you're going to live a thousand years in the millennial kingdom and into the eternal kingdom beyond based on what we chose in this little short couple of decades that we live in this life. What are we thinking? Well, you think it's just not possible for human beings to be that messed up in the mind. Yes, it is.

This is what we see in Exodus chapter 15. They have just been delivered to the Red Sea. They have just seen the mighty divine power of God act on their behalf.

They sing a big song, have a big party, play the bongos, and immediately thereafter it all evaporates like an early morning mist. Staying power is what we need. Endurance is what we need.

Do not be deceived by sin. Do not be hardened by sin. We are partakers of Christ if we hold that confidence that we started with firm to the end.

Today if you will hear his heart, hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion. For who having heard rebelled? Indeed was it not all who came out of Egypt led by Moses? Now it wasn't Moses fault. Was Moses a bad leader? It says Moses was faithful in all of his house.

With whom was he angry 40 years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest but those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. There is a promise of rest. All of us want rest.

All of us want peace. All of us want deep soul satisfaction. And wouldn't it be great if that joy and that satisfaction lasted not only through this life but all the way into the everlastings? Well

that's what this Exodus 15 challenges us to think about.

That's what Hebrews chapter 3 and 4 challenge us to think about. What are you going to consider important as the hours tick by and the minutes flow under the bridge never to be retrieved? We have to grab this time and this life and make it count. We've got to be able to see through the fog of circumstance and distraction that our culture and our time throws at us.

We have to see with God's perspective and this is it. So it's not an unattainable thing. Where does the power come from? God has given us his spirit to help us see that.

He's given us his word to convict us and remind us and change our minds and change our souls. We can be transformed. We can have our minds renewed by what we're doing right here this morning.

Looking at the Word of God, refreshing our perspective, reminding ourselves of who we are and why we're here. We're going to pause and take our break. When we come back we're going to look at the Israelites and see who they were and why they were there and what happened in their case.

That's what we'll look at when we come back.