

Exod 03-11-09a

As we continue our worship this morning, let's take a moment here to go to the Lord in prayer. We can review the status in our soul. We have the opportunity to spend time looking at what God has for us in His Word and to get the benefit of it.

It is vital that God's Holy Spirit have elbow room in our souls to maneuver, to make the Word of God real to us. And He can do that when we are receptive, when we have oriented and adjusted our attitude to be receptive, when we've acknowledged our sins before God and allowed Him to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And it makes this time valuable.

It makes it meaningful. It makes it count toward eternal things when we so do. So let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank You for this day and for the opportunity we have to be nourished and refreshed through the truth of Your Word. We thank You for the spiritual gift that You have given to each believer. And in the times of fellowship that we enjoy, we know that those gifts are active and functional and we can both be blessed and be a blessing to others.

We thank You that we have an environment where we can meet freely without fear of persecution. We can pursue our understanding of Your Word without threat, without pressure, without anything that would detain or deter us. And we know that You have given us this freedom and this opportunity for a reason.

We draw close to the end of this age and to the return of the Lord Jesus. And we recognize that the potential is before us to prepare ourselves and to be rejoicing at His coming and not be ashamed. We pray that our study this morning will prepare us and equip us for that day and for every good work that has been foreordained that we should walk in them.

We pray that You will give us eyes to see and ears to hear, not only in the things of Your Word, but also as we move forward into the circumstances and details of our lives, that we can see the application and the pertinence of the things that we have learned and have stored in our soul to our decisions and our actions. We pray for those who are not with us, those who study with us from a distance. We pray for our governmental leaders, our military, our law enforcement, and those who form the structure that ensures that we continue to be free and to have this opportunity.

We pray that You will continue to bless our nation in spite of our faults and our rampant evil, that because of the remnant and because of the faithful, You will continue to give us this opportunity as long as it is possible. We ask now Your blessing on us as we fellowship in Your Word. We pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified in all that we do.

And we ask it in His name. Amen. The Israelites, whose career we have been tracing, beginning in slavery in Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, moving out and finding God's provision of bread and

of water, of safety, preservation in the wilderness, are now encamping at the foot of Mount Sinai.

And the issues here in Exodus chapter 19 and following revolve around the righteousness of God, the sinfulness of man, and how that gap can be bridged. Well, we can close up and go home now. I've just explained the whole chapter and everything that pertains to it.

Righteousness of God, sinfulness of man, how is the gap bridged? Well, Job, interestingly, is thinking about these same issues because when he suffers all of the disasters, he's sitting there scraping his boils with a broken piece of pottery, and people come and visit him and they say, Job, man, you really messed up. Look at the way God is hammering you. Look at the way God is punishing and disciplining you.

And the friends, the four men who come to visit Job and express their opinions, are some of the foremost Christians of their day. I say Christians, believers, Old Testament saints of their day. They are wise in the things of God.

This is why they are Job's friends. Job is a righteous man, upright in all his ways. God is pleased with him.

God holds him up as an example to Satan. Satan comes up there for a meeting, and God says, Well, where have you been? He says, I've been in the earth, walking around in it. God says, Well, have you seen my servant Job? I heard a pastor one time teach a series called, When God Calls Your Name, it's time to step up at the plate.

At a certain point in your life, God will call your name and kind of bring you to the front. That's what I would call it. He called his series, When Satan Calls Your Name.

You'll come into times of testing where Satan will call your name. And I look in the Word of God, God called Job's name. It was God who said to Satan, I got my man Job here, what do you think of him? And it brings, it skylines him.

In the military, you're supposed to stay behind. You don't silhouette yourself in the skyline and make yourself a target. The military crest of a ridge or a hill is low enough that when you stand up, you don't show against the background of the sky.

Well, God just takes Job and plants him right up at the top and says, Hey, Satan, look at my man Job. He's doing pretty well, isn't he? And Satan says, Well, he is because you bless him and hedge him around and do all these wonderful things. If you take that stuff away, he'll curse you to your face.

God says, Okay, knock yourself out. Knock Job out. So all of these losses take place.

You know the story of Job. Look at this in chapter 9, though. He has just heard the speech of Bildad, the first time Bildad speaks.

Bildad, the shoe height, shortest man in the Bible. How long will you speak these things and the words of your mouth be like a strong wind? Here's a good friend. You're there, lost your family, lost all your goods, got this terrible disease.

You're hurting, sitting there looking at these guys for a week. They can't even say anything. Then when they start talking, Bildad, the shoe height, says, Well, Job, what are you talking about? You're just a big wind.

Good friend. Anyway, after he makes his point, he basically is saying, God, look at verse 20, God will not cast away the blameless. Verse 20 of chapter 8. Nor will he uphold evildoers.

He will yet fill your mouth with laughing and your lips with rejoicing. Those who hate you will be clothed with shame. And the dwelling place of the wicked will come to nothing.

Now this is good, solid Bible doctrine. God will punish the wicked. God will bless the righteous.

Perfectly valid point. The difficulty is, it is not applicable in Job's situation. The whole book of Job and the interaction of the friends and Job is all about wrestling with a difficult situation.

These are the wisest men of their generation. Full of knowledge of God. Trying to apply it to a situation.

And they basically get it wrong. And God finally steps in at the end and says, Everybody shut up. Let me tell you how it is.

And Job says, I'm not opening my mouth anymore. And God speaks and says, Where were you when I created these things? I've got a plan. You don't always understand it.

There are times when you've got to just grit your teeth and do what you know is right. And you're not going to figure it all out. Well, the problem here is, Job has been a righteous man.

He's done what he was supposed to do. He gets severely hammered and suffers these terrible losses and tragedies. And he can't figure out why.

He says, I will not curse God and die, but I wish I could talk to God. Listen to what he says in chapter 9. Truly I know it is so. What is so? God punishes the wicked.

God will bless the righteous. Job says, I know this is so, but how can a man be righteous before God? Job comes to realize that as good a man as he has been, and he says, maybe the flaw here, the reason I haven't understood this, is really the righteous man isn't all that righteous. When God says, I will bless the righteous, well, I've walked in integrity, I've helped the widows and the orphans and done all these wonderful things, and I still receive things from God, and actually I kind of deserve it because as it says in Isaiah, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

How can a man be righteous before God? You could do everything right, and God would still be

justified in wreaking all kinds of havoc on us because we are corrupt, we are fallen, we are sinful. Job, these men, my point here is they're having a pretty high-level doctrinal discussion. They're wrestling, trying to apply the highest and best knowledge in the Old Testament day to this unique situation.

Here is a righteous man suffering. That doesn't happen, typically. Typically, if it does happen, it's of short duration, and it is because there has been some sort of sin.

Well, here he says, I know it's so, but how can a man be righteous before God? If one wished to contend with Him, he could not answer Him one time out of a thousand. God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has fortified himself against God and prospered? He removes the mountains, and they do not know when He overturns them in His anger.

He shakes the earth out of its place and its pillars tremble. He commands the sun, and it does not rise. He seals off the stars.

He alone spreads out the heavens and treads on the waves of the sea. He made the bear, Orion, and the Pleiades and the chambers of the south. He does great things past finding out, yes, wonders without number.

If He goes by me, I do not see Him. If He moves past, I do not perceive Him. If He takes away, who can hinder Him? Who can say to Him, what are you doing? God will not withdraw His anger.

The allies of the proud lie prostrate beneath Him. How then can I answer Him and choose my words to reason with Him? For though I were righteous, I could not answer Him. I would beg mercy of my judge.

If I called and He answered me, I would not believe that He was listening to my voice. For He crushes me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause. He will not allow me to catch my breath, but fills me with bitterness.

If it is a matter of strength, indeed He is strong. If of justice, who will appoint my day in court? Though I were righteous, my own mouth would condemn me. Though I were blameless, it would prove me perverse.

I am blameless, yet I do not know myself. I despise my life. It is all one thing.

Therefore, I say, He destroys the blameless and the wicked. If the scourge slays suddenly, He laughs at the plight of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked.

He covers the faces of His judges. If it is not He, who else could it be? Does this make sense? I mean, it's a... It's not the simplest set of statements in the world, but basically you see Job recognizing the greatness of God, the smallness of man, the best of men, the blameless and the innocent. If God decides it's time for bad things, they're going to come.

No one can stop Him. And if the faces of the judges are covered, if the earth is given into the hand of the wicked, God is all powerful. God had to have allowed that.

He had to have had a reason. So who else could it be? Now Job says in verse 25, My days are swifter than a runner. They flee away.

They see no good. They pass by like swift ships, like an eagle swooping on its prey. If I say, I will forget my complaint, I will put off my sad face and wear a smile.

Do you ever have people do this? You know, you're in a real bad way, and people say, Count it all joy, brother, when you fall into diverse trials. Job says, look, if I try that, if I just say to myself, I'll forget my complaint, I'll put off my sad face and wear a smile, I am afraid of all my sufferings. I know that you will not hold me innocent.

Maybe they are designed to make me reach this point, and if I put that off and just smile when you're, you know, the Charlie Chaplin song there, then more is going to come. You will not hold me innocent. If I am condemned, why then do I labor in vain? If I wash myself with snow water and cleanse my hands with soap, yet you will plunge me into the pit and my own clothes will abhor me.

I cannot get clean enough for God. What did I say the issues are in Exodus 19 and following? It's a good thing we didn't go home, huh? What were the issues in Exodus 19? Righteousness of God, the sinfulness of man, how do we bridge that gap? What is Job talking about here? The righteousness of God, the sinfulness of even the best man, how is that gap going to be bridged? For God is not a man as I am, that I may answer him, and that we should go to court together. Nor is there any mediator between us who may lay his hand on us both.

Let him take his rod away from me and do not let dread of him terrify me. Then I would speak and not fear him. But it is not so with me.

Job says, I need a mediator to bridge this gap. God is righteous, and on my best day, I'm not. I need someone who can lay his hand on my head and bridge the gap between me and God.

Right? This is some of the most advanced thinking in the Old Testament. Job is one of the greatest and wisest men of the Old Testament because he has figured out the point of the whole Old Testament age of Israel. What does the New Testament tell us? The law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

The Old Testament days where God did not give the Spirit without measure, He did not seal and indwell and fill and do all the things that He does for us, was to get the human race, Israel in particular, and in and through Israel, to see that there is this need. There is a gulf fixed between God and man. God is in heaven.

We are on earth. How do we bridge that gap? Several times in the Old Testament, you see great destruction coming from God when David numbered the people and they didn't pay the half-

shekel tax and God gave them a choice. You can have three years of one thing, three months of another thing, or three days.

And he says, Well, I would rather fall into the hands of God for three days than into the hands of man for three months or three years. And God says, Okay, fine. And the pestilence started sweeping through the land and thousands were dying and the angel stops over Mount Zion, over the threshing floor of Arona, suspended between heaven and earth because when you look up toward God, there is judgment.

You think, What's the big harm in numbering the people? It doesn't seem like an offense worthy of death for these thousands of people. And Job says, I've lived a pretty upright life. What is my offense that all of this has come upon me? And yet, I know that the most righteous of us is actually worthy of anything God wants to inflict.

How can we reconcile this inherent sinfulness, this inherent corruption that separates us from God? Who's going to bridge the gap? We need a mediator. Well, turn back now to our study in Exodus chapter 19 because although it may not appear to be so, this is what is about to take place symbolically and pictorially for the nation of Israel. We've seen the visit of Jethro and the return of Zipporah.

That, by the way, I hope you'll remember because down the road a bit, when we get to Numbers chapter 12, it's going to explain a very difficult passage of Scripture, these events in Exodus 18 and the return of Zipporah. But look at chapter 19. In the third month, after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day they came to the wilderness of Sinai.

For they had departed from Rephidim, had come to the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain. It always makes me suspicious when I see statements that sound redundant.

We have several redundancies we're going to look at in this early part of chapter 19. First of all, it tells us in the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt. Now, who remembers the time calculations that we did when we were looking at the coming of the manna and the beginning of the observance of the Sabbath? Remember, we knew that it was 15 Nisan, the day after Passover.

And then it said we went 45 days forward to get into the wilderness. And they had the six days of manna. And then the seventh day was going to be the first Sabbath that they observed.

And so we basically had 50 days there. Now it says in the third month. How long is a month? 30 days, the old Israelite calendar.

So, the question is, and scholars divide into two equally weighty camps on this, has it been 60 days or has it been 90 days since they left? Because it says in the third month. And then it says on the very day. When you go to all of the other places in the Pentateuch where it says on the

very day, there has been a day of the month specified.

And here it is as though the day has dropped out. And so we have odd Hebrew here. And it's difficult to figure out.

It's sort of like in 1 Samuel where it says Saul was one year old when he began to reign. And after he had reigned two years, thus and so happened. There's obviously been a dropout in the text.

This is a similar type of thing. What we do know is it's in the third month. And it's early in the third month.

This is probably about 10 days after the events that we studied in chapter 16 and 17. I told you the Jethro episode has been taken out of later time and moved forward. So, this is after the first week of manna, after the first Sabbath.

They have picked up from Mephidim and they have moved to Sinai. It took them a few days. So, now after those 50 days, we've had another week or so go by.

And now we're in the third month. And it doesn't tell us exactly which day. What I find interesting about this is that when you have the number 3, and the significance of the number 3 is divine perfection.

The significance of the number 3 is divine perfection. We have several different numbers that speak of different kinds of perfection. The number 7 is also a number of perfection.

You have the numbers 10 and 12 that have the sense of completeness or fulfillment. Well, what is unique about the number 3? It is the number that is attached to God. Holy, holy, holy.

The trinity as we come to understand it from looking at scripture. But here's the main thing. And in all the different 3s that we could look at, I want you to look at this one thing.

In our hindsight, we have an advantage that the Old Testament people did not have. What was the sign of Jonah? Jesus said, This generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was in the belly of the fish for 3 days and 3 nights, even so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for 3 days and 3 nights.

When you look at the account of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord, when did it take place? Early in the morning on the third day. Days begin at sundown in the Israelite reckoning, so you're actually roughly halfway through the third day. It began at 6 o'clock in the evening.

12 hours later, it's 6 o'clock in the morning. Early in the morning on the third day, you've got about 12 more hours until 6 p.m. where, give or take, that's when the Monday is going to begin. So in the middle of the third day, in the third day, Jesus was raised.

In the third day, Jonah was vomited out of the fish's mouth looking like a wreck. See, this is where the picture breaks down because I think Jonah looked pretty rough when he came out to fish, and the Lord Jesus was glorified. At any rate, they are in the third month after they had gone out of the land of Egypt.

This is going to be the birth of the nation. They have had a kind of existence going back to the days of Abraham. The children of Israel are the seed of Abraham, and his descendants are the makings, the raw material for the nation of Israel.

But Israel becomes a nation at Sinai. This is where they are given their national constitution. This is where they are given the form and structure of their government.

This is where the law of God is delivered. This is where God becomes the king of Israel. He gives his royal decree.

This is the way things will work amongst my subjects, my people, my servants. And this is a new life for these people. It is a new mode of life.

It is a higher plane of existence. They are going to have a different relationship with God. The Levitical priesthood is going to be instituted.

The makings of this have been coming. They have got a new kind of provision. They have got a new destiny.

They have a new purpose. They have a new mode of operation. They are no longer slaves.

But this has been something of a process. God didn't walk them out of Egypt, cross the little border marker, welcome to Egypt, and as soon as they get outside, well, now, here I've got a couple of angels standing here. Here's the tablets of the law.

Look at this stuff on the ground. This is manna. You see that rock over there? Here's your water.

And everything happened at once. It could have. They could have walked in, and it would have been like walking into Las Vegas.

Everything hits you in the face at once. But it didn't. God measured things out over time.

He began by giving them confidence that they could exist outside the land, outside the bonds of slavery. He began by showing that he could conquer their enemies. And put to flight and put to rest and eliminate their adversaries.

And then, little by little, he tests them and he grows them. And as they are ready, he begins giving them a new form of provision. He begins giving them new food and new water.

New leadership. New ways of administering justice. And now they're ready to become a nation.

And they're at the foot of Mount Sinai. And this is the third day. It's new life.

In the same way that the Lord Jesus is resurrected on the third day. In the same way, if you think about it, if a thousand years is as a day, and the church began at Pentecost in, say, 31 A.D., how long has the church age been going now? About 2,000 years? So, the third thousand years of existence for the church is going to be when? What do we call that period of a thousand years? Millennial Kingdom. A new life.

A new plane of existence. New and better form of government. We will become the bride.

We will rule and reign with Christ corporately as the church early in the morning on the third day. We will be raised incorruptible early in the morning on the third day as a church, just as the Lord Jesus was, just as Israel comes here in the third month. And to reinforce this, we're going to see that not only are there three months involved here, but there's also three days involved.

It says in verse 2, They had departed Rephidim, had come to the wilderness of Sinai. By the way, Rephidim, the root of this word, has the idea of rest. And the "-im-" suffix there is the dual, which is sort of like the plural.

Myim is waters. It actually means two, but it comes to mean a plural. But there's two different kinds of plural in Hebrew.

Y'all having neck issues there? It comes to mean that there is more than one. This is rests, plural. So what is the pattern here? They are leaving Rephidim, which was sort of a place of rest, and they have come to the wilderness of Sinai.

What does Sinai mean? What did we say Sen was in Hebrew, S-E-N? Thorns. So they've come to the wilderness of thorns. They are at the mountain of thorns, because the law is going to be a hard thing.

We would be more at rest if we didn't have the commands of God. It would be easier if God did not make requirements for us. Right? Jesus is going to tell the man Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, it is hard for you to kick against the thorns.

The law is rough. The strength of sin is the law. Paul says, I was alive once apart from the law, speaking as the model of an Old Testament man.

I was alive once apart from the law, but when the law came, sin revived and I died. That's why it comes at the mountain of thorns. That's why they encamp in the wilderness of thorns.

Because this is a part of God's plan that's not easy, in the same way that Job's travails were not easy, but they were necessary. So they have left Rephidim, a place of rest, and they have come to this place of testing. They've camped there before the mountain.

And it emphasizes that in verse 2. And the word that says that they pitched their tents there, Mahanaim, is the word that means the camps or the campgrounds. And this is the verb that forms that noun. It is a place of encampment, but it is a place of thorns.

Now in verse 3 it says, Moses went up to God and the Lord called to him from the mountain saying, Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel, You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to me above all people, for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel. So Moses came and called for the elders of the people and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said, All that the Lord has spoken we will do.

So Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord. What does this remind you of? If you think back long minutes ago to our scripture reading. God is up on the mountain.

The people are down at the base. God has some information that the people need. And there is a man who goes up the mountain, hears the word of the Lord, and comes down and tells the people.

The people have a word of response for the Lord. They tell the man. The man runs up the mountain and reports to God.

What do we call this function? Mediating. He is an intermediary. He is the mediator.

He has one ear for the people and the other ear for God. He is the go-between. And Moses is going to be a picture in the Old Testament day of the function that the Lord Jesus Christ is going to ultimately fulfill in bridging the gap between man and God.

The message here has to do with righteousness. The thorns are the requirements of God's perfection, the requirements of God's character. He says in verse 4, He told Moses, Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the children of Israel.

Verse 4, You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Two different groups of people. Two different treatments.

What was done to the Egyptians? Ten plagues, death of the firstborn is the last one of those, and then the army is drowned in the sea. They are severely dealt with. He says, You I bore on eagles' wings.

Now, eagles, if you watch a National Geographic film about eagles, their nest is called an eyrie. It's way up high. They build up on cliffs.

Bald eagles in particular build their nests on very high cliffs. So, there are eggs. They hatch.

You've got little eaglets who are rustling around in the nest. Well, at a certain point, it's time to fly. Now, if you are a thousand feet up, a sheer cliff face, and you're growing these new little feathers, and you're trying to learn how to fly, so you totter to the edge of the nest and look

over, and it's a sheer drop, and so you take a leap and start flapping, if you can't fly, that is your one and only trial.

So, how do you learn to fly if you're an eagle up a thousand foot cliff? The mother eagle will, when she, in her God-given programming, recognizes that it's time for the little eaglets to start flying, she will nudge them out of the nest. They look over. They're up on top of an umpteen-story building.

They say, I think I like the nest just fine right here. Well, first thing you know, there's an eagle beak in their rear, and they bump out, and here they go. Their instincts kick in.

They start trying to flap and flap, but they're not going to get it right the first time. It's not like the turtles that hatch out and immediately can crawl and go to the sea. They don't get eaten.

Eagles need some practice to learn how to fly. So, what happens when they get pushed out of the nest? They begin plummeting to earth. The mother eagle swoops below them, flies beneath them, and catches them on her wings.

They will get right side up and get pointed forward and start doing the wing thing, take off from the mother's back, and flop and drop and get tangled up in themselves. The mother eagle swoops beneath them. Got lots of airspace there.

So, like the guy that has trouble with his parachute, you've got some time. You can deal with the problem. They're way up high, and if the little eaglet doesn't fly right away, the mother flies beneath and carries the young one on its wings and gives it the chance to learn how to fly.

Pretty soon, it can glide. If it tires, the mother will catch it, make a banking turn and go back to the nest. Give the thing a chance to rest up and make another try.

Within a few trial flights, all of these eaglets learn how to fly. This is what it means to be born on eagle's wings. It means you have to learn how to fly, but there is a point below which you will not fall.

God catches us on eagle's wings. I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself. Mount Sinai represents the presence of God, and it is unapproachable.

Sinai is the first holy of holies. It is the first dwelling place of God, and like the holy of holies, it is a place of separation. It is approach, but there is separation.

People approach in the tabernacle and later in the temple to worship God, but there is a boundary beyond which they cannot go. There is separation. The righteousness of God, the holiness of God is too pure and too intense for the approach of humankind.

And so we're going to see this in verse 9 and following when we come back from our break this morning. But here's the point. There is the righteousness of God.

There is the sinfulness and the ongoing failure that is a part of our nature, and there is the need for that gulf to be bridged. Our life, our mediator, is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is His work on the cross.

It is His word in the hands of the Holy Spirit that rehabilitates us, that enables us. That is the means by which we are caught when we are falling and returned to God. Jesus said, I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life.

No man comes to the Father but by Me. These people have been brought to God. He says, I have brought you to Myself on eagles' wings.

He doesn't say, I brought you to Myself with My strong right hand. There is a means. It is the eagles' wings.

For us, the Lord Jesus Christ is our eagles' wings. He is the one who puts His hand on our head, like Job requested, and says, I will talk to God on your behalf. It says, He ever lives to make intercession for us at the Father's right hand.

He prays for us daily. He also tells us about the Father. He tells us what the Word of God is.

He is the living, incarnate Word of God. So, this is our focus. We are not Israelites.

We are not under the Law of Moses. Our age, our time, is a time of fulfillment. It is a time of opportunity.

And it is because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done. So, what is the issue? Faith and obedience. Just like we sang this morning, trust and obey.

Job could do that in the Old Testament age when he didn't have half of what we have. He says, I wish there was a mediator. I know I have a Redeemer that lives and one day I will see it, but I don't see it yet.

I don't feel that deliverance on wings of eagles. We have that. We have every good and perfect gift that comes down from above.

And what a tragedy if we ignore that opportunity and just go rolling off the back of the mother eagle to plummet to an ugly fate. There is no reason to do it. God has provided every grace.

We're going to see it pictured here in Exodus 19. Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we'll pick up at verse 9.