

Exod 03-11-16a

Let's continue our worship this morning by pausing at this point to go to the Lord in prayer, prepare ourselves for the study of God's word for the ministry of God's spirit in our souls. Scripture tells us that the word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit and the joints and the marrow. It is a judge, discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

All scripture is inspired by God, is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness so that the man of God may become mature, complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. It also tells us be diligent to show yourselves approved unto God, a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. We have no more important function in our lives than to look at God's word and ensure that the fuel for our spiritual lives is readily available.

The intake of God's word, the study of God's word, is not in itself the substance of our spiritual life, but it is a necessary provision for that function to take place. So let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we are so grateful for your patience and your grace toward us.

Your mercies are renewed every morning. Great is your faithfulness. It is a wonderful assurance to know that our salvation depends on you and not on us.

It is founded on the great work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross for us, and as such it is unshakable and unchanging, written forever in your eternal decrees. We thank you that as a result of that relationship that has been established for us by Christ, we not only are secure in our eternal future, but we have the opportunity to advance, to grow, to reach new levels of understanding and of service in your plan. We pray that our study of your word this morning will move us along that road of advancement.

We pray that we will not just find interesting things to look at in your word, but we will find new ways of thinking and evaluating we can set, new goals, new priorities, new values as we move through the rocks and shoals of our daily existence. We pray for those who are not with us, who are suffering through illness or traveling or have relocated or are studying remotely with us by tape or by recording or all of the wonderful means that we have of having extended fellowship. We ask your blessing on them.

We pray that you will provide not only the teaching of your word, but also Christian fellowship and the ministry of the spiritual gifts you have distributed to each one of us. We pray for our governmental leaders. The challenges seem to grow greater with each passing day, both at home and abroad, for our president and for our Congress and for the judiciary.

We pray that your hand will in particular be on our court system and on those who interpret our laws and that that branch of our government will not thwart the good course that has been set in the other branches and that as those who fear you and seek to please you in what they

do, try to continue to perpetuate your presence in our national life. We ask again that you would be with us as we study and bless your word to our souls. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to the book of Romans, chapter 15. If you think about that book, that great theological statement by the Apostle Paul, some of the most advanced and complex thinking and argument to be found in the word of God is in this book.

We remind ourselves of something that is generally either misunderstood or forgotten about this book, and that is the theme of the epistle to the Romans is righteousness by faith. It is the handbook. It is the manual for the Christian walk.

It is not an evangelism pamphlet, the Roman road notwithstanding and the five great verses out of Romans that people use to talk to people about the gospel. I don't argue with that per se. I don't personally use Romans to tell people about Christ because each of those verses has been taken out of context and made to fit the purpose, which is unfortunate.

And I would hate in my ministry of the good news of Jesus Christ to others to begin their life of faith with a series of five mistakes. I think the Roman road is a great left turn toward the broad road that leads to destruction, but that's neither here nor there. It's important to remember that the book of Romans is about walking by faith.

If you have any doubt of this, just read Romans chapter 4. There is not a person on the planet in his right mind who believes that Abraham got saved at the point that God promised him a son. The fourth chapter of Romans bases and illustrates the argument on Abraham's belief in the promise of God to substantiate and forward the theme and argument of the entire letter, the entire book, which is people who believe in God, if they trust in God through thick and thin, things may look impossible, they may look untenable, they may look hopeless. You can't get much more hopeless than being 100 years old and having a wife who's just a few years younger than you and being told, even though you're childless, you're going to have a son and through him you're going to be the father of many nations.

There's going to be descendants as limitless and numberless as the sand on the seashore or as the stars in the sky, and you're 100 years old. And when in the history of man has there ever been someone that old and that far along, childless, who suddenly has a child, I mean, how can that possibly work? Can you picture a 95 year old woman giving birth and nursing? It's just inconceivable. And God says, trust me on this, a year from now Sarah will have a son.

God says to Abraham, trust me, I will make you the father of many nations. Through you all the world will be blessed. Abraham believed God and it was credited, it was imputed, it was accounted to him for righteousness.

He doesn't say it was righteousness, it was credited to him. Because he believed God, God placed righteousness in Abraham's account. That is the theme of this book of Romans.

Now we are on the eve of the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. And we know that there is a great gulf fixed between the Old Testament dispensations, the Old Testament economy, the function of the nation of Israel under the law that was given at Sinai, and the church, the body and bride of Christ, new covenant founded on new and better promises, having partaken of the body and blood of the Lord in figurative terms. We are an entirely new creation.

We are a gift from the Father to the Son. We serve a completely different purpose in God's plan than the nation of Israel did. Now there are many things that we learn from studying Israel because God is consistent.

God wrote down his dealings with the nation of Israel and with the patriarchs all the way back to Adam for our instruction. But we observe, we interpret, and we apply. Let me state for the record unequivocally, you can take this to the bank, you can take this to eternity with you, the church is not Israel and Israel is not the church.

God did not simply widen the borders of Israel to include the church. Old Testament saints are not the church of God. There is widespread, rampant, egregious misunderstanding of this principle throughout Christian writing and teaching and preaching and understanding in the world today and has been for generations.

And it is wrong with a capital R. It is just a complete misunderstanding of the unfolding plan and purpose of God. So I tell you, and we will see it as we go forward, because we are at probably the biggest turning point in the whole Old Testament where God takes the people, the descendants of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and changes them from slaves into a nation and begins to deal with them as an entity, as a nation. From this point forward, God is going to assemble the believers of the world.

He is going to ensure that they are born there, that they are raised there, that they are nurtured there, that they are taught the words of God in Israel. You are not going to have believers born in China or in Far East Asia or in Australia. This is a long introduction to our scripture reading, but there is a reason.

I saw a thing last night where a fellow was doing DNA research. Have you seen this? You may know that I sent off some DNA to find out what strand of the whole family is our branch from. The way they do that is you have to be a male surname descendant.

If you want to find out something about the branching out of the whole family, you have to get DNA from a son whose name is Hull, and his father's name is Hull, all the way back to the Hulls, as far back as you can trace them, because of the Y chromosome. Everybody has X chromosomes. Women are XX.

But every time reproduction takes place, the X chromosomes from the father and the mother get chopped up, thrown in the blender, and new X chromosomes are manufactured that are a blend. The Y chromosome, on the other hand, which is what determines maleness, if you have a

Y chromosome then you are a male, that one does not get chopped up. It is passed on intact.

Barring some bizarre mutation, my Y chromosome is exactly the same as my father's, which is exactly the same as his father's, which is exactly the same as his father's, going back and back. Once every, on an average, statistically speaking, about every 30 generations or so, a mutation will creep in. One tiny change in the genetic code.

It is usually part of that that we don't understand, that doesn't seem to be determinative. You don't grow a third ear or have some other bizarre physical change. It's in the parts of the DNA molecule that don't seem to be determinative of anything, but a little marker will be formed.

It is a unique thing that crops up by mutation in the process of copying. Well, over the course of history, as mankind branched out from Noah and Shem, Ham and Japheth, every so many generations, on an average, these markers would form. And so geneticists today can look at the people groups of the world and trace their movements and their relationships by looking at some of these markers that were originally created hundreds and even thousands of years ago.

So this particular individual, by taking the data and poring over it, and with the assumptions of modern science, has decided that life began. Mankind first raised his head with sentience and intelligence somewhere in Africa. This is the scientific view.

And then, from there, migrated outward. What were the earliest migrations? Well, they believe that this is all mapped out in the DNA. So he thinks the first migration of those who left Africa, because of the Ice Age and the trapping of water in these great ice sheets and glaciers, caused water levels to drop, creating some land bridges.

If you think Africa is dry now, you should see it during the Ice Age, they claim, where it was so dry that people could no longer live, and they had to leave. So the earliest humans, in the scientific view, had to leave Africa. They couldn't subsist, and so they traveled northward and they branched out.

The first branch, they believe, went from Central Africa along the coast through India to Australia. And some of this that's blocked off by the sea was actually possible to traverse by land, and they only had to actually cover about 150 miles by sea to get into the... And so, how did they do this? Well, they'd gone back and tried to find the earliest DNA, and it is very interesting because you can take the same data and draw some other conclusions from it. But my brother recommended a movie to me called *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, and it was about the Bushmen of Africa, the men who speak in pops and clicks and so on.

And they have this language. It's the only language in the world that has these pops and clicks. Well, the genetic experts believe that these people are the closest.

They are a branch unto themselves. They are lineal descendants of the earliest African peoples, and they have the prototype DNA from which all the rest of the world is derived. Very fascinating.

I'm digressing to some extent. But the second earliest is in the aboriginal people of Australia, and he was trying to find how did they migrate, and would there be anybody in the intermediate path, because there's no archaeological evidence for this whatsoever. They've never found any Bushman bones in India or anything like this.

So how did they get around? And so they looked for a particular marker that is unique to the Bushmen and to the Australian guys and to none of the other peoples of the world, and they tested 2,000 villagers in remote areas of India where people tend to just intermarry and not be with themselves and not be polluted with outside strands. And lo and behold, they found this ancient marker, which indicates that these people, as they traveled, had some descendants along the way who stayed in India. Very fascinating.

But here's the point. You look at this father-to-son descendancy, this Y chromosome that is preserved all the way down, and you look at the people of Israel and the patriarchal system that God imposed, and there was a family priesthood that took place prior to the giving of the law that we're about to study in Exodus 19 and following. And it was the patriarchal leadership that constituted what we call the family priesthood.

So Abraham offered sacrifices. Shem offered sacrifices because he was the oldest living patriarch in that particular clan or family group. God, in all of the world, made things easy on himself.

Instead of having someone who was positive and was going to believe in God pop up in Australia, which, once the Ice Age waters melted and the water came back up, was isolated. And there are animals and plants and people in Australia that have, since the earliest times, have not had any contact. They're unique.

There are species there that grow nowhere else on the earth because of this isolation. Well, how can you possibly get the gospel to an Australian Aborigine with his boomerang and his little skimpy clothes when there is no form of communication? These people have been isolated for thousands of years. Well, God said, I can survey all of the souls that are going to be in this generation.

Here are the ones that, in omniscience, I know are going to be interested in me and want to know more about me. I will conveniently locate them in the ancient Near East and make them crop up in the families of Jacob's sons. That way, the information will be at hand.

The training will be at hand. The worship and knowledge and everything that they need will be at hand. So, people say, what about the heathen? It's easy.

God arranged, without influencing their volition but knowing their volition, arranged it to where he could keep them all in one place. So, the nation of Israel is the place where believers dwell. In the ancient world, all the way up to the time of Christ, if you have believers, if you have those who are going to come to faith in God, they are going to either be in Israel or be close enough

to Israel to migrate in.

You have your Rahab the harlot, Uriah the Hittite, Naaman the Syrian, and so on, who are, if not in the land, close enough to the land. You have the mixed multitude in Egypt who come out with the Israelites because they believe in God. But this is God's prearrangement.

Why have some poor China man pop up and say, I want to know about God, and then God's got to move heaven and earth and send Thaddeus or somebody over mountains, hills, and dales and take five years to get over there, and how can he possibly learn and grow when he's so far removed? This is a very simple thing for God to do this. So, it's important for us to understand the Old Testament situation. Why is this about to happen? Why are we about to have the law of God on this smoking, quaking mountain given only to Moses and to the people who have emerged from Egypt? Why isn't there a smoking mountain in Tibet? Why isn't there a smoking mountain in Australia? Why isn't there a smoking mountain in the Andes of South America? There's no need.

There's nobody there looking for God. There's nobody there who has an interest. It's a waste of time.

You could smoke all the mountains in the Andes, and the Incas and Aztecs and all the people roaming up and down through Central and South America would thumb their nose at it. They're not interested. That's where all of the unbelievers got assigned when they were born.

So, Israel is the place of dwelling. Israel and its immediate vicinity is going to be the place of dwelling for those who are of faith. That's where God puts them.

Not so in our day and age. A great question that raises in people's mind is, what about the Jews now? And as I've mentioned a few times, and it's important to understand this because this is a new strong wind that is blowing through the theological world and the Christian world now. People say, you know, I've got an idea about how the heathen can be saved, both past and present.

It is not necessary for them to know about Christ. In the same way that the Old Testament saints believed in God and were positively disposed toward God when they realized His existence and yet didn't know the name of Christ, didn't know the work of Christ, had no concept, perhaps, of His resurrection, yet God saved them, God applied the work of Christ to their account, applied the work of Christ on their behalf because of their positive disposition toward God in general and specific knowledge of Christ was not required. Do you see the substance of this argument? Because, think about your Muslims today.

Think about your American Indians with the great spirit. Think about your other people groups who, in some way, shape, or form, believe in a God, especially the Muslims, Allah. There is no God but Allah.

And people say, now see, yeah, they're all fouled up. They've got Mohammed and they've

missed Christ. They just think Christ is a prophet and so on.

But they believe in God. And so even though they don't fully understand Christ, the work of Christ can be applied to their account sort of like it is... And you can see the problem with not understanding Romans because they go to Romans 4 and say, well, Abraham believed God and righteousness was credited to his account. Why can't the Muslims believe in God and he'll credit righteousness to their account in the same way? Do you see the gist of this argument? Well, the reason people find this compelling is because they do not understand the book of Romans.

Romans is not about salvation. Abraham did not get salvation imputed to him because he believed the promise of God. God didn't say, Abraham, if you believe in me, I will save you from the lake of fire.

God did not promise Abraham, if you will trust me for this son, I will save you and give you an eternal future with me. That's not the promise. Abraham is already saved.

Romans 4 does not talk about salvation. And it is wrong to take that principle and twist it into a pretzel and then apply it in some other way. So understanding Romans is important.

Secondly, it is important to understand the way God worked in the Old Testament. Did you ever notice that there's no preaching of the gospel? There's no euangelion? There's no evangelistic push toward Israel? I scratch my head as I look throughout the Scriptures that God gave to the Old Testament nation of Israel and He doesn't say, believe in the coming one and thou shalt be saved. Believe in the Messiah and your sins will be washed clean.

Believe in the Messiah, otherwise you're going to the lake of fire for all eternity. Where do you find that in the Old Testament? What is the consistent message of the Old Testament to Israel? Walk in accordance with my covenant. If you will hear my voice.

Remember we had this at the beginning of Exodus chapter 19. I have lifted you up on wings of eagles. Now, if you will hear my voice and obey my commands, you will be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.

You will be all of these. You will be a special treasure to me, is the way God puts it. He doesn't say you won't be thrown into the lake of fire that burns forever.

He doesn't say otherwise you are lost and hell bound. This is an agreement God offers to people who already have a relationship with Him. The prophets, the major and minor prophets throughout the latter part of the Old Testament call the people of God, return to me O house of Israel.

He doesn't say come to me O house of Israel. Come to me you Baal worshipping, Molech feeding ingrates, you pagan idolaters. He says you are disobeying, you are hard hearted, you are stiff necked, you are stubborn, you are on the path to destruction.

Return to me. Jesus reiterates this, the parables of the lost things in Luke chapter 16. There is a coin.

A woman had ten. One gets lost. She lights a lamp and searches the house.

There is the lost sheep. Hundred of them in the fold. One of them strays out.

He already belongs to the shepherd. The shepherd does not go out finding wild sheep to bring them into the fold and make them his own. I mean this ought to tell us something.

Hey, what is the picture here? Did God mess up? Did Jesus goof the parable? Were there not wild sheep in the land? Of course there were. There were sheep that got away and became wild. The rams and goats of the hillside that were just like the Mustang horses and things that were roaming the plains that got away and lived wild.

And people would go out and lasso some Mustangs and lasso some wild horses and bring them in and ram them and break them and use them for their purposes. Do you think this did not happen in ancient Israel? That Jesus could not have used that as a perfectly good parable for the good shepherd goes out and finds the lost sheep and brings them into the fold? He says no. They were in the fold.

One was lost. The shepherd went out and comes back with the sheep on his shoulders and he tells his friends rejoice with me for I have found my sheep that was lost. Jesus came as Messiah to the nation of believers and said if you will hear God's voice, if you will obey His words, you will be His special treasure.

The kingdom promises will be fulfilled. The land promises will be fulfilled. The Davidic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, the Palestinian covenant will be fulfilled.

These are conditioned on obedience not on salvation which is assumed. Israel is assumed to belong to God throughout the Old Testament. There is no gospel preaching.

Why doesn't Moses come down the mountain with a glowing face and say hear oh Israel there is a God in heaven who is going to redeem you. Believe in His coming Redeemer and be saved otherwise you are headed for eternal damnation. Isn't this the essence of the gospel and the essence of salvation? Why isn't it in Exodus 19? Why isn't it in Exodus 20? Why isn't it in any of the next 15 chapters? Why isn't it in the rest of the Pentateuch? Why isn't it in any of the prophets? Why? Because the Old Testament is not a salvation document.

And the gospel is not preached in Israel because the Israelites are assumed to be believers in God. And we can document this world without end in the Old Testament. This is a necessary perspective.

As we begin this next 15 chapters in Exodus we have to understand what it is. Because people go to Romans. I haven't even gotten to my scripture reading yet and we are rapidly drawing

near the close of our first lesson.

But I just want to try to get this idea across. On the one hand here is the law. The legislation that comes down from Mount Sinai.

On the other hand in the New Testament you have Romans. Paul in Romans says, By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. People who look at Romans as a salvation book say, Now see, people thought they could be saved by keeping the law.

If I can just do the right sacrifices and not work on the Sabbath, and follow the Ten Commandments and the other parts of this legislation, then I will be saved and go into the eternal heavenly realms. If I fail to keep these, I will be lost and subject to damnation. And people go to Romans and say, Now see, Paul says you are wrong in thinking that you can be saved by keeping the law.

Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. So there is a false argument. In an argument you have the prothesis and you have the hypothesis.

You have the statement that leads to the projection. The prothesis says, I say that such and such is true. Therefore, and then you have the hypothesis.

If this is true, then this must be true. Well, it just spirals people away from what the Word of God is actually teaching. This is about the walk in daily life of people who already belong to God.

When Romans says, by the works of the law no flesh will be justified, this is not justification in the theological sense of what happens to you when you get saved. By the works of the law, you cannot have righteousness credited to you as a believer. Paul in Romans chapter 4 says, let's look at Abraham.

When did God declare him righteous? When he did things that were obedient to God or when he believed things that were told to him by God. And Romans chapter 4 makes the point, Abraham believed God. And it was credited to him, accounted to him for righteousness.

Paul's whole argument in Romans is, it is not what you do that makes you righteous in the walk of a believer. If you want to advance and not be saved yet so as by fire and come in there patting the flames on your skinny white robe. You want to be wearing a nice ornate robe of righteousness.

You want to fully reflect the glory of God to the maximum extent. We need to know how to live in a righteous way. Live in a way that pleases God as a believer.

We are entering into the picture that was given to God's people, saved people in the Old Testament. This is what reflects a life of faith. This is the outgrowth, this is the visible manifestation of a life of faith.

This is the visible manifestation of a life of hope. These are the outward visible manifestations of a life of love. Love for God and love for one's neighbor.

If you have faith, if you have hope, if you have love, this is how your life will look. You will perform these sacrifices. You will keep these feasts.

You will refrain from these forms of sin and evil. You will do for widows and orphans these things because inside you have faith and hope and love. In the New Testament, you get to the book of Romans and Paul says, Look, the law that was given at Sinai was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

Now, with unveiled face, we behold what God was talking about. This was a picture, now we are going to live out the reality. We still live in faith and hope and love, but we don't have to adhere to these pictures that were given to the nation of Israel as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

Christ has come. Now that Christ is here, He is the fullness of deity in bodily form. In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and righteousness and sanctification.

Now, instead of looking at the model that is given in the law that we are about to look at, we look at Christ. He is the end of the law. This just blows the minds of people who say, Wait a minute, we are talking about salvation here.

Salvation was by the law and now it is by Christ. You are going to the Old Testament model. Do you see how confusing and muddled this can get if you don't keep straight this view? I state it at the outset because this is the container, this is the landscape into which we are going to carefully place our study, chapter by chapter, of the giving of the law to Israel.

There is nothing of salvation in the lake of fire sense in this. Christ had not come. How do you communicate what a life of faith and hope and love looks like to wilderness dwelling transient people who are on their way to the fulfillment of a promise of God? You give them the law.

You give them the rituals. You give them the ceremonies. You give them the legislation for their national life that reflects righteousness.

Righteousness that comes from faith. Righteousness that is the outgrowth of love. Righteousness that reflects a hope like Job had.

I know that my Redeemer lives. In the New Testament, we no longer exist as a nation. We are each priests.

We are each a nation, if you will. We are each a dwelling place for God. God dwells in the nation in the Old Testament.

He dwells in the individual in the New. Where do we look for our reflection of righteousness? It is Christ. Christ is the end of the law for those who are trusting.

So, I didn't actually even read any of Romans to you for this. Just trust me, that was our scripture reading. Because it's a long book.

We've got 16 chapters there. But I just want to establish this groundwork and this foundation as we move into the Ten Commandments and the giving of the law. Keep in mind, the realm in which we are moving is believers.

We're looking at the Old Testament age, which gives us pictures and outward symbols and a living out in tangible, concrete, earthly terms of concepts. How can you conceive and make real to someone these invisible concepts? Well, you reflect it in behavior. And that is what is going to be given, are outward signs of what is supposed to be inward faith, hope, and love.

This is why there is round, sound condemnation by God for people who do the outward forms and don't have the inward principles that they were supposed to reflect. You offer sacrifices, they are a stench in my nose. This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me, God says.

And it's all about the heart in that age and in this. We're going to pause and take our break. When we come back, we're going to move forward into Exodus 19.

But I hope this gives us a compass bearing as we get into the law to understand what is going on. Why is God thundering and lightning and giving these pieces of legislation? This is why. It is to communicate the very same things that are at the heart of the Christian faith.

Faith, hope, and love. Let's pause here and take our break.