

Exod 03-11-30a

Our scripture reading this morning in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, Paul says, Finally then, brethren, after talking about the first three chapters, we urge, we exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God. What's the point here? We talked about history, that history exists to give us an advantage, to not make the mistakes of the past. What's the point? How should we walk? How can we please God? That's what this information is for.

Some people go to church just to get their guilt worked off. Some people go to church because they're superstitious. Some people think, well, it's sort of a bargain.

I'll go and sit and sing a hymn and listen to the Bible, and then God will smile on me and prosper me in my efforts. And it's sort of a, I scratch your back, you scratch mine with God. But Paul says, the information I've given you in these first three chapters, you received from us how you ought to walk and how you ought to please God.

You know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. That's what we're studying in Exodus chapter 20 is commandments. And my question to you is, and my question to myself is, what is the point of looking at these commandments? They weren't given to me.

They were given to a bunch of raggedy ex-slaves in the middle of a desert, off on some unknown mountain. Nobody even knows which mountain is Mount Sinai. About 1,600 years ago, no, longer than that, 2,400, 3,400 years ago, 3,440 years ago is when this was given.

People said, well, we heard a noise. One of our guys went up on a mountain and disappeared for a long time. He came back down and he had all this information for us.

And I say, so what? Why do we care? We say, well, but it has become a benchmark. It's a reference point. Our Christian culture and civilization are based on this.

Well, I still say just because somebody else based a civilization on it doesn't convince me that it's valuable. The Muslims have based their civilization on what Muhammad said in 600 A.D. and I think they're full of prunes. So what's the point? Paul says, you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

And notice in 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 1, he says, we urge you and we exhort you in the Lord Jesus. We gave commandments to you through the Lord Jesus. Why? This is the will of God.

Verse 3, your sanctification. This is your improvement. Have you ever stayed up late and seen infomercials on TV where they have programs about, like Tony Robbins is real famous for this.

He's got a big mouthful of teeth and he smiles and says, you know, power of positive thinking. Take my tapes and go to my seminars and you can have health, wealth, success, happiness, all the things that you want. People say lose weight.

People say wear this undergarment. People say use our toothpaste, buy our deodorant, wash your clothes. Even somebody as thick as Mick Jagger figured it out.

And I can't get no satisfaction. He says, there's a guy on the radio telling me how white my shirts can be. And why do I care about that? The word of God gives us the one true way for self-improvement, to make something count.

This is the will of God, your improvement. Sanctification means get better. Sanctification means you're being completed.

You're being matured. And he says, abstain from sexual immorality and know how to possess your own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God, that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. And this is talking about community.

Why is he talking about sexual immorality? Why is he talking about the neighbor here? Because immorality means you go violate someone's daughter or you mess around with someone's wife and it destroys the fabric of society. God built human civilization on free will, on the institution of marriage and family and the nation. And in the nation, you respect other people's families, other people's marriages and other people's free choice.

Know how to possess your own vessel. This is referring specifically to the wife, but in general, it means all of the things that you have. This is the essence of the law that we're studying in Exodus 20, not in the passion of lust.

There are two forces at war in any human soul, and that is our reason and our emotion. We feel like doing certain things. We have an impulse.

Some of us have trouble with the impulse of impatience or the emotional need for order. It isn't even always logical. You think, well, what difference does it make if those books all face the same way or if they don't? What difference does it make? It bugs me to walk into a room and see a book upside down on a shelf with the top down and the bottom up.

It just bugs me. Or to see a book with the pages out and the spine in. You can't tell what book it is.

It just bugs me. And I don't care whose house I'm in or where I am. I am compelled to go pull it out and straighten it.

I walk into offices going in for some minor thing and there's a crooked picture on the wall. I have to give it a nudge. I think that's out of order.

And it's not reasonable. It's not logical. It makes no particular sense.

It doesn't make a hill of beans of difference to anybody else. That is an emotion. That is a

feeling.

It is a compulsion. And that's what he's talking about here when he says, don't do things in the passion of your desire. Passion and desire are feelings and feelings can't think.

You can feel bad. I wake up some mornings and just feel really out of sorts. I have no idea.

I'm sure there's some sort of chemical action at work. Maybe I ought to watch what snacks I have late at night. I think a lot of it is genetic.

I can see things in the genetic area, the research that they do and so on. But some of us just they call it getting up on the wrong side of the bed or whatever. You just feel like tearing a hole in something.

The first thing that comes up that isn't exactly right. I'm going to tear a hole in it. And somehow that makes me feel better.

And it's illogical. It makes no sense. It hurts people that you love.

Does nobody any good. It doesn't actually satisfy. It's an impulse.

It's a passion. It's a desire. Paul says in verse five, do not operate in the passion of lust.

Like the Gentiles who do not know God. If you don't know God, you cannot help but do this. But if you know God, there's no excuse for acting this way.

And when we do, we're in sin. Do not operate in the passion of lust. And if we avoid this, we will not be taking advantage of and defrauding our brothers.

We hurt others. We don't just commit sins ourselves. We injure and wound and do damage to our brother, to our fellow believers, to our fellow family members when we operate in this way.

And we defraud them. They deserve something better. What are the two great commandments? What sums up everything we're studying in Exodus? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength.

And love your neighbor as yourself. That's a command. We owe it to God to love him and obey him.

We owe it to our neighbor to love him and respect him and put his interests ahead of our own. It's an obligation. It comes with our salvation.

And when we don't operate in love, when we let our passions carry us away, we defraud them. We rob them. We take something away that is rightfully theirs in the same way that when people wrong us and treat us with sinful passions, we are defrauded.

And God takes note. Notice in the last part of verse 6, the Lord is the avenger of all such. Paul

says, I have forewarned you about this.

God keeps track if you defraud your brother. God keeps track and will avenge as we have forewarned and testified. God did not call us to uncleanness.

God called us in holiness. Therefore, he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us his Holy Spirit. He didn't just give us the command, but he also gave us the means of accomplishing it.

My daughters, yesterday and probably this afternoon, have a huge multi-acre yard full of leaves. It belongs to their grandma. Grandma would be greatly pleased if all of those leaves went away.

They don't have a gas-operated leaf blower. They don't have a compressor with a 100-foot hose. Their job is to move the leaves.

If their mother says, Elizabeth, Rebecca, get those leaves out of the yard and sends them out there and they stand there, what are they going to do? Pick them up one by one and carry them to the woods? They need a means. You have to hand them leaf rakes and show them how to operate a leaf rake, which they well know how to do. They raked about half of that yard yesterday.

I don't think they were able to shake hands with anyone this morning. Their shoulder moves and their arms do not. But if you give someone a task, if you put a requirement upon them, you have to give them the means to fulfill it.

God has given us His Holy Spirit. Now, why are we in this passage? Why is this our scripture reading this morning? We're looking at the Ten Commandments. God is up on Mount Sinai saying, don't have any of the gods before me.

Don't make any graven images. Love me with all your heart. Honor your father and mother.

He's going to give all of these commands. But let me ask you this. How much Holy Spirit do the people in Israel have? Is there any passage of scripture you can point to that say, and lo, God poked His head up above the smoke of the mountain, breathed on the nation of Israel, and they received the Spirit? Does not say anywhere that I can find that God put His Spirit on the people of Israel.

Now, this seems like a pretty mean trick to me. Give them a command and don't give them the means. How would you like to be Uzzah down there in the camp of Israel? Moses comes down glowing in the dark.

Look, we've got these flat rocks here. God wrote on it with His finger. And He says, don't do this, don't do that, don't do the other.

And Uzzah says, well, I'll give her a go. I'll give it a try. But I'm pretty much operating on the

same steam, the same human power that I used when I stomped mud into bricks and tromped across the Red Sea and that.

I mean, I'll try to follow these directions. Where is the power to be consistent and to be faithful in carrying these out? Well, they didn't have it. And I asked myself, why did God give them command? And this part of the verse right here, you look at that.

Verse eight has also given us His Holy Spirit. What have we been talking about from the beginning this morning? We learn from history. We look back at the Old Testament, the value of the Old Testament.

It says the law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Christ is the one that accomplished the victory. Christ is the one that qualified us to receive the Holy Spirit.

Christ is the one who gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit. They didn't have that. So why did God give them a command and no means? Because we look at that record.

The angels look at that record. God's unfolding revelation in history is here are people who have been given the requirement. They have the knowledge of what is right.

And let's see how they do. Well, Israel's history is a virtually unbroken record of failure. It's a virtually unbroken history of dismal, dropping in the wilderness, losing the battle, getting enslaved, getting taken away by idolatry and failing, failing, failing, failing.

And why did God do that? Well, how else are we going to be convinced of our human inability than to look at people who've tried it without the means? If you look out the window and watch Elizabeth and Rebecca out there picking up one leaf at a time and running over to the woods with it with the wind blowing, you can say, you know, it is impossible for them to fulfill that requirement. I don't care how many times they run back and forth the woods. They are never getting the leaves out of that five acre yard.

It's not going to happen. It's probably two acres. Two acre yard.

We're not that cruel. But we look at the Old Testament and it's like looking out the window and watching two little girls pick up one leaf at a time and try to run to the woods with it and get the yard clean. We ought to appreciate.

We just had Thanksgiving this past week. You want something to be thankful for? Be thankful for the last half of verse eight of First Thessalonians four. He has also given us his Holy Spirit.

He has given us these commands, how we ought to walk and how we ought to please God. And he has given us the ability to do it. We have something these people standing at the foot of Mount Sinai do not have.

And it creates responsibility. If we stand there like they did and we don't avail ourselves of the power of the spirit, you just picture those little girls running around with one leaf in their hand,

because that's all the further we're going to get. We will be powerless.

We will be in the grip of passions. We will be in the grip of desires. We will be in the grip of emotions.

We will do things that don't make sense. Our reason will not be able to carry us to a place of sanctification and a place of meaning in our life. God did not call us to uncleanness, it says in verse seven, but in holiness.

And if we reject this, we're not rejecting man. We're rejecting God who gave us his Holy Spirit. Look at verse nine.

Concerning brotherly love, you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. And indeed you do. So toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia, we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more.

This is really strong in Greek. Increase is a powerful word for multiplication, and more and more just puts an exponential factor on it. This is love squared, love cubed, love to the fifth power and the sixth power.

Increase more and more. Aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your own hands as we commanded you. Now take note there of that verse 11, 1 Thessalonians 4, 11.

Lead a quiet life, mind your own business, work with your own hands. Because one of our commandments deals directly with that very same principle. Why? Look at verse 12.

So that you may walk properly toward those who are outside and that you may lack nothing. Some people think, well, if I lead a quiet life and I don't get out there and grab a tiger by the tail, I'm going to miss something. Not so.

The Bible says you will lack nothing. Is God a liar? Does God not know what he's talking about? He says, lead a quiet life, mind your own business, work with your hands, so that you can walk properly toward those who are outside. This is outside the fellowship of the saints.

This is outside the church. These are unbelievers. We are to walk and that is our evangelism.

That is our witness. And you will lack nothing. Well, let's go back now to Exodus chapter 20 and pick up our study of the commandments.

Exodus chapter 20, beginning at verse 1. We started this last time we got to about the fourth commandment. If the chapter begins, the people are arranged at the foot of Mount Sinai, it took them three days to get ready. Three days, by the way, we've talked a lot about the number three, but when you see three days, this is a time of separation for sanctification.

Separation. The Lord Jesus was in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. Why? The

death he died, he died to sin.

It is separation. It puts a gap. There's a great gulf fixed between what was before the cross and what was after it.

These people get ready for three days to stand at the foot of the mountain. God spoke all these words, it says in verse 20 saying. Now, I wish we all, I'm going to try to teach you all Hebrew here over time.

So, this in Hebrew says, and Elohim, and then the verb is Dabar, D-A-B-A-R. This is the word that means to speak or to say in Hebrew. And the word for words is just the noun form from that verb.

It's Dabarim. He Dabar'd the Dabarim. He spoke the speakings.

He said the sayings. And Dabar not only means words, it also means matter or issue. He issued these issues.

He spoke these speakings. He said these sayings. There's a very strong link between the noun and the verb.

Why is that important? God said these. God spoke them. How many things can you point to and say God himself spoke that? I can show you things that Joshua said, and the Apostle Paul said, and Peter said, and James said.

What do you have where the lips of God moved, and this is what he said. Remember the first President Bush? Read my lips, no new taxes. And then several months later, zink, up went the taxes.

God here, in a sense, is saying, read my lips. Moses isn't making this up. God, Elohim, spoke and said.

And then you have another word for communication, which is Amar, which is to speak or to say. So he spoke these words, saying. Now we have the number one statement.

I am Yahweh, Elohim, who caused you to go forth out of the land of Egypt. It says brought forth, but this is the Hebrew verb yatsah, and it means caused to go forth. It's a hyphial.

The hyphial is the causative stem. You take a verb like go forth. If I say I yatsah from the bait, it means I went out from the house.

But if I put it in a hyphial, I might cause my cat to go out from the house. Cat does something wrong. That cat, by the way, leaked on the way up.

We were in the van, and cat's first trip. Cat's, I don't think, ever been out of the house except to go to the vet. It's lived its entire life in our house.

The girl said, well, we're going to be gone too long. We're going to take the cat. So we put it in the van.

The cat was terrified, making that yowling cat sound. And we caused it to go forth from its natural habitat. And it didn't hardly know what to do.

It was scared out of its mind. And next thing you know, hadn't gone down the road five minutes, and we have this moisture issue. It had to stop and get some enzyme cleaner and so on, because it just was all over everything.

Well, you cause to go forth. Hyphial of Yatsah. God says, I am Yahweh Elohim.

I am the Lord your God. Elohekar. Yahweh Elohekar, your God, your Elohim, who caused you to go forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of servitude.

It says bondage. It's not bondage. It doesn't say anything about bonds.

It's servitude. Ebed means to serve or to function as a slave or a servant. It's out of the house of servitude.

When we are not availing ourselves of our freedom in Christ, when we don't avail ourselves of the power of the Holy Spirit, we just go put ourselves back in slavery. We're saying, yes, masa, to sin. We let it control us.

We let our emotions rule us. We let our corrupted nature rule us. It is as though... My sister had a rabbit, and the rabbit had been born in the cage, grew up kind of like the cat in the house.

It had never been outside the cage, and she felt sorry for it. After she'd had it a few months, the summertime, there's green clover out, and she thought, I'm going to take my rabbit, and I'm going to put him out in the green clover. Well, the cat... I mean, the rabbit, same thing, had never been out of its cage, and so she opened the door thinking, well, he's going to hop out.

He just sat there. She took him out, set him in the middle of the clover, and he went and nibbled a few little pieces right there in front of his feet, but he didn't move. He didn't bunny about in the... Why? He didn't avail himself of his freedom.

He couldn't even comprehend it. He said, I don't ever move more than about a foot. I hit a wire wall, and so he's out there and sat there for, I don't know, 20 or 30 minutes and just never moved because he didn't avail himself of his freedom.

Our cage has been removed. Our servitude has been lifted, and sometimes we act like the rabbit. We just sit there and continue to function like a person that's not been saved.

I brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of servitude. Then he issues, he gives a fact. He says, I'm your God.

I'm the one that delivered you. Now, think about this. This is the third time that, and there are three times in Exodus where God says this.

I am Yahweh, your Elohim. I am the Lord, your God. He says this three times.

The first time, turn with me back to Exodus chapter six, six through eight. Exodus six, six through eight. Try to get this in before I run out of time here.

Exodus six, six through eight. Therefore say to the children of Israel, I am the Lord. I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I will take you as my people, and I will be your Elohim. Then you shall know that I am Yahweh, your Elohim, who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

Remember when we went through this, how repetitive it was? All the way through chapter six, he kept repeating that over and over. God is like a good military instructor. He tells you what he's going to tell you.

He tells it to you, and then he tells you what he told you. Three times in Exodus, he says, look, I just want you to know I'm the Lord. I'm going to bring you out of bondage, and then you'll know that I'm the Lord, your God.

He predicted it. I'm going to bring you out, and this is going to be the basis of your knowledge. If you ever wonder if I'm really here or if I'm really the Lord, you just think back to Egypt and to servitude and see that I'm the Lord that brought you out.

Now look at Exodus chapter 16 and verse 12. This is the second place in Exodus where God makes this explicit statement. Exodus chapter 16 and verse 12.

People are grumbling. We're out here. We don't have anything to eat.

I have heard the complaints of the children of Israel. Speak to them saying, at twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread, and you shall know that I am the Lord, your God. What did he do in the first instance? Chapter six, deliverance.

What does he do in the second instance? Chapter 16, provision. How do you and I know that the Lord is our God? He delivers us from sin, and he provides for us. Now God says, you people think back.

I brought you out of bondage. I have fed you in the wilderness up to this point, so there ought not to be any question in your mind that I'm the Lord, your God. You owe your life to me.

You have been delivered. You have been sustained. Now, here's your part.

You will have no other Elohim before me. What Elohim deserves our obeisance, or our

obedience, or our loyalty? Is there any other Elohim that brought us out of bondage? Is there any other Elohim that sustained us? No. So, to whom is our allegiance? You know, they say blood is thicker than water, and people are loyal to their family.

Why? Family is where you originated, and family is where you were sustained and provided for. You say, I owe my folks something for putting up with me when I could do nothing but soil diapers, who raised me, who gave me my life skills, who tried to inculcate me with what I would need to get through this life. I owe them something.

I'm loyal to them. I'll defend them. I'll look out for them.

I'll take care of them in their old age. They took care of me when I was little. I'll take care of them when they're old.

I owe them that. God says, look, I'm the Lord your God. I birthed you.

I brought you out of servitude. I sustained you in the wilderness. So, nobody takes my place.

We're going to look at the specifics of this when we come back from our break. There's a fascinating little turn of phrase here in Hebrew in both this and the next couple of commandments. But here's the point.

You think about our scripture reading in Thessalonians. You think about the fact that here God put a requirement on people and he said, I'm the Lord your God. You need to put me first.

And they didn't even have the Holy Spirit. We have the Holy Spirit. We have been given so much more than they had.

If they were held to the standard that God held them to in the Old Testament, and they lost their land and lost their blessings and went into captivity because they were not obedient and were not faithful, what do you think is going to happen to us who have been given so much more if we don't remember to put God first? If we don't subdue our passions and our emotions and remember who we are and why we're here. That is what our life is all about. That's what it means.

That's why we get up in the morning. That's why we go to bed at night looking forward to another day is to fulfill this potential to serve the Lord our God and not serve sin. No man can serve two masters.

We will serve one or the other. And if we do not avail ourselves of the presence of the Holy Spirit and the power of the Word of God, we will serve sin. And our salvation is relatively pointless.

Let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to move through some of these commandments. See some interesting things.