

Exod 04-02-08a

Let's begin our worship this morning, February the 8th, 2004, by taking a moment at the outset to clear our minds and recognize the essential ministry of God's Holy Spirit. We have only the ability to choose to be enabled and to be taught and to be built up in God's truth. We can't contribute to it with our intelligence or with our effort or even our desire or our level of commitment.

The only thing that ensures that God can do His work in us and through us is that His power is active within us. God is at work in us to will and to do His good purpose, and that power is a combination of God's Spirit and God's Word. It is practical.

It has a point, which is the fulfillment of God's plan, not necessarily the fulfillment of our plans. But that essential presence of God's Holy Spirit is always there, but is not always active and in use. That does depend on our decisions.

So we take a moment at the beginning of our study to remind ourselves that we are vessels, earthen vessels, in which the treasure of God's Word and the power of God's Spirit reside. Shall we pray? Father, what a privilege it is and what a comfort it is to know that we are held securely in Your hands. We are sealed.

We are forever secure in Christ because of His love and His sacrifice for us on the cross. We are so grateful that You have reconciled us to Yourself. You have entered us into Your family, into Your plan and into Your purpose.

While this life at times is challenging and at times is distracting, we know that it is just a prelude and just an opening movement in the great continuing purpose and eternal plan into which we have been entered. We thank You for the country in which we live, the environment of freedom and opportunity that we have. We thank You for the preservation of Your Word and the proliferation of its publication and all of the tools and study aids.

There has never been a time in history where we could delve into the riches and the treasures of Your Word as we can in this day and age. We know that the books have been unsealed and the insight has been given in these latter days because the time is at hand and the Lord Jesus will soon return. We pray that as we study Your Word this morning that God the Holy Spirit will find our hearts ready and soil that is readily tilled and that the implanted Word will sink its roots in and bear fruit and that we will be built up and nourished in the faith in such a way that we will reflect Your glory and the glory of our Savior.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to 2 Timothy chapter 3. We are in the book of Exodus.

We are in chapter 21, moving toward chapter 22. But our scripture reading in the New Testament impinges on our Old Testament study at the point that we found ourselves at the

end of last week's lesson, which is looking at the purpose of the law. We are very much interested in justice.

And we go to the law, whether it is the law of the Word of God or the law of our country or the law of our community to gain satisfaction and equity and what we think we deserve. It is natural. It is ubiquitous.

It is everywhere. Everyone expects that there is a certain level of justice that should come to us. But our expectations have gone beyond justice and we really want satisfaction.

And we look to the world and we look to our circumstances for satisfaction and for fulfillment and for what we feel we should have. And the point that we saw from what is and is not in the law that God gave to Israel last week is that the law is not designed to deliver justice. The law as it was given to Israel is not designed to ensure justice.

It does not and indeed cannot cover every case. There are limitations. There are great gaping holes that you could drive a truck through and you say, well, what about this? Elizabeth had many good questions last week, both during and after class.

Well, what about this and what about that? Well, it is not in the law. It is not specified. And the work of the judges and the magistrates is to interpret what does exist of the law and extend it and interpolate it to cover those cases that are not specified.

As an artilleryman, in the pre-computer days I was privileged to be in the artillery during the transition time from manual gunnery to automated or computerized gunnery. And so I learned it under the old system where we had tables, firing tables. And it says, here is the way you should elevate your artillery tube.

There are two aspects of orientation for what you would call a gun. I would hit anybody in the head that called a howitzer a gun. Guns by definition are unrifled and artillery howitzers are rifled.

But we'll just say gun for your benefit. So you have a gun. You know they shoot a long way.

It's indirect fire. Tanks are direct fire weapons. You look through your sight, see the target, shoot the target.

That's direct fire. Indirect fire means you can't see the target. And you have a trajectory that goes beyond your line of sight.

And you have an observer out there calling in corrections saying, well, that was over the target or that was to the left. Well, how do you know how high to elevate the tube to achieve the range that you want to achieve? How do you know exactly what direction, left and right, to point the tube so that you're not to the left or the right of the target? Well, you have maps. You know where the gun is.

The observer tells you where the target is. And so then you go through a process of determining how high should I elevate the tube, what direction should I point it. And in firing data terms, this is quadrant elevation and deflection.

Quadrant elevation is the up and down. Deflection is the left and right. Well, let's just talk about elevation.

You think, well, if it's a target that is 6,000 meters away, I should be able to, knowing the characteristics of the gun and the weight of the projectile, have some sort of standard. Well, what about powder temperature? Depending on the temperature of the powder, you have more or less things like the weather. You have to know how hard is the wind blowing.

Even a steel projectile, the wind will affect it as it goes through the various layers of the atmosphere. The atmosphere gets less dense as the trajectory, you get up into the higher levels. You have to take into account the rotation of the earth because there is a movement that is imparted to the projectile based on the momentum of the rotation of the earth.

And once it leaves the ground, the earth is rotating and the projectile has gone off in a straight line. You can imagine flinging a weight around your head on a string, slinging it around, and then if the string breaks or if you let go, it immediately goes in a straight line. Well, all of this has to be taken into account, so they have a book of firing tables.

And based on given ranges and given powder temperatures and various other things, you go into all of these tables. Well, if you've ever used a table, you know that it can't give every little microscopic change in one or another of these things. It gives basic data.

It might give you the elevation for every 100 meters of range. Well, what if it's 50 meters in between? What if I need to shoot between that? You have to interpolate. You have to extrapolate from the table a value between known pieces of information because otherwise you would have to have a separate truck just to carry the firing table so that it would be complete.

The same is true in God's law that was delivered to Israel. It cannot possibly cover every... I mean, how many sheep would you have to kill? How many skins would you have to prepare? How much ink would you have to use to try to record a law that could cover every circumstance? So it gives samples. It gives examples.

And then the judge's job is to interpolate and extrapolate from these known situations. But even there, the purpose of the law is not to deliver justice to every person. The purpose of the law in Israel is to preserve the community.

It is to protect the nation. A person cannot go to the law and say, I am not going to leave off with this law until I get what I deserve because the law will not always deliver justice. And we saw this in the preceding sections where it says a master could strike a servant and if the servant dies, now he's under penalty of death.

But if the servant lingers a day or two, then there's no penalty for the master. And you think, well, what about the slave? Isn't he a human being? Doesn't he have rights? I mean, he was stricken and was down for the count for days on end. But because he didn't die, the community puts no penalty on the master.

Where's the justice for the slave? He's a human soul created in the image of God just like everyone else, whether he's a Canaanite or whether he's a Hebrew. But if he does not die, there's no penalty inflicted on the master. And you think, this is the law of God, where's the justice? You have to remember, this law is not designed to deliver justice to individuals.

It is designed to protect the community. So in that particular case, why does the law of God not specify a penalty? Because of two things. First of all, it is not the community that is harmed in that case.

The master has shot himself in the foot. Remember, this slave is his property. He has him to get useful work.

And if he injures his slave, remember, if a man injures another Israelite and puts him out of work, he's got to compensate him for his lost time and pay to make sure he gets healed up. Because that has cost this other man money. Well, he has cost himself money if he has wounded his slave.

So there is sort of a built-in penalty. Now, if he takes the man's life, now he owes God a penalty. And you go to what God gave to Noah in Genesis 9. God delegates the authority for punishing murderers to mankind after the flood.

Before the flood, it's in God's province. And when Cain kills Abel, God meets out the punishment, which is not death. It is banishment.

After the flood, God says, if a man sheds blood, by man shall his blood be shed. And God says, you will now take justice into your hands. And here are the guidelines.

And there is harm to the community if you have someone who murders and is a murderer, especially if he's dumb enough to murder his own slave. There's something wrong with him, and he needs to be eliminated. So if he kills his own slave, his passions are ungoverned, and he is so out of control.

He is a threat not only to himself but to the community. A man that will kill his own slave, cannot bridle his passions, is a threat to the community. And God says, kill him.

So all of this, though, goes back to a point. If we're not looking to the law for our justice, where do we look? We look to God. Things that are not rectified in this life, and they are many.

Most of us can think of examples. Some of us have examples in our own family, where a significant and egregious wrong has been committed, and there was no justice. Someone gets

killed, and no one is punished.

Property is lost. Theft occurs. No one is ever caught.

The property is never returned. And we say, where's the justice? We as believers look to God, and we know that He is keeping account. And there is final divine justice that goes beyond what happens in this life, and goes beyond what happens on the surface of this planet.

And we rest our hope and our confidence in God, who sees all and who knows all. But God has not delivered, either to Israel or to the New Testament church, a system of perfect justice on this earth. It does not exist.

Don't look for it here. But to the extent that we find this to be a problem, we find a problem in ourselves, because our culture, our society, the human nature itself, wants satisfaction. So much so that as you look around in our society today, you find that people expect to be satisfied, and expect justice in this life, on this earth, and will settle for nothing less.

And this is our scripture reading in 2 Timothy, chapter 3, because this has just gotten worse as human history has progressed. And in these latter days, Paul says, Know this, in the last days perilous times will come. What does perilous mean? Dangerous.

They are dangerous times. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents. This is an issue we just saw in the law.

This was something the community would react to, those who are disobedient to parents, because this is a sign of dangerous times. This is a peril to the community. It is a peril to the fabric of any society when you have young people who are going to form the next generation who do not respect authority, who don't understand it, who cannot bridle their passions, and function within a set of guidelines or a set of rules.

Disobedience to parents, as we just saw, is, punishment-wise, on a level with murder. If you cannot control yourself, whether it's your own slave or another member of the community, and you raise the hand and kill them, or if you are a child and you curse your parents, or you strike your parents, the word strike there, when we saw it, doesn't mean that you kill either one of your parents. It doesn't even get to the point of fratricide, or patricide, or matricide.

It is striking them. If you raise your hand against your parents, you have demonstrated yourself to be a threat to the community, and the community is instructed by God to remove you by death. Perilous times.

Disobedient to parents. Unthankful. Unholy.

Unloving. Unforgiving. Slanderers.

You think about this, slanderers, what has happened in the last few decades in our own society? When you study American history, you try to study Thomas Jefferson, you don't get the writing

of the Declaration of Independence, you get the black slave that he supposedly had children with. Slandering George Washington, and finding fault with him, and the other men who have had achievements, who built the foundation of our country, all you find out are the scandals, and people are digging for the dirt. People run for office, they don't concentrate on their qualifications, they look for dirt.

Can we surprise? Can we scandalize? Can we find controversy? Slanderers. People are looking to tear down, rather than to build up. They don't think about the consequences.

It doesn't matter, people are more interested in finding out if the security and intelligence arms of our government were somehow perverted by the president or by someone else high up in government. It doesn't matter if by splashing this all over the headlines you get CIA agents killed overseas. It's the slander that counts.

If I can try to bring someone down with some sort of investigative report, I don't care who I hurt. Slanderers. Without self-control.

Brutal. Despisers of good. This runs rampant now.

The whole attitude toward the teaching of abstinence in schools, it's a despising of good. Evidence is overwhelming that even at a secular level, abstinence is much to be preferred. It's safer on a number of levels.

Young people, just look at it pragmatically, setting aside even the law of God and morality, just look at it pragmatically. Young people are not equipped to handle the responsibility for children that are brought into the world or the warpage and damage that is done to their psyche by trying to go through an abortion or whatever. Better to avoid an unplanned, unwanted, unsupported pregnancy than to hand out condoms, which are not always effective, especially in the hands of people who are already, the reason they're even messing around is because they don't have self-control.

If you don't have enough self-control to abstain, how are you going to have enough self-control to stop and employ a condom? It's ludicrous. But they hand them out in schools. And the idea is, well, you can't expect, I mean, it's just silly, and you get all kinds of criticism and have abuse heaped on you for suggesting that people abstain.

Despisers of good. You're thought to be some kind of idiot that it isn't possible to make it until marriage without experimentation and so on. And yet they're relying, they say, well, nobody's going to have enough self-control to wait until marriage to have physical relations.

But they will have enough self-control to listen to this education class and use a condom and all of their experimentation for weeks and months and years on end, they'll always use a condom. Where's the logic in that? They're despisers of good. Traitors.

People will turn on one another because they believe they are right. They believe that it is in

their best interest to love you now and not love you later. I won't go into it, but there was an interesting example.

You can't believe the book I was reading last week. It was Leonard Nimoy, I Am Spock. But one of the things he talks about is his experience in Hollywood and how when you're on top, everyone loves you.

The Eagles did a song about this also, The New Kid in Town. They will never forget you until somebody new comes along. And that is never more true than in Hollywood where when you're a cast member on a successful series, you are golden.

Every word that you say is responded to and so on. And when your series is canceled, you can't even get people to pick up the phone when you call. And Leonard Nimoy has some very pithy anecdotes about his experience in that regard.

People who swore undying allegiance and said, oh, we're going to do this and do that and do the other. Then they find out that your series is canceled or your movie is not going to be made. And suddenly they look at you as though you're from a different planet.

What? Said what? Did what? Promised what? Traitors. All of this, by the way, if you look at these, is tied to satisfaction for number one. You get treated in this way because people are out for number one.

It is an expectation. And sadly, this is the way Christianity is presented. A pastor at First Baptist had a comment on this this morning talking about the fact that Christianity is presented unwittingly.

People say, well, if you'll accept Christ as your Savior, Jesus will meet your needs. He will meet your needs. Christianity is not designed to meet our needs.

I mean, that sounds shocking. But it is not designed to meet our needs. It is designed to accomplish the plan and purpose of God.

Do you think John the Baptist's needs were met when he was in prison? Do you think that Joseph, the son of Jacob, the 11th son, do you think his needs were being met when he got wrapped up and thrown in the pit and imprisoned and falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and rotting in the dungeon for month after month after month? Do you think that even though he was in the very plan and purpose of God, had done nothing to deserve ill, do you think his needs were being met? Paul the apostle, read the litany of his experiences. He's the apostle. He's considered the greatest of the apostles, certainly by the Gentiles.

And were his needs being met when he was thrice given the 40 lashes minus one and was shipwrecked and imprisoned and chained? What are you talking about? Jesus will meet your needs. People have an expectation. Promises are made that the prosperity gospel.

Are you in financial trouble? Get right with God. Sow into the ministries and the windows of heaven will open. And it appeals and it fills auditoriums.

Look at the Christian broadcasting services, at the people who are pitching this non-biblical nonsense, and look at the hundreds and the thousands of people who are listening. Why are they there? I have asked myself this question. People purporting, claiming to be Christians, are hypnotized, are mesmerized in droves by this message.

Why? Because it hooks in to what it says right here. Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. I want my needs met.

I have an expectation that if I do this Christianity thing, I'm going to be satisfied. I'm going to have the life that I'm looking for. And that is a short-sighted view.

That's like saying I expect my justice to come out of the law. I want everything to happen here and now. I want it right.

I want it just. I want it fair. And I want it satisfying.

And I want it now. That's what constitutes a perilous time. Why is it perilous? Because it's seductive.

Because it's attractive. Because in our inner compass of rightness, it sounds good. I think life is right when it satisfies me.

I have no complaints when I'm satisfied, right? I'm not going to question. I'm not going to look under the surface and see if this meets the requirements of the Word of God, if it satisfies me. If I'm satisfied, you know, there's even a hymn in the hymn book, which we've never sung.

I am satisfied. I am satisfied with Jesus. It's not a matter of my satisfaction.

It's a matter of God's satisfaction. God will satisfy himself. And whatever is not justified, whatever is not reconciled and resolved by way of justice in this life, is certainly going to be in the next.

We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. People think they got over or got by or that it was satisfying to them here. Haven't got the full picture.

In the same way that when Eve took the first bite of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, it was satisfying. It satisfied a craving that she had in five different areas. She saw that it was good for food, that it was desirable to make one wise, and this, that, and the other.

Well, at the moment she bit into it, she was satisfied. It was afterward when God showed up in the garden and they knew they were naked. And this is the point that people don't think of when they're looking only in this life.

Unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. And the sad thing is having a form of godliness, having a trapping, having a shell or an external that says, I've got a presence of God, I own a Bible, I go to church, I do this, I do that, I do the other. Having a form of godliness but denying its power.

We began this morning talking about the power of God and what constitutes that power. From such people turn away. The Christianity that is often preached today says don't turn away from anyone.

Be embracing, be ecumenical, be inclusive. The Bible says when you find people like this, turn away. Because it is perilous.

It is seductive. It will drag us down. And there is a day of reckoning coming.

This is the sort that creeps into households and makes captives of gullible women loaded down with sins. You know what this means? They hook into guilt. Gullible women loaded down with sins, the hook is guilt.

These people get into households and find that chain and pull it. And to try to get past this load of sin, these people, this is why so many little old ladies send checks to these dumb ministries. Because they believe that God will smile on them when they support this message that sounds so good.

Led away by various desires, always learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. There is a real knowledge cult these days. And guys who stand to the side and draw away a drape and show something from the Word of God, this is what the Prayer of Jabez thing was all about.

This is what the Experiencing God movement was all about. And a host of others we could name. It is, let me show you something you never saw before.

And you pull the rabbit out of the hat or you pull the cover aside and here's the beautiful painting that's never been seen before. And people, the ooh and ah factor hooks them. And they believe that they're on the track because they're learning something.

And we have to be careful of that ourselves because we go into the Word of God and recover things that have maybe not been looked at in a long time. And it isn't just having the secret knowledge and entering into the click of the mysteries of the oracles of some deep forgotten thing. The Word of God is powerful when it's in the hands of the Holy Spirit and it's inside our souls working God's will.

And to simply learn without coming to a knowledge of the truth is a stimulation that doesn't have any substance. And that's what's spoken of here. The same thing by the way is mentioned over in Philippians chapter 3. Paul says in Philippians 3.17 Brethren, join in following my

example and note those who so walk as you have us for a pattern.

For many walk, of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping, they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. These are people in the church. They are saved and they're enemies of the cross whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly.

Self-satisfaction. Their God is their own satisfaction. This is what the belly represents.

And whose glory is in their shame. Why do you think they ordained this Episcopal Bishop who is a flaming homosexual? The glory in their shame. They are progressive.

They are inclusive. They are not going to turn away from someone who lacks self-control and is immoral. Who set their mind on earthly things.

Who set their mind on earthly things. If your hope is only in this life. Do you remember the Apostle Paul talking about resurrection? And he says, if there is no resurrection, then Christ is not raised.

And if Christ is not raised, you are yet in your sins. And he says, if our hope is in this life only, we are of all men most miserable. We are taught by the Word of God to look beyond this life.

That's the third leg of the three Christian virtues. Faith, hope and love. It is hope that looks beyond this life.

That recognizes that you don't have to worry about justice. You don't have to worry about taking another brother to court as the Corinthians are shamed for by Paul. They're looking too much in this life.

We look beyond. We recognize that everything is in God's hands. It will all come out right in the end.

And the end is beyond the end of this life. Well, this is an essential background now as we study the law as it is delivered to Israel in Exodus. Because we recognize that it is not God's intention.

It is not God's purpose to accomplish justice for every individual in Israel. We look at these daughters that are sold as house slaves or as concubines or as secondary wives. And we say, does God really look down on women as secondary? What about these poor people that get conquered and are brought in as slaves and can be beaten all over the place? And as long as they don't die, there's no penalty.

Is this the God of the Bible? Is this the God of justice? Is this the God we love and serve? But the reason we are shocked and the reason we are concerned by this is we think that we come to the expectation that every person is going to get justice under this law. God is looking at that Hebrew slave master. God is looking at that husband.

God is looking at this man in Israel. And if he manages to subvert and pervert and get around

the requirements of the law of Moses, he has accomplished nothing. This is what the Pharisees had managed to do.

And you have seen and heard the round condemnation. Woe to you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, for you wipe the outside of the dish, but inside it is corrupt. You whitewash the outside.

Inside you are full of dead men's bones. God sees, God knows, and justice is in the hand of God. So with that in mind, we looked last time at Exodus chapter 21, specifically at this section that deals with women who are injured in the course of striving between two men.

And we think, well, this is kind of an odd case. And this has become a focal point for those who are arguing for or against abortion. In verse 22, if men fight and hurt a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely, this literally says, if men strive and hurt a woman with child so that her children come forth.

The verb is *yatsah*, which means to come forth. It is used of children being born. You can go back to the birth of Jacob and Esau, with Jacob holding on to his brother's heel.

It says when the child came forth. And the word here that is translated gives birth prematurely. There is no verb for giving birth.

It is the word *yeled* in the plural with the feminine possessive suffix. Her children come forth. Come forth means to emerge.

And you think about this. When babies are born, they typically are not breathing or doing anything until they come out. And then this is why the doctor used to hold the babies upside down and spank them.

You crank them up. You hit the start switch and they begin to respire and so on. And so in Israel, there was no change in status as far as anybody was concerned with the child coming forth.

Once the child has come forth, now you evaluate if there is any damage. If it doesn't wake up and start breathing, it was damaged in the form of a miscarriage. If it comes out but it's got a broken arm because the man struck the pregnant woman, something needs to be addressed.

There is an injury. If the woman is injured, the child comes forth and she is injured in the process or after the fact, then something needs to be addressed. It says, If her children come forth, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished according as the woman's husband imposes on him, the man who actually struck her.

There is recompense, restitution, and they actually had arrived at sort of a cost or a monetary value for things like losing an eye or losing a tooth or losing an arm. And with the *lex talionis* or just *talionis*, this actually survived down and was modified and entered into Roman law. The

Romans had 12 tables of law that was all about lex talionis, recompense, equity.

If you inflict damage, that damage is inflicted back on you. There was a redemption. If you hit somebody and knock their eye out, you're accountable for an eye.

And if you can't pay for that eye, then you pay with your own eye. But it wasn't always that if you blinded someone, you had to be blinded. You could buy the eye in effect or buy the broken limb.

And the judges, this was part of their job, is to figure out what is a just recompense. What was the level of responsibility on the part of this person? As the woman's husband imposes on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine, or this literally says with the judges. He goes to the judges and the husband just doesn't say, well, you owe me a million shekels.

With the judges, he works out what the penalty will be. But if any harm follows, then you shall give. And there's an eightfold expression of lex talionis, and that's where we will pick up.

But to recapitulate, we need to check ourselves and be sure that our faith and confidence is not in earthly equity and that we don't find ourselves dissatisfied or depressed because things are not working out fairly. You know, the old saying, life is hard and then you die. For a Christian, that's not the end of the equation.

Life is hard, then you die, and after that is the judgment. And God will recompense. God will justify.

God will dispense justice. It's not over when we die. But if you think it is and you're living too much in this world, you are doomed to frustration because life, as the old truism goes, is not fair.

And it should not matter to a believer because we know that God is fair. And that is where our hope and our confidence should be. Our confidence is in God, not in the system of this world.

Let's pause and take our break. When we come back, we're going to take a closer look at lex talionis.