

Exod 04-02-15a

The epistles to Timothy from the Apostle Paul tell us some things about the Word of God, as does the book of Hebrews, which I think Paul also wrote. But those books tell us that the Word of God is alive. It is a special kind of truth.

Many libraries, many higher institutions of learning have an inscription that is a quote from the Lord Jesus that says, You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. But it's not just any truth. It's not the truth of mathematics.

It's not the truth of science. It's not the truth of psychology or sociology or philosophy or even the truth we gain by experience that we call common sense. The Word of God is alive.

The Word of God is powerful. The Word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces.

It divides apart. It separates. It distinguishes the soul and the spirit, the joints and the marrow, which is the very inner core of our being.

And it is a critic. It judges the thoughts and intents of our heart. This is where the judgment takes place.

We think and we judge based on outcome. We say, well, I made a decision. I followed a course.

I implemented a policy in my life. And everything came out the way I wanted it to, so it's okay. That is not God's standard.

God's standard is His Word. And His Word doesn't judge outcomes and it doesn't judge circumstances. It judges the thoughts and the intents of our heart.

Well, this is a little bit disconcerting on the low end and frightening on the high end because if God can see into the very center of our being, if He can see what we're thinking and what motivates us, and that's where His judgment is taking place, we're in trouble because the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, Jeremiah tells us, because many times our thoughts are only evil all the day. And so we have no hope of standing at the judgment. However, there is a means of deliverance.

There is a grace from God that transforms us by the renewing of our mind. And that is a two-part process. The first part is listening to God's Word, studying God's Word, and coming to know what it says, what the principles are, what the promises are, what the statements of fact are.

And then the second part is doing something with that knowledge. I looked out the window yesterday, and my optical cortex connected to my brain told me that snow was falling. Once I had that piece of information, I could act on it.

I could either rouse myself and go out and build a snowman or shovel my walk, or I could roll over and go back to sleep. I have a piece of information. Now, what do I do with that information? Do I make any change in my actions? The same thing is true with the Word of God.

It is one thing to learn it and to come to know it. It is something else, again, to act on it, to live in its light. We just sang the hymn, Footsteps of Jesus, that make the pathway glow.

I will follow the steps of Jesus wherever they go. Well, this is a decision that we make. It doesn't just happen automatically.

But we have to remember that God judges the thoughts and intents of the heart by the standard of His Word. And there's no escape. There's no dodge.

There's no getting around it. There is no missing of that event. It's going to happen.

Many people don't believe it's going to happen. And they're in for a shock, because whether you believe that the train is coming down the tracks or not, if your car is sitting on the tracks, the train will hit you and will destroy both your car and you. And you cannot believe it all you want.

It's still going to happen. In the same way, we have the truth of God's Word, and so it's our opportunity at this time to engage in that first part. I am privileged to help with the first part so that we can all look in and see what God's Word says.

But I can't do anything about the second part. That's entirely in your court. Each of us has to take what the Word of God says and decide whether or not to live our lives in its light.

So this is an important business. I think it's exciting. I think it's interesting.

I think it is enjoyable to dig through God's Word and find the treasures that are there. But it's also a serious part of our life. It has to make a difference.

There's no point in being a Christian unless our study of God's Word and our meditation on it makes a difference. If we don't let it change us, we have missed the point. It doesn't matter what outcomes are in this life.

It doesn't matter how circumstances turn out. We may be like Donald Trump and just have all kinds of great prosperity. But I will tell you this.

I have no idea what Mr. Trump's spiritual status is, but the Word of God is going to judge the thoughts and intents of his heart just like it does ours. And that is one thing all of us should be convinced of and should take to heart. So it's an important time of study when we come to God's Word.

We want to prepare ourselves for it by taking a moment to go to the Lord in prayer, make sure that the Holy Spirit finds our heart ready. I always think of it in terms of the parable of the

sower and the seeds. Is our field well plowed and ready for the seed to drop in or not? So if we can plow in 15 or 20 seconds, why, that's our opportunity here at the beginning of our class.

Shall we pray? Father, thank you for this day. Thank you for our nation, for our government, for our freedom, for all of the environmental factors that you have ordered and coordinated for us so that we are free as few people have ever been free to study your Word and to implement it and to live by it from day to day. We thank you for those who preserve our freedoms and our institutions of law, government, and family.

We thank you that through the rule of law we are protected from those who run amok, from those who have no standards, who live in the kingdom of darkness and are headed for judgment due to that. We thank you for this opportunity to study your Word. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will illuminate it for us so that we can be nourished and built up and live our lives according to your truth.

We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. This is February the 15th of 2004 and we resume our study this morning in Exodus chapter 22.

I'm going to forego our scripture reading this morning and dive straight into our passage which begins at verse 16. By way of orientation to where we are in the law, children of Israel are camped around the base of Mount Sinai. Moses is upstairs in the head office as it were.

God has come down and is delivering to him this message. The book of Exodus divides into three parts. Israel in Egypt, Israel in the wilderness, and Israel at Sinai.

When we began chapter 19, we started the third section of this book. From here to the end, we find ourselves at Sinai. This is going to occupy about 20 and a half chapters now from 19 through the end of chapter 40.

Actually, I guess that's 21. That's why I was an English major, not a math major. 21 chapters, 19 through 40, Israel at Sinai.

Within this, we have seen four subdivisions. The first is God's presence descending on the mountain. You have the lightning, the smoke, the cloud, and so on, the earthquake, the people who are afraid.

They say, Moses, you go up. We're backing away. So Moses goes forward toward God.

The rest of the people go backwards. So the advent of the Lord's presence, the making of the covenant. This is basically chapter 19 until about halfway through chapter 24.

That's the section that we're in. Beginning in chapter 25, we're going to see instructions for worship. What about the feasts? What about the altars? What about the sacrifices? We're going to have about six chapters of instruction for worship.

By the way, how many chapters for worship do we have in the New Testament? Which chapters

of those books specify how we are to worship in the church? It lays out who starts the service and who does the music. In the law, they talk about the sons of Kohath and all the rest of it. How much instruction do we have in the New Testament on our worship? Do we have six chapters? Three chapters? Two chapters? One chapter? We have two or three verses that define our worship.

Which is why, in the absence of divine mandate, we can pretty well assemble and worship as we see fit. The main piece of guidance in the New Testament for worship is that it be done decently and in good order. That there be authority that ensures that that decency and good order is maintained.

And that those who will not abide by that decency and good order are expelled so others can worship. That's about all you have. It is to be led by men.

There are some qualifications for those men who are to be elders in the church. And that's about it. Anyway, we have six chapters here.

That'll be chapters 25 through 31. Halfway through 31. Actually, all the way through 31.

Then, the third section in what remains to us here is what happens when Moses comes down from the mountain. No one can forget Charlton Heston standing on the outcropping of rock. I hear the sound of war in the camp.

Joshua says, they come down and Moses says, that's not war, that's a party. And then Charlton Heston raises those tablets over his head and he smashes them to the ground and so on. That's going to begin in chapter 32 through 34.

You can't hardly imagine all of these supernatural manifestations and right there in the presence of God. You think about it, seldom has God been so close to so many people as He is at Sinai. And He came and ate a meal with Abraham and walked a path with Abraham.

He appeared to Jacob. There are times when you see the presence of God, such as the pillar of cloud or the pillar of fire. But here God is fully present and descended on top of Mount Sinai.

The people are gathered at the base. Their first reaction is a physical departure of fear. Their second is a spiritual departure of disobedience.

They are going to do the golden calf. That's 32 through 34. Then finally, the last five chapters, 35 through 40, actually I think that's six chapters, is Israel's obedience of Yahweh's instructions.

They are going to be chastened and humbled after the golden calf incident and then they are going to begin to implement some of this guidance. So that's a broad picture. Now, within the part that we're talking about, I gave you a 12-point outline here of the law.

Let me just run down through this. Don't fall asleep. Don't get lost in the funhouse.

But it's important to understand that there is a logic. This isn't just a random scattering of commands. If you go to jury duty, down here at the central jury room, they begin by running a film and they give you all these different instructions.

They tell you this is what you have to do to be a juror. Well, it's a real snoozer. I actually stayed awake and watched it the first time.

The second time they showed it to me, I just couldn't get through it. I just lost consciousness. And one of the problems with their film, and if I was running the courthouse, I would change that film because it's random.

Their instructions don't cohere. They don't follow a progression. One minute they're talking about how to turn in your form.

The next they're talking about don't talk about the case and wait until you're called. It's disorganized. God's law that he delivers here is organized.

Our understanding of it needs to be organized. So this is the organization. If you can just tough it out and get this sequence, then we'll be organized, we'll understand the organization God put in.

So we began in Chapter 20 with this section. The chapter division is in the wrong place. Chapter 21 ought to begin at 2022.

That's where the law begins. And the first set of ordinances is for the altar. Remember that? Don't go up to my altar by steps.

Don't raise your, actually, *kerev* is the word that's used there, which is the word often translated sword, but it means pointed iron tool or chipping tool. It's a piercing tool. You find that same word in Psalm 22.

I just did some work on that this past week. Anyway, that's the altar. When you're thinking about the altar and the ordinances for that, we're looking up.

We're looking at God. This is worship, right? The next set in 21.1-11 is this is how to treat your servant. We went through the pierced ear slave and the different ordinances pertaining to servants when they are set free and who is a servant and this sort of thing.

That's looking down. You're a master. You're looking down at the servants.

So, you know, when you were a kid, did you ever have this thing, look up, look down, look all around, look at my thumb, boy, you're done. You have somebody going through these different things. I mean, it's a little kindergarten trick for people to play, kind of like that thing where they chuck you on the nose or whatever.

But here, God says, listen, I'm trying to get you oriented to your world. What's above you?

That's what's most important. That's God.

Here's regulations for the altar. What's below you? No matter, almost no matter how low you are in life, there's somebody lower than you. It's very seldom that you absolutely hit the bottom where there's just nobody below.

So you look up and then you look down. Now we're going to look to the sides. I see what's above me.

I see what's below me. Now I'm going to look to the sides. And this is the first set of what can be punished by death.

As you circulate in your society, you don't want to get killed over something. So what are the things that are death penalty offenses? And this began in 21 verse 12 through 17. These are the things punishable by death.

Then in 21.18, we started talking about lesser offenses that are also in the horizontal plane. What if you inflict a physical injury on somebody? Or what if you are responsible for a physical injury that somebody suffers? Right? So we had, if you're actively involved, if you lose your head or if you do something stupid and you hurt someone, this is active physical injury, 21.18 through 27. Then what if you just are responsible through neglect or through apathy or something that you didn't intend, unintentional.

This is liability, like what you carry on your car. That's 21.28 through 36. Then we started a new chapter, chapter 22.

And instead of physical injury to people's body, their person, now we're going to look at their property. What are the fundamental, think about it now, a civics lesson. What are the fundamental issues that any society has to try to organize and protect? Freedom, privacy, property.

Privacy is your personal self. I ought to be able to come in my house, lock my door, and not have somebody come barging in here and do bodily harm to me. I ought to be able to drive down the street and not have somebody run their car into mine and do me physical bodily harm.

That's my person and personality. That's myself. I ought to have certain rights.

I ought to be able to vote. Especially as a tax-paying property owner in this country, I should be able to vote. I should have some say-so in various levels of government.

So freedom, privacy, and property, that's what these things address. We personally need to think about our impact on others' freedom, on others' privacy, and on others' property, whether actively through the decisions that we make and the feelings that we have or whatever, and also passively. We need to look around and say, have I inadvertently wronged

my neighbor? Is the pile of trash that I have on the corner of my lot reducing my neighbor's property value, creating an eyesore, creating ill will? Do I have some policy or something going on? Do I play my TV too loud at night and he can't sleep? Whatever it might be.

So that's what these are about. So we started with the person in Chapter 21, 18, through the end of the chapter. Now 22, this is property.

It deals with theft in the first four verses. It deals with damage in the next couple of verses. It deals with safe deposit.

What if you're responsible for someone's property? You're holding it for him. What do you do? 7 through 13 of 22. And then what about borrowing? You borrow something and then something happens to it or it disappears.

22, 14, and 15. Now we start at Chapter 16 this morning. So if nothing else, I hope that this has given you the flow here, where we are.

What would you expect to be coming up next? We've talked about privacy. We've talked about property. These next things are going to have to do with freedom, I would expect, just on principle.

Let's take a look at 16 and following. If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed and lies with her, he shall surely pay the bride price for her to be his wife. If her father utterly refuses to give her to him, which you could easily imagine, he shall pay money according to the bride price of virgins.

You shall not permit a sorceress to live. Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death. He who sacrifices to any god except to the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

Now, these verses, these five verses, seem to be all over the map, don't they? Kind of like when you just go to the law. You say, well, you were talking about virgins and betrothed and now you're talking about sorceresses and now you're talking about bestiality, for crying out loud. What is the common thread there? Well, all of this is of a piece.

All of it is under the heading of seduction. It is all under the heading of seduction. You know what seduction does when you are seduced or when you seduce someone? It means you fool them with the promise of something desirable and it actually turns out to be snake bite.

It looks like a walk in the park. It turns out to be snake bite. It is the promise of something desirable.

And many times that promise is fulfilled. You know, a woman can be in, and this is only partially hypothetical. I've seen this happen.

A woman can decide that she's got a job. She's working in a company and she wants to advance. And she says, well, the guy who controls my fate in this company is this man right

here, so I will get in good with him.

And it may not go as far as a physical affair, but she will basically seduce him. She will either be flirtatious or she will do some other thing of a seductive nature to draw this man into favor so that he will advance her cause. Of course, men do the same thing.

It's just not in the physical seduction realm, hopefully. It will be more in the, well, let me take you fishing or let me show you this great place to hunt or whatever, and you basically schmooze your way to advancement. But all of this, believe it or not, we tend to think of seduction as only having to do with sex.

There's a lot of different kinds of seduction. TV seduces us to watch by teasers showing something either titillating or stimulating or whatever. They try to get you to watch.

They try to get you to tune in. This is seduction. Well, that's what's happening here.

Look at the first verse. If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed, well, what's the other kind of virgin? Virgins who are betrothed. And if she is betrothed, she is basically treated the same as one who is married, and if a man entices a virgin who is betrothed, this is essentially adultery and comes under the adultery laws.

What was the status of the Virgin Mary when she was pregnant with the Lord Jesus? She was betrothed. And this is why it was such a scandal and why Joseph, her betrothed, not her husband, but her fiancé, was tempted to put her away, just send her off to the boonies somewhere where nobody would see what was happening because it was a black eye for him. Anyway, this is one who is not betrothed.

She's just a young lady. She's in a household. She's under her father's care and authority, and a guy seduces her, entices her, and has physical relations with her.

He lies with her. He shall surely pay the bride price for her to be his wife. This means it is all the same as though the family had contracted this marriage.

Now, many times in Israel, in patriarchal society, marriages were arranged. The father of a girl would get with the father of a guy and say, let's have our kids get married. We say, oh, my goodness, death of romance.

How could this go on? How could God let this happen? I would be up in arms if my parents picked my spouse. Well, keep in mind that we have idle time, and our mind is the devil's workshop, and we're all interested in our own gratification. In the ancient world, marriage was an alliance.

It was for practical reasons. Romance was a nice side benefit if it took place. But in many cases, marriages were formed, and marriages endured, and marriages existed without benefit of romantic love.

It was business. It was survival. It was opportunity to procreate, to produce offspring, to maintain possession of the family or the clan property and their assignment in Israel, to ensure that there is a line that follows and that honors your name and so forth.

So, in that light, who is best equipped to form an alliance? Two teenagers or the two fathers? The two fathers understand property and wells and flocks and herds and fields and numbers of servants and what the practicalities are of uniting two households because a marriage united two households. Why do you think King David married so many women? Why do you think King Solomon married so many women? Everybody thinks, well, the lecherous old Solomon, that booger, you know, 700 wives and 300 concubines. He was just really in it for the ladies.

Solomon had the most peaceful coexistence with all of his surrounding neighbors that Israel has ever had. Why? Alliances. He married the daughter of Pharaoh.

He married the daughter of the king of Moab. He married the daughter of the king of Ammon. He married the daughter of all of these different surrounding regions.

And the guy is not going to go attack his own family. It's an alliance. That's how marriage is viewed.

So, an alliance is in the formative stage here. And someone comes in and messes it up. Then the man who is engaged is going to take care of this.

This is an adultery situation. Here, there is no alliance in the making. The man sleeps with the girl.

Well, now he has sort of forced the issue. But once again, it's up to the father as to whether or not to unite these two houses. The father can say, okay, you can take her to be a wife.

This wasn't my plan, but we'll do it. But it's up to the father, not up to the girl, not up to the guy. It's up to the father of the young lady as to whether or not he can pay the bride price for her to be his wife.

Verse 17, if her father utterly refuses to give her to him, I don't want grandchildren fathered by you there, buddy. I don't want to align my house with yours and have your kids inheriting my property, etc. He utterly refuses to give her to him, then the wayward youth here shall pay just as though he was taking her.

He still has to pay the dowry, but he gets no marriage out of the deal. He just owes the bride price. It's a fine.

And the bride price was a sizable chunk of money. In fact, there's evidence to suggest that Roland Deveau has done a lot of work on ancient Israel. He's got a book by that name where he talks about the customs of the time.

And he lives in Israel, or lived. I think he's dead now, but a very well-respected scholar. It's his

opinion that in many cases the bride price that was paid to the father was held in trust.

And upon the death of the father was the inheritance that went to the daughter. Normally, inheritances would be divided, firstborn son and that kind of thing, the double portion, and the father's estate would all go to his sons. But this bride price, Deveau thinks, was set aside, and this was a way that a daughter could receive an inheritance.

It was paid for her to the father. He would keep it, and then it would go to her upon his death. And so she is provided for in that way.

So it was a pretty good sum of money. So if we had this policy today, let's say a bride price is one year's income for an average American family. I don't know what the average income is in America.

Let's just say it's \$35,000. Somebody could probably sustain themselves on that amount of money in a year. So let's say the dowry, the bride price for a virgin is \$35,000, and you are liable for that if you sleep with a girl without benefit of marriage.

You have a choice. You can either pay the father \$35,000, that's what you owe him, and marry the girl, or you can pay him \$35,000 and he doesn't let you marry the girl. And if you can't pay the money, then you get to go to the debtor's farm where you work to earn that money until it is paid.

This would severely cramp the romantic style of most of our young men. And that's exactly what it did in Israel. Because if you fail to pay, what is the lex talionis? Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, life for a life? The dowry is basically the payment for a girl's life.

You are taking her and you are purchasing her into your family. Serious thing. I'm not saying they gave the death penalty, but I am saying that there was a high monetary price and you'd better pay it or the father and his clan are going to be coming after you and take it from you, take it from your father's house, and so on.

So this is the seduction of a girl who is not betrothed. Now, verse 18 just seems to be like lightning out of a clear blue sky. You shall not permit a sorceress to live.

But, because we have seen the flow of thought, because we understand this is a section on seduction, we say, of course, this is the same type of thing, but in the spiritual realm. This is a woman who seduces men in Israel into pagan worship. What does a sorceress do? What is a sorceress? She invokes magic.

She offers a power other than the power of God. When you think about that, who is a sorceress today? Or who would qualify under this more general definition? Yeah, you have your divas who are set up as social icons for various segments of our society, teenage icons, young woman icons, Oprah icons. You know, Dr. Phil is forever talking to women about what they set their sights on and what they value because we have a media and we have a culture that is pushed

over that media that doesn't actually reflect reality.

It reflects an ideal. It reflects a seduction. It tries to get people to go down a certain path.

This is why you have so many gay people, so many homosexual people all over the airwaves. This is why when a few of them get together and decide to break the law in San Francisco or when you get one high-strung, overly ambitious judge in Massachusetts or wherever, this is now pushed to be the norm for the nation and it is glorified and it is expanded and expostulated and expatiated all over the talk shows and everybody creates a big noise on it and my solution to that is I've just kept my TV and my radio off for this last week because I don't want to hear it. It's not reality in my community.

It's not reality in my state and the only other thing I'm considering is informing my senator and my congressman that they better remember what state they're from if this issue ever comes to any kind of a vote. But it is a seduction. A sorceress seduces.

Seduces away from God. Here, a young lady has been seduced away from her family and away from her future, her potential, and there is a penalty. Notice, you shall not permit a sorceress to live.

There is a greater penalty for seducing people away from God than there is for seducing them away from their family. Do not permit her to live. And notice that now, in 18 through 20, this is a new and second set of capital offenses.

Sorceress is not to live. Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death. I don't think we really need to even dwell on that.

He who sacrifices to any God except to the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed. It's easy if somebody sets up a little statue of Baal to say, Hey, wait a minute. You're sacrificing to Baal.

Friends, neighbors, countrymen, lend me your rocks. And you all get together and stone the guy to death. It is something else when the God is intangible.

When the God is emotion. When the God is my personal satisfaction. When the God is my ambition or my sense of personal justice, I think that I need to get what I need to get.

And that is the guiding principle and the alterate which I bow is my own satisfaction. And yet God says, when he looks at the thoughts and intents of the heart, this is a death penalty offense. To remove God from first place as a believer is a death penalty offense.

As it is illustrated in the law. Now, does it mean that as soon as we have such a thought, God strikes us dead? No. What it does mean is, remember when Adam and Eve ate the fruit in the garden? Did they take one bite and fall down dead at the roots of the tree? It began a process of death.

They were immortal until they partook of the fruit. God said, in the day that you eat thereof,

you shall surely die. And in the day that we remove God from his rightful place as almighty, as the most high, and put something else in his place, we have some other God before him, we begin the process of our own death.

The tricky part about that is, we don't know if it's going to be fast or slow. One thing we do know is that it is certain. Do not permit a sorceress to live.

Do not permit one who sacrifices to any God except to the Lord only to live. He shall be utterly destroyed. Well, this is our seduction section.

No false worshippers, no temptresses, no fornicating young men are to be tolerated in Israel. It goes from least to greatest here. Well, this brings us to another dividing point.

We're going to start up again after the break in verse 21, and we're going to talk about affliction, suffering that is imposed or is caused in Israel. What does the law have to say about that? That's where we'll pick up when we come back.