

Exod 04-08-01a

We continue our worship this morning on this first day of August 2004. We take a moment as we open God's word to remind ourselves that it is not our effort, it isn't even our desire or our concentration that rehabilitates our soul. You can want to change, you can realize something about yourself, you can acknowledge and have the perception to understand that there is a kink or a broken area in the soul and yet be powerless to change it.

Many times we say, you know, I just can't help myself. And that's absolutely true, we can't. But God can.

God's power exceeds any known factor in the universe because God created the universe and everything that is in it and necessarily He is greater and beyond anything that we can see, anything that is a part of our creation. And yet God has imparted that spirit to us and we ask ourselves why. This is the same spirit, when we look in our soul we find the same spirit that hovered over the face of the chaotic dark earth in Genesis chapter 1. The same spirit that empowered the Lord Jesus Christ, the same spirit that led the great prophets, that worked the great powerful miracles that have been seen throughout biblical history.

That spirit resides in our souls. And yet He is ineffectual. He does nothing without our consent, without our choice, without our request.

It is important that we invite God to do His work in us, to be susceptible to it, to be amenable to it, to be compliant, to be humble. That's really the definition of humility, is to submit ourselves to the mighty hand of God so that He can exalt us in due time. Where there is no humility there can be no exaltation.

To be lifted we have to first bow the knee. And it is the recognition of that fact that causes us to pause at the beginning of each of our times of Bible study to remember that literally and truly without God we are nothing. We accomplish nothing.

We have nothing in our future. Our life becomes another wisp of shriveled grass on the wind. So it is an important thing not to be taken lightly, hopefully not to become routine and superficial when we stop to pray, stop to ensure that our souls are free of unconfessed sin so that God can do His important work of creating a place where His glory can reside in our souls.

Shall we pray? Father, we thank You on this Sunday morning that we are Americans, that we live in a country that is founded on an acknowledgement of You and Your creation and Your divine assignment of responsibility to us and giving us a freedom to pursue life and pursue liberty and pursue happiness. We know that happiness ultimately only comes from You and is only grounded in relationship with You through the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for Him.

There are not enough days. There are not enough ways. In all eternity we can never sufficiently express the gratitude that we owe for His love and His sacrifice for us on the cross, rescuing us

from our loss and hopeless condition, establishing us not only in this life but in the kingdom to come and in eternity to come, making a way through the veil, enabling us to have contact with You in Your righteousness and in Your justice and in Your love.

We thank You for the gift of the Spirit who seals us, who sustains us, who guides and energizes Your Word in our souls so that we have a life of meaning and purpose. We ask Your blessing on us as we study Your Word this morning. May God the Holy Spirit find our hearts ready and receptive and give us a clear understanding of the truth that is contained in this passage and its import as we leave here and continue to live the life that You have assigned us, the circumstances, the families, the jobs, the locations, all of the factors that make up our daily existence, we know are simply a testing ground and a place to apply what we learned here this morning.

We pray that in all things our Savior, the Lord Jesus, will be glorified. We pray it in His name. Amen.

For a scripture reading this morning, turn with me to Psalm 106. Psalm 106. We looked at 107 last time.

We're backing up one psalm and looking at 106 because this morning we study one of the most famous, well-known, widely advertised experiences in the entire Old Testament and that is they sat down to eat and they rose up to play. The golden calf hammered out at the foot of Mount Sinai. It just doesn't get any more Hollywood than that.

And Psalm 106, in rehearsing the history of Israel, has pretty much at its center this great episode and puts it in a context and gives us a little bit of the why that is not immediately apparent in Exodus chapter 32, which is where we resume this morning. So let's read Psalm 106. It's a little bit long, but I will move through with alacrity and be ready to get back to our chapter.

This is subtitled in your New King James, Joy in Forgiveness of Israel's Sins. What does Israel represent in the Bible where we are concerned? Corporate, nation, individual believer. That's the equation that we make.

What happens with Israel as a group, as a nation, as a people can be applied individually for us. So we could also say joy in forgiveness of my sins. We ought to be grateful.

It is no light thing. It was no easy task for God to dispose of the guilt and the penalty and all of the other elements of separation and destruction that pertain to sin. It was no easy thing for God to dispose of that without killing us, without consigning us to an eternity apart from him, but he did it.

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever. Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can declare all his praise? Blessed are those who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times. Remember me, O Lord, with the favor you have toward

your people.

O visit me with your deliverance, your salvation, that I may see the benefit of your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, that I may glory with your inheritance. We could stop right there and spend the rest of the hour seeing the links of those concepts in our New Testament understanding, couldn't we? Of inheritance, by pursuing righteousness, having a meros, having a part, that is not the smoke that rises eternally from the lake of fire, but instead attains to and partakes of those overcomer blessings in Revelation chapter 2 and 3. What is the basis of benefit? You can be a chosen one, but how do you secure the benefits of being a chosen one? Well, I'm going to resist the temptation to just preach on those first five verses, but you can see it, I think, that I may see the benefit of your elect, your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation, being a part of your chosen people, in our case, the body and bride of Christ, that I may glory with your inheritance. These are potentials, aren't they? They are not secure and guaranteed to everyone in the group.

Remember me, O Lord, with the favor you have toward your people. Visit me with your deliverance. This is daily deliverance.

This is seeking, finding, laying hold of, and exploiting deliverance on an ongoing basis. We have the title of Christian, but are we saved day by day or not? We have sinned with our fathers. We have committed iniquity.

We have done wickedly. Our fathers in Egypt did not understand your wonders. They did not remember the multitudes of your mercies, but rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea.

I think I'm going to have to do my commentary blow by blow here, because I just can't pass by. We have sinned. We've committed iniquity.

We have done wickedly. This is the biblical principle from beginning to end of acknowledgement. We are required to examine ourselves.

Judge yourselves lest ye be judged. If we would examine ourselves, God would not have to bring things to our attention. We would see them.

We would acknowledge them before him, be cleansed, forgiven, and move on. So this is an expression of that principle. We have sinned with our fathers.

We have committed iniquity. We have done wickedly. Our fathers in Egypt did not understand your wonders.

You know there is a movement that has been around for some decades now, not only in secular psychology, but also in the church, that one has to find out what the iniquities of the fathers were. You need to go back and find out did your father or your mother have an affair? Was there some sort of impropriety? Was there embezzlement? Did your father skim? Did he cheat on his taxes? What kind of sins did your parents commit? Because you've got to go back and dig

into that so that you can be free and be whole, and this somehow has an influence on you. Secular psychology is real big on digging back into the past and trying to find the roots of current problems.

Biblically, you see a principle here of going back and looking at the fathers, but what is it looking at? I am following a pattern of sin. We can inherit or see a pattern within a family of areas of weakness. It sort of stands to reason.

You have similar genetic makeup. You have an environment that was created by somebody that, let's say someone has an anger problem or an impatience problem or whatever else it might be. Well, it's easy to see that not only environmentally, but also hereditarily, one might have a weakness in that same area.

However, the power to change does not lie in observing that somebody before me had this same problem. There's no power in that. Knowing that smoking causes cancer does not give one the power to quit.

You have to get the patch or the, you know, remember that? The lady used to say the power to calm, the power to something, the power to quit, and they had to change it because they said the power to help you quit. Because the little patch does not give you the power to quit, it can help you quit your nicotine-driven addiction. Well, it is a good thing.

You see, when you read Ezra and Nehemiah, you can see acknowledgment of national sin going back and saying our nation has sinned. We, in our individual prayers, can confess before God the sins of our nation, even though we don't sponsor homosexuality, we don't sponsor perversion in Hollywood, we don't sponsor the huge multi-billion dollar industry of pornography that is worldwide in its reach and in its corrupting influence and is located largely in our United States. You can understand something of the anger of the Islamic world, whatever else you want to say about them, they are right in calling us the great Satan in the sense of us spreading a lot of perversion.

And there is a righteous indignation for people who want to have a moral society. There seems to be a much greater desire for morality on the part of our enemies than there is on us. And we are rebuked and we are shamed by these godless maniacs who yet have a higher standard of morality in society than we do.

In some cases too high. But it is a shame and it is a rebuke and a reproach that we are being blown up and having our young people shot and killed and otherwise taken out of this life in Iraq by people who in some areas of Bible-based standards of measure are better than we are. At any rate, we have sinned with our fathers.

We have committed iniquity. We have done wickedly. Our fathers in Egypt did not understand your wonders.

They did not remember the multitude of your mercies, but rebelled by the sea. This is their

Bible. Remember, in this day, there aren't people walking around with a scroll under their arm of the first five books of the law.

There aren't people walking around in the common population that have any kind of written Bible. What is the Bible that your average Israelite has at his disposal to learn and to be instructed in the ways of the Lord? It is the history of his nation. In the same way that we study Israel in Egypt, Israel in the wilderness, Israel in the land, Israel in captivity and learn from it, so did they.

And so this is not an encouragement to go dig into the sins of the fathers and somehow find a therapy. This is a quoting of Scripture, as it were. This is the Word of God.

This is God working in the people and saying, we've seen this kind of thing before. The thing that we have a problem with now has occurred before, just like we look at Israel for our own instruction. Our fathers did not understand.

They did not remember, but they rebelled. Notice, what is the sequence here? The rebellion at the end of verse 7 is preceded by what? Three things. Our fathers did not understand your wonders.

They did not remember the multitude of your mercies. They rebelled. The rebellion doesn't just spring fully flowered out of the ground.

The root and the branch are not understanding and not remembering. Not understanding and not remembering what? Truth about God. The first condition that leads to separation between us and God is not understanding and not remembering.

Nevertheless, He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make His mighty power known. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it dried up. So He led them through the depths as through the wilderness.

He saved them from the hand of Him who hated them and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. The waters covered their enemies. There was not one of them left.

Then they believed His words. They sang His praise. But they soon forgot His works.

They did not wait for His counsel, but they lusted exceedingly in the wilderness and tested God in the desert. He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul. He filled their mouths with quail and bread, but there was leanness in their soul.

When they envied Moses in the camp, this is Exodus chapter 32 that we'll look at this morning. And Aaron the saint of the Lord, the earth opened up and swallowed Dathan and covered the faction of Abiram. A fire was kindled in their company.

The flame burned up the wicked. They made a calf in Horeb and worshiped the molded image. Thus they exchanged their glory.

They metamorphosed the glory. They changed the glory into the image of an ox that eats grass. I said exchanged because it puts us in mind of Hebrews chapter 1, doesn't it? When they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God.

Neither were they thankful, but they became vain or empty in their imagination, and their foolish heart was darkened. And they exchanged the glory of God for images made to resemble animals and so on. Notice, they forgot God their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt.

Wondrous works in the land of Ham, awesome things by the Red Sea. How many times has the Red Sea been mentioned now? The Red Sea is one of the greatest. Everybody knows what happened at the Red Sea.

Signature culminating deliverance. It culminates and caps the whole ten place thing, doesn't it? And yet that's the place where they rebelled. Look again at the end of verse 7. They rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea.

Of all places, right next to the place of God's signature Old Testament miracle, they rebelled. And how did the rebellion happen? They did not understand. They did not remember.

They did not remember, and they forgot God their Savior, verse 21, who had done great things in Egypt. Wondrous works in the land of Ham, awesome things by the Red Sea. Land of Ham, why is it called the land of Ham? What's Ham famous for? Ham is famous primarily as the father of Canaan and the curse of Canaan, the sin against Noah.

And the land of Ham is the land of the perverse, the land of the fallen ones, the land of the cursed. And God blessed them in the land of cursing. We travel through a fallen world with a fallen nature, and yet God blesses us if we remember it.

Wondrous works, awesome things. Therefore he said he would destroy them had not Moses his chosen one stood before him in the breach. This phrase we have of standing in the gap, standing in the breach, this is where it comes from.

Moses stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath, lest he destroy them. Then it goes on to talk about the future once they get to the land of Canaan. They despised the pleasant land.

They did not believe his word, but complained in their tents, and did not heed the voice of the Lord. Therefore he raised his hand in an oath against them to overthrow them in the wilderness, to overthrow their descendants among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor.

This is what we're looking at in Ezekiel, the great condemnatory chapters in Ezekiel where God says, look at your sins. The sacrifices that were made to the dead, they provoked him to anger with their deeds, and the plague broke out among them. Phinehas stood up and intervened.

The plague was stopped. That was accounted to him for righteousness to all generations forevermore. And you see the eye of the psalmist here roving across the history of Israel comparing their later sinfulness in forgetting God's blessings in the land and being scattered among the nations, the captivity, all the way back to the days in the wilderness where there is a man who brings a foreign woman into the midst of the camp and has physical relations with her in the sight of all Israel.

And Phinehas gets a spear, and as they are cocculating on the ground, he stabs them both through with one stroke and satisfies the righteous anger of God who is about to blow away the whole nation for tolerating this kind of thing. And it's a reminder that we have a responsibility for what we tolerate and what we allow in our periphery and what we can control. I can't control what happens in Washington, but I can certainly control what happens in my household.

I can influence what happens in my community. I can't control the telephone either. And that righteous indignation, that dealing with sin in the camp puts Phinehas in the Bible forevermore.

He is marked righteous. There is a reward for Phinehas that will last eternally because he stood up for the things of God in a time of perversity. They angered him at the waters of strife so that it went ill with Moses on account of them.

Moses had a little bit of an anger problem. I can relate. I'm not sure God was pleased when Moses smashed the tablets that God had written with his own finger.

I don't think God was certainly not pleased when Moses struck the rock a second time. That's what this refers to. They rebelled against his spirit so that he spoke rashly with his lips.

This is talking about Moses. Because they rebelled, he spoke rashly. He got infected, as it were, with the sin in the camp by being overly zealous and overly angry.

They did not destroy the peoples concerning whom the Lord had commanded them. This, again, he's roving forward into the time in Canaan. God said, drive them utterly out.

Leave no one alive. But they mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works. And this is directly pertinent to what we're going to see in chapter 32 this morning.

They mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works. They served their idols which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons and shed innocent blood.

The blood of their sons and daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan. And the land was polluted with blood. If somebody says, I don't see anything in the Bible that says abortion is a bad thing, this is the passage.

The blood of our sons and daughters is polluting our land. They are being sacrificed to the gods

of convenience. They're being sacrificed to the gods of self-indulgence, of promiscuity, of impatience, of if it feels good, do it, and I'll fix up the consequences as best I can later.

Of permissiveness, of the sexual energy that charges almost everything in our culture from our advertising to our entertainment. And the lack of standards and the lack of healthy self-control that used to be inculcated by parents into their children. We have a lax, permissive, self-indulgent and standardless society that results in suicides, results in teen pregnancies, results in unwanted pregnancies, affairs.

This pregnancy will interfere with my career because I'm a career woman here and I'm climbing the corporate ladder and I just can't be walking around the company as a vice president with my tummy swelling. I've got to get rid of this thing. That is a god of Canaan.

Success, affluence, don't mess with my schedule. I've got a plan and it doesn't include a baby right now. My boyfriend's liable to leave me.

I've got to sleep with him right now. And, you know, so on. These are the gods.

These are the idols of Canaan. And we sacrifice. Do not think it's not so.

This is what this passage means to us in our day. We are just as guilty as a society, as any Israelite who passed their children through the fire, who sacrificed them to Molech. It is no different.

You don't have to make a decision about when life begins. I am telling you that to engage in this behavior, to tolerate it, encourage it, defend it, and call it a woman's right to choose, you might as well start a new movement for euthanasia and say, well, it's a child's right to choose. When my parent gets too old and becomes too much of a burden and interferes with my lifestyle, I need to snuff them.

I need to just, you know, they're suffering. It's not good for anybody. They're delirious.

They've got Alzheimer's. They don't know who's coming and going. Wouldn't it be better just to give them a little overdose of pills and put them down? We do this for animals.

We don't let them suffer. All creatures, great and small, the vets over in England, you know, here's a horse that has a compound fracture of the leg. You euthanize them.

You give them an excessive amount of anesthetic, and they just fall asleep and don't wake up. It's better for everybody, don't you? So it's a child's right to choose. How is it any different? What do you mean a woman's right to choose? Do I have the right to murder somebody because I think he's a threat to my family? Do I have a right to murder some guy because he attacks my daughter in a physical way? Do I have that right? I do not.

Society is assigned the responsibility for justice. So if we're going to have an abortion, then let's have a court case. Let's take it to court.

Let's do it in the legal system. Oh, no, no, no, it's a private decision between the woman and her doctor. I could make exactly the same argument about euthanizing my parents.

It's a decision between me and the rest home as to how much trouble it is to take care of them. How is it different? It's not. We are sacrificing, shedding innocent blood of sons and daughters to the idols of Canaan.

The land is polluted with blood. That's the reason this country is going to be destroyed. I promise you, this country is going to be destroyed.

You do not see it in prophecy. If you see it in prophecy at all, it is the Babylon that is viewed by those who stand afar off in ships. They can't land because it's radioactive, most likely.

And they say, oh, the place from where we attained all of our luxury items is all up in smoke. They're not weeping for the people, are they? They don't say, oh, all of those good and kind people, what happened to them? They're saying, where are we going to get our perfume and our fine silks and all of the other goods? It is a purveyor of goods. And they say, oh, it's kind of like your favorite store shutting down.

That's all they're weeping over. And that's what we have become in the world. They were defiled by their own works and played the harlot by their own deeds.

And this is looking at a historic past, at the truth of God's dealing with their forebears and saying we have become like unto them in our time in the land, in our time in captivity. Therefore the wrath of the Lord was kindled against his people so that he abhorred his own inheritance and gave them into the hand of the Gentiles. And those who hated them ruled over them.

Many times we find ourselves in the grip of circumstances that are beyond our control and we have to ask ourselves the question, now is this a test or is this discipline? Pretty much only the person in that circumstance can answer that question. You have to say, well, what's my standing before the Lord? Sometimes you might say something to your spouse and they don't answer back. You might say something to somebody that's near and dear to you and they don't answer back.

And you say, well, now are they mad at me or are they preoccupied? Well, you can pretty much answer that question because you know what the status of your relationship is, right? If you've been snapping at each other all day long and then you say something and you get no response, it's a high likelihood that you're being sort of given the cold shoulder. You're getting kind of a silent rebuke. If everything's been peachy keen and you've been in great conversation all day long and you say something, right? We should not have to dig very deep to know whether testing or trial or adversity in our life is a rebuke and a discipline from God or whether it is a test of our faith because we should have the kind of relationship with God where we know what God is doing with us.

If you are asking and you're seeking and you're knocking and your heart is, Lord, I want to please you. I don't care what the day brings me. I just want to live this day in a way that's pleasing in your sight.

I want the glory of the precious Lord Jesus to shine out of my life this day. Whatever it takes, that's my goal. Then if you have adversity, God will turn it to blessing.

But if God is at a distance, if God is on the mountain and you're down at the foot of the mountain, living in the grip of other desires and you haven't heard from God in a while and then something bad happens, it's pretty easy to know, well, God didn't just decide my number didn't come up for a special blessing here, did it? We should be able to judge that relationship because we have been drawn to God. We've been brought near by the blood of Christ and we should know what the status is. If we are not actively pursuing the goal, the point of our life, count on it.

God will get our attention. If we don't judge ourselves, God will do something to get our attention. It is all about what we choose as the priority and the goal and the highest value each and every day.

Can't rest on our laurels. Can't count on momentum from the past. Today is the day that God has made.

Today is the day of deliverance. Today is the day where we are called to enter into his rest. The past is the past.

Today is the day. What are you going to do today? This is the whole import of Hebrews chapter 3 and 4. While it is yet called today, do not harden your hearts as they did in the rebellion, as they did by the Red Sea, as they did in Psalm 106. Many times he delivered them, verse 43, but they rebelled in their counsel and were brought low for their iniquity.

How do you rebel in counsel? This is your plan, isn't it? This is when you set your agenda. You get together and decide what you are going to do. We are going to see a little counsel, a little powwow happen at the foot of Mount Sinai here when we come back from the break.

They rebelled in their counsel and they were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless, he regarded their affliction when he heard their cry. If we turn, if we cry to God and say, OK, I've got the message here.

For their sake he remembered his covenant, relented according to the multitude of his mercies. He also made them to be pitied by all those who carried them away captive. It doesn't say he took away the captivity, but he eases the burden of the captivity.

You can survive the consequences. You are given the strength and God will ameliorate and reduce and lighten the load in that situation once we cry. Save us, O Lord, our God.

This is the content of the cry. Gather us from among the Gentiles to give thanks to your holy name, to triumph in your praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting.

And let all the people say, Amen. We'll resume in Exodus chapter 32 when we come back from the break.