

Exod 04-09-19a

Let's begin our worship this Sunday morning, the 20th of September, 2004. We are in Exodus chapter 33, and as we begin the study of God's word, we will take a moment to present ourselves before God's throne. Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful, as always, for another opportunity to be nourished and refreshed and strengthened through the study of your word.

We say grace before each meal and thank you for our physical food, and we likewise thank you at this time for our spiritual food that is so essential to our current function and our future hope. We thank you for the country in which we live, the leadership that you have provided, the believers who have risen to levels in government where they can make a difference and their faith is manifest and evident. We pray that you will strengthen them and encourage them and protect them from the vicious attacks of those who prefer darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

We pray that you will be with our president in particular as he continues to manage both our foreign and domestic policy and seeks to run his re-election campaign. We pray for those who support him and are with him. We know that there are many believers on his staff and in his cabinet.

We pray that you will impress on each of their hearts the truth of your word and that your spirit will enable and empower. We know that without you we can do nothing, and in your strength your will and purpose are accomplished. We pray for those who are not with us this morning, those who worship with us at a distance, those who worship with us by recordings.

We ask your blessing on each one who is hungry for your word and who is seeking your face through the study of the truth of the scriptures. We pray that we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we can be thoroughly equipped for every good work. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Our scripture reading this morning is from the Psalms. Turn with me, if you will, to Psalm 56.

Psalm 56. This is a psalm to the chief musician set to the silent dove in distant lands, a mikdam of David when the Philistines captured him in Gath. Be merciful to me, O God, for man would swallow me up.

Fighting all day, he oppresses me. My enemies would hound me all day, for there are many who fight against me, O Most High. Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You.

In God I will praise His word. In God I have put my trust. I will not fear.

What can flesh do to me? All day they twist my words. All their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather together.

They hide. They mark my steps when they lie in wait for my life. Shall they escape by iniquity? In anger, cast down the peoples, O God.

You number my wanderings. Put my tears into Your bottle. Are they not in Your book? When I cry out to You, then my enemies will turn back.

This I know because God is for me. In God I will praise His word. In the Lord I will praise His word.

In God I have put my trust. I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? Vows to You are binding upon me, O God.

I will render praises to You. For You have delivered my soul from death. You have kept my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living.

As you can tell just by a reading of this psalm, it merits a study all its own. I wish we had time to talk about the introduction. I wish we had time to talk about the principle of opposition in this life.

We may think, well, I don't really have human enemies in this category. I can't really name someone who right now is twisting my words, who is marking my steps, who is gathering together and conspiring to lie in wait for my life. I would suggest to you that there are.

There are minions of Satan operating in our culture, in our entertainment industry, in our press, in our periphery, our environment, who are operating with an agenda. There are people who want us to live and to think and to conform to their view, their vision of what society should be, what American culture should be. We should buy their products.

Even Mick Jagger has this figured out. When he is talking about he can't get any satisfaction, he says there is a guy on the TV smoking a particular kind of cigarette, his shirt is wider than mine is, that kind of thing. There is an assault on us as believers trying to walk the narrow way.

It is orchestrated by Satan. It is enabled and empowered by the principalities and rulers and powers of this age, and they do lie in wait. They are subtly trying to pervert our thinking to manage us with selective information.

You think about the network news, you think about the press, and you think about the manipulation of events to try to get us to think a certain way. That's what David is talking about here. And David weeps over it.

David is concerned over it. And this has been something that has sort of come up in our study of Exodus and our study of Ezekiel, where God sends an angel, the inkhorn angel, with his pen to mark the foreheads of those who sigh and cry over the evil state of affairs in Judah because he is about to send the five battle-axe angels out to destroy those who do not have God's mark, who are not recorded in God's records as being those who care. And have no fear, I'm not

slipping over to do Ezekiel this morning, but I find it quite interesting that there is a record that God keeps.

It's presented to us two different ways in Scripture, and the link here to our passage is Moses saying to God, Forgive this people of their great sin. Lead us, fulfill your promises to take us to the land. If not, blot me out of your book.

What book is that? What record is it? Well, as I said, it's presented to us two different ways. Sometimes it is presented as a scroll, as a book, as a record that is kept with names that are added or blotted out. Other times, you see the other end of the equation.

From the heavenly point of view, God says, Here is my register. Here is my roster of the faithful. From an earthly point of view, there is a mark on us.

We find a name written on us or a seal or a mark. The Holy Spirit is said to be God's seal upon us in Ephesians. Paul says, The faithful have this seal.

The Lord knows them that are His. And the knowledge of God reminds me of two ends of a rope or a link or a pipe. One end is the record in heaven, and there is writing up there for God to see.

The other is a record down here on earth, pictured as being in our forehead, and that is the earthly mark. We have confidence that we are sealed. We are marked when we are faithful, when we qualify for that designation.

It is a subset and a minority, I would say, of the totality of God's people. God has many children, but He has few sons who are a chip off the block, as it were. A son indeed.

Jesus is talking to the disciples who are manifestly not only Old Testament saints, but who acknowledge Him. You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God, Peter says. And yet Jesus says to them, including Peter, If you will operate in integrity, if you will walk in love, if you will heed the injunctions of the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain, then you will be sons of your Heavenly Father.

Now, you either figure that they lost their salvation and have to regain it, which makes no sense, or you recognize that there is a positional sonship and there is an experiential sonship, being a son indeed, being a child indeed. Well, this idea of the book is one that we looked at last time. Moses asking the Lord to forgive Israel or to blot his own name out of the book that he has written.

And God says, I will blot those who have sinned out of my book. And there's been a lot of theological contortions trying to make that fit just the book of the saved. And that if you haven't accepted Christ as your Savior, then your sins remain, and this kind of thing.

It is much easier to look at the witness of Scripture about these marks and to see the

connection between those who are marked and those who have their names recorded. It is the same status. It's the same criteria.

It's the same thing. And I just want to review a few of these passages we have looked at before. But I want to take a quick look at those who are registered, those who are marked and sealed as sons indeed.

Let's begin in this passage, Psalm 56 and verse 8. David says, You number my wanderings, put my tears into your bottle. Are they not in your book? This is part of the criteria that we saw in Ezekiel chapter 13, isn't it? Those who sigh and cry. Those who recognize that there is evil in the earth, whether it is directed against us or directed against others.

The fifth and final accusation in Ezekiel is that there is violence abroad in the land. There is oppression. There is no justice.

There is iniquity in the highest levels of government, whether it is civil government or religious leadership at every level. And there are people who mourn for that, who bring it before God and say, Lord, this is a terrible thing. It is sort of the confession of national sin that you find in Ezra and Nehemiah and Jeremiah.

So, put my tears into your bottle. Are they not in your book? Why would God write someone's tears down? Would these be the tears of self-pity? Would these be the tears of having hammered one's own thumb by stupidity and neglect? I don't think those are the tears that God writes down. I think He writes down the tears like Jesus cried when He stood over Jerusalem.

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered you under my wings as a hen gathers her young. You would have none of me. And there are believers, there are people of God who will basically have none of God's plan and God's will.

And it brings forth tears in those who care. Jesus wasn't weeping for Himself. He was weeping for those like us that He came to redeem and to fulfill God's promises to.

Well, you find this also, turn over just a few pages to Psalm 69. This is one of the longer psalms, but if you pick up in verse 22, he's talking about these who are oppressing, who are insensitive, who are antagonistic. He says, Let their table become a snare before them, and their well-being a trap.

Let their eyes be darkened so that they do not see. Make their loins shake continually. You know, the withered loin is a judgment.

This is what happened to Jacob when he wrestled all night. Or the unfaithful wife, whose thigh would rot after partaking of the water that had the dust of the tabernacle floor. Pour out your indignation upon them.

Let your wrathful anger take hold of them. Now, you think about this. This is an imprecatory

prayer.

Compare this prayer to the prayer that Moses is praying, where God says, I am going to do all of these things to the people. And Moses is saying, No, Lord, let me interpose myself here. Let me intercede because your promises are on the line.

And you see both sides of this. There is a balance. Because on the one hand, God is righteous and God is just.

And he says to Moses, I will visit the people. And when I visit, I will visit their iniquities upon them. On the other hand, you have those who are in eternal opposition.

And David says, Pour out your indignation on them. Let your wrathful anger take hold of them. Let their dwelling place be desolate.

Let no one live in their tents. For they persecute the ones you have struck. And they talk of the grief of those you have wounded.

Add iniquity to their iniquity. And let them not come into your righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living.

And not be written with the righteous. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living. Let them not be written with the righteous.

The parallelism that you find in Hebrew poetry, and in Psalms in particular, when you find these synonymous distics, as they call them, where one line restates the idea in another line, in different words, you see that the book of the living and being written with the righteous is set in parallel. He is not saying two different things. Being in the book of the living is to be written with the righteous.

Those who are in the book of the living are the righteous, in other words. And to remove them from being written with the righteous, they are blotted out. It's the same thing.

You have Isaiah chapter 4 and verse 3. This is one I don't think I gave you last time. Talking about the time of judgment. In that day, seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, we will eat our own food and wear our own apparel.

Only let us be called by your name to take away our reproach. In that day, the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing for those of Israel who have escaped. There are two sets of people in Israel.

One are the shamed women who will pay their own way if they can only be given an honorable name that belongs to someone else. They say, I ask nothing of you than that my reproach be taken away. Give me your name.

Seven women will attach themselves to one man who has a good name because their name is

shot. But in that same day, the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious. Those who abide in the vine, so to speak.

The fruit of the earth, excellent and appealing for those of Israel who have escaped that particular judgment. Look at verse 3. It shall come to pass that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy. Everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem.

Now this would be an odd thing if the book of the living is just the physically alive. This is the book of the righteous. And how many times have we seen this throughout scripture that access to the holy city both in the millennial kingdom and in the kingdom of the Father is a privilege reserved for the overcomers.

It is a privilege reserved for the faithful, for the righteous. Those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. It is reserved.

It is a select, an elect group that is given this access. We are going to see this in several more passages but you will note that this is one of the early ones in the Old Testament. Those who are left in Zion, those who remain in Jerusalem, this is those of Israel who have escaped.

Escaped what? Escaped the kind of attack we saw in our scripture reading this morning. Have not been waylaid. Have not been diverted.

Have not intermarried with the people of Canaan as Israel did against God's command. Have not gone into syncretism and absorbed and compromised and polluted their faith. Everyone who is recorded among the living in Jerusalem.

When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the blood of Jerusalem from her midst by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning, how is God going to separate those who are qualified to enter the city and dwell in Zion and those who are not? It is the spirit of judgment. It is the spirit of burning. Then the Lord will create above every dwelling place of Mount Zion and above her assemblies a cloud and smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night.

If that doesn't sound familiar or you haven't been here for the first 30 chapters of Exodus, what did that symbolize in the camp? Where are we right now? Where is the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire? Not in the camp, is it? Moses pitches a tent outside and that's where the pillar is. And who's out there? Moses and his servant Joshua. And all the people in the camp are standing in the door of their tent.

What does God say here? These who honor God will be honored by God. God's presence pictured here as the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire will be over each dwelling, each tent, each home. For over all the glory there will be a covering and there will be a tent for shade in the daytime from the heat, for a place of refuge and for a shelter from storm and rain.

A tabernacle for shade in the daytime. A place of refuge. Now, if you think that this is just an Old Testament picture, turn with me to Revelation 7.3. In fact, as you're going there, if you want to take these in order, we'll stop off just briefly in Revelation 3.12. By the way, you know that this is in the midst of the letters to the seven churches.

Revelation 3.12. To him that overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Where's the temple? Zion, Jerusalem. He shall go out no more.

I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God. And I will write on him my new name. You have a threefold imprimatur, a threefold register mentioned here.

The name of God, the name of the New Jerusalem, and the Lord Jesus' own new name. Now, let's flip on over to chapter 7 and verse 3. Looking at the 144,000 witnesses. Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.

The servants of God are sealed on their foreheads. You remember the seals being opened. You have seven seals that are opened, but between the sixth and the seventh seal you have the sealing of the servants.

Look back. Just look at the previous page, verse 9, at the fifth seal. When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

They cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth? Then a white robe was given to each of them, and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who would be killed as they were, were completed. Their fellow servants and their brethren. Two different categories.

Now, is the altar a part of the Old Testament economy or the New? It's a part of the Old. You go back to Leviticus and Deuteronomy and you find that this is where the blood of the sacrificial animals was spilled, is at the base of the altar. And these are linked with that idea.

They are like the sacrificed animals. They are at the base of the altar, so to speak, symbolically. And they are given a white robe and they are told to wait until two different categories of people come in.

Their fellow servants and their brethren. Now, if these are tribulational martyrs, what kind of saints would they be? They would be Israel. Because those who are left in the very next chapter are marked out by tribes, right? Their blood is at the base of the altar.

Believers in Christ in the Church Age are not associated with the Levitical altar, with the Levitical offerings. Christ's work is manifestly associated with that, such as in the book of Hebrews. But we present ourselves a living sacrifice.

We have a different picture associated with us. This is the old altar. The blood at the base speaks of the Levitical sacrifices.

But now, look at verse 9 of chapter 7 in Revelation. After these things I looked and behold a great multitude which no one could number of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues standing before the throne and before the Lamb clothed with white robes with palm branches in their hands crying out with a loud voice saying, Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb. All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures fell on their faces before the throne worshiped God saying, Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom thanksgiving, honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever.

Amen. One of the elders answered saying to me, Who are these arrayed in white robes and where did they come from? John says, Sir, you know better than I do. And he says, These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple. He who sits on the throne will dwell among them Pay attention now. Look at verse 16.

They shall neither hunger any more nor thirst any more. The sun shall not strike them nor any heat for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters and God will wipe every tear from their eyes. What do we have back in Isaiah chapter 4? The glory of the Lord will be a covering for them.

There will be a tent for shade in the daytime from the heat for a place of refuge for a shelter from storm and rain. Now, what does this tell us? This multitude is composed of two categories of people. This is what God told the souls under the altar.

You've got to rest. Here's your white robe. Hang on to it until the number of your brethren and fellow servants is completed.

Two separate categories. Fellow servants are not necessarily brethren. Fellow servants are these from the ethnoi, from all of the tribes and kindreds.

And there is an innumerable number. Now, how many saints could there be just under the altar? If these are tribulational martyrs as they seem to be presented to us here, is this the same crowd that is now out from under the altar standing before the throne with a palm branch in their hand with these promises being fulfilled? Under the altar is not a big place, and yet here is an uncountable myriad of souls. This is the complete number, so to speak, pictured.

And you say, well, but Sam, it says these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation. Well, if you look at this in Greek, out from the great tribulation, this is a promise that was made to one of the seven churches. I will deliver you out from the tribulation.

I would submit to you that these, this idea of great tribulation, the great Philipsis, Jesus said in

this world, ye shall have Philipsis to his own disciples. Everyone has great tribulation. Everybody does.

God delivers us from the wrath to come. The last half, the three and a half years of the 70th week of Daniel, the last half, is God's judgment on the world for unrepentant evil. And those who are faithful are delivered out.

God reserves mercy for thousands of those who love him, but he is not unjust to forget, and he will visit the iniquities of a family on the current generation and the second and the third generation of those who perpetuate that pattern and hate him. God says, I will blot the one who sins out of my book. There is either reward or there is judgment.

There is either profit and fruit in your life or there is loss, apolia, destruction. You can be a son of perdition or you can be a son of God. You can either inherit or you can be outside roasting your humble food over the flames of the lake of fire.

It's one or the other. These are the ones, the elder says, who come out of the great tribulation. This also speaks of the church which is raptured out before the great tribulation.

You go to Thessalonians and you go to the words of Paul about we are not of those who are in the darkness and in the night. Live as sons of light. We are in the daylight.

We see clearly. The ones who sleep, sleep at night. The ones who get robbed, get robbed at night.

We are not of the night or of the darkness that we should be included in that number. We are delivered out. So you have a very wide bandwidth of meaning here when he says those who come out of the great tribulation because there is an immediate and personal sense in which God delivers us out of our trials.

We may still be in them physically but our souls are delivered. We have peace that passes understanding. We have sometimes the experience of being delivered out.

We have sometimes the experience of being delivered through. Jesus said, if you want to arrive where I am, you're going to have to take up your cross and follow me through the valley of the shadow. But there is still a sense in which we are delivered because Jesus said, in this world you have great tribulation but be of good cheer.

I have overcome the world. And so these from every tribe and kindred, this includes both Jews and Gentiles who are standing before the throne with their robes washed. These are the ones who come out of great tribulation, washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple. Remember the promise in Revelation 3, 12. I will write the name of Zion.

He will be a pillar in my temple. He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger nor thirst.

The sun will not strike them nor any heat. Another promise of Jesus to the overcomers, you will not be hurt by the second death. The lake of fire is specifically said to be the second death.

Fire, heat, scorching. They will not feel any heat from that judgmental flame. Why? Because they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

He will shepherd them, lead them to living fountains of waters. This foreshadows the river of life that is going to flow out from before the throne of God. God will wipe every tear from their eyes.

They have tears. These are not tears of self-pity. These are not tears of the crybaby.

These are tears of those who cry and sigh over evil. Who recognize that when an affront is done to them, when they are rejected, when they are maltreated, it is an affront to God. Wouldn't it be great if we could grow to the point where when someone wrongs us, we grieve over it.

Not because of the damage it does to us, but because of the loss in the body of Christ. Because of the inroads of evil. And we look at it from God's perspective that it is another manifestation of the cancer that grows in the human race.

The depravity and the corruption and the fallenness. And that we do not grieve for ourselves, but we grieve for God who made man in His image and who now looks down from Sinai to see His sons and daughters cavorting around the golden calf. That is a place that God can bring us through His Word and through His Spirit to where our tears are the tears of David.

Those tears that are kept in a bottle and recorded in God's book. Well, I find this all very fascinating. The other passages you can go to are Ezekiel 13, 9, which we just saw.

Those who sigh and cry over Jerusalem in our Ezekiel study. Psalm 87, verses 4-6 is illuminating in this regard. Psalm 87, I will make mention of... Now this is a very interesting psalm.

I spent quite a bit of time because I had never seen this psalm in this light. Let me just read you the whole psalm. It's only seven verses long.

It's a psalm of the sons of Korah. His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

Glorious things of Thee are spoken, Zion, city of our God. You have the great hymn coming from verse 3 of this psalm. Then he goes on to say, I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to those who know me.

Rahab is Egypt. You can document this by going to Isaiah and so on. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to those who know me.

Behold, O Philistia and Tyre with Ethiopia, this one was born there. And of Zion it will be said, this one and that one were born in her. And the Most High Himself shall establish her.

The Lord will record when He registers the peoples this one was born there. Both the singers and the players on instruments say, all my fountains, all my springs are in you. Now this seems somewhat cryptic, doesn't it? Well, think in terms of the millennial kingdom.

Think in terms of this blood-washed multitude from every tribe and kindred with the palm branch in their hand before the throne who have the name of God written in their forehead, who have the city of God written in their forehead, who have Christ's new name written in their forehead. This is a birthmark. In fact, the Septuagint translators, when they came to this and they get to verse 4, it caused a lot of confusion because the Hebrew scribes, the Masoretes, when they were writing this down, they said, well, surely God can't be saying that the Egyptians and Babylonians and Philistines and those from Tyre and Cush, which is what the Hebrew is here instead of Ethiopia, Cushites, would be born in Zion.

That can't be. And so there's been some monkeying with the text here. When the Septuagint translators came here, they said these guys from Egypt and Babylon and Philistia and Tyre are going to say Mother Zion.

That the Mater Zionos is the Greek there. They're going to say Mother Jerusalem. They're going to call it their home.

It's going to be their birthplace. They are natives. They are indigenous to Zion.

That's probably the best way to think of it. We talk about someone who is indigenous, who is a native. People from all of these kindreds are going to be in God's register.

God will register and say these are native-born citizens of the Jerusalem of the Millennial Kingdom and the Jerusalem of the Kingdom of the Father and these names will be written down. And it's not just people from the dwellings of Jacob. It is people from Babylon and Egypt and Philistia and Tyre and Ethiopia.

It is a great piece of Old Testament prophecy embedded here in terms of looking forward to the church and looking forward to those who will, by their faith and by their patience and by their dedication to the things of God, qualify to be a native-born son of the restored Jerusalem of the Millennial Kingdom. It's very powerful. The Most High Himself will establish her.

This one and that one were born in her. It literally says a man and a man were born in her. You would have never have known it looking at the outside.

It's kind of like the... You can't always tell. Israelites looking at this passage for hundreds of years could not tell. The little boy that was in his elementary school class and the teacher was trying to talk about biology and here's where chickens come from.

So she held up an egg and she says, Does anybody know what's in here? And the little guy raises his hand and he says, Yes, I know. Pantyhose. You don't always know what's on the inside.

I heard Mrs. Criswell tell a story this morning about two fellows down in Mississippi and one of them met the other one. He was walking along with a bag and the guy says, What you got in the bag? He says, Chickens. And he says, I bet you can't guess how many I've got.

And the guy says, Well, if I guess right, will you give me one? And the guy says, I'll tell you what, if you guess right, I'll give you both of them. So the fellow says, Alright, I guess five. But looking at the outside, we don't always know.

We don't always know by looking. God knows. God has the register of the righteous.

God has the listing and He puts His seal. Having this seal, the Lord knows them that are His. We should take comfort in that.

We should establish our hope on that. We should endeavor and strive and be patient and enduring in whatever faces us, that it's worth it. The substance of our hope is not just a vague pie in the sky.

It is to be a citizen. It is to stand before the throne of God praising His name in a white robe that's been washed in the blood of Christ. To have the name of the city written in our forehead.

To have the name of God written in our forehead and to have the name of His precious Son, His new name written in our forehead, is something devoutly to be wished. It is something to look at and say, my short time of great tribulation here is worth it. That great song, it will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

Well, it will be worth it if we have remembered who we are and why we are here and what our great calling is. Well, we're out of time for our first session. We'll pause and take our break.

When we come back, we're going to move forward and look at the concept of God's presence as it is taught to us in Exodus chapter 33.