

Lev 05-07-17a

This is Sunday the 17th of July 2005. We will continue our study this morning in the book of Leviticus where we are looking at the great summary of the feasts of Israel found in Leviticus chapter 23. There is a great deal of information related to these feasts that we want to cover and so we will begin by acknowledging the ministry of God's Holy Spirit making sure that our hearts and our souls are prepared for His teaching of God's Word.

I will endeavor to bring it before you in a way that will make it understandable and then from that point it's up to you to meditate on it to figure out what it means in your life. Hopefully we can maintain the perspective that we talked about on Friday night recognizing that each minute of every day is an opportunity. We don't have to be walking around with folded hands saying prayers and quoting verses but we do need to remember who we serve and why we are here and we can redeem the time even though the days are evil.

This is some of the information that helps us put our life in the context of God's plan for history. The festivals, the feasts in Israel give us an outline of what God is doing in the human race both with the nation of Israel and with the church and so when we remind ourselves we have been placed at this point in time for a reason. You are in the family that you're in.

You are in the town that you are in. You are in the circumstance that you are in. You have reached the age that you have reached in the year of our Lord 2005 and you are exactly where God knew you would be in eternity past regardless of how you got there regardless of whether mistakes have been made in the past or you wish you had done something different or perhaps you just had a happy confluence of circumstance and for whatever reason this is the day that God has made.

God's mercies were renewed this morning and we have opportunities that God foresaw and that God wrote into his great plan of history and it is our opportunity to encounter the circumstances of this day and all the days to come and convert them into divine treasure to convert them into an eternal inheritance. It doesn't matter what the actual substance is. I've often reminded you that our life is like a story problem in a math book.

You don't really care what the names of the people are who have the pairs or who are driving the cars or you don't really care what the names of the towns are that the trains depart from heading at a various rate over a given amount of time over a certain amount of distance. The names are really immaterial, aren't they? It's the substance of the problem. What do you do with the information that's given? How do you apply what you know to derive the answer? That's what story problems are all about.

Our life is a great story problem and it is our opportunity to encounter whatever it is God has for us today and in the days to come and work those problems. It doesn't really matter who says what they say or what the specific thing is that happens. What counts is what is your

response, what formulas, what promises, principles and doctrines, what truths do you bring to bear on the daily tasks of life, the daily opportunities of life, the daily challenges and blessings of life? What do you bring to bear? How do you think about them? How do you respond? We either respond in human strength or we respond in faith to everything.

Everything. The decision to come to Bible class, the decision to study the Word of God. Will you meditate on these things in the future or not? All of it depends on our attitude, on our motivation, what are our goals, what are our thoughts with regard to the things that we encounter.

That's what God is looking at. God is recording it in his book. He is judging us.

We think, as is our heritage as people of the earth, we think that life is about circumstances and how circumstances turn out. Did that turn out good or did that turn out bad? Was I lucky or was I unlucky? Was I made happy or was I made sad? How do I feel about what's happening to me? Do I feel happy that I have to do this task or am I upset? Am I happy about what people are saying or what I'm hearing or not? That's really not the measure by which our life is evaluated. It is how we think in our heart.

What does scripture say? As a man thinks in his heart, so is he. The Word of God is a judge or a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It isn't what you're thinking about.

It's how you think about it that counts. Well, oddly enough, that is a big part of what we are going to see in the feasts of Israel. Why are these feasts recorded? It was great for Israel, but God could have let that information slip away.

A lot of information from early days in human history has slipped away. We don't know how Cain and Abel knew what sacrifices to make. We don't know how Abram understood what he understood about God.

We don't have the copy of whatever knowledge he was given. We just have a few fragments here and there. God could have let this information on the feasts, the ceremonial laws of Israel, slip into history if we didn't need it, but it has been written down for our instruction.

So we are anxious to look at it not only to understand chronology, not only to understand worship life in Israel, but also to ask ourselves the question, what about me? What does this information do for me? I am a person living in Texas or wherever I live. I have things going on. I've got places to go and people to see.

I've got stuff to do. So what that there is a feast of unleavened bread? We want to try to answer that question, but in order to do that, we have to have the ministry of God's Holy Spirit to minister God's Word to our souls. So we pause at the beginning of our study to exercise our right to come before God's throne.

It's a right that the Lord Jesus Christ died to give us. It's important. It is a privilege.

And we pause now to exercise that privilege and ensure that our hearts are ready to receive the inculcation of God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, we are grateful for your grace, your provision, your protection, your compassion on us over these many days. We thank you for the opportunity that we have to gather to assemble ourselves and spend time in fellowship as we look at the truth of your Word.

We're grateful for the gifts that you have distributed amongst us. Whether we be many or whether we be few, we know that your Holy Spirit is at work and that each one is important. The presence of each one, the prayers of each one, the intake and the exhale of your Word in the soul of each believer, whether near or far, whether here or absent, is important and is a benefit to the body as a whole.

We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you that we have been entered into relationship with you. We have been sealed into him.

We share his destiny. We share the blessings and the rewards and the inheritance that are potentially the gift that is given to each one of us through him. We want to be qualified.

We want to be acceptable in your sight. We want to be found faithful as servants and faithful as sons in your house so that we can exploit that great potential. We thank you for the country in which we live and those who exercise authority within it.

We pray for them as we are instructed to do. We ask that you will guide them, guide the choices as the judiciary branch of our government is undergoing change. We know that there will be great controversy and a great struggle and who will guide the course of legislation in our nation in the coming years.

We pray for our president. We pray for those in this Congress. We pray for those who are military leaders, especially those who are of the household of faith who are doing what they do because they love you and they want to honor you in their duties.

We pray for those who cannot assemble with believers of like mind who are subsisting on the resident doctrine in their souls. We pray that you will remind them and give them a fresh insight into the things that they know and may they be encouraged and built up and comforted through that which God the Holy Spirit can bring to their hearts and minds on this day. We ask your blessing on us now as we study the great legislation that you gave to the nation of Israel with the feasts.

We pray that we will find in this study the truth that you would have each of us store away in our souls for future use. We pray it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Our scripture reading this morning is from Psalm 36. Psalm 36 is subtitled in the New King James, Man's Wickedness and God's Perfections. I selected this Psalm because of the principles I outlined in our introduction this morning.

It's important for us to remember who we are and why we're here. That's what this study of the feasts ought to do. It's not just a technical study.

It's not just a chronological study. It's not an eschatological or prophetic study. It's a study to help us remember the context of our life in the greater scheme of things that God is executing in history.

One of the ways we are reminded of this is looking at ourselves in both comparison and contrast to those who are in the world. We have a relationship to people because we're people. We have a relationship to God because we are in union with the Son of God.

So this is an interesting Psalm. Let's read it together. Psalm 36, subtitled in the New King James, Man's Wickedness and God's Perfections.

The first verse in Hebrew is your little superscription there that says, To the chief musician, a Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord. Many times you'll see these superscriptions say various things, but this is a little special. How many times do you see it just say a Psalm of David, period, or a Psalm of David and then the name of the tune? But here it specifically emphasizes the fact that this is a Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord.

It doesn't say David the king of Israel. If it was humanly inspired we would say, well, what's the most grandiose thing I can say about the author? Have you ever browsed the book section in a bookstore and somebody has come out with a new book and so it says, by Ray Bradbury, the author of, and then all of his most famous books of the past are in there. John Grisham, he lists his previous books, or Herman Wouke or any of the other authors.

I haven't really browsed the popular fiction shelves lately, but we have some well-known authors that people like to read. There are some women authors that write mysteries and romances and so on, but whenever a new book comes out they say, don't forget now, or a new movie. This is by the producers of so-and-so and here's the star that was in this other thing that you like.

So you get a Psalm here and you say, well, why not talk about how great the author is? It doesn't say anything about how great the author is. It says David is the servant of the Lord. This is the perspective that David has on his own life in the greater scheme of God's plan.

I'm not David the king. I'm not David the mighty hero of conquering Goliath. I'm not the David that whipped the Philistines and brought the dowry in for my wife.

David, the servant of the Lord. An oracle within my heart concerning the transgression of the wicked. There is no fear of God before his eyes, for he flatters himself in his own eyes when he finds out his iniquity and when he hates.

The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit. He has ceased to be wise and to do good. He devises wickedness on his bed.

He sets himself in a way that is not good. He does not abhor evil. Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens.

Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the great mountains. Your judgments are a great deep.

O Lord, you preserve man and beast. How precious is your loving kindness, O God. Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings.

They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of your house. And you give them drink from the river of your pleasures. For with you is the fountain of life.

In your light we see light. O continue your loving kindness to those who know you and your righteousness to the upright in heart. Let not the foot of pride come against me and let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.

There the workers of iniquity have fallen. They have been cast down and are not able to rise. Really doesn't need very much explanation, does it? It's a great perspective.

It's a viewpoint that says God is in his heaven. He exercises and expresses loving kindness. People who dwell under the shadow of his wings, our Psalm 91 verse, did it come to your mind when we read that? He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

He will cover you with his feathers. Under his wings you shall take refuge. His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

How precious is your loving kindness, verse 7. The children of men put their trust under the shadow of your wings. What is that a picture of? Why do chicks, small birds, end up under the shadow of their parent bird's wings? It's usually the mother, sometimes the father. Some species of birds have the male sit on the nest and guard the brood, guard the eggs when they're ready to hatch, and that sort of thing.

Why is that? Why would a bird cover its chicks with its feathers? Some sort of danger, right? There's some sort of threat. It might just be the threat of the heat of the day, where the sunlight can kill a little defenseless chick that doesn't have all of its temperature controls and doesn't have the maturity to deal with the sunlight. And so the bird covers it, puts it in a shadow.

It's an artificial shadow to protect it from the elements, protect it from drowning in the rain or boiling in the sun. It can also be protection because the mature bird has the camouflage of its plumage and it can blend into the foliage or blend into the ground, wherever it is, and predators are not going to see. Did you ever notice that mature birds blend into the environment much better than baby birds? Baby birds are little pink things and they're easily spotted.

You look inside the nest and they don't have their feathers and so on. So you have this camouflage net that gets spread over them so that they're not spotted by a predator and eaten alive. The children of men put their trust into the shadow of your wings.

They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of your house. This is sort of a double entendre, isn't it? Because the fullness of a house and giving to drink has the idea of sitting down to a table and having abundant food. But this is the house of God and our spiritual food is what we are partaking of right now.

At this very moment our souls are being fed from the Word of God. We're looking at the Word of God and we're seeing the promise and the provision and the character of God as it is expressed toward the children of men. And he gives them drink from the river of your pleasures.

This is above and beyond provision, isn't it? You could just have stale water that would keep you alive. People have been kept alive in jail on bread and water. They've been kept alive in prison on just the barest necessary food.

But this is a river of pleasure. The drink that we drink is more than just sustenance. It's pleasant.

Your ways are ways of pleasantness and all your paths are peace. It says in the Proverbs about wisdom, her ways are ways of pleasantness. All her paths are peace.

And the wisdom of God, the Word of God that comes to us is pleasant to our soul. Remember the promise in Proverbs chapter 2? When wisdom is pleasant to your soul, understanding will keep you and guard you from the wayward paths. But it has to be pleasant to our soul.

You have to appreciate it. Some people won't drink water. I'm one of them.

I like flavor in what I drink. I want coffee or I want a soda or I want something. I want juice.

I want something. Very, very seldom will you see me with just a plain glass of water, which is kind of bad. People that are smarter than me drink water because it's healthy for you.

It's great for you. It's the best thing. It's the purest form of what your body needs.

And I just fail in that regard because I'm a slave to flavor. I just like what I drink to have something more than just water. But when water is pleasant to you, the water of God's Word, it's a different thing in the spiritual realm.

You want that great sustenance to come into your soul. And it is from the river of God's pleasures. For with you is the fountain of life.

Particularly when you're young. I can remember when I was in junior high and high school, it took a while for me to appreciate God's Word. I sort of endured it.

It was something that my family did, something that my parents appreciated. And I respected them and went along with them. But it wasn't something that I sought out for myself.

That changed when I kind of got over the... You know, when you're a child, you're kind of in the valley of your family. And you just see what's in the valley. You see what's in your house.

Your parents make all the big decisions. You find yourself riding in the car going here and there. But you didn't decide where to go or how fast to go.

And you don't have to drive. You don't have to look at the map. You just look out the window and watch the scenery go by.

You live in your house and food magically appears. And you know, cars get fixed when they're broken. And you don't really have to worry about all this.

It's all... You're kind of in the nest and you just see the insides of the nest. You're in the valley and you have all these pleasant things that just sort of appear. And you don't really have to worry about where or how.

You don't really know what the bank balance is or what any of the stresses and strains are for your parents in providing this environment. The environment, ideally, is just sort of feathered and comfortable. But as you get into your teenage years, you start realizing, well, I'm going to be leaving the nest one of these days.

I'm going to have to start figuring all this stuff out. Food's not just going to appear in the refrigerator out of nowhere as if by magic. It's not going to appear on my plate out of nowhere as if by magic.

My laundry won't appear folded in my drawer. I'm going to have to make that happen on my own. And you start kind of coming up over the horizon and you see the big world beyond the valley, beyond the nest.

And when you do, you start to realize that you need wisdom. How am I going to know what to do? I've never had to... I've just kind of followed my mom up and down the aisles of the grocery store. But I didn't have to pick out what we bought.

I didn't have to decide what service to use for various things that might come in. I didn't have to make any of these decisions and now I'm going to. Should I get cable TV or should I use rabbit ears? Should I use dial-up internet or should I get broadband? Should I spend the money on a car of a certain brand and type or should I, you know, go buy a new one? Should I get a used one? Where should I live? How much should I pay? What sort of utilities should I put in? You suddenly find that you have to think your way all through the day and everything is your decision.

You can't just wait for somebody else to make it. And so you say, wow, how am I going to know

what to do? And at that point, to me, it's kind of like coming up out of the valley. You look over the hill and you see the big wide world.

You say, wow, I'm going to have to cope with this. Well, the wisdom that comes from God's word doesn't address those specific questions. It doesn't tell you what to buy in the store.

It doesn't tell you where to live or who to marry or who to associate with or what job to get or what classes to take in college or any of these other specific questions. It's better than that because what it gives you is a gyroscope in your soul that keeps you level and upright and gives you the ability to think rationally and clearly. Pressure doesn't warp you.

It doesn't bend you. It doesn't fragment you and fracture you so that you can't cope. It gives you a center.

It gives you a stable foundation and you can think calmly and clearly and you can adapt. It gives you that essential information and that essential viewpoint that makes these other decisions fall into place. It would be a pretty thick Bible if God put an answer in there for every detail of life, wouldn't it? Well, in the year 2005, if you live in Plano, Texas and if you need TV service, this is what you should choose.

I mean, our Bible wouldn't fit in a county of Texas with all of the detailed information. How much better is it that God gives us information that conditions our soul so that we can adapt and we can make our own decisions? This is what parents try to do for their children. I can't tell my daughters everything that they are going to need to know for the future, but I can train them to think so that when they encounter things, they can make their own decisions and they'll make good ones because they know how good decisions are made.

They can think under pressure because I put pressure on them. They can respond productively to criticism because I have criticized them and forced them to respond productively. They can cope.

They can handle because they've been trained for years and years under less than ideal circumstances so when they get out in the world, which is less than ideal, they're not going to fall apart. They're not going to crumble and crack and flake and return home and want to live in their old bedroom anymore. They'll be fully functional.

God is doing that with us and that's what this is talking about. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of your house. You give them drink from the river of your pleasures for with you is the fountain of life.

There's the fountain of life. Jesus said, when I give you this water, the Holy Spirit out of your belly will flow rivers of living water. We have the Holy Spirit.

This river of life is within us and it is the inseparable union of the Spirit of God and the Word of God within us that gives us the essential life that we need. It is a fountain of life. It was given to

us by the Lord Jesus.

The Spirit wasn't given because he wasn't yet glorified. Once he went to the cross, once he accomplished his work of redemption, once he inaugurated the church, here we are. We have that river of life that we carry around with us.

It's one thing to pack for a trip and say, I've got to fill up the canteens and then I've got to haul this water with me and I hope I don't run out. I hope I get back to a source of water before my canteen runs dry. It's something else to have an inexhaustible supply of water in our soul.

What a great thing. Don't have to worry. It's like being in your house.

We just assume when we turn the cold water on, it's going to flow, right? Very, very seldom. I can count on the fingers of one hand the number of times that I've turned on the tap and there was no water. When I lived out in happy country and they had a big water main break, we went for a couple of days with no water.

Had to go somewhere else and bring it in in bottles and then suddenly that which I've always taken for granted becomes a big concern. We have the fountain of living water in our soul because God the Holy Spirit is with us and will never leave us. The Word of God that we learn is with us and will never leave us.

In your light we see light. What's our other memory verse? 1st John chapter 1. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son keeps on cleansing us from all sin.

In your light we see light. When we walk in the light we can see clearly. We won't stumble.

We won't fall. We won't bark our shins and hurt ourselves because we're in God's light. It's better than a magic 8-ball where every time you have a new problem, every time you have a question, you shake the magic 8-ball and look in the window in the top and wait for the thing to float up and say yes or no or maybe or whatever those things say.

Have you seen them? Do they still have those magic 8-ball they had when I was little? Well, we have something far better. We have a fountain of living water within us. It's the wisdom of God.

It's the essential thing. That's why it's important as a young person to recognize the importance of it, to store it in your soul because a lot of your most important decisions are made in your teenage years, aren't they? You decide how you're going to do in school and that affects what you can do after school. If your grades are lousy, if you fritter away your time, you don't study, you don't think, you don't concentrate, not only do you not learn your life skills of concentration and self-discipline and orderliness, good study habits and that, but you limit your options.

A wise pastor used to teach that good decisions open up your options. Bad decisions shut your options down. If you make bad decisions when you're in junior high and high school, it shuts

down your options.

No option for scholarship, no option to be accepted at a college because you can't get your SAT scores up high enough because you fool around and didn't study, didn't think. If you look ahead, you say, you know, I'm going to need this. I ought to spend a little more time on my algebra.

I ought to spend a little more time on this and that. Good decisions leave your options open. This is a great principle.

Sometimes when you don't know exactly what to do, you say, well, there's this is good, this is good, I wonder which I should do and they're kind of equally balanced. Well, which one leaves your options open? Well, if I choose this and it doesn't pan out, I can still do option B. I'll do option A because if it works out great and if not, I can still do option B. If I do option B, option A is no longer available. So good decisions leave my options open.

Bad decisions shut my options down. Those who dwell, interestingly, in the shadow of God's wings are in God's light. Kind of a conundrum there, isn't it? Kind of an oxymoron almost.

You dwell in the shadow of God's wings, but in your light, we see light. There's light in the shadow because the shadow speaks of protection. The light speaks of the wisdom of God, the doctrine from God's word.

So then you have this prayer, continue your loving kindness to those who know you. You can be a believer and not know God. Why do we subject ourselves to Bible class? It's not always convenient.

It's not always stimulating. It's not always we can think, boy, you know, I could be doing something really fun. I could be doing something more productive.

I've got tasks awaiting me. I've got, you know, time, tide, and formation. Wait for no man, they say in the Navy.

I could be doing something. There's nothing more important than what we're doing right now. Why? Because if God is going to continue his loving kindness, and that's essential to our life, he's going to continue it for those who know him.

I recently spent some time with some really good friends. I spent nearly a whole week at their house, and it was wonderful. Well, it was half a week.

It seemed like a week because we packed so much into each day. I don't mean a week in the sense of being tedious. I mean a week in the sense of being great.

And it was a great thing to catch up and to get current and to see the individual, to sort of reacquaint and renew a great friendship. Spend time with somebody, and all of the best things of a friendship come to the fore. When you're absent, you have a memory of a great friendship,

but you don't really know what's going on with them.

What's good? What's bad? What's up? What's down? What's going well? What's a challenge? You can't pray as intelligently. You have to pray from a distance because you're just not current. You don't know as well.

When we know God, it's because we spend time with him. We see how he thinks. We see what he does in different situations, and we're near, and it's tangible, and it's current, and it's real to us.

If God is far away, how can he express his loving-kindness to us? There's this great gulf separating. Continue your loving-kindness to those who know you. You know someone when you spend time with them.

You don't spend time with somebody, you don't know them very well. This is why it's a good idea to have an engagement period of some length so that you get to know someone. If you're going to spend your life with somebody, it's kind of handy to know them.

Of course, if you have a short engagement period, you just have to spend more time with them in each day of that short period, which is what some of us have done. But either way, you get to know the essential things. You have to find that out.

You can't just meet somebody, and three days later, elope. You might be blessed with the grace of God if you do that, but the principle is, know someone by spending time with them. We know God by spending time with them.

Not just in Bible class. Not just in Bible class. In fact, Bible class is really not the time that you spend with God.

That's time that God is talking to us, right? The time we spend with God is when we pray, when we meditate, when we digest, and we think about what God has told us, right? You go to school. If you're a student, the professor or the teacher stands up and says certain things. You say, oh yes, well that all makes sense while you're writing on the blackboard, but when is it that you really learn it? It's in your homework, isn't it? This is where the light really begins to dawn.

You say, oh I see, so when I have a problem like this, that thing I saw on the chalkboard hooks into this and gives me the answer down here. You really do the learning when you work the problems, not when you're just sitting there. It all makes sense at the time, but you go away and you quickly forget whatever it was that made so much sense.

Somebody hands you the first problem, you say, oh no, well I don't see how that pertains. You learn it by doing. Learn by doing.

Let not the foot of pride come against me. Sort of a chiastic structure in this psalm, because this goes back to the beginning. The transgression of the wicked.

There is no fear of God before his eyes. Look at the contrast. The person who appreciates the loving-kindness of God, put their trust in him, dwell under the shadow of his wings, drink from his fountain, share in the abundance of his house, continue in his loving-kindness because they know him, share in his righteousness because they are upright of heart.

That's a category of people. We make a choice. People don't just get branded in eternity past, like the Calvinists think, as being righteous or wicked, as being saved or unsaved.

We choose. We decide what kind of person we will be. Calvinists forever go into Romans chapter 9. God's putting up great patience with the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction in order that he might show his greatness and glory to the vessels of glory.

They say, see, God shapes from the same clay some vessels for honor and some for dishonor. He's just enduring the vessels of dishonor. He's going to smash them and throw them in hell.

We didn't have a choice. We were just a lump of clay. God made some of us vessels of honor and some vessels of dishonor.

The same Paul that wrote Romans chapter 9 was talking to Timothy. He says over in 2 Timothy, if a man separate himself from uncleanness, if a man separate himself, he can be a vessel of honor fitted for every good use. We choose what kind of vessel we are.

Not God. God starts to make a vessel of honor and the clay spoils in his hand. He can't make a vessel of honor.

That's the clay's fault. Is God a bad potter? Doesn't know how to make a pot? Oh, goof that up. I got my thumb stuck in the clay again.

I know some of you all have recently tried making some pots on a potter's wheel. You know that it takes skill. It takes a skilled potter to take that lump of clay and center it and put that well in the middle and then put the thumb on the inside and the fingers on the outside and pull that clay up and make the right kind of shape.

You eventually see somebody who can make a pot that is as long as his arm. How long is the arm of the Lord? Doesn't the Bible say the arm of the Lord is not shortened? He can make any kind of vessel he wants. The problem is the clay.

We decide what kind of clay we are going to be. We decide if we are a vessel of honor or a vessel of dishonor. You look at the beginning of this Psalm chapter 36.

The transgression of the wicked. They decide to transgress, to cross the line. Why? There is no fear of God before his eyes.

Do we go through days where there is no fear of God before our eyes? We don't really think about who we are and why we are here. We are folding laundry. We are driving a car.

We are doing our job. We are puttering about smartly in the house or at school or at work or in recreation. Is there fear of God before our eyes? Do we remember that we are dwelling under the shadow of his wings? Do we remember that there is a fountain of living waters within us? Or do we just go along living just like any goofball, worldly, unsaved person? Just being bounced from bumper to bumper down the road of life just like an unbeliever.

Well, a circumstance here. An opportunity there. Here is a fun thing.

Here is a good opportunity. Let me just do that. Do we make our decisions? Do we set our priorities just like any old person in the world? Or do we have the fear of God before our eyes? That's the difference between a vessel of honor and a vessel of dishonor.

That's the difference between a fountain of life and a dry hole. That's the difference between life and death. Fruitfulness or barrenness.

Between a thirty-fold, sixty-fold and a hundred-fold field or a field that is cursed. A field that is fit only for burning. That brings up thorns and briars.

We choose every single day. You can't sit there and wait for God to bring some big opportunity to be a missionary or to be a pastor or to be an evangelist or to be some great worker of the faith. We are writing the record of our life day by day by day.

It doesn't matter how old you are. It doesn't matter how young you are. Day by day by day.

God gives you this capital. He gives you an hour. An hour is like a twenty dollar bill.

What are you going to do with that capital? How are you going to invest it? Are you going to fritter it away on the things of this life? It doesn't mean you can't have fun. Believers have great capacity for life. You ought to enjoy everything that you do.

You ought to have just as good a time washing dishes as you do riding a bike or skiing behind a boat or looking at a sunset in the mountains because you carry your fountain of life around with you. And that water flows out and you have capacity for life. You have capacity for love.

You have capacity for happiness. It's like we say in the Marine Corps. Every day is a holiday and every meal is a feast.

Everything is a great opportunity because you can invest that hour, that spiritual twenty dollar bill, in eternal weight of glory. But you have to have the perspective that David, the servant of the Lord, has in Psalm 36. I look around and I see the transgression of the wicked.

Why does he transgress? Why is he wicked? He doesn't consider God. God's not in the picture. You look through a camera, you've got the viewfinder, you say, well, I'm going to push the button here in a minute and get my little digital image.

God's nowhere in the picture. Snap away. No fear of God before his eyes.

He flatters himself in his own eyes. I'm a good person. I'm accomplishing things.

I'm doing well. People think well of me. Certain people think well of me.

I ignore the rest. He flatters himself in his own eyes when he finds out his iniquity and when he hates. Explains away.

Rationalizes hatred. Rationalizes and explains away iniquity. Well, anybody would have done that in my shoes.

I couldn't help it. I had to do that. I'm a good person.

I was just forced by circumstances to do that bad thing. I lost my temper, but that was their fault. If they hadn't done that thing, I wouldn't have lost my temper.

If they forced me into it. Flatters himself. I'm not a bad person.

I just do bad things and it's not my fault. It's my background. It's my heritage.

It's my environment. It's my heredity. It's not my choice.

That's the sad thing, by the way, about Reformed Theology and Calvinism is it falls into the same trap as the rationalization of the world. It's not my fault. It's not my responsibility.

I am not really accountable. Forces beyond my control made things happen the way they happened. It's the decree of God.

It's just as big a rationalization as the devil made me do it. The words of his mouth are wickedness and deceit. Notice he was once wise and he was once good.

Did you see that in the last half of verse three? He has ceased to be wise. He has ceased to do good. We're talking about a believer here who has lost sight of God, lost the fear of the Lord, and has ceased to be wise, has ceased to do good.

He devises wickedness on his bed. This is sort of a double entendre here because you can think about, well, he's laying up at night thinking about his plots and schemes, but he's also on his bed at a time when he shouldn't be on his bed. People get languid.

They get too relaxed. They lay around on the bed when they ought to be up and about doing things. They get lazy.

Instead of being out there plowing the field and doing the hard jobs and the things that aren't so much fun, they say, well, God's not in the picture. I'm not worried about whether I'm doing what I should, whether I have self-discipline, whether I have self-control, whether I put others ahead of myself. I just lay on the bed.

It's more fun. It's more comfortable. I'll just lay on the bed and just think my thoughts.

He sets himself in a way that is not good. Notice, he sets himself in a way. You and I are responsible for the course of our life.

You can blame absolutely no one. I don't care what your parents did. I don't care what your family does.

I don't care what your co-workers say or do. I don't care what happens in school or on the job or in your marriage or in your church or in your environment. We set ourselves in a way and we are accountable for the way in which we walk.

He sets himself in a way that is not good. You can blame no one but yourself if you're in a way that's not good. There's no pressure.

Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. If God be for us, who can be against us? If there's something wrong, it's us. He does not eschew.

He does not abhor. He does not separate himself from evil. We have to identify evil and we have to separate from it.

That's how to walk in the way. That's how to have that river of life. That's how to enjoy the loving kindness of God.

That's how to be upright and share his righteousness. That's how to enjoy his loving kindness and know him. God is light.

In him is no darkness. The only darkness we should know is the shadow of his wing. This is the perspective that we need when we look at ourselves in history.

This is the perspective that Israel needs as they celebrate the feasts. It's not just a ritual. It's not just something on the calendar.

Fourth of July, buy the fireworks. That's not what it's about. It is recognizing the place of God, having the fear of God before our eyes.

That's what the feasts really speak of. Reminders, habitual, scheduled reminders. Every seven days you have a reminder to think about God.

Every season of the year you have feasts in Israel to remind you of God. Keep the fear of God before your eyes. You have the sacrifices.

You have the Levitical offerings. You have the Levitical feasts. The point of it is right here in this psalm.

Keep the fear of God before your eyes. If you're young, it's critical. If you're old, it's critical.

If you're in midlife, it's critical. Every day, every hour, it's critical to keep the fear of God before our eyes. That is the way to dwell in the secret place of the Most High and abide under the

shadow of the Almighty and enjoy all of these wonderful blessings that come from the river of his pleasure.

Well, we're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to pick up and look at the feasts of Israel. We began with Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread next.

We'll pick up with that and move forward when we come back.