

Lessons From Unleavened Bread

Deliverance From the Zero - Sum Game

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We are going to begin this last Day of Unleavened Bread sermon this morning in Job the 38th chapter, verse 4. We will be reading verses 4 through 7. God says,

Job 38:4-7 "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

Here we see Job, who had just been through a series of trials so severe that hardly any man has ever suffered the way he did, except for Jesus Christ, of course, and he was in the process of trying to have God justify Himself. He wanted God to show him why, as a man living in godly righteousness, he should go through all the incredible difficulties that he had been forced to endure. It is good for us to keep in mind that from God's perspective this was the vital part of the growth process of a righteous man, and He allowed Satan to do it.

But here we find a good starting place in this sermon as we consider our sovereign and great Creator God through whom everything is being created, including our own character, which should have been a central focus throughout these Days of Unleavened Bread.

Note in verse 7 God's declaration that the angels shouted for joy in seeing God's creative work as He set the physical universe in place with the creation of the heavens and the earth. It appears before this time that there was no physical creation of the heavens and the earth, the physical creation which man would learn to grow. But perhaps within the limited understanding that the angels had of the unsearchable ways of their Creator, man was not even

yet in the picture to them as they shouted for joy, watching God continue His incredible work of creation. Could this have been when a sin of presumption began with Hillel?

Let us turn to Isaiah the 40th chapter. We are going to be picking it up in verse 21 and going down to verse 31.

Isaiah 40:21-31 Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told to you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless. Scarcely shall they be planted, scarcely shall they be sown, . . . "To whom then will you liken Me, or to whom shall I be equal?" says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, "My way is hidden from the Lord, and my just claim is passed over by my God"? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Here God tells us clearly that there is no one like Him and that His ways are not always clearly understood by those whom He has created. But He is constantly in the process of creating, and to those who wait on Him, He gives power and constant renewal of strength to mount up with wings like eagles. What an incredible God we serve!

And now let us turn to Isaiah the 66th chapter, where God gives every member of His creation instructions regarding how we are to patiently wait on Him and His ways that are unsearchable within our own minds.

Isaiah 66:1-2 Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," says the Lord. "But on this one will I look: on him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word."

We see here God's promise that He looks with great favor on those who are humbly trembling at His Word. As we have gone through these Days of Unleavened Bread and humbly submitted to His Word, we kept the leavening out and have eaten the unleavened bread daily, one of the things that should have been on our minds was why God commands us to do this exercise that obviously sets us apart from the rest of the world and how it does things. Over the years, it should have given us a bit of light into the unsearchable ways of God, our great Creator, as we continue to wait on Him and do this to the best of our abilities, humbly submitting to His Word.

A major lesson from the Days of Unleavened Bread is the setting apart of God's people by His deliverance so that we can better understand how to live the unleavened life of Jesus Christ within this world that has a completely different way of living.

With these things in mind, turn with me back to Genesis and the very first chapter of the Book.

Genesis 1:26-29 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds

of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food."

Going forward, I would like us to keep in mind not only that God had determined to make man in His very image and likeness at some point before this, but He had created us to be like Him, productive and fruitful in continuing to enhance every aspect of His creation.

Please keep Genesis 1:29 in your minds throughout this sermon because God gives us a clue right from the beginning of how He expects us to learn His way of creation as opposed to this current world's way of destruction. God tells us, "See, I have given you every herb that yields its seed which is on the face of the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed." Just a clue, but it directly points to the way God's creation should work when in line with Him. It does not destroy what has been set in place by Him, but should produce more.

Genesis 2:15 Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

Notice here that God placed man in the Garden to beautify it, to make it better than it was when he had been given it. The Garden does not disappear. The Garden grows in beauty through the efforts of men within the God-given gifts He has given. At this point, it was not backbreaking labor, but a joyful joint effort with the God of creation to beautify His creation.

However, we read a warning in verses 16 and 17, where God said,

Genesis 2:16-17 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat of it, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die."

As long as men continue to humbly tremble at God's Word in joyful submission to the only One who could possibly determine in His own unsearchable ways what creates the beauty that caused the angels to shout

for joy, this dire consequence would be avoided. Continually consuming in humble submission the unleavened bread of God's Word would continue the process of creation in peaceful unity with the Creator Himself, continuing to enhance His creation.

However, now I would like us to consider what I mentioned earlier when I said, but perhaps within the limited understanding that the angels had of the unsearchable ways of the Creator, man was not even in the picture when the angels shouted for joy. I mentioned this because perhaps, as I said, this led to the pride that we see welled up in some of the angels when another part of God's creative work became obvious that He was creating man in His image and likeness.

Please turn with me now to Ezekiel, the 28th chapter. We will be starting in verse 11.

Ezekiel 28:11-19 Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God: "You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering: the sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you in the day you were created. You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading you became filled with violence within, and you sinned; therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God; and I destroyed you, O covering cherub, from the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you. You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading; therefore I brought fire from your midst; it devoured you, and I turned you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you. All who knew you

among the people are astonished at you; you have become a horror, and shall be no more forever."

This set of verses is a bit complex because it is addressed to both the former archangel that served at the very throne of God but also in part to a physical king of Tyre. However, whether Satan himself or his physical minion, they are both following Satan's same pattern of prideful corruption of what God can give in wisdom and beauty to enhance His creation. "By the abundance of your trading" it says, "you became filled with violence within, and you sinned. Therefore I cast you as a profane thing out of the mountain of God." Regardless of whether it is specifically referring to Satan or those following the pattern of Satan and the way he lives his life within the free choice God had given him, this world's pattern of prideful corruption is where we live to grow, but set apart by God to follow His way and not this world's way.

Please turn with me to Isaiah the 14th chapter. We are going to be picking up a little bit more of this.

Isaiah 14:12-15 "How you are fallen from heaven, O [Hillel], son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.' Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the earth."

Here we see God's indictment of Hillel, who was one of the angels that shouted for joy at the creation of this world but now weakens the nations. His weakening of the nations comes in the determination of his pride to violently take rather than to produce and enhance. It is this infection that he spread throughout mankind. It is in this world we find ourselves set apart to live unleavened lives in a way totally opposite of Satan's way of get, that only produces division, war, and destruction.

Please turn with me now back to Genesis the 3rd chapter, and we are going to see the beginning of the whole pattern.

Genesis 3:1-6 Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, . . .

Here we see the very beginning of the weakening of the nations as Satan spread the infectious disease of what we are going to see is the zero-sum game.

At this point I want to read to you a section cited from an article written in 2004 by Walter E. Williams. I have referred to this article in the past in a commentary that I gave because it describes the zero-sum game, which in essence is exactly the pattern that Satan is using in all aspects of this world's work that is diametrically opposed to the way God does things. Herbert Armstrong was quoted as rightly saying there are two ways of life. There is the way of get that is self-centered and destructive, and there is the way of give, outgoing concern for others, which is self-sacrifice and produces what enhances God's creation.

Although the following article was written by a man who was a thoughtful commentator with strong and good conservative opinions, he did not understand the unsearchable ways of God, and thus his conclusions still fall within the zeitgeist of this world. But Mr. Williams' opinion here should help us more clearly understand why the Days of Unleavened Bread should help us more deeply appreciate God in this stark difference between His way of doing things and the ways of this world in which we live. We should be extremely grateful that we have been set apart for the unleavened lives God wants us to develop within this chaotic world. So as I read this article, please

do not consider his conclusion as the way to peace, because the only way to unity and peace is by humbly submitting to God and living the unleavened lives of sincerity and truth through Jesus Christ. This will produce the abundance of blessings in God's creation that He desires.

With all this in mind, please listen to some pertinent excerpts from Walter Williams' article entitled "Why We Are a Divided Nation." Mr. Williams began:

Recent elections pointed to deepening divisions among American people, but has anyone ever given serious thought to just why? I have part of the answer which starts off with a simple example. Different Americans have different and intense preferences for cars, food, clothing, entertainment. For example, some Americans love opera and hate rock and roll. Others have opposite preferences, loving rock and roll and hating opera. When was the last time you heard of rock and roll lovers in conflict with opera lovers? It seldom, if ever, it happens. Why? Those who love opera get what they want, and those who love rock and roll get what they want, and both can live in peace with one another.

But suppose that instead of freedom of music in the music market, decisions on what kind of music people would listen to were made in the political arena. It would be either opera or rock and roll.

Rock and rollers would be lined up against opera lovers. Why? It's simple. If the opera lovers win, rock and rollers would lose, and the reverse would happen if rock and rollers won. Conflict would emerge solely because the decision was made in the political arena. The prime feature of political decision-making is that it's a zero-sum game. One person or group's gain is of necessity another person or group's loss.

As such, political allocation of resources is conflict enhancing, while market allocation is conflict reducing. The greater the number of decisions made in the political arena, the greater the potential for conflict.

Walter Williams then went on to explain:

In comparison, this country, though not perfect, unlike any other in the world, has lived in relative harmony because [as he puts it] for the most of our history, government was small. There was not much pie to distribute politically. When it's the political arena that determines who gets the goodies, the most effective coalitions are those with a proven record of being the most divisive, those based on race, ethnicity, religion, and region.

As a matter of fact, our most costly conflict involved a coalition based upon region, namely the war of 1861. Many of the issues that divide us are those best described as a zero-sum game. When one group's gain is of necessity another's loss, big government policies that benefit one American at the expense of another American.

Mr. Williams then goes on to make an insightful observation for all who are living in this world and not given what you have been given, brethren, to recognize the zero-sum game that has infected the thinking of every man who has ever lived since Genesis 3. Mr. Williams wrote,

You might be tempted to think that the brutal domestic conflicts seen in other countries in other times can't happen here. That's nonsense. Americans are not superhumans. We possess the same frailties of other people in other places. If there were a severe economic calamity, I can imagine a political hustler exploiting those frailties here just as Hitler did in Germany, blaming it on the Jews, the blacks, the East Coast Catholics, or free trade.

Then Mr. Williams finishes with a conclusion that does not get to the root of the problem that everything in this world is under Satan's sway and driven by a zero-sum game. He concludes by declaring

The best thing the President and Congress can do to heal our country is to reduce the impact of government on our lives. Doing so will not only produce a less divided country and greater

economic efficiency, but bear greater faith and allegiance to the vision of America held by its founders, a country of limited government.

Brethren, these Days of Unleavened Bread, when we are under the government of God, God has clearly delivered us to see the two ways of life in this world more clearly as we choose to humbly submit to learning and living His every word in this often difficult journey. All the division, all the pain, all the suffering that men are under these days is because we live in a world of system that weakens the nations by following Satan's pattern of get at the expense of others.

It is a zero-sum game where someone must lose for another to gain, as opposed to the life God has given us to separate us from this world and produce what is pleasing to Him as He develops in us from the inside out minds just like His.

This is a very important thing for us to consider on this last Day of Unleavened Bread as we have spent the week considering our great sovereign Creator by whose hand everything is made to become beautiful and productive. We certainly recognize how much we need to differ from this world, to see our own failings and rely on the strength that can only be given by consuming the unleavened bread of the life through Jesus Christ. All things from the mind of Satan, whether politics or a market efficient economy, contribute to the weakening of the nation that began right there in the Garden of Eden.

Satan convinced man the only way for them to live was to take from God what they could because He was not really telling them the truth. This whole world is built on a zero-sum system of covetousness, which should not be one of the lessons we can take away from these Days of Unleavened Bread. God shows us this is a time for us to recognize this and not to look back but continue our privileged opportunity to separate from this system of bondage and to live under the perfect way of our sovereign Creator. We have been delivered from this system and given the ability and privilege to stay focused forward on Him, to follow His lead in faith. This is what these Days of Unleavened Bread should have been all about for us over these last seven days.

I asked you to keep Genesis 1:29 in mind because within God's great plan and purpose under His sovereign authority, this is not a zero-sum game. God does not play a zero-sum game. What He has given remains with those to whom He gives, so that through self-sacrifice and outgoing concern, it produces more, just like the seed of the fruit trees and the seeds of the herbs for the benefit and enhancing the beauty of the whole creation for the glory of God.

Let us take a look at a good example of a zero-sum system of Satan that produces violent weakening of the nations that we were to remember during the Days of Unleavened Bread and specifically on this seventh day.

Please turn with me to the book of Exodus, and we will be picking up a number of verses through Exodus 12 because I would like us to really take in what was involved here. So we are going to be starting in Exodus 12, right in the first verse.

Exodus 12:1-2 Now the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, "This month shall be the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month every man shall take for himself a lamb, according to the house of his father, a lamb for a household.'

Exodus 12:5-8 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats. Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in twilight. And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it. Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

Exodus 12:11-15 And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the

firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

Exodus 12:29-30 And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. So Pharaoh rose in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

Exodus 12:33-37 And the Egyptians urged the people, that they might send them out of the land in haste. For they said, "We shall all be dead." So the people took their dough before it was leavened, having their kneading bowls bound in their clothes on their shoulders. Now the children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, and they had asked of the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing. And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them what they requested. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. Then the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children.

Exodus 12:41-42 and it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day—it came to pass that all the armies of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt. It is a night

of solemn observance to the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the Lord, a solemn observance for all the children of Israel throughout their generations.

You know, last Sabbath we were discussing just how tiring the first few days of the Passover season are. On the night of the last day of March we had Passover services. The next day we made an end to our months-long preparation to have all the leavening out of our house. We also made ready for the Night to be Much Observed, the meal that we shared and celebrated at the beginning of the first day of Unleavened Bread just after sunset.

Then we all went to our homes and came back again for a day together listening to the truth of God's Word, having a meal in between services, and by the end of the day we were pretty much exhausted. Then of course we spent the week thoughtfully eating unleavened bread, attended weekly Sabbath services, and then today we have again gathered for services on this seventh day of Unleavened Bread. All of this took a great deal of preplanning and effort. Even within our modern conveniences, this seemed to be a fairly tiring exercise. But just consider what God had Israel do to come out of the bondage of slavery in Egypt as seen in chapter 12 of Exodus.

They kept the Passover in the evening of the 14th. They selected the lamb on the 10th under careful scrutiny. On the 14th, they had to slaughter that lamb, gather in their homes under the blood that they put on the doorposts. They roasted the lamb; they ate it whilst they listened to what was going on outside as the Death Angel killed all the firstborn of Egypt. Then after dawn on the morning of the 15th, they spent the day collecting what the Egyptians gave them. They gathered at Rameses, and by that evening, as the 15th began, they started out on foot.

Not only that, we read in verse 39, they baked unleavened bread on that day when they were driven out of Egypt, not yet leavened because of the urgency of their departure. But under that was a work that only God could do to deliver them. God also made sure it was on the precise time that He had selected for them to leave Egypt, with a high hand under the strength that only God could give them. How would you like that much work, not to mention the trek to the Red Sea over the next six days? I got exhausted just thinking about it.

We see at the end of verse 51 that this was all on God's schedule. It came to pass on that very same day that the Lord brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies. So even though it was God the Lord who was doing 99.9% of all the work to deliver them from bondage, how much work do you think they felt they were doing as they began their march? Perhaps their grumbling when they reached the Red Sea found its roots in thinking that God owed them something for all their hard work. Just a thought, but is this a lesson God wants us to consider as He does 99.99% of the work in our lives to build the character to be just like Him within this zero-sum world of Satan, where somebody has to lose or somebody wins?

This system promotes finger pointing and blaming someone else for the difficulties of our lives, which in turn ends up pointing at the only One who has done all to deliver us from this mess. This is something we need to always consider, especially when we are exhausted from our trek.

We are going to pick it up in chapter 13, verse 1. We are going to read a portion of the next two chapters because we need to note that God makes sure we understand that this week, in eating of the unleavened bread, we keep in mind that this is all according to what God has done. Also, it is important that we recognize as the firstborn with Jesus Christ, we have been set apart as His right now, to live as Christ lives in us, for the glory of the Father who has delivered us out of this world now. And we must continue forward no matter what God chooses that we must face.

We owe Him everything, every bit of our lives as constantly reminded in the firstborn Son dedicated to Him throughout generations.

Exodus 13:1-3 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both man and beast; it is Mine. And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of the hand of the Lord brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten. On this day you are going out, in the month of Abib."

Exodus 13:14-18 So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of the hand of the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beasts.

Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.' It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt." Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near. For God said, "Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt.

Exodus 13:20-22 So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.

Exodus 14:1-5 Now the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: "Speak to the children of Israel, that they turn and camp before Pi Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; you shall camp before it by the sea. For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, 'They are bewildered by the land; the wilderness has closed them in.' Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." And they did so. Now it was told the king of Egypt that the people had fled, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people; and they said, "Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us?"

When we consider all these things, as we have done over the last week, it is very tiring, especially for us old folks. But just consider, after reading this account, how much intense physical labor the Israelites did over the period of time and how easily they could start grumbling in their exhaustion, thinking that God owed them something for following His lead to do something that only He could accomplish.

Brethren, this is an important lesson that we take away on this day. Make special note of verse 5 because it clearly states the zero-sum system that the whole world runs on. Without God's deliverance, the zero-sum game of Satan shows the way of life: somebody has to lose. According to Pharaoh, it should have been Israel. And somebody has to win. It should have been the Egyptians or the other way around.

Picking it up again, we will read chapter 14, verse 10.

Exodus 14:10-14 And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt thus with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."

God promises deliverance from all our trials. But having been raised in this zero-sum game, we can easily blame God for our trials and want to return to the bondage from which we have been delivered. But this is not a zero-sum game with God, and He always makes a way of escape for those who faithfully trust Him to keep His set-apart children moving forward. Here, as they neared the seventh day of their journey, memorialized in the seventh day of Unleavened Bread, Israel looked back at the might of the army of Pharaoh rather than forward, remembering what they were told to focus on: the hand of God that had done all to deliver them. Instead they allowed what was truly in their hearts to drag them back into the Satan-weakening of nations, the system of things, a zero-sum system.

Picking it up again in verse 13.

Exodus 14:13-15 And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace." And the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward."

Brethren, these are our marching orders from this day. Do not be afraid. Behold the hand of God. Get moving.

These days are to remind us that this world is marching in Satan's nation-weakening, zero-sum system where somebody must win by taking something away from someone else. But this is not God's system of creation.

We are going to begin to wrap up this sermon. As we look towards the end, now looking away from this toward God's magnificent system that He has given us now the ability and privilege to follow within this world but set apart to move forward with Jesus Christ.

Let us begin with something we all heard as we began the Passover season eight nights ago. So turn with me, please, to John the 6th chapter. And we will be picking it up in verse 32 through 40.

John 6:32-40 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this

is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

As we ate the unleavened bread every day this past week we were not only to remind ourselves of the haste in which we are to move through God but that God delivers us from the bondage of slavery, of sin, through the unleavened life of Jesus Christ dwelling in us, that we are to have a productively eternal relationship with our great God. There is no other way.

Now turn with me to John the 15th chapter, and we will be reading verses 1 through 5. In keeping with the being connected to Christ, Jesus says,

John 15:1-5 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

We are to bear much fruit. We have not been given the gifts of God just to sit back. We are to bear the fruit from being connected to Jesus Christ, who is the unleavened bread of life.

Now, let us turn to a scripture that is often read during offertory sermonettes, but so important to us in considering that God supplies for us to continue our journey. So turn with me to II Corinthians the 9th chapter. As I said, this is often read during offertory messages, but it is very, very important to us to consider today. We will begin in verse 6, considering the seed that God has planted in us.

II Corinthians 9:6-10 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always

having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work. As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever." Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness.

Brethren, this is the way God works within all of His creative efforts. His way of life is one of giving and producing more as opposed to the get-whatever-one-wants-at-the-expense-of-others in Satan's zero-sum system.

Please turn with me now to Colossians the 3rd chapter. We will be reading verses 1 through 7.

Colossians 3:1-7 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

Brethren, we were in bondage to Satan's zero-sum system of disobedience. But please notice that God puts an exclamation point on this and on the system of Satan in verse 5. The zero-sum system is driven by covetousness, that is, idolatry. John Ritenbaugh said the following about this verse in his sermon on the Tenth Commandment:

The word translated 'covetousness' in Colossians 3:5 is the Greek word *pleonexia*. It is an ugly word describing an ugly sin.

It is ugly because it is idolatry and destructive. Lexicons describe *pleonexia* as the insatiable desire to have what rightfully belongs to others rather than the zero-sum game. It suggests ruthless self-seeking and an arrogant assumption that others and things exist for

one's own benefit. Covetousness is idolatry because it puts self-interest and things in the place of God. A man sets up an idol because he desires to get some pleasure or satisfaction from it, so he serves it to get, which is an idol. The essence of idolatry then is to get for the self.

Christians though must give themselves to God, and we do it by yielding to Him in obedience to whatever He says. Colossians 3:5 says we are to mortify therefore our members which are on the earth. This does not mean merely to practice an ascetic self-doctrine. It is a very strong word meaning to kill. The Christian must kill self-centeredness. He must radically transform his life, shifting the focus from himself to God.

This is exactly what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:29-30. Everything that keeps us from fully obeying God and surrendering to Jesus Christ must be spiritually excised. The tenth commandment, like the first, serves as a governor, controlling whether we keep the other commandments. Brethren, this covetousness is Satan's driving force behind this world's ugly zero-sum game that drives every facet of this life. This is one of the most important lessons of this day. We have been delivered from this system to God's magnificent way of outgoing concern and enhancement of His creation, and He intended it just as He intended for us to be in communion with Him from the beginning.

For a final set of scriptures, please turn with me to the book of Hebrews, chapter 12.

Hebrews 12:1-7 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which

speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

Hebrews 13:5-6 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

Our journey may be difficult and painful at times, as so many of us are experiencing, but through Jesus Christ, as the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, we have been set apart from the ugly covetousness of this zero-sum system of Satan to continue our journey faithfully focused on the One who has promised to never, never, never leave or forsake us.