Sermon for Sabbath: Answering the call

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Torah Portion: Sh'mot (Names): Exodus 1:1-6:1; Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23; Matthew 2:1-12; Acts 7:17-37; 1 Corinthians 14:13-25: http://tinyurl.com/x92xzn6y.



Shabbat Shalom, brothers and sisters. Today is a special day for this congregation, and I would be remiss if I started off today's message in any other way than to offer thanksgiving and praise to Yeshua for getting us to today's anniversary, for we certainly wouldn't still be here if it wasn't for the LORD's will, His grace, and His blessing. One year ago today, we celebrated our first public Shabbat here in this building following several years of home church fellowship at my house. It wasn't really my plan to break out in public in January last year, but God had the steps set up for us and we followed them gladly. Leading up to our inaugural public Shabbat, Pastor Jared of Calvary Chapel called and offered this building without me even seeking him out. I'm grateful for Doug and Barb MacCormack, friends of mine, who heard we were looking and took action to let Jared know. All this worked together in a somewhat miraculous and unexpected way—a sign of God's love for us and His desire for His Word to be preached without apology. It wasn't long at all from the time Pastor Jared and I first spoke and the time First Fruits Ministries started meeting here, and what a wonderful partner Pastor Jared and Calvary Chapel have been in helping us discover the LORD's will in this place together. Granted, we had a general plan to move into a public place, and this was on our minds, but it seemed a distant goal. We wanted a place where we could invite all people who are truly seeking the LORD with all their heart to join us in that journey, and we wanted that place to be somewhere that faithful people we didn't previously know could come and experience the love of the LORD. The LORD abundantly provided at a time we couldn't have expected, and the steps we took to get here were not our own—frankly, they have not been our own since the congregation began in late 2020. Every step along the way was directed by the LORD and has brought us closer in relationship with Him—praise and honor to His blessed Name! Today, we gather together by the hand of the LORD, and we all ought to thank Him for the peace and joy He is leading us in together.

Our path as a church so far shouldn't be a surprise to any one of us, for we read in Proverbs 16:9, "A man's heart plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps." Similarly, in Proverbs 20:24, we read, "A man's steps are of the LORD; How then can a man understand his own way?" I can tell you this, if we had not gone to the LORD to direct

many of the steps we took to get here, both the encouraging ones and the discouraging ones, we wouldn't be here today. As we continue, I believe it's important for us to remember that we must go to the LORD to lead each and every step of the way in honor of His Name. Without Yeshua's leading, we cannot meet with Him. Without His guidance, we cannot help advance His Kingdom. We ought to remain humble and contrite, waiting on Him in every matter. We ought to endure every trial and tribulation, thanking Him for every blessing. We ought to lean in to Him for every setback and praise Him for every victory. We ought to put Him first while trusting Him fully each and every day. The only reason I'm up here, the only reason I'm doing any of this, is at His pleasure. Everything I do—everything we do—it all must be focused on making the name Yeshua famous, on teaching His ways, and on calling as many people as we can according to His purpose. I hope you are with me in this plan, because it is on this truth I rely: We can only build this house at Yeshua's direction, surrendering fully to His will, with joy and peace in our hearts. We learn in Psalm 127:1, "Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain." I cherish my late nights with the LORD and my early mornings, and I also enjoy the restful sleep He gives me, but what keeps me going night or day is Yeshua's promise to never leave me nor forsake me when I put Him first in my life, and that promise is available for you also. So let each of us all submit to the LORD and build this house together according to the steps He is showing us.

I want to express a few other words of gratitude before we continue into today's message: It's now been a little more than three years since the LORD called me directly into the ministry, to be a pastor in New Hampshire after the model of Daniel Joseph from Corner Fringe Ministries in Minnesota. Clearly, this is still a work in progress, but the LORD hasn't left me to figure this all out on my own—and for this too I am grateful. He put Pastors Daniel Joseph, Kraig Dorney, Mike Sutcliffe and Stephen Opoku as well as so many of the Mighty Men from Corner Fringe into my life to help sculpt me into a shepherd who can guide others toward Yeshua. The LORD provides us with counselors who know Him to encourage us, strengthen us and remind us to always turn back to the LORD and walk in His ways, and we need these counselors. We read in Proverbs 15:22, "Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established." And so I'm grateful for the counsel, example and friendship of these brothers, and many others who I believe are building up treasure in Heaven by doing the will of the LORD. At the same time, we must all remember that Yeshua is the only true Shepherd of us all, and each of us ought to follow Him as brothers and sisters together.

Besides these invaluable counselors the LORD has provided, I want to express deep and sincere gratitude for the love and counsel of my wife Jen, for her partnership in this ministry is without parallel. We would not all be here together without her. She is a treasure far greater than rubies, and in her heart for the LORD I also safely trust her, because she does me good for the LORD's sake each and every day, and she does the same for this community. I know of no greater description of my wife than Proverbs 31:10-31, which I've put up on the screen. I'm not going to read all of it, but I highly recommend you add a bookmark here in your Bible and learn from the Word of the LORD how highly He considers the women in our lives who love Him. Jen, you are this wife for me, and I praise God each and every day when I see your lamp on late at night, when I see you reach out to those in need or those who are poor in spirit, when you open your mouth with wisdom, or speak according to the fruit of kindness. You are far from idle; you are working constantly for our household, our children, and for the household of the LORD. "Many daughters of Yahweh have done well, but you excel them all"—at least from my perspective. You are a woman who fears the LORD, which is the most important thing, but He has also gifted you with charm and beauty. I pray that together you and I will continue to walk in the humble footsteps of Aquila and Pricilla, in unfailing pursuit of the LORD, both as we lead our family together and as we lead this church as servants of Yeshua, who put others first before ourselves. I pray the LORD keeps us and shines the light of His face upon us and lifts up His countenance upon us with His peace in the midst of any situation, so we can always fulfill His Word for the good of everyone we encounter.

For the couples here, and as more couples come into the Body—I pray you also look to Biblical models, such as Aquila and Pricilla, to Scripture as a whole, so you are led to do the work of the LORD that He calls you to do directly within this ministry and outside of it together. I pray He leads you to "train up [your] children in the way they should go" (Proverbs 22:6), according to the way of the LORD, for this is one of the ministries that we all must attend to first. The overseer, the deacons and the elders must have children in submission with all reverence to the LORD, according to the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3, and I believe this calling to raise up godly children ought to inspire each of us. As long as things continue as they are, it is a great good for men and women to call upon the name of the LORD, and for this end we all need teachers. In similar manner, I pray you singles look to Timothy or Joanna, among other Scriptural examples, for each of them gave all of their resources to the cause of the Gospel. We know that our greatest resource of all is our time when it is mixed with the love of God, and so our singles ought to serve the LORD without distraction (1 Corinthians 7).

Speaking of three special singles in my life, I am grateful to the LORD for my daughter Aidan. Because of her desire to put God first and to trust His Spirit to move within her, we can worship the LORD with beautiful music and prepare our hearts to hear what He has to say to us each and every week. I'm grateful to the LORD for my son Jacob, also, that he also helps to set up our technology each week—the sound, the livestream, and the slides are helps that bring glory to the LORD. Regarding my son Elijah, I'm grateful to the LORD that he comes up each week for prayer, reminding each and every one of us of our need to bear one another's burdens and offer healing in the Spirit of Yeshua. Last but not least, I want to offer my thanks and praise to the LORD for those of you here today attending in person and watching online. I'm grateful you've trusted the LORD to speak to you through this ministry. Because you are here in fellowship with us, you each bring unique gifts that help each of us grow closer to Yeshua. You bring insights, experiences, blessings and challenges that we all need to share so that together we can do the work of the LORD. What ministries does Yeshua have planned for our future? What is He working together for good in your hearts right now? Let's find out by following His lead. We have a good, good Father, and when we come here together to worship Him, to hear from Him, and to build one another up in Him, He will lead us according to His will to build a house that glorifies His name and serves one another with the love that He Himself showed us. As the writer of Hebrews exhorts in Hebrews 10:23-25, so I exhort all of you: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope [in Yeshua] without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching." In everything we do here, in everything we do outside of here, in everything we ought to give thanks: for this is the will of God in Messiah Yeshua (1 Thessalonians 5:18). I thank Him for what He is building here, and I thank Him for all of you, with whom He is building His Temple, preparing us for the day He comes. I pray that each one of your hearts will lean in to Him as we move beyond these early days together and grow into a community that serves the LORD, loves one another, and emanates the light of Yeshua in New Hampshire for all to see.

And so, as we break into Exodus in our Torah Portion readings this week, it seemed appropriate that our first reading is called "Sh'mot," meaning "Names." Our reading in Exodus begins with the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob their father. And by way of transition into our message, I want to point out that we are all grafted-in to Israel through Messiah Yeshua, according to Paul's writings in Romans 11 and Ephesians 2, and, as such, our own experiences, bad and good, can be seen

in the stories we're reading about historical Israel. We share in the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Satan, represented here by Pharaoh; the trials and tribulations of Israel in their newfound freedom, because the enemy does not want to let us go, but we must press on in faith; and the call to endurance in faith for the children of Israel so we can one day stand among the remnant that marches with our King and High Priest into the land of promise. If we are among the remnant that endures in our faith in Yeshua and consequently keeps the commandments of God as we march throughout this wilderness, trusting in the LORD to show us each next step we ought to take, our names will be written in the Lamb's Book of Life and we will live in the Kingdom that Yeshua has prepared for us. But if we persistently complain, if we look back into our former lives of bondage or fail to overcome them, if we disbelieve in the promises of God, our names might just be blotted out of the Book of Life, and our corpses will rot in the wilderness. This story of Israel's journey starting in Exodus is a historical allegory that I certainly intend to cover as we move on in our reading in the coming weeks, but today I want to stick with the theme we started with. What manner of people is God calling us to be? If He has said, "go and make disciples," baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and teach them all of the things I have commanded you (Matthew 28:18-20), how are we answering this call?

The first step is to make disciples, or μαθητεύω (matheteuó—math-ayt-yoo'-o) in Greek. According to the HELPS Word-studies, a resource that looks to the use of the Koine Greek words in writings both in and out of the Bible during the First Century, a disciple is a person who is trained up in the Truth of Scripture and the lifestyle and discipline required to obey it; someone who follows Messiah Yeshua in both His stated beliefs and practices; someone who progressively learns the Word of God to become a matured and growing Christian. This isn't someone who stays where he or she is at, but someone who constantly challenges himself or herself to grow in his or her obedience to God because he or she wants to become more like Yeshua. To make someone a disciple, he or she first has to be freed from bondage, and to be freed from bondage, a person must desire to be made free from bondage. There is an example in Exodus I want to cover that shows would-be disciples rejecting the deliverance offered to them, and this leads to many more years in bondage before they can even start their journey toward faith. Similarly, there is a contrasting story of those who accepted the call. While Moses was still in the household of Pharaoh as an adopted son, we read in Exodus 2:11-14: "Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. And when he

went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, 'Why are you striking your companion?' Then he said, 'Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?'" Rather than take this story at face value, I want you to consider this passage from the standpoint of spiritual warfare, where the Egyptian represents a demonic oppressor, Moses represents a deliverer, and the Hebrew men represent each of us before we are called out of the bondage of sin. Moses, the deliverer may have driven out the demon that was causing harm to the people he was trying to save, but at least one of the people was still under the influence of his oppression and was thus lashing out at his neighbor according to a pattern of sin that he learned from his demonic oppression. The aggressive Hebrew could not see the deliverer who came to redirect him from this oppression, for he was caught up in sin. Instead of address the valid question, "why are you striking your companion"—in other words, why are you striking your neighbor—, he instead turned to attack the one who came to correct him. The problem was with Moses and not with himself, at least from his perspective, but he was wrong. This is the age-old "shoot the messenger" type of response. Rather than repent and change his ways, the aggressor chased Moses away, and away he went. Moses fled from Egypt and didn't return for 40 years, a transitional time period. During that entire time, the Hebrews remained under the oppression of the enemy. What happened to this bitter man we'll never know, but we do know he didn't make it into the Promised Land.

I see an analogy here in Matthew 10, which is perhaps one of the stronger tutorials on spiritual warfare that Yeshua gave us. Consider how in this chapter, Yeshua sent out His 12 apostles, giving them power of unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and diseases. Yeshua instructed His disciples saying, as we read in verses 12-15, "And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!" Now, what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah is representative of the final judgment, and there couldn't be a worse thing to happen to a city, but in the flesh the people of that city were destroyed in an instant. On the contrary, the Hebrews in Egypt suffered 40 more years of hardship and slavery because one man in Goshen rejected the Godly advice of Moses. In other words, they suffered 40 years of judgment in hell because one man would not receive Moses or hear His words. That's a stiff rebuke. For his part, Moses fled for his life, fearing that he would be executed for killing the Egyptian, but on

the metaphorical level, he let his peace return to him. We find him next in Midian, helping seven Gentile women at a well as a defender for their flocks. These woman and their father welcomed Moses into their home, and he even married into the family. It's safe to say the household of the Gentiles was worthy and the peace of Moses rested on this house for 40 years of blessing. Clearly, there is deeper prophetic meaning here than what I'm going to get into today: Rejected by his own, Moses fled to the Gentiles where he saved them and defended their sheep, but God would send him back to deliver his people Israel at the appointed time, and at that time Israel would be joined with the Gentiles in freedom.

To get back to our analogy, though, consider that these seven women at the well present a contrasting story to the two Hebrew men who were fighting. In Exodus 2:16-21, we read: "Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well. Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. And they came and drew water, and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock. Then the shepherds came and drove them away; but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. When they came to Reuel their father, he said, 'How is it that you have come so soon today?' And they said, 'An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and he also drew enough water for us and watered the flock.' So he said to his daughters, 'And where is he? Why is it that you have left the man? Call him, that he may eat bread.' Then Moses was content to live with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses." (Exodus 2:15b-21) My first question in this part of the story is concerning the shepherds. Who are they? Why are they driving the seven women and their sheep away from the well? It's my interpretation that the shepherds here represent false teachers who are denying the women, who are symbolic of the Gentile Church, access to the living water, which represents the Holy Spirit of God. False teachers are empowered by doctrines of demons; they represent the oppression of the enemy, just like the Egyptians symbolized demonic oppression over the Hebrews. But this episode ends differently from the last one. Moses, who still represents the deliverer in this episode, defended the women and gave them access to the water for both them and their sheep. In contrast to the Hebrews, who accused Moses of murder when he was trying to free him, these women actually testified concerning the good that Moses had done for them by chasing away the evil shepherds. This testimony led to Moses's invite into the house to eat bread, and there he also married one of the seven daughters; namely, Zipporah, whose name in Hebrew means bird, as in the one who flies away. It is important for us to recognize deliverance when we see it, even though it might seem unusual to us. When we

welcome deliverance and bring the Deliverer into our house, His peace comes upon us. We can then become disciples who fly away with Him.

Let's return to the story of Moses with the two Egyptians for another moment, but this time from the prophetic perspective of Stephen, who spoke on this matter right before he was stoned to death. As part of his sermon for the high priest and the Jewish Sanhedrin, we read in Acts 7:35-37: "This Moses whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush. He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.'" I've brought you here just to show you that the interpretation I've been sharing with you is not my own, but can be verified within the full context of Scripture. Not only is Moses a deliverer in the two stories that we've just covered, he is also a prophetic template for our Messiah Yeshua, who is our deliverer who saves us from sin and death. And so, these stories also represent the two manners in which people might receive the opportunity to be delivered from sin and death. While the two men in the first story refused to see the good in Moses's act to remove the enemy from among them and lead them in righteousness, the women and their father in the second story not only accepted deliverance from the enemy, but also fully embraced the deliverer. The first group was afraid of the enemy and didn't want to cause a stir. They didn't want to upset the status quo. They were content in their slavery, which was leading them to quarrel with one another in disharmony. The second group celebrated, while initially chased away from life by the enemy, welcomed the enemy's defeat and even celebrated it. These evil shepherds conceivably lived in the area. Perhaps they would return and mount a counter-offensive? The women and their father didn't fear this. They fully embraced the man who delivered them and trusted in him to protect them from the possibility. With the marriage of Moses and Zipporah, the family even began to bear fruit—they had two sons. To conclude this section, allow me to explain the lesson here: to become disciples of Yeshua, we must be willing to not only confront the oppressive enemy by the power of Yeshua, but also to embrace our Deliverer so He can help us keep the enemy at bay. And so, when we are going out to make disciples, it is incumbent on us to use this same approach. We cannot allow the fear of the enemy to keep people ensnared in their bondage, which leads to sin and death, but we must lead them in all boldness to confront the enemy and turn away from the bondage of sin by the power of Yeshua to ensure and maintain victory.

Now, from our reading we know that Moses Himself went up Mt. Sinai from here and spoke to God in the Burning Bush, and he later came down with a definitive mission to deliver the Nation of Israel, which originally rejected him, from the bondage of Egypt. We're going to get into that latter episode in more detail next week, God willing. Before we leave Exodus to explore one of the more interesting prophetic warnings against complacency and confusion, I want to explore Moses's original reaction to God's calling on his life, for it relates to today's message and exhibits the risk we all face to reject God's calling on us to do His work. When Yeshua said "go and make disciples," baptize them, and teach them what I have commanded you, how many of us jump up upon reading that and get started? Shouldn't we jump up and get started? When the LORD called Moses from the Burning Bush, He explained His nature and presented His name to mankind for the first time. He said, I AM WHO I AM, or Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh, as if to say, I AM the one who was, who is, and who is to come. The LORD also explained in Exodus 3:15: "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel: Yahweh, God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me to you. This is My name forever and this is My memorial to all generations." I'm personally floored by this statement and I think my heart would skip a beat or two if God ever spoke to me in this way. It would seem to me that when the Creator of Heaven and Earth and everything in it comes and tells a person His name and asks the person to do something for Him, one might jump at the opportunity, if not for any other reason than fear. I'd prefer to consider love for God as the proper motivation, but neither idea immediately motivated Moses. God said to Moses: "Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

We have to be careful not to judge Moses harshly in the beginning of this dialogue. There is some level of acceptable inquiry when we hear from the LORD, and that is what I want to address first because it is a model for what we should do with any prophetic idea we come across. Whenever we believe we are hearing a prophetic message from the LORD, we want to make sure that the Spirit voice, dream or vision we hear or see is actually from the LORD and not a demon. We want to make sure we are not deceived, for deception is one of the enemy's tools that brings us to destruction. John writes, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Messiah Yeshua has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Yeshua is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in

the world already" (1 John 4:1-3). In other words, don't be deceived. Be careful. Make sure you know the nature of the spirit you are interacting with, and make sure the Spirit identifies God's name and His nature. I think Moses actually does then when He asked the LORD for His name in Exodus 3:13. There we read: "Then Moses said to God, 'Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" This is when the LORD answered, I AM WHO I AM, and added He said He would be known as Yahweh.

In Philippians 2:5-11, which we've covered several times before, Paul explained that Yeshua indeed was in the form of God in Heaven, because He is, was and always will be God, but then humbled Himself to come in the flesh, die on the cross and rise to glory after paying for our sins, and now He sits on the throne in Heaven, His name elevated above every other name. To make sure we grasp this, Paul writes in verse 11 that "every tongue [will] confess that Messiah Yeshua is LORD to the glory of God the Father." The Word for "LORD" in Greek is "Kyrios," the same word used for Yahweh in Exodus 3:15 in the Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament. I include this just to show evidence that Moses was indeed testing the Spirits, just as John exhorted us to do. So far, so good in Moses's approach.

After the LORD answered Him in this way definitively, I think Moses's next question is acceptable also, showing his humility before the LORD. He asked the LORD, "'Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?'" (Exodus 3:11) I think we can all relate to this. Earlier on in my life, when the LORD started to call me into the ministry, I didn't understand His Word well enough to know He was calling me. But as time carried on, and I did begin to comprehend that the words, "feed my sheep," which I heard the LORD say to me in the Spirit, meant to teach the Word to Christians. I took this same approach as Moses, saying, "I'm not a pastor" and "I have no idea what to do." But just as the LORD told Moses, so He told me: He said, "I will certainly be with you." You would think that would be enough, but sometimes it's not. Here we know, by the evidence the LORD is willfully providing Moses, that it is actually Yahweh who is calling Moses to serve Him and the LORD has promised to go with Him. I think at this point, surrender ought to be the response, but as humans we often fail to submit ourselves and the LORD makes room for this.

As we see as the episode continues, the LORD interjected increasingly convincing reasons why Moses should listen to Him, and Moses continued to reject those reasons, offering additional reasons he should not listen to the LORD. There is room

for an interpretation of humility in the first two responses, but not in the third. In the first of his last three responses, Moses said: “But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, ‘The Lord has not appeared to you’” (Exodus 4:1). Granted, this is fair, and the LORD provided Moses with three ways to prove he was sent by God. Ultimately, though, even great testimony is subject to the faith of the listener. I think the best test for someone confronted with another person claiming to have a message from God is to compare the prophesy with the Word of God. If the prophesy aligns with Scripture, then it ought to be given weight as we lean in toward God and seek His will. "The spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Corinthians 14:32). If the prophesy doesn’t align with Scripture, we ought to doubt the testimony. Deuteronomy 13 is a great reference point for deciphering a prophet in this way, also. Please make a note of it. Next, Moses continued to express self doubt, saying “‘O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue’” (Exodus 4:10). This is where I think our prophet begins to push the LORD too far. Yahweh had already told Moses He would be with him. Here He says, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say” (Exodus 4:11-12). I think there comes a point when we have to step out in faith—walk on water if you will—and simply do what the LORD commands. After all, hasn’t He said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15)? To me, this section reads like an outright rejection of the LORD’s commandment, and the LORD’s response shows He is beginning to lose His patience, but you can see that He is still patient and loving with His response—thanks be to the LORD! What comes next is the last straw, though, for Moses outright rejected the LORD's calling, when he said, “‘O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send’” (Exodus 4:13). This rejection went too far, and we read in the very next verse that the LORD’s anger was kindled against Moses. We really want to try to avoid going this far with the LORD. When He asks us to do His will, we ought to be quicker to get to work for Him. But even in this there is grace. While God still used Moses to deliver Israel, Moses would lose some of the glory God had in store for him to Aaron his brother. Would the whole of Scripture be different if Moses responded differently? We'll never know, but He was simply representing the heart of men, and each of us know this heart well if we search ourselves. LORD, have mercy. If we are truly seeking a relationship with Yeshua, we should never get to a point where we quench the Holy Spirit through our obstinance or sin. Our hearts ought to be to serve Yeshua, to put Him first, to even give up our own life if necessary. When we go out to make disciples, we ought to consider the interests of the other people before our own, but as we learned in the first example today, there also comes a time

when we ought to dust off our feet and move on. The LORD wants us to plant the seeds of His Word in as much ground as we can, and we can't spend all of our time tending seeds that won't grow.

And so, after we answer the call of the LORD to make disciples, we discern which disciples we ought to pursue and invest in, and we bring them into the faith, it's time for us to teach them the commandments of God. It's important to recognize the New Covenant requirement of Gentiles from Acts 15:19-21. New converts must avoid food that has been strangled, or polluted by blood or idols, and abstain from all forms of sexual immorality, but this is just the beginning of the faith. As we continue to work with people we bring in, it's important to strongly but gently urge that they attend church on the Sabbath Day, where they will hear the laws of Moses read and discussed. Conceivably, this is how the Holy Spirit will do His work over time to convict hearts and minds and lead disciples toward increasing levels of righteousness. There's much to discuss here, and I could certainly give a sermon on this topic alone, but in summary I think it's important that we simply exercise the Spirit of gentleness and patience as we work with people to grow in their obedience toward the LORD. At the same time, it's important that we actually see growth in the faith among the disciples we're working with. The writer of Hebrews was very frustrated that many of his students were stuck on the milk of the Word, not advancing beyond the basic principles of the faith. He exhorted them with rather harsh language, explaining that they were even "unskilled in the Word of righteousness;" in other words, they were failing to grow in obedience to the commandments of God. More mature believers, the ones we hope to be training up here, are those who have developed a power of discernment trained by constant practice distinguishing between good and evil. This discernment only comes from actively confronting evil by the power and leading of the LORD and taking back ground for the LORD. Yes, only a mature Christian can have this type of confidence.

One of the reasons people fail to mature in general is because they get stuck on the letter of the law rather than the Spirit of the law. That is part of the meaning of Isaiah's prophesy in Isaiah 28:9-10, and the surrounding text, where we read: "Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little." The problem Isaiah identifies here just prior to these verses is that the teachers of the law during his time were drunks who had "erred through wine and through intoxicating drink". They went "out of the way." Wine doesn't have to be the only factor, it can also be any type of disobedience or sin, ignorance, laziness or outright rebellion. Their

judgment has faltered, their ability to interpret the Word of God has failed. The LORD will not help teachers who have turned their backs on Him. And when the teachers cannot teach, those who are just coming into the faith cannot learn. They may read Scripture line by line, and follow concept by concept, but when they don't have a teacher to make connections from the whole counsel of God and bring everything together into context and agreement, they will be lost and never understand; they will likely fall away or at least they will never progress. For this same reason, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14:20: "Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature." His point is that we ought not fight over the meaning of lines or precepts taken out of context or even spoken through the Spirit in a tongue, but rather we ought to seek understanding through the Spirit of prophesy and share this understanding, one with another.

It is on account of such immature interpretation, or isolational analysis to use Pastor Daniel's phrase, that people might read 1 Corinthians 16:2 completely out of context, for example, and distort the commandments of God. The verse reads: "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." I can't even tell you how many commentaries use this verse to make a claim that the Apostles changed the Sabbath day from the seventh day to the first day of the week, and that conclusion simply cannot be justified by the text. Here's one verse in Scripture, taken out of context, and it can literally shake one's understanding of the fourth commandment of God by someone ignorant of the Word. Where in this verse does God command anything new? It's simply not there. So what does Paul mean? When we put 1 Corinthians 16:2 next to the Torah verse it references, Paul's meaning comes into perfect clarity. Let's read Leviticus 23:10-11: "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it." And so, when properly understood according to the whole counsel of God, Paul is instructing the Corinthians to follow Torah, to take a collection of their first fruits on the first day of the week and set it aside so it can be offered on the first day of the week to the LORD. The verse in Corinthians has nothing to do with meeting on Sunday for church, but rather collecting a tithe, the first and the best, and offering it to the LORD. The Sabbath Day, the LORD's Day, has always been Saturday and some obscure verse about collecting a tithe does not change the law of God. I could give many more examples of such line-by-line, precept-by-precept distortion, but I think this one is quite illustrative. Many teachers, especially today, distort Scripture into something it's not,

usually because of ignorance—they don't read the Bible—but sometimes in allegiance to dogma—the commandments of men—over the commandments of God. We must be careful to practice proper exegesis when reading the Word to make sure we are representing it properly, especially when we are training up new disciples to follow the commandments of God, no matter what our traditions have trained us to believe.

I think it's important to conclude with one more related tip from the Apostle Paul, for he speaks to the disunity between Jews and Gentiles that many falsely read into Scripture. While Old Testament commentators may have exaggerated the meaning of Torah law and expanded it with oral tradition, and New Testament commentators may have negated the meaning of Torah law by distorting New Testament passages into meanings they shouldn't have, our focus ought to be on clarifying both distortions and uniting everyone in Christ. Our goal is to unite both Jews and Gentiles under one faith in Messiah Yeshua, our savior, who taught us how to faithfully obey the commandments of God. Our desire ought to be to learn these commandments as we grow closer in our relationship with the LORD and then patiently and gently teach them to every disciple who wants to do the same, for this is what Yeshua commanded us to do before His final ascent to the throne. Paul wrote it this way in Romans 10:12-15: "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.' How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!'" Brothers and sisters, I think it's incumbent on us to hear the calling on our lives, to answer that call by building into a closer relationship with Yeshua, and to build on our relationship with the LORD and one another through obedience and lov, going out to make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them all of the commandments of God. Let's talk about how we can get to work on this at every chance we get today, for that is one of the reasons we're here. Shabbat shalom.