

The Potter's Christian Life Center

SERMON NOTES
with Pastor Greg Formey



Escaping The Mental Prison

Isaiah 43:18-19

Sunday, June 21, 2026

18 “Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. 19 Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. ESV

There is a deep tragedy in the journey of human life. Most people do not finish their lives inside physical prisons made of concrete and iron bars. They finish inside prisons of the soul built out of old memories, old hurts, and old labels. This can be called “rearview mirror” living. Though mirrors are important for glancing back, God wants us to escape this mental prison by looking through the “windshield” of the future.

THE PRISON OF THE PAST

The children of Israel escaped the physical country of Egypt in a single night. The chains were broken, the gates were opened, and they walked out as “free” people. Even though they left, Egypt stayed inside many of them for four long decades. They were physically out of slavery, but in their souls, they were still wearing the chains.

This is a picture of the human condition.

- Some people left a toxic relationship years ago, but emotionally, they still live there every single day.
- Some people survived heavy rejection in their childhood, but they still wake up every morning wearing the identity of someone who is completely unloved.
- Some people escaped poverty years ago, but their minds still panic every hour like they are about to lose everything.

The terrifying truth of life is that you can move forward physically while your mind stays permanently faced backward. That is why God speaks a shocking command through the prophet Isaiah:

Isaiah 43:18 - Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.

God is not telling you to erase your memory. He is not asking you to pretend your history never happened. But He is saying **Do not dwell there**. Do not build a permanent home in your past pain.

A CULTURE OF BONDAGE

To understand why we stay stuck, we have to understand what Egypt actually was. Egypt was never just a physical country on a map. Egypt was a mental system. Egypt was generations of conditioning.

For hundreds of years, they woke up to the exact same routine: fear, hard labor, oppression, and bare survival. Eventually, that kind of repetitive pain did something to their minds. Slavery stopped being just an experience they were going through, and it became their identity. It became who they thought they were.

Over time, even pain becomes familiar. Dysfunction can start to feel strangely safe. This is why some people tend to sabotage good things. They think like survivors, not like overcomers. If you are still mentally dwelling on a season that has ended, you are keeping Egypt alive inside your own head.

We see this survival mindset explode in the wilderness. God performed massive miracles for Israel. The Red Sea opened, the physical chains broke, and the Egyptian army collapsed behind them. They were completely safe.

But the moment discomfort showed up in the wilderness - the moment they ran out of water or faced uncertainty - they did something unbelievable; they started missing Egypt.

In **Numbers 14:2-4**, the people cried out:

"Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword?... Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?"

Imagine that! They missed the very place that broke them. They missed the whips, the bricks, and the pharaoh who tried to destroy their children. Why? Because the human soul hates uncertainty. It would rather cling to familiar pain than risk unfamiliar growth.

Trainers have learned that if they would tie a baby elephant by a rope to a stake in the ground, it becomes conditioned when it is grown not to even try to get free. The elephant is not held by the physical rope. It is held by the mental conditioning of its past. It still believes the old lie: *I am trapped, and I am powerless.*

LEARN A NEW WAY

Many people today are praying for a brand-new future while emotionally feeding old identities they have been chained to every single day. They want healing, but they replay the betrayal or the heartbreak every single morning like a movie in their minds.

Isaiah 43:19

Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. ESV

The way out is to use the rearview mirror to the past to remember all the good God has done for you, then to apply those testimonies to the challenges of the present. In this way, escape from a mental prison is assured.

Conclusion

Your past may explain where you started, but it does not own where you are going. Stop looking at your life through a rearview mirror. The miracle of freedom does not finish when you leave the environment; the miracle finishes when the environment leaves you. Today, stop feeding the mental prison of Egypt inside your mind.