

The Lord's Call on the Redeemed

2026-09-27 – Exodus 13:1-16

As the Lord graciously and powerfully redeems His people it is truly an awesome scene. The host of the Lord (Ex. 12:41) redeemed by the Lord's provision through the blood of the lamb come out of the land of Egypt--that land of prideful idolatry, severe death, rampant idolatry and bitter slavery. The Lord incredibly protects and leads His people out of death and judgment. Yet what would we expect to happen next? Exodus 13:1-16 details the call of the Lord upon His redeemed people. God lays out here what is of vital importance. It is what He, the redeeming and worthy Lord, expects of His undeserving and redeemed people. The Lord does not call His people to a reckless-carefree life once they are free from slavery. No, he calls them--and us to far, far more. And all of this is unto His everlasting glory and our (and our children's) earthly and eternal good. Join us as we consider the awesome call of the Lord upon those He redeems. There is much here for us who follow the Lord Jesus. We are those who in God's kindness have been purchased--redeemed--by His blood and are trusting and following the Lamb of lambs, Jesus Christ, the risen righteous Savior and Lord. Let us learn to honor our Redeemer with increasing faithfulness equipped and encouraged to the very end. Soli Deo Gloria

Opening

A good morning, church. It is a joy and a pleasure to be here with you this morning. As many of you know, Pastors Brandon, Steven, and I were all in Texas for part of this last week. So during our fellowship time afterwards, if you could please introduce yourself to us with a hearty "howdy," we would appreciate it to make the transition back a little bit easier.

This week as we begin our worship service, we have a few announcements regarding upcoming opportunities. In the 9 AM hour prior to this service each week, we have a pre-service discipleship time. Classes that are offered include going through the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith as well as the Essen Confession of Faith. You're grateful to join us. There are offerings for all ages. For those 10 to 18, which I myself am teaching, we meet in the upper room just above the kitchen down on the other end of the church. For adults, we meet near the children in the children's area as well.

Also on Wednesday nights, we have our weekly prayer meeting in the room just aside from the café. If you meet there, it'd be great. There's also a lot on Wednesday nights for the kids that meet here as well. And also do know that next week, following this service, meeting at 12:30 in the café will be a group meeting for evangelism. So if you can make it next week, please be sure to be there as well.

And now as we begin our service, we'll begin with a call to worship. Our text for this morning will be Psalm 15. So if you could please rise for the reading of God's Word as you're ready.

Call to Worship – Psalm 15

Psalm 15, hear now the word of the Lord.

A Psalm of David. O Lord, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord; he swears to his own hurt and does not change; he does not put out his money at interest, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Worship in Song

- Amazing Love
- Christ the Sure and Steady Anchor
- My Jesus, I Love Thee

Pastoral Prayer (Pastor Steve)

Grace and peace, and good morning. Would you please pray with me as we come to our loving God?

Our loving God and Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, as we just sang now, we say collectively in our hearts: "I love Thee because Thou hast first loved me, and purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree. I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow. If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now."

Father, we do confess that we don't always love You as we ought. Our hearts are often cold and frigid toward You. We are passionate about the dust of the world—the games and the food and sports, the news, the money, the stuff, the noise—and then we have the audacity to be bored in the presence of the living God. We are eager to gain the treasures of the world; our hearts covet more possessions; we are never satisfied and we crave and pursue what this world offers, and yet we are slow to pursue You. We have no interest in drawing near to You or gaining more of You. We are never satisfied with this world, but simply satisfied with You—never desiring greater depth of fellowship. Our hearts are invested in our work and our relationships and our Netflix shows when we gain joy and excitement in those things. But when we come to church or pray to You in secret or read Your Word, our minds run in a hundred directions. We come to church and everything is mechanical and clinical, with no fervor, no blood-earnestness, no affection.

God, You have commanded us to love You with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and we must confess that we do not love You as we ought. And yet, God, as we look to Jesus Christ—even when our hearts are cold toward You, even in our pre-converted condition when we hated You, even when we deserve absolutely nothing from You except rejection and desertion and holy hatred—God, we see You, Father, out of Your love for us, sending Jesus Christ, who purchased our pardon on Calvary's tree, who wore the thorns on His brow. And we see that You demonstrate Your love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. God, in this is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

God, it would be enough that Christ would be our Savior and snatch us from hell. It would melt our hearts that Christ is our righteousness who justifies us in Your courtroom. It is humbling to know that Christ is our King who gives us victory over the spiritual forces of darkness. It would be enough for Him to tell us, "I have saved you, I have justified you, I have fought for you." But God, how it lays us low and breaks our hearts to hear His words where He said, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you." God, You don't just save us and justify us—You affectionately love us. So we sing to You this morning: "I love Thee because Thou hast first loved me."

So we pray, Father, the Spirit-inspired words of the Apostle Paul: not firstly that we would love You more, not firstly that we would have an increased devotion to You, but that God we may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that we may be filled up to all the fullness of God. God, don't let us focus so much on our ability to love Christ, but widen and deepen our ability to comprehend and embrace Christ's love for us undeserving sinners. And then, Father, when we are filled up, may we say with the Apostle Paul, "The love of Christ compels me."

Not only for us Christians, but we pray for our unbelievers here and visitors and children and teens and friends, that they would see both Your wrath outside of Christ and Your love in Christ, that they would flee from the wrath to come and find forgiveness and righteousness and eternal life and love in the death and resurrection of Christ. We pray for the backslidden and ask that they do not forget their first love, but that You would revive their love for Christ. We pray for the self-deceived, that they would realize it is not enough to know things about God, it is not enough to love people who love You or to love theologians, but that they themselves must have a personal love for You. And we pray, Father, for the downcast and the sick and the dying, and we ask, God, that You would remind them that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And we pray, Father, that the love of Christ would be shed abroad outside our church walls as well. God, we ask that You sharpen the spiritual eyesight of Grace Reformed Baptist Church in Rockford, that they may see more of the radiance of Christ's love, and that they may say with Paul, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." We also pray for Grace Covenant Baptist Church in Elgin, that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with them all.

We pray, God, not only for churches, but also for governing officials. And God, as we near the mid-term election, we pray that evangelical churches in Illinois would not buy into the foolishness of political quietism or third-way-ism, but would allow the truth of Christ's lordship and God's law to encourage and inform how they live in this world and how they vote in this world. God, give us courageous and hope-filled men and women who proclaim Christ as Lord, not only in church, but in the public square. We also pray for Governor Pritzker, who has twisted the concept of love for omni-tolerance and the promotion of sin. God, save him from the path to hell he is walking on. We lift up against Senate Bill 3572, the Abolish Abortion Illinois Act, and we ask that this bill would cause a ripple effect in our state, that it would be the first pebble to drop that would end the bloody, selfish, and satanic practice of abortion that plagues our land.

Finally, Lord, we do pray for the nations. Christ told us, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." So God, we beseech You this morning. Raise up Christ-loving, prayerful, Bible-saturated, church-centered, hospitable, holy, faithful, and brave men of God who are willing to say farewell to the comforts of home for the glorious purpose of planting the flag of Christ on foreign, unreached soil. God, raise up men for the work of missions, even in our midst—put a vision in the heart of the teenager, call the young man in college, place a burden on the middle-aged man willing to sacrifice a career for the sake of the lost. God, send out workers into the harvest, to Bangladesh, to Indonesia, to Mauritania, to Pakistan, to India, to the 10/40 window—the most concentrated area of the unreached on the globe. God, we ask that You raise up men this very morning, that people would know the love of Christ.

So Father, we pray all this with great expectations in our hearts. We ask this not in our own name, but in the name of our loving Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Worship in the Word

Grace and peace from God our Father, through Jesus Christ our risen, ruling, one-day-soon-returning Lord, the only Savior. Brothers and sisters in Christ and friends, it is good to be with you on this Lord's Day. And what a joy it is to open God's Word.

In just a moment I'm going to ask you to stand for the reading of God's Word. We are in the book of Exodus. And so if you find Exodus chapter 13, I will read verses 1 through 16. And if you're using a church Bible, this is found on page 61. If you don't have a copy of God's Word, there are extra copies out there in the lobby for you. And we'd love for you to have one, to open up the pages of Scripture and encounter the risen Lord Jesus. And if you are witnessing to someone and they don't own a copy of the Bible, please take a copy for them and put that in their hands and read that with them that they might be saved and receive God's special revelation.

Exodus 13, starting in verse 1. Would you please stand now if you are able for the reading of God's Word.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me."

Moses said to the people, "Remember this day in which you went out from Egypt, from the house of slavery; for by a powerful hand the Lord brought you out from this place. And nothing leavened shall be eaten. On this day in the month of Abib, you are about to go forth. It shall be when the Lord brings you to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall observe this rite in this month. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven be seen among you in all your borders. You shall tell your son on that day, saying, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.' And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the Lord brought you out of Egypt. Therefore, you shall keep this ordinance at its appointed time from year to year."

Now when the Lord brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you, you shall devote to the Lord the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the Lord. But every first offspring of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' then you shall say to him, 'With a powerful hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. It came about, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the Lord killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the Lord the males, the first offspring of every womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem.' So it shall serve as a sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead, for with a powerful hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt."

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

You may be seated.

Almighty God and merciful Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we come before You today in the name of Jesus and by Your Holy Spirit. We ask that You, the only worthy Creator, the God who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, would be glorified today. Strengthen us through Your holy Word. Illuminate our minds and our hearts by Your Holy Spirit to gladly receive and be reformed and renewed by Your truth. May Your will be done more and more in and through us on earth as it is in heaven. May the meditations of our hearts and the words of our mouth be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. We confess we are sinful, we are weak, we're rebellious, forgetful, and we need You. So help us now, God, as only You can. And may we more than ever before walk by faith in Christ, walk in step with Your Holy Spirit, and live together united under the lordship of Jesus Christ, eager to share the excellencies of Christ, to strengthen our bonds of love and peace, and lift our eyes and our hearts to You. If any friends are discouraged, reignite their zeal, and help all of us, God, to leave here refreshed by Your gospel, Your kingdom, Your glory. We pray all of this in Jesus' name, and all of God's people said together: Amen.

The Lord's Call on the Redeemed (Exodus 13:1–16)

Well, friends, imagine with me for a moment that you were an Israelite, one of the Hebrew people back in Egypt. You had just witnessed all of these plagues—the ten plagues: water turned to blood, amphibians (the frogs that came up out of the land), the gnats, the lice, the flies, the disease on livestock, the unhealable boils on people's skin that happened to the Egyptians, hail and fire, locusts, darkness, and then the most severe of all the plagues—the death of the firstborn. And you just heard news. Word is going around in your neighborhood that Pharaoh is going to finally release you after over 400 years of being enslaved. 400 years of bitter, brutal slavery. Finally, Pharaoh is going to release you. You're nervous. You have a lot to do. You need to pack for this journey. You've never been in this place before. You're packing your belongings, however meager they may be. And then Moses, this 80-something-year-old man who's your leader, your strong leader, gathers you together and says, "We need to talk about worship and service to the Lord."

Can you imagine in the camp some of the comments made by some of the moms and the dads who have to pack all the belongings for the kids? "Moses, now is really not the time. Let's do that in a few days. But right now..." We want to talk about worship and service to the Lord. It reminds me of times in our own home when sometimes the kids need to go to bed, and I can tell that they're very tired, they're very whiny. My wife and I both want them to go to bed, and then I will impulsively say, "We're going to do family worship," and hear this collective "Ahh!" from the kids. You think of that in this context. We've just heard of this plague, this final plague that has come, this interaction between Pharaoh and Moses where he said, "You may go." And then here in chapter 13, there is somewhat of an interesting section—a section that is looking ahead but is not quite all the way ahead. What's going on here?

Well, the Lord is letting those He has redeemed and will redeem—He is letting those know who are His—that redemption is but the start of their journey of faith. My friends, you need to understand this today, and I need to understand this today afresh, because it is in God-breathed Scripture. When you come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, when you are redeemed by the Lord—in this case, the blood of the lamb, a substitute for them; they were spared; they were granted salvation and deliverance—when you come to this place, your walk with the Lord, your faith, the calling upon your life that the Lord has... it's not done. He doesn't redeem you to leave you. He redeems you, my friends, to lift you up, to make you walk more in step with Him, to reflect His glory and His praise and His honor.

And so, Lord willing, with the help of the Spirit today, we're going to walk through and see five callings—five callings that the Lord has placed upon those He has redeemed here in ancient Egypt as they are gearing up to go, as they are preparing to make this journey that they've never made before, this historic, epic journey of finally being free and on their own. They don't necessarily know where they're going or what they're doing. They don't have many things to pack, but they do have some things to pack because they've plundered the Egyptians, and just as the Lord promised, He has blessed them with possessions that the Egyptians gave to them as they leave. What is happening here amongst the people of God? Well, Moses is telling them, "My friends, you need to heed these callings upon your life." And as we will see as we work through this text today, there are similar callings we need—all of us who are in Christ Jesus—to heed as those who are the redeemed. Let's walk through these now, one at a time. Five callings the Lord has placed on those He has redeemed.

First:

The Lord calls His redeemed to obediently set apart every firstborn male unto Him. The Lord calls those He has redeemed to obediently set apart every firstborn male unto Him. Don't hear the language of the firstborn—it's not the first time we have seen this. If you turn back a few chapters to Exodus chapter 4, there is language of Israel, all of Israel, being a firstborn son to the Lord. And actually, that's when a threat is made—a threat is made to Pharaoh all the way back in chapter 4, before these plagues have been executed. The Lord says, *"If you do not let My people go, your firstborn son will die."* And we know what happened: Pharaoh did not heed that warning. He was stubborn in his heart; his heart was hardened against God. And this first call that Moses declares that came from the Lord to the people, the redeemed people, is: You must obediently set apart every firstborn male. The context here is speaking of the firstborn male and animal. It mirrors what we read a few weeks ago concerning the Lord's judgment upon Egypt. Just as there will be death in these households of those who do not have the blood of the lamb, so there will be life amongst those who have the blood of the lamb over the doorposts. And the Lord is saying here: You must obediently, perpetually, forever set apart the firstborn male to Me.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 **"Sanctify [consecrate] to Me every first born, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me."** (Exodus 13:1-2)

Notice what it says there in verse 1: "It belongs to Me." Sanctify, consecrate—your translation might say—it just means set apart every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel.

One scholar, Larry Walker, notes in the *Holman Christian Illustrated Bible Dictionary*: *"The firstborn son of newly married people was believed to represent the prime of human vigor."* You see that in Genesis 49:3 and Psalm 78:51. It is an exciting time in the life of a couple when they have their firstborn. It is a blessed time when this child comes into the world. It is a continuation, an extension of the generations. It shows the Lord's provision, the Lord's hand upon a family. The people of God are called to remember: the firstborn, your pride of life, this one that you look at and have so much joy in and delight in—this one ultimately belongs to Me. You must set this one apart.

Now, to be clear, some have speculated what it means to be set apart, and they would suggest different things. This has something to do with the priesthood later on in Israel's history. Further on there is a

connection made to actually the Levites being taken instead of the firstborn of the Hebrews—but that’s much later in redemptive history. For our purposes now, we can understand that the Lord wanted this to be etched on their minds and hearts. He wanted every single Hebrew family to understand—some even not yet married: The firstborn is Mine. The firstborn belongs to Me. Now there is again this priestly connection here to this language of the firstborn—one who has been set apart for holy purposes.

Matthew Henry wonderfully comments this way. He says: *“God, who is the first and best, should have the first and best, and to Him we should resign that which is most dear to us and most valuable. The firstborn were the joy and hope of their families.”*

Now if you’re the second-born or the third-born or the fourth-born or the fifth-born, you might be thinking, “Now hold on a second here.” You might be a little offended. You should not be. This is an ancient cultural tradition that many ancient Near Eastern cultures believed in, and to this day there is something still very special and incredible about the firstborn when the firstborn child is born. This language of the firstborn son is to display to every single family: Yes, you have great delight in your son, your firstborn son. But remember, ultimately, this firstborn son belongs to the Lord. He is set apart; he is holy. And you, Israel, are My firstborn son. There’s a direct connection to Israel’s mind and heart knowing: We—men, women, boys, girls who believe in the Lord—are the firstborn son of Yahweh. And my son who has just been born is also set apart. There would have been something in the mind of those Israelites, of those Hebrew people, that would have said: Just as this one is set apart to the Lord, so we collectively belong to the Lord. And all that we have belongs to the Lord, including our animals. Did you notice that? The firstborn animals—that which you own—it speaks of ownership, your possessions, the first fruits that you have. These things belong to the Lord, and you must set them apart for holy purposes. This is an exercise in the Hebrew mind to help them not forget God, but to keep God prominent in their life, prominent in their community after they leave Egypt. That’s the call upon their life: to obediently set apart every firstborn male unto Him.

Now the New Testament picks up this language of the firstborn as well. It speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as being the firstborn—the firstborn of creation. What does that have to do with? It has nothing to do with original creation, as if Jesus is a created being. That’s a heresy. Jesus has eternally existed as the eternal Son of God. Colossians rather uses this language of the firstborn from all creation to speak of the new creation—how Jesus Christ died and rose again, defeated death and rose. And Corinthians picks this up as well (1 Corinthians 15), and He is the firstborn of that new creation. That’s what the New Testament is speaking of when it comes to the firstborn—something special and holy and set apart on a whole other level where death cannot invade, where there is no sin that can sneak up and creep up in our lives. And of course the Lord Jesus Christ, impeccable, sinless as He was, never sinned. But we now who are in Christ, who is that firstfruits from the resurrection—we recognize there is something special of being found in Christ. I’ll say more about that a little bit later, Lord willing. But don’t lose sight of this first call to the people of Israel. You see this repeated twice in Exodus 13. We see very clearly at the verse we just mentioned, verse 1, and then down in verse 12: ***“You shall devote to the Lord the first offspring of every womb, and the first offspring of every beast that you own; the males belong to the Lord.”***

Then there’s a little bit of a confusing part here. You might have looked at it and thought, “Oh, he’s going to skip over verse 13 for sure.” Look at verse 13 in your Bibles: ***“But every first offspring of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, then you shall break its neck; and every firstborn of man among***

your sons you shall redeem.” What’s going on with this verse? We’re not going to skip past that. It is something that is important for us to note. Donkeys would have been the only unclean animal listed there, and yet they would have been, as many Bible commentators point out, incredibly valuable for a journey into the wilderness away from Egypt—to carry many belongings and possessions. Donkeys are very durable, as it were. They can carry a lot. They’re very strong; they can carry above their weight. And so the Lord here, many Bible commentators suggest, is saying there’s a way to redeem even this unclean animal of the donkey—namely by sacrificing a lamb in its place. But if you do not want to do that—that is, sacrifice one of your lambs—then that donkey must die. That animal must die as an unclean animal, something unfit to be in the camp.

Now to us this seems so strange—to break the neck of a donkey. It seems foreign and almost seems vile. But here’s what you have to understand: The people of God, set apart and holy, will not allow any uncleanness into the camp—any uncleanness into the camp of God. There will always be, for anything that is unclean, a sacrifice made, even for this firstborn that is a donkey. And so this is a strange thing for us. It almost seems foreign. But we have to understand and put our minds and hearts in the lens of a Hebrew who understood: That’s an unclean animal. How can I take what is unclean with me outside the camp? And the Lord says: Make a sacrifice with one of your lambs, and then that will be a substitute for this donkey that you may then use for a holy purpose. Obediently set apart every firstborn male unto the Lord. That’s the first call.

Second

The Lord says that the people He has redeemed are called **to personally remember the powerful Lord and what the powerful Lord freed them from**. They need to personally remember what the powerful Lord freed them from. Notice how many times in what we just read this mention of Egypt was made. Time and time again we see this.

Exodus 13:3: **Moses said to the people, “Remember this day in which you went out from the land of Egypt, the house of slavery; for by a powerful hand the Lord brought you out from this place.”**

Three mentions there already—Egypt, house of slavery, this place. In just one verse you have three mentions of this place. The Lord is trying to again etch and burn on the minds of the Hebrews: Remember where you were. Down in Exodus 13: 8, look in your Bible: **“You shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.’”** Verse 9b (that is the second half of verse 9): **“...with a powerful hand the Lord brought you out of Egypt.”** Verse 14: **“With a powerful hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery.”** Verse 15: **Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go.** And in verse 16: **“The Lord brought us out of Egypt.”**

What’s the lesson for us in this set of verses where Egypt, Egypt, Egypt, slavery, slavery, Pharaoh’s stubbornness is mentioned—in what’s supposed to be a worshipful place? You can imagine the Hebrew people thinking to themselves, “Why are we talking so much about that place that we were—that bitter, awful place of slavery and death?” Remember, ancient Egypt was filled with polytheism. They worshiped false gods, demon gods. Pharaoh himself considered himself god. He was actually a Satan-worshiper. You look at that—you think of the vestment that he had over his head. It was a cobra. There’s a connection there to the satanic, to the serpentine nature of ancient pharaohs and kings. These were not good and

godly people. These were not nice people. These were demonic people, superstitious people who were amazed by magic and superstition and all these kinds of things, but also who were full of a love of death—putting to death the Hebrew firstborns, those sons who were born. And actually not just the firstborn sons—all the way back in Exodus 1—but every son. If it's a male, throw him into the Nile River. This is not a good place. This is a godless place. This is a wicked place—a place of pride, polytheism, idolatry, rebellion against the living God—with Pharaoh sitting as the representative of that regime. But my friends, the Lord is saying: Remember what I, the powerful Lord, redeemed you from. You can't forget that. You can't skip past that.

In our own lives there are so many New Testament passages that speak about this same idea. A few of them are listed there in your bulletin—speaks of this idea of your before-Christ life and your after-Christ life, as it were. See that in Ephesians 2: ***You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even while we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.*** You see that? Egypt. The Egypt of sin. The Egypt of being dominated by the spirit of the age. That prince, by the way, is the devil—the same devil that dominated Egypt, that dominated a place where the Hebrews left. For 400 years—over 400 years—they were in slavery. Bitter bondage, no rest, serving not their Lord, but one who called himself a master and a lord, and served demons.

The Hebrew people were called to personally remember what the powerful Lord freed them from. We must not diminish both in our lives where we were—that sin, that slavery to sin, that place where we would have followed the devil and done his bidding. We must never minimize that, friends, for God does not get the glory if we forget that, if we don't look back at that and thank Him and praise Him for His great deliverance and rescue. Actually, the work of Christ, the grace of God in Jesus Christ, also gets diminished if we act as if it wasn't that big of a deal—"Those were just minor mistakes. I wasn't really that dominated by sin. I wasn't actually really that bad. Did I hardly need to be saved?" If we do that, we diminish the cross of Christ. Thomas Manton, a Puritan pastor, put it this way: ***"It is very dangerous to lessen the misery of man or the merit of Christ."*** It is a very dangerous thing when you start to diminish and look at the misery of man—"Not that bad, pretty good actually"—and Christ's work gets diminished even as sin gets diminished as well. So the Lord calls His people who are redeemed to obediently set apart every firstborn male unto Him, and also calls His redeemed people to personally remember what the powerful Lord freed them from. Remember where you were in Egypt.

Third

The Lord calls His redeemed to willingly submit their calendar and diet to honor His redemption. This is an amazing thing. Around His redemption the Lord does this. Understand this is an incredible thing that the Lord is saying here: You need to willingly submit your calendar, your diet, around this redemption—around remembering this redemption. And you see this in multiple verses here. Verse 4: ***"On this day in the month of Abib"*** (Hebrew *B's* there—it's just pronounced with a V as it were in our way) "you are about to go forth." Verse 5: ***"Observe this rite in this month."*** And verse 6: ***"For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord."*** So they are to submit to the Lord willingly and say, "Lord, we're not just going to be one-and-done here. We're actually going to do this next year and

the next year and the next year. We're going to honor You, and our calendar and our diet—what we eat—will revolve around You and Your redemption."

Now please don't hear me saying that I'm going to put you on some Exodus diet. I'm going to call you to do that. That's not what I'm going to call you to do. Some people have done that with different parts of the Bible. It's just important for us to realize that the Lord gave instructions on eating, on food, that ultimately point to a greater purpose—namely His redemption through the blood of a substitute. Understand that.

The Lord is trying to press home here to His people through Moses, His chosen prophet, that you, My people who are redeemed, who don't deserve it—who would have, just like the Egyptians, died if you didn't have the blood over those doorposts, over the lintel—you, My redeemed people who don't deserve it, you need to willingly submit your calendar, your diet, to honor My redemption, to circle your life around this, that the Lord is at the center and you are not. So every year they would come upon this time. This would be like March/April of our time of the year, as it were. So it's like barley harvest in their cultural context, in their part of the world. We know that from Exodus as well. But every year there would be a feast—a feast of unleavened bread. There would be the Passover. Remember we said a few weeks ago those are tightly linked together. Some people consider them even the same, one and the same, but they're tightly linked. They would happen one after the other. At the very least, the people of God who are redeemed are told by Moses: The Lord desires you to honor Him annually, to come together, to do this together, to eat for seven days unleavened bread, and then on that seventh day to have a feast, a celebration, and remember exactly what the Lord our God did.

We talked a number of weeks ago about the lamb, the bitter herbs, and what those represent concerning their bitter time in slavery. There will be a correspondence to that as well. But here is a reminder yet again: Your calendar is Mine. Your diet is Mine because you are Mine. You are My firstborn. That's the third call upon believers' life. And it's important too to realize what this means in terms of why they eat nothing containing yeast, as it were. Why do they eat unleavened bread? Well, here's what one Old Testament scholar, John Mackay, said the Lord now said. Quote: He said, *"Eat nothing containing yeast. This symbolized the fact that the Lord's deliverance had introduced a decisive break in their lives from the corrupting spiritual influences of Egypt. The avoidance of yeast celebrated their separation as a people redeemed by the Lord and in covenant with Him. It was symbolic of their quitting the land of Egypt spiritually as well as physically."*

In other words, when you have this annual feast—prior to the feast, I should say—when you're eating the unleavened bread with no yeast, when you're doing that, every day when you're eating, you are reminding yourself: God has rescued me from Egypt. I will not go back to that land of idolatry and death. I am not who I was. I am not where I was. God has delivered me. That's the idea. That's what's happening here in this diet, as it were, that the Lord sets for them annually. So it calls on the redeemed:

- First, obediently set apart every firstborn male unto Him.
- Second, personally remember what the Lord freed them from.
- Third, willingly submit their calendar, their diet around His redemption.

Two more.

Fourth

Closely follow His commands even in their future promised land. Now this was amazing. As I was studying and looking at this passage, I noticed something that I had not seen before, and I want to draw your attention to it. It's right there in the text. It's not like it is a novel insight. I just missed it. That's really what it comes down to. That's the amazing thing in the Bible. You read and discover something new whenever you read through it.

Look in your Bible at verse 7: ***"Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven be seen among you in all your borders."*** ***"In all your borders."*** Why is that so amazing?

Consider the Hebrew people who have been enslaved for 430 years in Egypt. Borders? Our borders? We were enslaved in Egypt. We don't have borders. We are an oppressed people. We are people who have... This is assuming that people have land. It is assuming that people have a specific land. They can point to it and say, "This, by the grace of God, this is mine." If you were a slave dominated by a foreign superpower, dominated by those who hated God, and then you hear through the Lord's prophet Moses now, "In your land..." As you're on your way out the door of Egypt—"Our land? We're just going to the wilderness. We don't have land." This would have set in their minds and hearts again that reminder, that promise that the Lord will make good on His promise.

Consider these verses as well in Exodus 13. It comes to their land. Verse 5: ***"It shall be when the Lord brings you to the land of the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Amorite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite..."*** A pastor friend of mine's father used to always say, "And the mosquito bite," he used to add it all over there. One of those pastors' jokes. I don't think I've ever done that in my pastoral ministry, but there you go. There's that one. Get that out of the way, clear it off the board, never do it again. So you see that. Look at all these foreign nations: Canaanite, Hittite, Amorite, Hivite, Jebusite. These are not godly nations. These are godless nations. Canaanites actually offered their children in sacrifice through the fire. We know that from not only ancient records that have been pulled up by archaeologists, but it's also in the God-breathed Scripture. These are not good nations. And these are also nations that are more powerful than Israel—that have been much more established, have much more military might, military prowess—were not slaves but took slaves, and actually rivaled (though did not compete exactly, because Egypt was a dominant superpower). So these were not nations that were just going to roll over.

And yet the Lord says, through Moses, "When the Lord brings you... which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall observe this rite in this month." Look down at verse 7: ***"Unleavened bread shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and nothing leavened shall be seen among you, nor shall any leaven be seen among you in all your borders."*** Then down to verse 11: ***"Now when the Lord brings you to the land of the Canaanite, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and gives it to you..."*** This is a declaration of assurance, a declaration of certainty, a guarantee. The Lord **will** bring you to this place. And here the people—still in Egypt, gearing up, ready to go, maybe on their way (we don't know exactly what point they're at)—but they're not in their land. They're not there yet. Moses is saying: Even when you're in your future promised land, even there, closely follow the commands of the Lord. Take seriously the feast of unleavened bread. Take seriously the offering of the firstborn. Take seriously all these commands. Closely

follow the commands of the Lord who redeemed you and has revealed this to you—why the law is supposed to be in your mouth. It's supposed to be in your mouth for a purpose which we'll get into in just a moment with point number five, calling number five.

Look at this. This is so important for us as Christians today. Sometimes when we are in a comfortable place in life where there's ease of life, it's easy to let our guard down. It's easy not to be ferociously devoted to being holy because God is holy. "Things are going well for me. Maybe I can play with sin or ignore some of God's commands." My friends, you absolutely cannot. The Lord through Moses is warning them: When you get to that place, that promised land that I will give you, then there—and even there, especially there—follow My commands. Pay attention to these feasts, these sacrifices that I have given to you. These ordinances are for your good; they are for My glory. Do not ignore them, even in that future promised land.

Fifth

The Lord redeems His people. And to what purpose? **To faithfully catechize their sons in the what and why of biblical faith.**

Unpack the word "catechize" in just a moment. I want to share a quote with you that I found very helpful for me when it comes to thinking about the Lord's promises, thinking about what the Lord is going to do. George Swinnock is an English nonconformist pastor. He lived from 1627 to 1673. And this is so encouraging and comforting to us who are in this already-not-yet place. We are not in the New Jerusalem. We are not in Zion, that holy city, yet. We still see sin and death. We still see all sorts of things around us. What should we do as Christians when we're... "Where's the promise of the Lord? Why is it coming to pass?" Swinnock says this, and it's so wonderful: *"Not one good thing of all that the Lord has spoken will be unfulfilled."*

When you read the Bible and you see a promise and it's yet to be fulfilled, you tell yourself: "Yes, but my God has said it will be fulfilled. And it will be. It will be, my friends." We praise God for that. And we tell our children that. We tell them: "Yes, my son, yes, my daughter, you don't see that yet, but one day by faith you will." We tell them that. We believe that, friends. We believe that passing on the faith is a non-negotiable. It's not something that these "marines of the spiritual" lead amongst Christians do. Every single Christian must be devoted—doggedly so—to raising their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. We must faithfully catechize. That word just means—it comes from the word, this idea of instruction, of teaching. The Apostle Paul uses this word in the Greek, **katēcheō**, in 1 Corinthians 14:19 and in Galatians 6:6. Don't be scared of that word, but "catechize" is a stronger word than simply "instruct." I want to press that home because it's a biblical term, but also because it is a historically faithful term to what the task is. Catechize your children. This is a deeply rooted, not one-and-done, not lazy kind of instruction. This is not "check it off the box. We had the talk. We talked about Jesus once." That is not it at all. No, this is catechism, catechesis. This is not being content with surface-level knowledge. What's going on here is the Lord is saying through Moses: You must faithfully catechize your sons in both the "what" and the "why" of biblical faith.

The “what”. What did the Lord do? What did the Lord do? Well, the Lord did redeem them, and then the Lord gave them commands to follow—the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Passover, these sorts of things. Blood on the doorpost, this meal we’re eating, no yeast for seven days, then a big feast.

And then the “why. Old Testament scholar John Currid, who’s a churchman, says this: *“Redemption from Egypt must not only be recounted to children, but must also be explained to them.”* It is not enough, my friends, to say, “God did this, God did this, God did this. God saves us through Jesus, God saves us through Jesus. Here’s the Lord’s Supper, here’s baptism, here’s church. That’s enough.” So children, here’s something for you boys and girls in the church today: Ask your parents many questions about what you see in church. Why do we sing that? Why do we have baptisms? Why do we partake of the Lord’s Supper? Why do we listen to preaching from God’s Word? Why do we read the Scripture? Why do we gather on the Lord’s Day, on this Sunday? Why do we gather week after week after week? Ask questions, children.

You can see very clearly here there’s two components of this: both proactive instruction without a son or a daughter asking, and also reactive instruction when a son asks. And so look here at the proactive side of things where you’re positively impressing him with truth: *“You shall tell your son on that day, saying, ‘It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.’” Exodus 13:8* There’s no question here. It’s proactive.

You’re sitting him down. Even if they don’t want to sit down, even if their eyes are glazing over, they’re squirming, they don’t want to listen—you are sitting them down and opening God’s Word and saying, “God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.” You’re saying that to your children—that God created the world and everything in it, that He’s the Judge, you’re going to stand before Him, and we’re great sinners, but God is a great Savior. You’re singing the Word. You’re doing this proactively. They did this in ancient Israel. We do this today. Very similar proactive instruction without a son asking.

Next, reactive instruction. When a son asks, look down at verse 14: *“And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is this?’ then you shall say to him, ‘With a powerful hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt from the house of slavery.’”* Why do we do all this—these feasts, these strange meals? Why do we worship like this? Because God redeemed us. That’s why. And He has commanded us to honor Him in these ways.

So parents, a lesson for us—a very important lesson for us: When our children come to us and ask a question, particularly a spiritually significant question, let us be fully attentive. Let us put our phones away. Let us be all ears and take advantage of that opportunity. What a gift. What a blessing. And how often do we squander that and say, “Go talk to your mother. Go talk to your father.” What an opportunity to say—and notice the short answer. I love the simplicity of this: *“With a powerful hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt from the house of slavery.”* There’s a ton of these in the Bible. Titus 3: *“For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, enslaved to various passions and pleasures, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared...”* So why do we gather for the Lord’s Supper? Why do we see and witness baptisms? Why do we sit under the Word of God? Because these are the ordinary means of grace that God has promised to sanctify—that is, make holy—we who are His children. So we give them answers, and parents, we are prepared to give answers. If you are here today

and you have a desire to be married—maybe you're younger, waiting for a spouse; maybe you're a little older, still waiting for a spouse—understand, my friends, that you should be preparing yourself even today to be a husband, to be a wife, to be a mother, to be a father, so that you can answer those questions. And those who God has presently called to be husbands and wives and mothers and fathers, understand the gravity of your answer to your children.

A few years ago a study came out and it showed very clearly: There is no one who is more significant in a child's life than the parents. It's not even close. It's not even close. No teacher, no coach—however impactful, however cool—no friend, no mentor—no one has the same weight in a child's life as their parents. So what that means is some of us probably need to repent and say, "Sorry, Lord, for neglecting my role as mother or father." But it also means this: You have an opportunity—an opportunity to lean in and prepare to answer and to disciple your children, and to raise them the way they should go, answering the questions: Why did the Lord do what He did? What did He do? Why do we do what we do? And to celebrate when they ask questions—spiritually meaningful questions about church life and about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ supremely.

Well, so much more we could say about this by way of application, friends, but let me just give you a final word on this. First, all true Christians—those redeemed by the blood of Christ, who are in Christ—are represented by Jesus, who is the ultimate Firstborn. If you are in Christ Jesus today, you are now viewed as the firstborn, given all the privileges, all the rights that are found in Christ Jesus. The Scripture makes that abundantly clear, so we say praise God for that.

Second, we are those in Christ who've been powerfully freed from sin, and that sin is a far greater slavery than anything that ever happened in Egypt. You might think, "Well, that seemed intense in Egypt. I've never been enslaved." My friend, you have been enslaved. You have been enslaved. You were under the accusation of the devil—that ancient foe, that murderer, that blasphemer from the beginning. And Jesus Christ came and through His work on the cross He silenced that accuser—that one who deceived Pharaoh and has deceived many other men and women and boys and girls all the way to hell. And so if you're in Christ, understand: God has powerfully freed you from sin, which is a far greater slavery than anything that happened in Egypt. Paul puts it this way: "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." That's what Jesus did on your behalf. He triumphed over our foes. He canceled out the certificate of debt that consisted in decrees against us—sinner, trespasser, rebel—canceled, forgiven at the cross of Jesus Christ.

As those who are in Christ, we can also praise God that as those who are redeemed we can now willingly submit our whole lives to honor the Lord our Redeemer. We can recognize we will by faith every day wake up and it will be a fight. The Bible uses language of the fight of faith. We can gladly give ourselves with confidence that we have been filled with the Spirit, we have the sufficient Word of God, we have the people of God around us who can strengthen and encourage us, and together we can willingly submit our whole lives to honor the Lord—not just a diet, not just a calendar, but all that we are, all our beings—and the Lord is praised by that as we walk by faith. Fourth, as those who are redeemed, we can be obedient to God's commands and keep our eyes fixed on that promised land that God has promised for us.

See, this is all a picture, a type of the new heaven and the new earth. That land flowing with milk and honey—it was promised to the old-covenant people of God. Ultimately, you see similar language used in the New Testament concerning New Jerusalem, where we are bound for—that place where, according to Revelation, there's no death, nor pain; the former things have passed away. There is no sorrow or sadness. We can confidently be obedient to the Lord's commands and keep our eyes fixed on that promised land, knowing that by faith, again, the Lord says this: "I will never leave you, I will never forsake you." You may find yourself in a place where you have great disobedience in your life, but you can know this: that the great Deliverer is stronger than your disobedience. He will hold you, my friends. He will keep you from now until eternity.

And finally, as those redeemed, let us in a fresh new way recognize we have been commanded and called to instruct our children in the faith. Let us press on with this high and holy calling. Fathers, we especially invest in our career. Mothers, you invest in many things related to the home and so many other things that you, sisters, do. But understand this high and holy calling from the Lord: to raise your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, to give them an answer to the what and the why questions they bring up about church, about truth, about Jesus, about the Bible. Recognize that there is no greater calling—no greater calling. There's no greater thing you will answer to the Lord for than that.

You're going to stand before the Lord and give an account of everything—every idle word that you speak—and even more so than an idle word, consider the gravity of a word you speak to your son, to your daughter, who comes to you and asks, "Why do we do that at church? What is Jesus all about?" Consider the gravity of that answer and give them biblical truth and plant in their minds and hearts gospel seeds that will take root and that will spring up to eternal life. My friends, this is the calling we have. And if you're here today again and you're not a parent yet, let me just urge you to not only pray for that, ponder that, and prepare for that. Because guess what? In ancient Israel we know for a fact that not all of those sons would have been born yet. Not all of those sons were even known. If you look in your Bible, verse 14, it says this: ***"And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come..."*** There were children yet to be born that God knew would be amongst the Israelite camp, and He was saying to them—even those young ones not yet married—to your children: Be prepared. Be prepared to give an answer, to say, "God rescued me from Egypt. He rescued me from sin. He, the great Deliverer, rescued me from this bondage, and now I am His, and so we worship Him forevermore." My friends, this is an amazing text of God's Word. Never consider—never consider instruction on worship, instruction on our life and discipleship—never consider that a disruption to something more important that you have to get to in your life. This is a lesson for us here in Exodus 13. Sometimes we're so hurried to go here and do this and do that and the other thing for the Lord that we don't just hear the special instruction, the straightforward instruction on the calling on our lives as those who have been redeemed.

I close with this quote from Joseph Exell, who beautifully said this: *"The more God doth for any man, the more he ought to conceive himself to be the Lord's. Here is a ground of much consolation in that Christ being the truth of the firstborn, from Him the birthright is derived unto us believers, and we partake of the same birthright with our Head. We are dear to God in Christ."*

Almighty God and merciful Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, thank You for these friends. Thank You for an opportunity to sit under Your Word. Thank You, God, for this special set of instructions given to Your people, the old covenant. And we thank You, Lord, that You are the Lord who has called us as those redeemed by Your grace in Christ to a life of discipleship, taking seriously Your law and Your Word, having Your law in our mouth so we can give it away to our children. And so, God, I pray for these friends: Strengthen all of them in their calling—to not be lazy and think that they’ve been saved and now they can coast, but to live to the praise of Your glory, walking in step with Your Spirit, according to Your precious and holy Word. For You are the God who is worthy of all that we are, and has purchased us by the blood of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. And all God’s people said: Amen.

Would you please stand as we sing together “In Christ Alone”?

Benediction

What an awesome privilege and joy to belong by the grace of God to the redeemed who belong to him...

Go with this word, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, from Revelation 1:5–6:

Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth... to Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood—and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.