

life redefined

exodus 13.1-16

Exodus 13 this morning.

The lives of the Israelites had, in one night, been completely changed. For 400 years they had been slaves in Egypt, meaning that none of this multitude had known anything other than affliction and forced service to Pharaoh.

Now the Lord had set them free from that bondage, but as we've seen, He wasn't just setting them free to go wild and live however they wanted, wherever they wanted. He had made it clear to Pharaoh that the descendants of Abraham belonged to *Him* and now He was going to reiterate it to the people themselves.

It was the first day of the rest of their lives and God took the opportunity to explain to the people what their new lives were going to be all about.

Exodus 13.1-2 - Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine."

The Psalmist correctly states that "The earth is the Lord's and everything within." Every place, every thing, every life belongs to God. And He says it outright here, "It is Mine."

Now, we also see God commanding the people to consecrate the firstborn to Him, showing that God, though Creator and rightful Owner of all things, gives people the will to choose whether they will obey Him or whether they will disobey. He says, "I've saved you, I own you, you belong to Me, but I will allow you certain freedoms so that you can respond to Me in love, and here's what I'd like you to do."

He asked the people to consecrate the firstborn and, really what we'll see through these chapters, God is asking them to live a consecrated life, just as He asks us in the New Testament.

Consecrate means: "To be holy, removed from common use, subject to special treatment, forfeit to the sanctuary." In the time we find ourselves God doesn't just ask for the firstborn to be consecrated, He commands all of us to forfeit our lives to Him, living holy, set apart to do His good will.

In our text we see a few ways that this consecration works. First, we consecrate ourselves to God by *remembering*.

Exodus 13.3 - And Moses said to the people: "Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place. No leavened bread shall be eaten."

Remembering the character of God and what He has done is absolutely essential to life. The surest method to lose your way as a Christian is to stop thinking about God and the life He's set before you and instead start thinking about self and feelings and our own desires.

The North Star has saved a lot of people because it is fixed. God is fixed. His word is fixed. His ways are fixed. But our feelings are not. So, to stay set apart, forfeit to the Lord, we've got to moor ourselves to Him by remembering who He is, what He's done and what He's doing. For Israel it was a formal, calendared time of remembrance, for us it's as often as we can.

Also there tagged onto the end of the verse is the blurb about not eating leavened bread. We'll see that talked about more in verse 7, so hold the leaven 'til we get there.

Exodus 13.4-5 - On this day you are going out, in the month Abib. And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, that you shall keep this service in this month.

God makes a lot of promises and He can do all things. That means that He's going to keep His promises. He doesn't have to promise us things. He's the one writing the Book. He didn't have to make promises to Abraham or promises to us. But He does and then He keeps them.

And, while the Lord doesn't want us to worry about tomorrow, He does want us to have a big picture mentality. What is the big picture of my life and my service and His plan for the world? If I'm in tough circumstances I can trust Him and rely on Him and cling to His promises and it will benefit me to consecrate myself by thinking forward to what I know God is doing in the bigger picture.

Exodus 13.6 - Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord.

We consecrate ourselves to God by *celebrating* Him. The Christian life is meant to be enjoyed. We should feast on holiness and celebrate righteousness.

Now, sometimes holiness can be an acquired taste. Here's one example: Fasting. On a purely physical level, fasting is not sensually enjoyable. And, not everyone can fast, God doesn't ask us to be irresponsible with our health, but when we fast and it's a good fasting day, when you get those times for prayer and for communion with God, it is a very satisfying, engaging, joyful experience with the Lord. You feel filled in a way that a banana split cannot fill you. It's a feast to the Lord. But that's a taste that must be worked on as we subject ourselves to special, spiritual treatment. It's easier to celebrate sensually, but God calls us to spiritual celebrations.

Exodus 13.7 - Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days. And no leavened bread shall be seen among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.

So, already we've seen a lot of talk about leaven leading up to this chapter. We've talked about it a little bit in previous studies. But what we can take away this morning is that we consecrate our lives by *disinfecting* ourselves. We've been washed by the Lord, but those feet get dirty.

They need washing. We need to disinfect our hearts and clean off the stuff that latches onto us as we go around this sinful world.

The guys are going to pour some concrete out in the courtyard this morning. When you work with concrete, you're going to get concrete on your hands and your shoes. If you get a big dollop of concrete on your boot, it's understandable. But if you look at that dollop and just leave it there, you shouldn't be surprised when it hardens and ruins your boot.

We get hit with all kinds of gnarly stuff as we live life, but we're also equipped to disinfect ourselves with the Word, with prayer, with confession, with the ministry of other Christians. Consecrate by disinfecting.

One more thing here - this verse says, "in all your quarters." Really the word there translates to 'borders' or 'territories.' So, before, the command was to sweep the house and get the leaven out. Now it's expanded to all their lands and territories. Consecration is something that should grow and expand in our lives, not be limited to small areas.

Exodus 13.8 - And you shall tell your son in that day, saying, 'This is done because of what the Lord did for me when I came up from Egypt.'

Here we see that part of consecration is *communicating* God to our children. Christianity is not meant to be a private thing, certainly not in the home. Communicating the Lord to the next generation is a bedrock command God gives His people.

Exodus 13.9 - It shall be as a sign to you on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Lord's law may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand the Lord has brought you out of Egypt.

A sign on the hand, between the eyes, in the mouth. The Lord is saying that their lives were to be *defined* by this relationship to God. Everything was to center on God. Not self. Not wealth. Just God, who would set the course and the pace and give the rations that were needed. And everyone was to recognize God's ownership of their lives by the way they lived their lives. It was supposed to be audible and visible and immediately understandable.

Exodus 13.10 - You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year.

Every year. In the young years and the old years, in the good years and the bad years. Consecration was the purpose of their life now. Their futures were bought out by God. We've all heard of *Abercrombie and Fitch*, but they weren't always known for trashy clothing. Back in 1892 David Abercrombie and Ezra Fitch opened up a sporting goods store. 96 years later a company called *The Limited* bought *Abercrombie and Fitch* and changed the whole direction of the business into what we know and loathe today. When God redeems us He changes everything about our futures and He completely changes the purpose of our lives. And He sets ordinances in place so that year after year we remember what life is about, rather than staying stuck in the past.

Exodus 13.11-12 - "And it shall be, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and gives it to you, that you shall set

apart to the Lord all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males shall be the Lord's."

A lot of the Law that God gives the Israelites is repetition. He wants to drive these things into their minds. We're forgetful people, so the Lord speaks to us often.

But also here, we see that God wanted them to consecrate themselves on the way through the wilderness *and* once they had arrived. This was now their regular way of life, *even after* they got to this Promised Land. Consecration isn't a rank system, where you get to the top and then there's nowhere left to go. It's a forever cultivation that continually brings fruit in our lives.

Exodus 13.13 - But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem.

Interesting here: There are certain sacrifices that God wants and other types that He doesn't. He said, "Don't offer me a donkey, offer Me a lamb in place of a donkey." The way we do what we do matters. The way we worship. The way we serve. The way we give. It's to be done as prescribed by God in His word, not however we feel like doing it.

Cain was the first person to learn this lesson. He brought his version of an offering to God, but it wasn't in line with what God had asked. Cain brought something pretty and convenient and something that was up his alley, but God has methods and requirements for His people. The Christian life must be lived according to those methods if we want to please the Lord.

Exodus 13.14-15 - So it shall be, when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' that you shall say to him, 'By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And it came to pass, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.'

Here again we see the consecration of our families by communicating what God has done. This time we get a pretty good template of how to preach to our kids.

We live in such a way that demands explanation. Then we explain what God has done, how He saved us, how the Lord is God of all things, able to do all things, and why we now live sacrificially unto Him.

Exodus 13.16 - It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes, for by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt."

This relationship with the Lord that they had was to be the absolute defining focus of their lives.

I'm sure at some point you've all seen a Hindu person wearing their bindi. The little dot they paste between their eyes.

If we saw a woman walking down the street today with a little red dot pasted between her eyes, we would instantly know a lot about her, right? That tiny dot brings definition to her life.

God said to His people that He wanted their behavior and their demeanor and their activities and their words to proclaim not only who He is, but His ownership of their lives. And that's possible for us if we consecrate ourselves, forfeiting our lives to the Lord.

Our lives should be defined by the simple facts that the Lord has redeemed us and His strong hand is upon us, leading us forward. That's the purpose of our lives and that's how we live holy, and Godly, set apart to Jesus for His pleasure.