

Exodus Chapter 12 v 43 - Chapter 13 v 16

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we're going to turn together in our Bibles. If you have one to hand, please turn with me to Exodus and chapter 12. Now, earlier in the year, we began studying Exodus, and we got through to chapter 12 just before the summer, and we've had quite a long break since then, but we're going to come back to Exodus. And just to give you, as you're looking, we're going to begin at verse 43 and read through into chapter 13. Just to give you a little background, if you're not aware what happened, God's people, the Hebrews, were in slavery in Egypt for 400 years. God sent Moses to be their deliverer from Pharaoh, the king of the Egyptians. Pharaoh would not let God's people go, did not want to lose the slaves, so God sent ten plagues of increasing violence against the Egyptians until the final plague was the death of the firstborn. And on that night, which became known as the Passover, God's people had to eat a meal of lamb and various other things and daub or paint the doorposts and lintel of their houses. And that would protect them from the judgment of God. But at the end of verse 29, in Exodus 12, the firstborn sons and the firstborn animals in the whole of Egypt died. Pharaoh let the people go, and in the night they left with haste. So much haste, they didn't have time to put yeast in with their dough, and they left the country of Egypt and went on their way.

And so we're going to pick up what happens from then, verse 43, and what God has to say to the people. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, these are the regulations for the Passover. No foreigner is to eat of it. Any slave you have bought may eat of it after you've circumcised him, but a temporary resident and a hired worker may not eat of it. It must be eaten inside one house. Take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones. The whole community of Israel must celebrate it. An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised.

Then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it. The same law applies to the native born and to the alien living among you. When the word alien is used, boys and girls, it means somebody who is a stranger. It doesn't mean somebody from outer space or anything like that, okay, in case you wonder what the word is there. All the Israelites did just what the Lord had commanded Moses and Aaron. And on that very day, the Lord brought the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions. The Lord said to Moses, consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal. Then Moses said to the people, commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the Lord brought you out of it with a mighty hand. Eat nothing containing yeast.

Today in the month of

Abib, you are leaving. When the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, and Jebusites, the land he swore to your forefathers to gift you, a land flowing with milk and honey. You are to observe this ceremony in this month. For seven days, eat bread made without yeast, and on the seventh day, hold a festival to the Lord. Eat unleavened bread during those seven days.

Nothing with yeast in it is to be seen among you, nor shall any yeast be seen anywhere within your borders. On that day, tell your son, I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt. This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the Lord is to be on your lips. For the Lord brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand. You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time, year after year. After the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you, as he promised on oath to you and your forefathers, you are to give over to the Lord the first spring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the Lord. Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons. In days to come, when your

son asks you, what does this mean? Say to him, with a mighty hand, the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the Lord the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons. And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the Lord brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand. If the...we're in Exodus then, and particularly chapter 13, but also, as we read just a few minutes ago, the last few chapters as well of 12. And as we've been thinking this morning about today as Remembrance Sunday, as we've stopped to consider and to remember those men and women who died in the two world wars, particularly, but also those who continue to suffer and to die in conflicts around the world. We're joining with people, millions of people, I imagine, around the country at this time, in almost every town, village, city. There will be people commemorating this day, either with church services or with laying of wreaths or with marches, if I can put it that way, gatherings at memorials, other acts of remembrance. Remembrance moves us to do something. And of course, it is a time to remember. It's a time to remember the loss of those lives, but also a time to remember the gain that those losses earned. The gain of freedom, the gain of peace in measure that we enjoy and are privileged to have. Remember the cost. And so, with a sense of sadness and with a sense of gratitude, we commemorate both. Now, when we come to Exodus in chapter 13, we see that [7 : 24] God had long before us instigated the importance of commemorating and remembering when he gave instructions to his people here, the Hebrews. He says in verse 3, 10, Moses said to the people, commemorate this day, the day you came out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, because the Lord brought you out of it with a mighty hand. And it's clear that there was a remembrance day, in fact, a whole week of remembrance that they were to keep all the way through their history in the years to come.

But here, God gives them these instructions just moments after they have actually left Egypt. All the events, all the trauma, we may say, all the hurriedness, the leaving of the country, the leaving of their homes, the leaving of their, where they'd grown up, everything else. They were refugees on the way out of Egypt. Within hours of that, God was instructing them so that they should not forget. Of course, that is one of the great failures of human beings is that we are forgetful people. We forget. Especially we forget God.

We forget what he's done for us. And so God calls his people to commemorate, to remember the events which led to their freedom from slavery with three acts, as it were, of remembrance, three events of remembrance. They were, first of all, to keep the Passover meal, and we saw that at the end of chapter 12.

As they had eaten that meal on the night of the Passover itself, they were to commemorate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, as it was called. Verse 7, eat unleavened, that's unyeasted bread, for seven days.

And they were to consecrate every firstborn male, whether animal or human, to God. There in verse 2, consecrate to me every firstborn male, and the instructions are given later on about that.

[9 : 33] In verse 12, all the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the Lord, redeem with a lamb, and so on. So why did God do that? Why did God give them these three events, these three actions that they were to carry out every year so that they should remember? Well, particularly that they might not forget this tremendous work of God that had rescued them and set them free. That they might not realize that they had the enjoyment and the blessing of the promised land, as they would have later on, the blessing and the enjoyment of the freedom to earn money for themselves and work for themselves and to worship the Lord and all these things, that it had been done by God. It hadn't been themselves, it hadn't been because they had raised up an army themselves or a revolution themselves or set themselves free. Everything that had happened to them, the blessings that they had, were God's doing.

And so on four occasions through chapter 13, we have this phrase, because the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand. It's there in verse 3, and in verse 9, and verse 14, and at the very end, verse 16.

The Lord brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand, referring to those plagues, referring to God's overpowering of all the powers of Egypt, the superpower of the day. Well, you may say, well, that's all well and good, and that's interesting, but what has that got to do with us today? What has that got to do with us on this Remembrance Sunday? Well, the sad truth is, of course, that for an increasing number of people, even in our own country, there is the attitude that a Remembrance

Day doesn't matter. We don't need to have a Remembrance Sunday. We don't need to think of those things. Many people think little of it and belittle it, but I'm sure most of us agree that it must not be ignored and not forgotten, the sacrifice.

We remember the freedoms that we enjoy here in the 21st century have been hard won, have been bought at immeasurable cost by those who died in the 20th century and those who continue even to die today. But the reality is that the connection between this chapter and us is that if we are Christians this morning, then we are to remember, like God's people of old, that we have been brought out of a place of slavery into a place of freedom by the goodness and the power of God's mighty hand.

To be a Christian is somebody who's described in this way in Colossians chapter 1. God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness. The truth is that sin enslaves people. I did the children's talk with them this morning and reminded us that sin is what has spoiled this world. Sin is what has broken this world, corrupted this world. Sin is the very cause of the wars, the death, the suffering, the cruelty that we see around about us. And sin enslaves humanity. And it enslaved us.

[12:47] And still does. If we're not Christians this morning, we're still slaves to sin. This is what the Bible says again and again. In Romans chapter 6, you used to be slaves to sin. And like Pharaoh and the Egyptians, sin is a very cruel taskmaster. It demands of us that we wear chains. It demands of us that we work to our own destruction. One of the great lies that sin tells people is, doing what you like, doing what pleases you, will bring you freedom and happiness. Well, where on earth is it then? Where is it? We are more miserable, more unhappy, more dysfunctional as a nation than we've ever been before. Sin has caused that. But most, of course, it has caused us to be separated from God and under the very curse of God because our sin is against Him, our rightful ruler and Lord. Now, if we are Christians, the wonderful thing is that we have been set free. That sin no longer is our master, the Bible tells us. That we've been taken out of that place of slavery, that dominion of darkness, and we've been brought into God's kingdom. We've been brought into the wonderful relationship with God as our heavenly Father. We've been brought into that place where we enjoy the freedom and liberty of being the sons and daughters of God. We've been brought into life everlasting and life in all its fullness. And since that has been done by God, the question is, how should we remember what God has done for us just as the Israelites remembered what God did for them? If we remember those who fell in the past wars, if we remember that their deaths won for us peace by wearing a poppy, by celebrating and commemorating particular events in our lives, and if God's people here in the Old Testament were commanded to remember in certain ways what God had done through them for the Passover and through the unleavened bread, through the consecration of the firstborn, how much more must we as Christians today commemorate and remember our own salvation?

How must we commemorate what Christ has done in our lives? Do these instructions that we have here have anything to teach us about what God desires of us that we might not be forgetful? We know that forgetfulness is indeed one of our chief failings in so many ways. Well, simply remembering is not enough. By that I mean just bringing to mind that something has happened in the past is not enough by itself. Just as Remembrance Sunday is more than just remembering, it's doing, it's active, it's participating, it's either wearing a poppy or doing something else. And just remembering what God had done for them in bringing them out of Egypt was not enough. God called for something more, called for them to actually, year by year, participate in something which would be their act of remembrance. And so it is with us.

Remembering is not enough. If you husbands were to remember your wedding anniversary but did nothing about it, I don't think your wives would be all that chuffed.

If at the end of the day when she's been waiting for her flowers, her chocolates, her card, being taken out for a meal or whatever it may be, she says to you, didn't you remember it was our anniversary? Yes, of course I remembered it was our anniversary. But I didn't do anything about it. They would not be in you. You would not be in her good books. So remembering by itself is pointless, isn't it? Just saying I remember it was your birthday but I didn't send you a card. I remember this or that but not doing anything about it. Or I remember that you needed a lift but I didn't bother to go. It's almost as bad if not worse, isn't it, than forgetting. Forgetting, at least it's not intentional. At least it's just a fault. But to remember and not do something is an intentional act.

[17:10] So God directs the people here with three things, three indicators as it were, to remind them of what God did to deliver them. And I want to look at them and then look at what we are

called to by God ourselves today. And it's important that remembering is really to have a bearing upon the whole of our lives. The whole of our lives. If you look at the instructions in chapter 13 particularly, you see that God's instructions about remembering were to have influence upon us as individuals.

And we see there where we're told that on the day, verse 8, I do this because of what the Lord did for me. This is where the whole crux of what it means to be a Christian hangs. It's not enough that we say, I remember that Jesus died on Good Friday and I remember he rose again on Easter and I remember that Jesus was born at Christmas. There has to be an individual connection to those events. It has to be Jesus came into the world for me. He died on the cross for me. It was my sins he took there. And my faith is in him. There's no corporate, if I can put it that way, salvation. We can say, well, because I live in England, therefore I'm a Christian. No, it must be personal faith in a personal Savior who personally has rescued me. So it's individual. It has an effect upon me personally. It has an effect upon my family. You know, on two occasions we're told about how the deliverance was to have effect upon the children. On that day, tell your son, verse 8, and later on it says, in days to come, when your son asks this family. And in verse 9 we're told that the Lord God brought you out. We have a responsibility as Christians, particularly Christian parents, to share and to speak of the Lord Jesus Christ with our children. That is our responsibility primarily. It's good that we have Sunday schools. It's good that we have children's clubs. It's good that we have children's talks. But it is your and my responsibility as parents to share Christ and speak of Christ with our children. But it touches our families. It touches our relationships with those within our family. There's no such thing as a private faith.

Yes, it's personal, but it's not private. It's not something that you keep locked away from those you're in a relationship with. We see as well, of course, that it is to touch upon our life in the church. In verse 14, we have the Lord brought us out of Egypt. Us out of Egypt. And earlier on in chapter 12, we're told that this was something that all of the community of Israel were to participate in. All of God's people, verse 47. When we become a Christian, that's when we become part of the church of Jesus Christ. And the way in which we live that out is in the local church. Going to church does not make you a Christian, but if you are a Christian, you will go to church. Because you know that you are part of something wonderful and special. You're part of a family, God's family, God's people. And you have a common faith. And you have a way of sharing together what God has done for you together. So it's individual.

It affects our families. It affects our relationships in the life of the church. And it affects our relationship in the world around about us. Notice God said to them, when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Hivites, and Jebusites, and all the other ites as well. As Christians, we don't live in isolation. As Christians, we don't lock ourselves away in church buildings and say, there's our Christian bit of life. The rest of our life outside is nothing to do with God. No, we live as people in the world. And what we do in living for Christ should impact and relate to those around about us outside of the family of God. So in all our relationships, relationships, remembrance is to play a part. But also in everything that we do, in all the experiences of life. As you go through the chapter there, you've got birth, haven't you? The firstborn.

[21 : 42] You've got death, the redeeming, the killing of the animals. We've got how we eat. Eat unleavened bread. We've got what we talk about in those days when your son comes to you. Every experience and part of our lives is to be affected by our remembrance of what God has done for us. So what do we do?

What is it that God is calling us, commanding us to do in active remembrance of his salvation for us?

Well, there's one simple word, and it's there in verse 2 of Exodus 13. Consecrate. Consecrate. Not a word we hear a lot of today. It's not a common word, but we know what it means. It means, well, here it means the same word as holy, to set apart. We understand what it means better when we look at the command being explained in verse 12. You are to give over to the Lord, the first offspring of every womb. Why? Because all the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the Lord. The Israelites were to consecrate, to acknowledge that the firstborn son and the firstborn animal all belong to the Lord. They were gods. He had a right to own them for himself, and that we could redeem them. In other words, buy them back from God who owns them by sacrifice alone. Either the sacrifice of a lamb in the place of the child or the animal, with a donkey, it would have to be sacrificed itself as a way of showing that this belongs to God. This is his. Why does God do that?

[23 : 40] Why just the firstborn? Well, because, of course, of what happened on that Passover night when all the firstborn sons and all the firstborn animals of the Israelites were spared.

When God went through the land with that final plague, all of God's people were rescued. The firstborn sons, the firstborn animals were rescued, were protected, were kept. But all the firstborn of Egypt died.

So God owns them. They belong to him because he spared them and rescued them and delivered them. What about us? The Bible makes it clear that our lives belong to God. Here's 1 Corinthians chapter 6.

You are not your own, for you were bought with a price, therefore glorify God. What price did God pay for us did God pay for us that we are his? He paid for us with the most precious possession that he had, most costly thing that he had. 1 Peter chapter 1. You were redeemed, bought back with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. One of the things that often we just, we can't quite comprehend, is why was there so many animals that were killed in the Old Testament? Why did God call for sacrifice with blood? Why did animals suffer? Because ultimately, all of them were pointing to the greatest sacrifice of all, the sacrifice of the Son of God.

[25 : 26] You see, sin is not simply a matter of naughtiness. Sin is not just a matter of doing things that are selfish. We've toned it right down. What we've got to recognize clearly is this, that sin equals death.

And sin is a matter of life and death. And sin is serious because it brings upon this world and those who sin the curse of death. And the only way that death can be blotted out, as it were, is by death. And so for the sins of the people in the Old Testament, for them not to die for their sins, something else had to die in their place. A lamb, a bull, a kid, not a child, I mean a young goat.

For us who sinned against God, the curse of death demands a death. But not an animal, but the sinless, perfect Son of God, who died the death for us, that we should not suffer death.

When the Bible talks about death, it's not only talking about the cessation of life within our bodies. It's talking about the everlasting death of hell and eternal punishment in separation from God.

[26 : 57] So as a Christian, dear friends, we doubly belong to God. We belong to him because like all people, we have been created by God and given life by God and are sustained by God, and he provides and meets our needs, all of us, whoever we are, whether we recognize that or not. But as Christians, we are doubly God's because he has paid for us by paying the ransom for our rescue from sin and from hell with the cost of his own son's blood, the very blood of God. As Paul puts it in Acts 28, the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. So God owns us. We are his. We belong to him.

So what should we do? If we belong to God and we are to consecrate ourselves to God and recognize that we belong to him, how do we practice this remembrance? How do we live out this act of remembrance that affects all my relationships, that affects all my experiences, that shows that I remember that I am a saved person, that God has rescued me with a mighty hand?

Simply in this way. Obedience. Obedience. Look at verse 9. This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the Lord is to be on your lips. It doesn't mean that you just talk about it, but that you live it out.

You know God's will and you do it. Freedom from slavery to sin is not freedom to do whatever I like. That's exactly what sin is. No, it is freedom to live as God pleases. Freedom to live the right way. Freedom to be a slave of his. Here's Paul in Romans 6.

[29 : 00] Now you've been set free from sin. You've become slaves to God. But he's not like the old taskmaster, where sin is a taskmaster who is cruel and who oppresses. When we have God as our master and our Lord, he brings freedom, joy and liberty. To be under his rule, to be under his governance, to have him directing all parts of our life, is to be the fullness of the person God created us to be.

It's to live the fullness of life that we're meant to live. That's why God gives such clear commands about how and who may eat the Passover in chapter 12.

No foreigner is to eat of it. No temporary resident or hired worker may eat of it. It belongs to those who are God's. He gives instructions about the feast of unleavened bread.

A bread. Eat unleavened bread seven days. Nothing with yeast in it is to be seen. He's clear. Yeast, by the way, in the Bible is a picture, a symbol of sin. That's why God gives that illustration. It's a picture of sin.

And he stipulates the way the firstborn are to be redeemed. We've looked at that already in verse 13. He'd be the lamb. So what's behind all these commands? What's God actually saying in all these commands? He's saying something similar to this.

[30 : 23] You are to live your life showing that you belong to God, showing that you are different from everybody else in the world. The Passover was a special meal, a meal which set the people of God apart.

Only those who had been part of the family of God, part of the children of God who had been delivered from Egypt, they were to eat it, not the foreigner, not people to whom it meant nothing. The feast of unleavened bread was to make bread and eat it differently.

Differently to other people. Why don't you have yeast in your bread? Well, this is the reason, as the son would ask. The consecration of the firstborn was setting them apart as belonging to God, those children and animals, treating them differently.

Yes, all these three events link to what happened in Egypt. The meal they ate when they were delivered, the haste with which they left so they didn't have enough time to put yeast in with their dough, the plague upon the firstborn.

But in every sense, God is saying, look, you're now a different people. You're now a special people. You're now a rescued people. You're now my people. And the way you live, the way you act is to be different to the way you were before and different to those who have not experienced that wonderful deliverance.

[31 : 43] And so it is with us, dear Christians. Listen to this wonderful description that Peter writes about in his first letter. You, he's writing to Christians, you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

You and I as Christians are special people, not because we are good people or because we are more talented or more handsome, though for some of us that's true, or more beautiful, or more intelligent.

We're a special people because we belong to God, because he's done a wonderfully unique thing in our lives, which, yes, he wants to do in the lives of others, but has not happened yet.

And in one sense, what God has done for us as Christians and the way we are to live our lives is so that we might make others jealous, that they might want to be part of our gang.

They might want to be part of our church, part of our family. God has done an amazing thing in your life and mine, and we can forget it.

[33 : 03] Or we can take it for granted. The incredible blessings that Christ has brought upon us and in our lives must never be forgotten.

See, God was aware that once the people got into the promised land, once they'd gone through all the wilderness troubles and everything else, once they'd settled down and got their new homes and vineyards, he knew very well, like us, they'd take it for granted.

They'd be forgetful of all that God did for them. And so he wanted them to remember, to remember, to remember, and to show by the way they lived in their lives day by day, that they were thankful to God for what he'd done.

He said these, twice he speaks about the fact these commandments and these activities are going to be like a sign on your head and a symbol on your hand. In one sense, a sign on your head affecting our thinking, a sign on your hand affecting our doing, our action.

Dear Christian, are you remembering what Christ has done for you in everything that you do day by day? Is your life a life that says, I want people to see that I am thankful to Jesus Christ for what he's done for me.

[34 : 20] I want people to see that I belong to God and that I'm not my own, but I've been bought with a price. I want my life to be more marked than me wearing a poppy on Remembrance Sunday, that people will see that I am grateful in an obvious and visible way.

Our lives, dear friends, not just what we do on a Sunday, not just what we do in home groups, not what we just do from time to time in Christian things, not just what we do when we read the Bible or pray in our own homes, but everything we do has a reason and a purpose to show that we are thankful for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our salvation.

I'll close with these final words in Romans and chapter 12. Therefore, because of what Paul has just been talking about, the cross of Christ and his suffering for us, therefore, I urge you, brothers and

sisters, in view of God's mercy, his love, his care, his action, in view of God, in light of what God has done for you, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.

This is your spiritual act of worship. We're going to sing together a hymn which is indeed... Take my life and let it be, God, she pray, dear Lord, to thee.

Take my love and stand my days, let my love and ceaseless grace.

[36 : 38] Take my hands and let them be, God, the impulse of my love.

Take my feet and let them be, swift and beautiful for me.

Take my silver and my gold, God, the might will die with all.

Take my sins and live mind.

Thank you.

[38 : 13] May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will.

And may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom we glory forever and ever. Amen.

Thank you. Thank you.