

# The Reminder



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**Exodus 13:1-16**

Do any of you remember time and life before cell phones? If you remember that, then you remember there was that time when you left home thinking you knew everything you needed to get when you got to where you were going. You went and got it but when you got back home, whoever was sending you forgot to tell you everything to get. Since there was no personal communication device, that thing they forgot to tell you to get, you now have to go back and get it. Have any of you ever done that? Now, that is the good thing about those smart phones, amen? As a matter of fact, my smart phone has an app on it called "Reminder," and if I can remember to remind it, it will remind me of what I don't need to forget. I mean, I can just put it in there and when it comes time to be reminded, I am not thinking a thing about it, but all of a sudden a little warning goes off and I am reminded to do what I wanted it to remind me to do, and now I can do it. Now, if you are under eighteen you are probably not going to remember this, but do any of you remember ever tying a string around your finger? We tied a string around our finger to remind us of something. (Now, when you got to a certain age you might not remember why you put the string on your finger!) Have any of you ever pulled out an ink pen and

wrote on your palm? Maybe it was an address, a name, or a telephone number? Sure! Sometimes there is just a need to mark your hand so that you will remember a certain action, especially if that action is important for you to remember. Now, I do not know about you, but I not only need to see it on my hand, there are sometimes I need it right in front of my eyes. Have you ever put something on a notecard and then put the notecard on your dashboard right in front of your gauges? That is me! I have even got a piece of paper before and taped something on the mirror because every morning I brush my teeth and it is right in front of my eyes because it is that important to remember!

This morning as we open again to Exodus, we are going to move out of chapter 12 into chapter 13 and we are going to see God believed Israel needed a mark on their hand and frontlets on their eyes so that they would remember. Remember what? Remember that it was HE, by His strong hand, who had led them out of Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land.

### **Scripture**

***V. 1–2: "The Lord said to Moses, "Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine."***

***V. 11-16: "When the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and your fathers, and shall give it to you, you shall set apart to the Lord all that first opens the womb. All the firstborn of your animals that are males shall be the Lord's. Every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. And when in time to come your son asks you, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'By a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery. For when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals. Therefore I***

***sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.' It shall be as a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes, for by a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt."***

I want to share the backstory really quickly. God has passed through the land of Egypt and He has taken the firstborn of all the Egyptian homes — their firstborn sons and the firstborn of their livestock. While God was passing through the land of Egypt, He actually passed over the homes of the Israelites. He did not take their firstborn sons or the firstborn of their animals because a lamb had been substituted for that son. They had taken the blood of the lamb and applied it to the doorframes and the lintel of their homes, so when God passed through the land that night He saw the blood, they saw the blood, and He passed over. Now, God wanted to make sure that they remembered when they came into the land of Canaan that it was He, by His mighty hand that had redeemed them from evil and brought them into the land. He wanted them to remember that in order for them to be free from slavery it required a death. But He also wanted the firstborn to remember that not only were they redeemed from slavery but they were redeemed from death itself.

So, God gives Israel three marks, three signs, three statutes, to remind them of their exodus. The first was Passover. We have talked about Passover. Passover would lead into the second sign, which would be the feast of unleavened bread and we have talked about that. This morning we are going to discover that before He actually got them to the Red Sea, through the Red Sea, and onto the Promise Land, He gives them another mark on their hand. He gives them one more thing to be a frontlet on their eyes to remind them that it was not they who had redeemed themselves, but He had redeemed them. Now, if you are like me, I am getting this picture that God wants them to remember their redemption, amen? I would assume because God wants them to remember it to this degree there must be a danger if they forget about their redemption.

And so, here is the third mark He gives them — it is the consecration of the firstborn. Here is what God says, “Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever is the first to open the womb among the people of Israel, both of man and of beast, is mine.” Now, guys, this is pretty straight forward. You do realize this, right; the redeemed belonged to the redeemer. God says to Moses consecrate, dedicate, make holy, the firstborn to me, for whatever opens the womb first belongs to me. Wow! Have you ever thought about that? Just like Israel, if you have been redeemed you now belong to another. The one you belong to is the one you give credit for your redemption. So if you believe God is your redeemer then you should understand this truth: you belong to God. God said the firstborn belongs to me so we are going to make him holy; we are going to set him apart. He is not going to be like the other children; he is going to be different. Now, in case anybody is thinking this doesn’t sound fair, remember what the other option is for the firstborn — it is death. I think we would all agree if the choice is to die or to be set apart to God, we would want to be set apart to God. Amen?

So, Scripture says in verses 11 and 12, when you come into the land... no, no, no... that is not what Moses said! WHEN THE LORD BRINGS YOU INTO THE LAND and GIVES YOU the gift that He promised to you, set apart the first male that opens the womb in the animal world that you possess and among your sons and give them to Him. So that means if you have a sheep that lays down and gives birth, if it is a boy, you sacrifice it to the Lord. If you have a heifer, it is her first-time calf, and it is a bull, you sacrifice it to the Lord. Now, if you are not from a farm background you may not get what’s going on here. If you do have a farm background, this is serious. On the farm when calving is over, when kidding is over, when lambing is over, we have roughly about 50% males and 50% females. Do you get this picture? You have your prize heifer — this is a good heifer — if she gives you a bull, it doesn’t belong to you it belongs to God. Now you take that bull, you leave it with its momma for seven days, but on the eighth day you slit its throat and you give it to the Lord. But why? That is what your son is going to ask... *Daddy, that is Gracie’s first baby... Momma, Gracie has a bull... Praise the Lord.* No, PRAISE THE LORD!

See, if it had been a heifer we would get to keep it for ourselves, retain it in the herd, and raise more babies. But imagine as we begin to take the knife to that baby calf and our son says, "Dad, what are you doing?" You say, "Son, right here is a good time to remind you that we used to be in Egypt and we were slaves but God had a plan for our life because we were his firstborn. He told Pharaoh to let us go and Pharaoh wouldn't let us go, so the only way God could get Pharaoh to let us go was for Him to come in the night and take the firstborn of Pharaoh and everyone in the land of Egypt. But God provided salvation for us through a lamb. We put the blood on the doorpost to our house and when God passed through the land that night He passed over us and He has brought us to where we are. So we are giving this animal to God because it is His." Boy, would that be a mark on your hand? Would that be a frontlet on the eye of your children forever? Are you farmers adding this up? If you had a lot of livestock, you would probably offer half of all of the animals from your virgin animals. Somebody is going...whoa, that would be a sacrifice! That is right! Now you get it! That is what it took in order to free us from death, free us from slavery; it took a sacrifice.

Now, when it comes to your donkeys I do not want you to sacrifice your donkeys to me, God says. Is it not kind of strange here that God tells us not to sacrifice the donkey? But then He gives us a choice — we can either redeem the donkey or kill the donkey. If we decide to kill the donkey instead of redeeming the donkey, we can't slit the donkey's throat because that would look like we are sacrificing it to God and God doesn't want donkeys sacrificed to Him, so we must break its neck or redeem it. See, donkeys were fairly important on the farm back in those days; they were the beast of burden. Now, you have a beast of burden born, it is a male, and you have to make a choice. Do you want to keep this donkey? In order for you to keep this donkey, you have to sacrifice a lamb. So you have to value the life of the donkey, value the life of the lamb, and make a choice. If you value the value of the lamb more than you do the donkey, you have to break the donkey's neck and kill it. Then right after that, God tells us in the next sentence that we don't have a choice when it comes to our sons.

Yes, when they become teenagers we will want to break some of their necks, amen, but we can't when they are eight days old. Guess what we have to do to every firstborn son? We have to redeem him.

Now, I am not going to go this way in the sermon this morning, but it has been amusing to me this week reading the commentaries, scholars, and all of the people who see a correlation between the redemption of the donkey and the redemption of the firstborn son. Is that not kind of strange that God would talk about redeeming a donkey and then talk about redeeming a son? I am not going to go there, but you do know that there are a lot of qualities that, from time to time God takes from the donkey and applies to sinful humanity, right? As a matter of fact, if I can be nice, some of you have acted like a donkey before, amen, some of you have even been called a donkey before, but the *other* word for donkey. So here is what God does. God gives us a way to redeem our donkey but we have no choice when it comes to redeeming our sons. Why would God want Israel to redeem the sons and to remember what He did for them in leading them out of Egypt? We are redeeming our son — why? Here is what I believe you are going to see. I believe here God is not saying that the other children are not important. God is saying there is going to be a special responsibility to that first son that is born. The firstborn son is going to have this responsibility to serve his life dedicated to God. He is going to serve as a priest to God where he is going to be dedicated to the things of God and he is going to be a representative to the rest of the family.

What we are seeing in the book of Exodus with the redemption and consecration of the firstborn is we are seeing this truth — because of the salvation that God has brought to Egypt when they get in the Promised Land, one member of the family is going to show the rest of the family what a life lived to God looks like. Is that awesome or is that awesome? Here is what I want you to see — there is a lamb for a family, but not only is there a lamb for a family there is now a priest in each household when the families come to Israel, to Canaan. That member is going to show the rest of the family how a life lived for God really looks. That is going to be a mark on our hands and frontlets on our eyes when we see that son

dedicated to God. So when we get to Sinai, God is going to tell the nation that they are going to be a kingdom of priests. They are going to be a peculiar nation. Moses goes up on the mountain and is going to get the Ten Commandments. When he is up on the mountain getting the Ten Commandments, he also gets 613 laws. In Exodus chapter 22, God reminds them in the giving of the law that the firstborn son is to be given to Him. Then He reminds them also that every firstborn of the animals belongs to Him. Leave it with its mother for seven days, but on the eighth day, you have to give it to Him.

Now, Moses has been up on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights and God writing out the Ten Commandments on stone. Moses is coming down off of the mountain and he hears a racket, a noise, and it sounds like the noise of war. But Moses knows the noise of war and he says... *whoa, whoa, whoa, that is not the noise of war, Joshua. They are partying.* Do you all remember this? When Moses gets down to the bottom of the mountain he sees the children of Israel partying and they are partying around this golden calf. Does everyone remember that story?

Now, we are going to go into details in a few months, but get this picture. The Bible says while Moses was up on the mountain the people decided they didn't know what had happened to Moses so they told Aaron to make them gods who delivered them out of Egypt. So Aaron asked for all of their earrings and jewelry, he puts it in a fire, heats it up, gets it molten, lets it cool, and then takes a hammer and fashions it into an image of a calf. He sets the calf up and they start declaring it is Yahweh who led us out of Egypt. They start dancing, and then Aaron builds an altar to it. Moses come down, and can I say this, he is as mad as God is! Do you remember when Moses pleads with God not to pour His anger out on Israel? Now Moses is mad, he breaks the commandments, turns to Aaron and says... *WHAT HAVE YOU LET THESE PEOPLE DO!?* Now, I love this. Aaron says...*Moses, the people gave me their gold, I threw it in the fire, this calf jumped out, and there it is...*Moses: *Really? Where do you think I have been? I HAVE BEEN WITH GOD FOR FORTY DAYS AND FORTY NIGHTS AND YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THAT STORY?!* Aaron: *Yep, that is what*

*happened. That is my story and I am sticking to it, Moses.* Does anybody remember what Moses said? He said is anybody here on the Lord's side? Then all of a sudden, all of the sons of Levi step forward, and Moses says take your swords. They take their swords and go through the camp. Among those who were dancing to the golden calf and worshipping the golden calf, the influencers of that, the Levites killed, and three thousand people died by the sword. Then Moses says this: God has set aside the Levites to serve Him.

Now you understand why when you get to Numbers and they leave Sinai and are they are getting ready to march towards the Promised Land and they are arranged for war, God said to number the Levites. There were 22,000 Levites. Then God said number the firstborn of Israel. They numbered the firstborn of Israel, and there were 22,273. That is close! Do you know what God said then? He said since the firstborn belong to me, because of what I did in bringing you out of Egypt, I am now claiming the Levites instead of the firstborn sons. Why would God do that? Please do not miss this! What should that firstborn son have done, even though he was eight, twelve, eighteen, or twenty-five years old? What should that firstborn son have done when he saw Daddy dancing to the golden calf? What should that firstborn son have done when he saw his mom taking off her jewelry, giving it to Aaron, and them start fashioning it into a god? That firstborn son, as a priest before God, as a representative of the family of a life filled for God, that son should have said...*Daddy! Daddy! Stop! What are you doing? Daddy, I thought we took the life of the lamb so that I could live! I thought you told me that when we did that it was Yahweh who led us out of Egypt. Daddy, daddy, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? Momma, WHY?* Do you know what the firstborn son did? He did what many priests do today. He was silent. So what we are getting ready to see in the Bible is not just a family with a son who is dedicated to God, we are now going to see a nation with a tribe that is dedicated to God — the tribe of Levi.

While this is a historical story and it is true, it is a shadow, a type, of your salvation and my salvation. See, I want you to believe there was not only a lamb for a family and a lamb for a nation, but there was also a lamb for



the world. There is not only a family with a son who is dedicated to God, there is not only a nation with a tribe dedicated to God, but God also wants there to be a world who has a church that is dedicated to God. What I beg you to see this morning is this truth that in this historical story, it is a shadow, a type, of our salvation. Yes, God had a plan for the firstborn, and yes, God had a plan for the tribe, but God also has a plan for the church. He has a plan for the church because He offered His Son as the Lamb of God for the sins of the world and He wants the world to see a church within it that is dedicated to Him. This is why the Bible calls us as the church a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood. If you have repented of sin and put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ, if you have identified Him through believer's baptism, you are a priest, a priest who ministers on behalf of God to the world so that the world can see how a life looks when a life is lived in dedication to Him.

So, do you know what God wants us to remember? Our redemption. In being the redeemed in God and in being the church of the firstborn (as Hebrews 12 calls us), we need to remember we have been redeemed FROM, we have been redeemed TO, we have been redeemed BY, and redeemed FOR. We have been redeemed from sin. Did you hear me? Hey priest, you have been redeemed from sin. Our life shows those who know not Christ what a life can look like when it is redeemed from sin. We do not do what we *want* to do we do what we *ought* to do. Whoa! Did you hear that? As the church in America, we need to hear this. We live in a country that prizes freedom, but I am beginning to understand that we don't really know what freedom is anymore. Freedom is not the freedom to do what you want to do; freedom at its highest and purest level is the freedom to do what you ought to do. You have been freed from sin. You have been freed from believing that the world revolves around you. You have been freed from crowning yourself lord of your life and from those shackles that hold you captive to sin's behavior. YOU ARE FREE! You have walked out of a life of sin because God redeemed you FROM that TO Him to be a peculiar people, to be a holy priesthood, to be a ROYAL priesthood, and to be a PEOPLE that belong to Him. So, you have been set free from sin to serve Him.

By the way, you do know this, right? Just as the Israelites did not have to redeem the donkey, God did not have to redeem us. There was a choice involved when God decided to redeem man.

Man —> unclean, stubborn, sinful, rebellious

God's lamb, God's Son —> spotless, without blemish, obedient

God chose to redeem man, so God sacrificed His lamb. Peter reminds us that we were not redeemed by silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. Paul reminds us that in Christ we have redemption — the forgiveness of sins through His blood — redeemed FROM sin TO God BY the blood of the lamb FOR His glory. In Corinthians, Paul said know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is within you? How many of you have the Holy Spirit within you? Then listen to this — you are not your own. You were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your mind? No! Glorify God IN YOUR BODY! That is why Paul would write to the church at Rome, and based on everything in the first 11 chapters in that book, when he comes to the practical application part in chapter 12 he says, "Therefore brothers, I beseech you, I beg you by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service or act of worship. Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what is the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God." God wants His sons alive. He doesn't want us to be a dead sacrifice; He wants us to be a living sacrifice. He wants us to make a presentation of ourselves to Him based on what He has done for us in Christ. Why? Because to God, our bodies are holy and acceptable, they have been set apart, and that is the most reasonable thing we can do. No disrespect to anyone, but God is not asking you to be fanatical, God is not asking you to be radical, all God is asking you to do is be reasonable. Why does someone not write a book just called "Reasonable?" Do you know what the most reasonable thing you can do is? Just present your body to God alive from spiritual

death, alive to Him, dedicated, consecrated, and holy to Him. He says it is the most reasonable thing you can do because we are priests.

I told you this years ago, but my papaw raised hogs and I loved to help my papaw. My papaw gave me two caps when I was a young boy. One of my caps was the cap that we would work in and the other cap was the cap that we would go to town in because my papaw had this belief that when you went to town you did not wear the cap that you worked in, so Papaw had two caps. His go to town cap was always in his truck and I would see him take the hog cap off and put the go to town cap on because Papaw knew if you ever went into where the hogs were in total confinement, where there were 3,000 hogs in one building, let's just say what was in there came out with you. It was all over you. So Papaw knew you never wore your hog cap to town to go to the bank.

Now, I don't wear washed caps. I can spot a washed cap from one hundred yards. I don't know what it is but when a cap has been washed I just won't wear it. So I had this cap that my papaw had given me that had never been washed. I had, had it for about three years and it had been in the hog house about every day, it had been in the grain bins a lot; it had been all over the farm but it had never been washed. I just want to say when I would put that cap on every morning, that cap was holy and acceptable to me. It always did its reasonable service; it always sat on my head, kept the sun from burning my nose, kept the rain from getting on my hair, it identified me as a hog farmer, and I loved that cap.

Well, I got married in July of 1980, and after I got married one of the first disagreements my young bride and I had was over that cap. See, that cap that was holy and acceptable to me and had always done its reasonable service was not holy and acceptable to her. Our first major discussion was where my cap was going sit in our 14x70 mobile home. We discussed it. I wanted to sit it right there where you go out the back door on the lid of the washer and dryer and she didn't want it there. Well, you know me; I was reared Baptist. I knew once she said I do, I said I do, and he said we were, I was the head so I just put my foot down. I said the cap was going

to be right here, and sure enough, the cap was right there. Every time I would go out the back door I would grab that cap and put it on. It turned fall that year and I was pastoring a little church called Owen's Chapel. I was over towards Owen's Chapel, I came home, and I was going to go help Dad. I put my work clothes on and reached for my cap off of the dryer and it was not there. I just turned because I had just left my lovely wife, Celisa, in the kitchen. She was just thirty feet away. I said, "CELISA!" Silence..."WHERE IS MY CAP?" Silence... I had the unthinkable thought — so I go over to the washer, open up the lid of the washer, and it is not in there. Whew! But there is the dryer. I open up the dryer, look in the dryer, and it is not there either. She has done something with my cap...I am now, thirty feet later, in her presence and I am saying, "Honey, where is my cap?" I will never forget this. That little petite body of hers took her little petite fingers, cupped her face, and she said, "I tried to burn the trash today and it was so wet and damp that I could not get anything to burn. So, the only thing that I could think of to find in the house to burn was your cap." THERE WERE NO WORDS! I stomped those thirty feet, all of the pictures fell off of the walls of the trailer, I slammed the back door, got into my truck, and threw gravel all upside the front of our trailer. When I hit the blacktop driveway, I left a black mark. I went about one-quarter of a mile when, I promise you, I thought the Lord spoke to me. And here is what I thought I heard Him impress upon me...*Hmmm, you are that hurt over a cap that you thought was holy and acceptable to you and always did its reasonable service because your wife used it to start a fire in the trashcan? How do you think I feel when Satan takes what is holy and acceptable to me and uses my priest to start the fire of hell in an unbeliever's life? Whoa!*

God wants your boss, God wants your husband, your wife, He wants your family, He wants your work associates, He wants your classmates, He wants your students, He wants your bank, He wants your plant, He wants them all to know what a life looks like when a life is lived dedicated to God. Is that what your life looks like?