

INTRO:

PAUSE FOR TECH LEADER... Would you **Pray** with me? *“Father God, as we look to open your Word and hear from You today, we’re reminded that the faith and way of life You’ve articulated within these pages here is far more beautiful than any other we could have. Because it’s one marked, not by contradictions, but profound dichotomies...things like, as we just sang, being BOTH sinners AND children of God...Judgement and mercy. Law and grace. Gospel preaching and social justice. And as we’ll see today BOTH your unparalleled holiness AND your unequalled love. Speak to us, and help us **break free** from whatever hinders us from receiving, delighting-in and sharing the freedom we can enjoy because of what you’ve accomplished in Christ. We pray this in His name - And all God’s people said, “Amen.”*¹

If have Bible or Bible App and I hope you do, go ahead and turn to **Exodus 12**. We’re continuing our “True Myth” series today and looking at a really mysterious story/the climactic scene in the book of Exodus, AND one which is, not only, a kind of summary of the Biblical plotline, but a text that really sheds light on, I think, one of the bigger reasons why people leave the church OR are hesitant to commit to a church in the first place. And that is: A belief that church and Christianity/regardless of being true or not, isn’t good, BECAUSE, we think it’s just about a set of rules, duties, and obligations that really don’t speak to the most pressing issues of life, AND when they do, restrict our ability to live and experience a rich, full life. Maybe you’ve felt that!

What I wanna do today is two things: **First**, put that objection to the test, by ultimately observing how much MORE, not less, MORE freedom is found in following Christ than anything else... And then **Second**, by God’s grace, inspire those of you who call Hub home, to see why our mission of “*Sharing the Freedom and Family of Christ*” deserves your total buy-in, now more than ever!...Two Things! But first let’s listen to the reading of God’s Word together... **Cyndy S Intro’s Self > Exodus 12:1-13, 21-32...**

TEXT:

Thanks **Cyndy**...So as I mentioned, **Exodus 12** here is the climactic scene of Exodus. And if you recall from two weeks ago, we left off with God continuing to forward His plan of bringing a savior, through the family of Abraham, by means of, not just thwarting the evil that was, for example, directed at Joseph, but actually using it to further His saving objectives.² The result, as we saw, was that the Jewish nation was not only preserved, but afforded opportunity to multiply in the land of Egypt...SO...when you get flip from Genesis to Exodus here, what you find is that Israel, though multiplied, is now enslaved to Egypt/under the rule of a new and evil Pharaoh. **Exodus 1** actually begins saying, *“Then Joseph, and all that generation died. But the people of Israel increased greatly...so that the land was filled with them. (But) there arose a NEW king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.”* A King, we’re told, who out of concern for Israel’s growing political power, began sadistically enslaving the Israelites...doing things like ordering that ALL Hebrew males, born at the time, be executed/a kind of mass abortion, that really was,

¹ Dichotomies adapted from insight in: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/tgc-podcast/ray-ortlund-on-renewal-for-tired-pastors/>

² Thought adapted from “The Saving of Many Lives: A Public Faith—November 17, 2013 - Genesis 50:15–21 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive, 2012-2013* (New York: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

not just sadistic, but Satanic... cuz anytime you/certainly a culture-at-large, in anyway, justifies or just turns a blind eye to the killing of fellow image bearers of God/certainly the unborn, who don't have the ability to protect themselves, you can be SURE that Satan is at work. That's exactly what was happening in Egypt... BUT by God's grace, you might know the story, one baby/the baby Moses, is miraculously spared, raised, and ultimately called by God to lead Israel out of Egypt, in what becomes this great back-and-forth drama where Moses goes to Pharaoh and says, "Let my people go!" Pharaoh says, "No!" So God sends a plague, Moses comes back again and says, "Now, let my people go!" Pharaoh again says "No!" so God sends another plague... until after 9 plagues, we get to **Exodus 12** here and this final, really bone-chilling, 10th plague of God promising to wipe-out every firstborn son in Egypt, as a WAY of executing justice on Pharaoh for having tried to wipe out ISRAEL'S children.³ Bone-chilling!... But ALSO, you understand... defining! Because this event here, which I said is a kind of synopsis of the Biblical plot-line, is something Jews still commemorate today... Passover... Cuz you see in **v.2**, the Lord tells Moses, "This month shall be for you the beginning of months/the first month of the year." For Jews, Passover is THE central thing that makes em who they are. A kind of New Years or July 4th - their Freedom Day.⁴... And there's really **2 Concepts** you have to understand about Passover here, after which we'll draw out some applications related to whether or not Church and Christianity is restrictive. But **2 Concepts**:

First, you see the concept of **The Firstborn**: In **vv.12, 23** and **29** you see God promising and then fulfilling His promise to take the firstborn. And you might be saying, "Why's God picking on firstborns here?" I'm a firstborn/many of you are. Why us?... And the short answer is: Because of what firstborns represented. See, in ancient cultures the family was looked at like a unit. In our culture, we look at families as a collection of individuals right, but in ancient culture, your individuality was secondary to your familiarity. And WITHIN the family, the firstborn son was the prize possession, because HE represented the future of the family... Lotta pressure on you firstborn sons out there!... So when God says, "I'm gonna take your firstborn," what He's very clearly saying and what every Israelite would've immediately UNDERSTOOD Him to be saying is, "you owe me your future, your well-being, your life. I own your soul!" Which to us, might sound odd, but if you were to go back to Genesis and read the very famous story of God asking Abraham to sacrifice his firstborn son Isaac, you'd see that, weirdly, Abraham never objected/never said, "God this is ridiculous/cruel/unfair." No! He went along with it/reluctantly, but he went along with it, because HE/and every Israelite knew this principal of owing our lives to God. After all, we don't HAVE life apart from God creating and sustaining us. And so in knowing that, Abraham/like every other Israelite, knew that if God ever called in our debt, because we'd sinfully sought to, in some way, find life outside of Him... the price would be... the firstborn. That's why incidentally, this 10th plague is unique in comparison to the previous 9! The previous 9 plagues/those'd been singularly directed at Egypt/put Egypt in danger. But HERE the Israelites are told that if they don't obey these Passover instructions they TOO will be in

³ Context Summary adapted from insights from: <https://summitchurch.com/GetFile.ashx?Guid=0ac997ba-9c60-4ed7-a8b2-d6a4a83b7916> + "Moses & the Grace of God - Life of Moses - July 2, 1995 - Exodus 12:1-13 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

⁴ Insight adapted from: "The Price of Freedom - Exodus 12:3-31" - J.D. Greear + "The Story of the Lamb: The Gospel According to Moses: Discovering the Lost Language of Salvation" - September 29, 2002 - Exodus 12:1-13 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

danger. So what's God telling us with all this? He's telling us that, payment for sin, of course applies to everyone; both Egyptian and Jew alike/those considered irreligious and outside of God's ways - the Egyptians AND those considered religious and worshippers of God - the Israelites... All of us! Because of sin and being sinners, we're ALL, naturally under condemnation. **Romans 3:23** says it this way, "*there's no distinction. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God*"... And I know that is a REALLY unpopular idea, cuz most of us/most people don't feel like they're worthy of God's condemnation. I mean we know we aren't perfect, but generally we're "ok" right, especially in comparison to others? No! Cuz what this passage and really the whole of Scripture tells us is: that God doesn't judge on a curve... And by the way, that's a good thing! Cuz if you say, like a lot of people in Boston say, "*I believe in a higher being or God, but just one who loves us. I don't believe in a God of wrath, who would punish us for sin, and ultimately need to be assuaged through the substitutionary death Christ.*" If you say that, ironically, and with all due respect, your God of "love", is actually far LESS loving than my God of wrath. Cuz a "god" who says, "*I love you,*" but then never shows you through something like the atoning work of His Son, or worse never punishes sin, brokenness and injustice... isn't, you understand, a loving god.⁵ It's an apathetic/saccharine/I don't-care-what-you-do God. This concept of the firstborn here/the taking of the firstborn was God's way of telling the people of Israel, what He'd been telling em for years: That when you sin/when you and I don't, in every way, live for the King who created us, because we instead choose to live for ourselves, it's a kind of cosmic treason... that deserves death. ***That's the first concept you gotta understand.***

The **Second** and **Final** one/which is really like the other side of the same coin, is the concept of **The Substitute Lamb**: Cuz you see, within these Passover preparations every Israelite household was to take a specific lamb, kill it, eat it in a prescribed way, and then sprinkle it's blood over the front door of their houses as a SIGN that the members of that household had followed the Lord's instructions, and were in a sense taking shelter under the blood, so as to be "Passed...Over" by, as **v.23** says, "*the destroyer*" / the deserved judgment of God... The Substitute Lamb. So **First**, the **Lamb!** Because at every household, you see, one of two things died: Either a firstborn son, OR, if they provided it, a lamb. Now, we modern people hear this kinda thing and say, "*that seems extreme. Why doesn't God just forgive like us? Why need a lamb.*" And it's a fair question, but honestly, it fails to understand something really important. And that is: with every sin/every act of brokenness, there's ALWAYS payment required. For example, if you get into a car wreck, getting your car fixed'll require payment right? Either by you or someone else depending on who caused the wreck... There has to be a payment. Or let's say the brokenness/the sin is a little more nuanced. Like someone really treats you like a jerk... What do we tend to do? Repay em right? Treat em like a jerk back... Or if you're the "non-confrontational type", what do you do? Oh you still pay em back. You just do it inwardly... harbor anger, even hatred toward em or just cancel em altogether... Or maybe you're neither of those. Maybe you're the type who's a little more predisposed to feeling like things are your fault, so when someone treats you like a jerk, you don't repay THEM, you repay yourself! YOU feel shame and tell yourself things like, "*It's all my fault.*" ***The point is:*** There's ALWAYS a payment

⁵ Explanation adapted from "The Story of the Lamb: The Gospel According to Moses: Discovering the Lost Language of Salvation" - September 29, 2002 - Exodus 12:1-13 - Timothy J. Keller, [The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive](#) (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

for sin. For forgiveness to actually happen, a payment has to be absorbed, EITHER by you or someone else... Which is why **Second**, you gotta see, not just the Lamb, but the **Substitution**. Because, not only is it God, in effect saying, *"I graciously established this arrangement because I DON'T wanna punish you. I love you. I wanna give you a way out,"* but too, even in the details OF this arrangement, there's evidence of God's grace. Cuz for example, you see in **vv.3-5**, when He tells every household to procure a lamb to give them a way out from His punishment, He basically says, *"and if you can't afford one, go in with your neighbor and split the cost/that'll suffice."*... This whole thing with the substitute lamb and the firstborn is a picture of God's grace in the midst of God's justice. He's a God of both Grace and Justice. Mercy and Righteousness. Forgiveness and Holiness... Which is why, in **vv.29-31**, after the Lord's struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from *"the firstborn of Pharaoh, to the captives in the dungeon, to (even) the firstborn of the livestock,"* you see there's this combination of sorrow and freedom; with, as it says, *"a great cry (going out) in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead,"* but then Pharaoh quickly FREEING Moses and the people... Sorrow and Freedom... That's Passover!

TRUTHS:

So what does this all tell us about the objection that church and ultimately Christianity restricts us from living a rich, full life. Well I think **3 Things**: **First**, it tells us something of **The Myth of Freedom** that, maybe especially we as Americans buy into. And I say "myth" because, I think we all have to admit that while we're "free" to do a lot of things/honestly "free" to live the way we want, we really aren't free to live the way we ought. Part of what this Passover account reveals is that every person - religious and irreligious/moral and immoral/rich-poor/conservative-liberal/we're ALL naturally and equally under condemnation, because we DON'T/CAN'T live the way we ought. Ya know the 10 Commandments/later in the book of Exodus, are kinda like the standard for how we're to live. But if you go through em, you realize very quickly that we don't do too well with em. Cuz just take the first one of *"having no other Gods,"* which is sorta like the gateway commandment. Break it and you're bound to break the rest. But have you ever asked yourself if you've "had no other gods?" Cuz you know what that means right? It means you've ever put anything in your life before the God of the Bible? You've always had Him been pre-eminent in your thoughts, affections, and actions... so that, for example, you've never gotten more excited about a new romance, new job, new possession than you have about Him?... I don't know about you, but right there, I'm already takin' the L. And that's just the first commandment. NONE of us live the way we ought... And incidentally, to those who say, *"well I don't believe in the 10 Commandments or transcendent, moral absolutes, so I'm good."* Ok, well then let's do this: Imagine that around your neck there's an invisible Alexa that only ever hears the things YOU say other people oughta do. So it only picks up YOUR moral standards... If, at the end of your life, we were to take that device and have it speak an evaluation OF your life, I can guarantee that there's not one person on earth, who could live up to even even their OWN standards, much less God's⁶... See, it's a myth to say we're free, because while, for the most part, we're free to live the way we want; we're not free to live the way we ought!

⁶ Illustration adapted from "The Story of the Lamb: The Gospel According to Moses: Discovering the Lost Language of Salvation" - September 29, 2002 - Exodus 12:1-13 - Timothy J. Keller, [The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive](#) (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

Which brings me **Second** to: **The Means of Real Freedom**: And I'll tell you, it's NOT trying harder to be better. That'll only produce a dark inferiority complex when you fail OR a nasty superiority one when you succeed! No! What this Passover account shows us is that real freedom/freedom to not just live the way you want, but live the way you ought, **is found through the substitution of the lamb!** You know, we've been saying throughout this series, that the Bible, in all it's 66 books and 31,102 verses is telling one story and whispering one name. And it's certainly true here, because...you see, just as the lamb was a substitute for Israel, in that IT was judged instead of them; and they could be saved if and only if they took shelter under it's blood...so too us. Cuz if you were to turn over to **John chapter 1** what you'd find is that when John the Baptist, who's really the great bridge character between the Old and NT's, first lays eyes on Jesus, he says this, "*Behold the Lamb of God.*" And as one commentator points out, that wasn't a normal term you'd use for a great leader. Like "*behold, General Patton/Winston Churchill, Martin Luther King...standing there like a fluffy sheep.*" No! Because what John was saying was not, "*Behold here's A lamb of God,*" but "*Behold here's THE lamb of God.*"⁷ The holy one who's going to save us from the condemnation of our sin, by becoming sin for us. Not a little wooly animal, but the very Son of God come down to live the life you and I should've lived but couldn't, and die the death we definitely should've died, but didn't...OUR SUBSTITUTE!

Friends, can I tell you, that there's real freedom/greater freedom than you could ever imagine waiting for you if only you'll behold Jesus standing in your place! I'll just give you two ways it brings about real freedom: **First**, beholding Christ in your place/it frees you from the arrogance, over-confidence and superiority complexes that ruin so many of our lives and the lives of those around us. Cuz when you see that though you deserve death for your sin, Jesus, the sinLESS one stood in your place as your substitute, I mean, it humbles you to the dust. How can it not? It eviscerates any sense of being superior, or for that matter, being able to in ANYWAY hold the kind of grandiose opinions about yourself that can so easily cause you and to look down on or even marginalize others! You can't! Jesus as your substitute frees you from any ounce of feeling superior...But **Second**, it frees you from the shame, guilt, and inferiority that can stunt or even spiral our lives into depression, addiction, or the like. Cuz Friend, when you see that Jesus, the HOLY one stood in your place as your substitute, it affirms you to heavens. - Cuz the God of the universe willing to give His very life for you! My goodness! How could I ever feel less-than: as a Pastor, a Husband, a Dad, a friend/how could you? In other words, beholding Christ in your place makes you humbly courageous and courageously humble. You know that kind of person that's simultaneously gentle, kind, gracious, safe for people, joyful in suffering, able to rejoice in other's successes, BUT at the same time utterly passionate, gritty, full of conviction, doesn't wilt under pressure, willing to risk in order to reach people with the good news of this God! A person who, as Tim Keller says, is both "*a lamb and a lion at heart*"⁸...I mean, isn't that how we all wanna live? I know I do! And Hub, I want us to live that way too!...Don't you see? This is a freedom that not only, speaks to everything you're dealing with/and we're dealing with/and our

⁷ Explanation adapted from: "The Price of Freedom - Exodus 12:3-31" - J.D. Greear + "Moses & the Grace of God - Life of Moses - July 2, 1995 - Exodus 12:1-13 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

⁸ "Moses & the Grace of God - Life of Moses - July 2, 1995 - Exodus 12:1-13 - Timothy J. Keller, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

culture's dealing with, but which you just can't get outside of faith in Christ...And so, it deserves our complete buy-in!

So **Third and Finally**, and by way of application here, let me real briefly, show you what that buy-in looks like. It looks like two things/write these down: **Receiving and Remembering/Receiving and Remembering**: Cuz put yourself in the Israelites' shoes for a second. Moses comes to em and tells em to get their lambs ready or else they'll wake up on the morning and find a dead family member right? You gotta believe some of those Israelites were in one of two camps: Some of em had to've been thinking, *"This is crazy. There goes Moses with His right-wing, anti-science, hell-fire and brimstone conspiracy theories again,"* while others were probably thinking: *"Moses has finally lost it. Doesn't he know we're Israelites/children of Abraham, the Evangelical, moral majority. God would never do that to us."* In other words, there was prolly a ton of objections and reasons NOT to **Receive** and obey the word of God...Just with like us right? What'll my family or friends think if I really take seriously following Christ? Will my neighbors or co-workers start being awkward with me if I finally share what I believe or just ask em what they believe? What'll happen with my job if I choose to take an ethical stand because of Christ. Or my finances if I actually start tithing and being truly generous in light of Christ's generosity to me?...What'll happen if I actually obey God's calling on my life?...The list goes on-and-on and with any of em, it's so easy, isn't it? to say, *"this is crazy,"* and shrug it off or just drown it out with more Netflix and FaceBook...only to find ourselves in the end/like the Egyptians, NOT more free, but LESS. Friend, you've gotta fight to **receive** and obey God's word. ***What does that look like for you today?***

But **Second**, WE/AS A CHURCH have gotta **PRIORITIZE Remembering** the Gospel. Israel was told to memorialize the event of the Passover. We didn't read it, but **v.14** says, *"This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast."* Which is why Jews still observe Passover today. And the reason for that is because it was a kind of OT Gospel: THE event in their history that was to give shape to their whole lives; namely, how they viewed God... themselves...and others...How much more for us who don't have a KIND of Gospel, but THE Gospel, which even more shapes, **first**, how we view God: not as someone we're working to appease, but someone, who Himself, did all the work in Christ to save and set you free...**second**, see ourselves, not with guilt and shame where we're always trying to replay, repay or undo what we've done, but can rest in how God sees us...and **third**, see others, not as less-than or better-than but EQUALLY as us in need of receiving, believing and remembering the Good News of Christ's love and salvation before it's too late! So Hub I wanna challenge you: ***What would it mean for YOU to prioritize receiving AND remembering the Gospel together? - Sunday Gatherings, Missional Family Meetings, DNA Groups - And how can WE joyfully partner with you in that today? ...*** Take a moment to consider that, after which we'll move into our breakout rooms.

APPLICATION:

At this time we're gonna move into breakout rooms for just a few minutes, so that you have an opportunity to begin discussing that question you just thought about, with others in your Missional Family...If you're not connected to a Missional Family, no worries - we invite ya to remain here and enjoy just a low-key time to connect and ask any other questions you might have...But after a few minutes discussing the question onscreen **NOW**...we'll re-gather back here for a sending blessing...Ok? Ok!...

- ***This Sunday's Application Questions: What would it mean for YOU to prioritize receiving and remembering the Gospel and how can WE joyfully partner with you in that?***
- ***CHARLIE BREAKOUT: Welcome > Connected? > Q&A / Abridged Covenant Card***

CELEBRATION:

Welcome back. Hub...I hope that gave you a chance to start a conversation that we really do hope you'll continue during your respective Missional Family Meetings this week. But more importantly, I hope you're seeing or have been reminded about how much MORE freedom is found in following Christ than anything else. And subsequently, how, now more than ever, our mission as a church of "*Sharing the Freedom and Family of Christ*" deserves your total buy-in - your participation, your care, your giving. All of it!

SENDING:

So Church as you are SENT into your week, receive this, our Missional Family Meeting passage and blessing for the week: **Romans 6:20-23**, which says, "*For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting from the things of which you're now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But NOW that you've been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the FREE gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" Go in peace, walking in the freedom of Christ together! Thanks. **You are Sent!**