

Text: Exodus 12:37-51, 13:17-22

Title: "God leads His newborn people"

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Introduction: On December 23, 1928 at 1246 State Street in Salem, Oregon, the nine-year old son of a prominent resident found a blue-eyed baby girl about a month old, wrapped in a blanket, in a rocking chair, with a warm bottle of milk at her side, abandoned on the front step of their house. Not much later, a woman came forward claiming to be the child's aunt, but this was not the first child this criminal had stolen with a false claim, and so after 14 months this imposter was put in the Oregon State Hospital. Next came decades of foster care for the infant, living on her own as a teen, and suffering multiple divorces as an adult.

In these chapters of Exodus, we have been reading about the birth of a new nation. In the birth of this nation, God's work of redemption is on display in a way that can make every one of us as born again children of God thankful for what God has done to free us from the bondage of sin through the sacrifice of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. We have thought upon many of these salvation themes of the exodus together.

So what does the Lord do with His newborn people after giving birth to their nation? The answer to that question is the focus of our passage this morning. Much unlike the 1923 story from Salem, Oregon, the Lord faithfully leads His newborn people. I want us to notice three ways from the passage in which this was true for Israel, the newborn nation. And then, we will see how these same faithful leading is available to us who are born again believers today. The Lord never leaves His newborns abandoned to the care of others.

I. God leads His newborns to special provisions (12:37-42).

Illustration: The mother who abandoned her child two days before Christmas left her with a warm bottle, a blanket, and a rocking chair. In the end, though, we would all understand that those provisions fell short. Every little baby needs a loving mom and dad, a home that is bound together by the strength of their marriage, and the spiritual, emotional, and physical support over years, which only loving parents can provide.

Application: The Lord's provisions never fall short. He makes some wonderful provisions for His newborn people.

(1) God provides a defense that protects their freedom (v. 37). Because 600,000 were walking, Bible students believe that the total population of this newborn nation was roughly 2MM people. Once they were defenseless slaves, but now they had 600,000 who could provide for their nation's defense. Every newborn believer has a spiritual freedom from the bondage to sin that is adequately defended by an unfailing Advocate. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14).

(2) God also provides resources that change their destitution (v. 38). The previous passage speaks of how many provisions came from the Egyptians, their former masters. Now here we read of a *mixed multitude*. The idea of that term is that there were many people whose lives were so interwoven with those of the Israelites that they decided to leave with the Israelites in the exodus. The term *mixed multitude* is used in Num. 11:4 to describe fringe opposition to Moses's leadership, but the original language indicates that this is a different group. Moses's Cushite wife may have been one of the group referred to here at the exodus.

Certainly, as born again people, our lives are interwoven with many whom we hope will come with us out of Egypt. Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." The gospel spreads from faith to faith as lives newly born are interwoven with the lives of others to whom they are a gospel witness.

(3) God provides a few moments that correct 430 years (vv. 39-42). Their salvation happens so quickly, they do not have time to let their dough rise with leaven. That is the way justification works. The legal condemnation of years of bondage to sin is wiped out in a single instant, and so Jesus could say of the publican who humbly prayed, "Lord, be merciful to me the sinner," "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:14). No one has been in bondage to sin too long to be saved in an instant, with this same simple and humble prayer.

II. God leads His newborns with a special identity (12:43-51).

Illustration: Some who remember the Salem baby left on the doorstep wonder how her life might have been different if the imposter-aunt had never been allowed to bamboozle the authorities. Clarity on her identity was certainly critical. Also, the baby's difficult life was ultimately caused because she lost her own clear sense of identity through this abuse.

Application: Keeping the identity of His newborns clear and distinct is a very important way in which God leads them in His constant care. Whereas a baby's identity is defined by

the love of parents in the home, Israel's identity as the newborn nation of the Lord is tied up in the Passover Lamb. Similarly, the believer's identity as the newborn child of God is tied up in the Lamb of Calvary.

The identifier of Israel's identity was circumcision. It symbolized the removal of sin with which we are all born. All were welcome to join Israel (v. 49), but they were only welcome if willing to be circumcised. In the New Testament era, God's visible program is no longer the nation of Israel, but now Jesus's local churches. We too must guard our identity. We too have an identifier that helps us do so. The Great Commission of our era puts it this way: "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).

How identifiable are we who claim to be disciples of Christ? If the Nazi Gestapo came driving down our driveway this morning ready to arrest anyone who was a believer in Jesus Christ, would there be enough objective evidence to arrest you? Our special identity is tied up in the Lamb of Calvary, and although everyone is invited through the gospel to come to the cross and join us in worship there, we must never compromise our identification with the cross in exchange for more favor from the world.

Maintaining our distinct identity means some will not want to join us, because they want to act on their own terms rather than on the Lord's terms. Jesus was clear that we cannot lower His terms to make it easier on those we wish would join us: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

God leads us with this special identity – the Passover sacrifice, and its Lamb whose bones were not to be broken (v. 46;

John 19:31-37, "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.") John is saying, "Because Exodus 12:46 is in the Bible, you should turn from your sin and trust Christ."

III. God leads His newborns with a special love (13:17-22).

Illustration: On Thursday night I watched two programs on TV. One was the presidential debate, and the other was the first episode of a series on recipients of the Medal of Honor. Juxtaposed that way, these viewing experiences communicated two starkly contrasting presentations of what it means to be an American. There is something about a troop leader charging 200 yards in the face of enemy fire to disable their machine gun nest and save his fellow soldiers that is very different from a presidential debate. The medal recipient I learned about was shot three times making that charge, and he got up all three times. And after taking the nest, they came under fire again, and so he charged again, this time losing his life.

Application: God leads His newborn nation in this passage with the kind of love that many in our nation have displayed on the battlefield for their fellow soldiers. C. H. McIntosh

put it this way: “Jehovah not only selected a path for His people, but He also came down to walk with them therein, and make Himself known to them according to their need. He not only conducted them safely outside the bounds of Egypt, but He also came down, as it were, in His traveling chariot, to be their Companion through all the vicissitudes of their wilderness journey. This was divine grace” (2. 171).

(1) God loves His newborns when they are threatened by their enemies (vv. 17-18). He understands that war is ahead of them, but they are not ready yet. One commentator noted that they needed to go to Sinai first before they would be ready for the ferocity of opposition (Davis, 164). In the life of the believer, the Lord faithfully promises to never give us more than we can handle at the time: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

(2) God loves His newborns even when His promises are afar off (v. 19). Joseph had made this request some 400 years earlier. Heb. 11:22: “By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.” He saw the coming city that Abraham also saw, even though it was yet “afar off” (Heb. 11:13, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”).

(3) God loves His newborns whether they walk in the day or in the night (vv. 20-22). The pillar of this passage is what Bible students call a *Christophany*. It is a pre-incarnate revelation of God’s presence mediated in objective visible form by the Son of God. Eventually, we will see that Moses talks to

God when He talks to the pillar, and Israel worships God truly when they bow before the pillar (Exod. 33:9-11). Moses could speak to God through it like a friend face-to-face.

This morning, God speaks to us through His Word given to us by His Spirit. And so the Psalmist declares, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). Have you used it to speak with Him face-to-face?

Conclusion: And so the Lord leads His newborn people to special provisions, a special identity, and with special love. A question remains – do we want to follow Him? I want to share a hymn that contains a prayer that I think is the only way to properly respond. It has a number of themes in it from the Book of Exodus, and it is titled, "Savior, I Follow." It was written by a 19th century pastor of Memorial Presbyterian Church in New York named Charles S. Robinson.

"1 Savior, I follow on,
Guided by thee,
Seeing not yet the hand
That leadeth me.
Hushed be my heart and still;
Fear I no further ill.
Only to meet thy will
My will shall be.

"2 Riven the rock for me,
Thirst to relieve,
Manna from heaven falls
Fresh ev'ry eve.
Never a want severe
Caused my eye a tear,
But thou dost whisper near,
"Only believe."

“3 Often to Marah's brink
Have I been brought;
Shrinking the cup to drink,
Help I have sought,
And with the prayer's ascent
Jesus the branch hath rent,
Quickly relief hath sent,
Sweet'ning the draught.

“4 Savior, I long to walk
Closer with thee;
Led by thy guiding hand,
Ever to be
Constantly near thy side,
Quickened and purified,
Living for him who died
Freely for me.”

God faithfully leads His newborn people. Will you follow?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching