

# When God Says "It's Mine"

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 11 April 2021

Preacher: Guest: Eric Ickes

[ 0 : 00 ] turning your Bibles to Exodus chapter 13. And while you're turning there, Greg has some handouts here, some outlines. If you'd like to follow along, take some notes.

Also in regards to our ministry, we have prayer cards and even some bookmarks out in the foyer. Feel free to take those. We'd love to be on your refrigerator or on your missions wall, wherever you keep prayer cards for missionaries.

And so we'll sort of haunt you there, remind you to pray for us. That'd be a great privilege. So this morning as we look into God's Word, I want to offer maybe some, maybe the key word is perspective.

How many of you have ever seen the movie Ratatouille? Okay. All right. Most of us have seen Ratatouille. I really like that movie. It's been out a long time. But so, you know, the food critic comes into the restaurant and he orders perspective and they don't know whether it's not on the menu.

And so basically he says, okay, you give me your best and then I'll offer you the perspective. We think about that word perspective. It means how you're viewing life, how you're viewing a situation.

[ 1 : 22 ] It comes from your background, your beliefs. It's sort of like your glasses. What you're looking through to make sense of life.

It guides you. It guides you. You will base decisions upon the perspective that you've gained from life.

When we find the Hebrew people here in Exodus chapter 13, I think God was trying to build within them a theological or divine perspective.

He was trying to teach them how to view himself as God. Okay. It's been a couple months since I was reading through Exodus.

But when I came across Exodus chapter 13, verses 1 and 2, it's like God just arrested my attention. He caught me.

[ 2 : 22 ] And he was saying, Eric, pay attention. Perspective. Look at verses 1 and 2. Exodus 13, 1 and 2.

This is what God's word said. Then the Lord spoke to Moses saying, Consecrate to me all the firstborn. Whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast, it is mine.

It's those last three words that really caught my attention. Where God said, It is mine. Now how do you feel when someone says those words to you? Perhaps you're about to play with a certain toy when another child says, Ah, it's mine.

Perhaps you're about to take the last can of soda or the last piece of pie when someone else says, Uh-uh. It's mine. Or us adults in here, it's tax season, right?

And the IRS is saying, It's mine. They're laying claim to something that we thought was ours, and they're saying, No, it is mine. So how do you react? What emotions do you feel?

[ 3 : 30 ] What thoughts come to your mind? I suspect that most of us first respond with some negative emotions, some negative thoughts. Most of us probably feel offended or perhaps even angry.

After all, people who make such claims of ownership, they're the ones that seem selfish, presumptuous, proud. And in contrast, we can feel unloved, neglected, even humiliated when they say, It's mine.

But how do you feel when God claims that something or someone belongs to him? How do you feel when God says to you, It is mine.

Let's consider several examples this morning where God laid claim to certain possessions, loyalties, or affections of other people.

I want you to hold your place in Exodus 13. We'll come back there. But turn forward to 1 Kings 17. 1 Kings 17.

[ 4 : 36 ] We're going to begin in verse 8. 1 Kings 17, verse 8. God's word says, And the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there.

See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you. Verse 10. So this is Elijah. So he arose and went to Zarephath.

And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, Please bring me a little water and a cup that I may drink. And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hands.

So she said, As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread. Only a handful of flour in a bin and a little oil in a jar. And see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it and die.

And Elijah said to her, Do not fear. Go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first and bring it to me. What?

[ 5 : 46 ] Really? What presumption here? Okay, you have one little bit for your last meal, and Elijah says, Make me some first. He says, Bring it to me, and afterward make some for yourself and your son.

For thus says the Lord God of Israel, The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day of the Lord sends rain on the earth. So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah.

And she and he and her household ate for many days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke by Elijah.

You know, I'm so intrigued by this account, especially that one detail there. God told Elijah that he had commanded, as if he had already commanded this woman, this desperately poor widow, to provide for Elijah.

Nevertheless, materially speaking, she didn't have anything to spare. And she almost acted surprised at his demand. God was basically telling her that a portion of her last meal belonged to God.

[ 6 : 52 ] You can fill in your blanks here in your note. God was basically telling her that a portion of her last meal belonged to him. Another account, Luke chapter 18, we won't turn there, but it's probably very familiar to many of you.

This is the account of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and asked him what he could do to basically be right with God and so forth. You remember what he told him?

Jesus commanded that rich young man to sell everything that he owned and give the money to the poor and then to come and follow Jesus. And he gave him the promise that he would have treasure in heaven.

Think about that man's situation. Go sell everything you have and give the money to the poor so you have nothing left. And then you come and follow me.

And I promise you, you will have treasure in heaven. So in essence, Jesus told that young man that his riches and his life, again, you can fill in your blanks here, his riches and his life belonged to God.

[ 8 : 03 ] You think of the different times where Jesus fed thousands of people at a time. You might consider those who gave up their loaves, the fish, their lunch, in order to give it to Jesus, who then multiplied it to feed so many people.

Jesus was basically telling them also that their food belonged to God. Or think of his disciples. He commanded them to leave their employment and their businesses to follow him.

Some were fishermen. They had to give it up. When was the tax collector? Give it up. Leave it all behind and come and follow me. So what was he telling them? Their careers, their futures, and their lives belonged to God.

Oh, and with the promise that they were going to suffer for his sake. And I think when Jesus was making that what should have been a triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he told two disciples, go and find a colt.

It'll be tied up. You bring it to me. And the owner there was like, hey, what are you doing with that donkey? And they said, the Lord has need of it. And somehow that sufficed.

[ 9 : 28 ] That person's animal belonged to God. You know, these are just a few examples for us to consider. Let's take a closer look at the one back in Exodus chapter 13.

So would you turn back there with me? When God says, it's mine. Let's begin reading at verse 11.

Exodus 13, 11. And it shall be when the Lord brings you into the land of the Canaanites as he swore to you and your fathers and gives it to you that you shall set apart to the Lord all that open the womb.

That is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have, the males shall be the Lord's. But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb. And if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck.

And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem. So it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, what is this? That you shall say to him by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

[ 10 : 28 ] And it came to pass when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go that the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beasts. Therefore, I sacrifice to the Lord all males that open the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem.

It shall be as a sign on your hand and as frontless between your eyes, for by strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt. So God was telling Israel that every firstborn male child and animal belonged to him.

All of them had to be either sacrificed or redeemed by sacrificing another animal in his place. Now, of course, God never wanted them to sacrifice a child. That's what the pagans did. Okay?

So the firstborn male, a child, had to be redeemed with a lamb. Nevertheless, whether it was the firstborn male of a child or of a beast, God clearly stated to Israel, it's mine.

He is mine. Let's ponder what that would have meant to them. What it should mean to us. What was God saying? How should have that affected the belief system of Israel?

[ 11 : 37 ] Well, I think God was telling them at least three key principles of perspective. They're in your notes there. First of all, God was telling them, I am priority number one.

Considering all that would happen in their lives, God was to come first. Life revolves around God. And so, let's turn that into maybe a key word for our lives.

This principle that God comes first and life revolves around Him. To me, that's worship. That's saying, He is the most valuable. I worship Him.

Let's try to step into the theological shoes of the Hebrews at this point. So often, I grew up in church and anytime Israel was mentioned, I think I thought of Israel as they were after having received the law.

With all the religious system. But when we find the Hebrews, the Israelite peoples here, they're not even Israel yet in a sense. They're coming from Jacob, but they're not the nation yet.

[ 12 : 48 ] These were people who were enslaved in Egypt. Remember after Joseph, a new pharaoh arose who did not know Joseph, and he enslaves them. So now God is bringing them out.

And religiously, they are a mixed bag. They are all over the place. Yes, there were probably a few that still heard. They didn't have the law yet. They didn't have the scriptures yet. All of their religion was taught by what they had heard from those who had gone before them.

Parents, grandparents, and so forth. There are no synagogues yet, no priesthood yet, no scriptures yet. It's just what they had heard. But these Hebrews, while they were in Egypt, some of them were worshipping the gods of Egypt.

I think that's proven in not just afterwards when they come out of Egypt, they're turning back to these false gods. But also remember the ten plagues that God brought against Egypt and Pharaoh and so forth.

The first several of them were also experienced by the Hebrew people. It wasn't until later that God made a distinction and said, I'm protecting them from these plagues and just making them fall on the Egyptians.

[ 13 : 56 ] Now why was that? Well, every one of those plagues seemed to be directed at a specific Egyptian god or goddess. One of the gods or goddesses that they worshipped and God was saying, see, they're nothing.

All right? I'm the one true God. So when we find these people coming out now of Egypt and God making this claim, it's mine, the firstborn male of beast and person, it's mine, God is saying, I'm in charge.

I am priority number one and I have a right to make a claim to your possessions and even your children. I have a divine right.

I'm so thankful for the songs we sang this morning. Even behold our king. You see, that's what God was doing here for these Hebrew peoples who were perhaps some irreligious, some perhaps paganly religious and maybe a few that actually did worship who they heard was the one true God.

But God was saying, I'm first. I am priority number one. I am the one to be worshiped. Now I say and ask you this morning, do you believe this to be true for you?

[ 15 : 14 ] Do your thoughts, words, actions conform to the fact that all of life should revolve around God? If not, then how would God say you need to change?

How should we respond? You know, sometimes God has to remind us that he must be our first priority. Sometimes those lessons come in very difficult ways.

God really challenges our self-lordship when we think we're in charge of our lives or we're in charge of something or some area of our lives.

God enforces his divine right as king and God upon our lives. So that's the first principle this morning.

God is priority number one. He should be worshiped. I think the second statement and lesson God was telling Israel is this. because I am the ultimate owner of all things you are accountable to me for how you use them.

[ 16 : 27 ] Because I'm the ultimate owner God is saying I own everything because I'm the ultimate owner of everything you are accountable to me to how you use what I've given you.

So the key word I would give you for that is stewardship. Stewardship. We are stewards to God. He's entrusted things to our care and oversight.

We're accountable to him. That makes us stewards. He's owner we're stewards. Now one might argue that God only claimed ownership over the firstborn males. Well let's put this in sort of our kind of setting.

If someone came to your home and claimed ownership over your car, your couch, your television, your iPad, your game system, you would demand to know by what authority that claim was being made.

Like what right, what authority you have to come into my house and tell me that you own this. So often we think of ownership, we're comparing ourselves with other people, right?

[ 17 : 34 ] Now I own this car versus my neighbor who owns his car. We don't often think of I'm an owner versus God, right? We think of ownership in earthly terms.

But what kind of authority does God have? God has divine, ultimate, absolute, and unlimited authority. So when God claims ownership over one thing, he's merely expressing a very small portion of his authority as creator, owner, and giver of everything.

Okay? I think that's what God was telling Israel, that I'm laying claim to these firstborns, but that's not all I own. This is to be a lesson to you.

I'm claiming this to remind you that I own everything. You don't own it. Everything belongs to God. Consider these verses, Job 41, 11.

Who has preceded me that I should pay him? Everything under heaven is mine. God says in Psalm 50, verse 12, If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all its fullness.

[ 18 : 46 ] Ezekiel 18, verse 4, God says, Behold, all souls are mine. The soul of the Father as well as the soul of the Son is mine. The soul who sins shall die. So far, you're saying, okay, my checking account is safe.

Haggai 2, verse 8, The silver is mine and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts. And to Christians, those to whom God has saved, God has said in 1 Corinthians 6, 19 and 20, Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you, we, we're not our own.

You were bought at a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. Your body, your spirit, they're God's.

He owns them. Because God is the owner of all things, we do not have the right to do whatever we want with our bodies, our lives, our souls, nor anything else in this world that we might possess or use.

Instead, we are stewards of what God has made and over all that he gives us. And as stewards, we are going to give an account to him of how we use them.

[ 20 : 01 ] So, the question for application is, do you believe this to be true for you? Do your thoughts, words, and actions conform to the fact that God owns everything, that you are his steward, accountable to him for how you use all that he has made and given?

And if not, then how would God say you need to change? is there anything in your life that you consider to be yours, not God's?

And you might say, no. I know better. Right? Let's put it in a different. How would we respond emotionally to this? Is there anything or anyone in your life which if God took from you, you would be tempted to turn against God?

Did you want to hate God? Did you want to be angry with God? If he took that person away or if he took that thing, that opportunity, your career, if God said no, you can't have it anymore.

Is there anything that he could take away that would make you turn against him? Be angry with him. Now he knows, he pities us, we're made of dust.

[ 21 : 20 ] He knows what sorrow is like. And there's a doubtful a life represented here today that hasn't been touched by some significant sorrow. And the longer we live, the more sorrow we experience.

And God knows that. God has been reminding us so much over this, not quite a year since we learned about this opportunity.

opportunity. And the toughest thing about it was counting the cost. There were two aspects that have been really difficult about this. One, the way God has led in this is different than he led us in the past.

Sometimes I find it really easy when God just gives that compulsion and says, you must do this. Then it's a very clear thing of, okay, well if I don't, I'm in direct rebellion, and that's not good, right?

But for the most part, the way God has led in this opportunity is he's been holding it out in his hand. Saying, this is what you've been praying for, do you want it?

[ 22 : 22 ] Now the second part of that is counting the cost. If we say yes to wanting that, what are we saying no to? And how can a little precious granddaughter be such a huge hindrance to following almighty God?

But it's been a temptation. It's been a temptation. But whatever it is, you know, God will lay these claims upon our lives. Challenging our sense of ownership over something, someone, or just even over our lives in general.

Can we truly say like Job, chapter 1, verse 21, naked I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord. It's hard. But he's calling us to worship. He's calling us to stewardship. And thirdly, what is the third statement I think God is making in this, this third statement of perspective?

God is saying, I am in control of every blessing of fruitfulness in your life and the future of your flocks, herds, and families are dependent upon me.

[ 23 : 36 ] They're dependent upon me, the all-powerful God. He was telling the Hebrew people, everything, your entire future, your life depends upon me, but I am the all-powerful God.

And so the third key word there is faith. He was challenging them to trust, to put their faith in him. Now, if you were an Israelite and your business was raising sheep, how would you determine the success of your business?

Well, by the growth of your flock, the number, the health of the sheep in your flock, the amount of money you would make by selling them and so forth. Now, consider this. It takes almost a year before sheep are physically mature enough to bear little ones.

Then about five months before the lambs were even born. So we're looking at 17 to 18 months, perhaps, time from the time a lamb is born until it brings forth the next generation.

Now, if that firstborn lamb of yours was a male, God's saying, go kill it. Now, what would that do for your business? All of a sudden, you know, a major percentage of each little litter or whatever they call a brood of sheep there, major percentage is gone.

[ 24 : 52 ] That firstborn man, it was gone. God's saying it's mine. Destroy it. That's going to affect your bottom line, right? You see, God's claim of ownership was a test of their faith.

Whether they realized it or not, their entire lives, their success, their fruitfulness, their families, their futures were completely dependent upon God and his power. You know, sometimes God demands that we give him what we think we need or what we think we cannot live without.

He commanded that poor widow, Zarephath, that was making what she thought was going to be her last meal before she died. And God, through Elijah, commanded her to take a portion of her last meal and give it to Elijah.

Really? It's all I have. Sometimes what God commands us to give or give up are practical items like money, a home, job.

Other times God lays claims of people who are precious to us or to our health, our privileges, our liberties, or what we think are opportunities for happiness.

[ 26 : 08 ] While it can certainly hurt to lose our possessions, it can hurt a whole lot more to lose some of these other things. But note what the Hebrew parents were supposed to teach their children as the reason for sacrificing the firstborns.

He says this, By strength of hand, the Lord brought us out of Egypt. The power of the all-powerful God, the Lord of Lords, was to be proclaimed, reminding them that God was able, that God was able to deliver them, to protect them, and to provide for them.

And because of that, he could be trusted, and he should be trusted. God wanted them to live by faith, and he wants us to do the same.

So when God lays claim to someone or something in our life, God is saying, Will you trust me? Will you trust me?

So do you believe this to be true? That your entire life is utterly dependent upon God, and that because he's all powerful, he could be trusted? Do your thoughts, your words, your actions, your emotions, conformed to the fact that he's in control of every blessing of fruitfulness in your life?

[ 27 : 25 ] If not, how do you need to change? Is God saying to you, in some way today, you need to trust me? I know you don't understand. I haven't given you the whole picture.

But I'm saying, I own this. I must be worshipped. And I'm all-powerful. You can, you need to trust in me.

I will take care of you. In closing, I want to just make a few more comments about the cost of following Christ. Share some of Jesus' words, and then close with the gospel.

You know, as my wife and I have considered this opportunity to serve God overseas, this topic has been a reoccurring thought, a reoccurring theme in our thoughts and conversations.

And again, I think that's why that phrase, it is mine, caught my attention. And I wish that I could truthfully say that we have been the perfect living examples of being willing to pay any price in order to obey God.

[ 28 : 30 ] But we've struggled. We've struggled with this decision. We don't want to make certain sacrifices. If we wanted to make them, they wouldn't be called sacrifices, right? You know?

But throughout this process, God has been faithful to challenge us with many of these examples in his word, and also to remind us of his character and of his promises, even the promises of eternal rewards.

And God has also taught us that our reactions to his claims of ownership will be dependent upon our theological perspective. The way we react to God will be in direct conformity to what we believe about him.

Again, if your neighbor claims that his car is his, and you say, yeah, duh, I know your car is yours.

But if our neighbor says that our car is his, then we say, you know, you're off your medication. There's something wrong here. Now let's consider God from what we've already heard this morning from his word.

[ 29 : 36 ] When God lays claim to something or someone in our life, how are we going to respond? If we have the perspective, of course, God, everything is yours.

We're going to react much more positively, right? We're going to submit. It may be hard, but we may will submit to say, you are Lord, you are God. Of course, that is yours.

Do with it as you please. But if we're struggling with this perspective of that we own our lives or we own the things in our lives or the people that are so precious to us are ours versus God's, and then God lays claim, that's when we're going to really struggle.

So when I, that's why I mentioned this issue of perspective. God was trying to change the perspective of the Hebrew people, and he wants us to have the same perspective.

That he owns it so that we, when God does make those claims, when he does call us to sacrifice, then we say, yes, Lord, what else should I do?

[ 30 : 44 ] You own it all. And as we sang this morning, all I have is Christ. And he is enough.

Amen? If we believe that, is he enough? Let me share a concluding statement in some of these words of Jesus.

So this is how I would summarize it. The cost of following Christ will not include anything that we own. Since we don't own anything, right?

Okay? So the cost of following Christ will not include anything that we own, but it could cost us everything that we have. Or everything that we ever hope to have in this life.

Nevertheless, despite any earthly costs paid through personal loss, sorrow, or sacrifice, God has promised eternal honor and rewards to all who serve him. Matthew 10, verses 37 through 39, Jesus said, He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.

[ 31 : 51 ] And he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it.

And he who loses his life for my sake will find it. In Matthew 16, verses 24 through 27, then Jesus said to his disciples, if anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?

Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the son of man will come in the glory of his father with his angels, and then he will reward each according to his works.

And then finally in Mark chapter 10, verses 29 and 30, you can also find these in Luke 18, verses 29 and 30. Jesus answered and said, As surely I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for my sake in the gospels who shall not receive a hundredfold now and this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come, eternal life.

[ 33 : 12 ] So Jesus is promising rewards. What is he saying there? He's saying it's going to be worth it. He's saying that to all of us. Whatever, however God leads in our life, that we will submit to him, obey him, serve him.

No matter what it costs us, God is saying it will be worth it. I will reward you. Remember, he's priority one. We're going to worship.



He owns everything. We're stewards. He's all powerful. Our lives are completely dependent upon him. We can trust him. He will be faithful to his word.

He's also going to be faithful to his promise to save. What is this all about? What are our lives about? Well, God is God.

We are sinners. And that puts us in a desperate situation. Because one day we're going to stand before God and we're going to give an account for what we've done in this life.

[ 34 : 11 ] And we've already messed up a whole bunch. And those of us who are Christians, we already realize we sin every day. And we don't even realize probably how much, how often we sin.

We are not holy. And so that puts us in a predicament. How can we as sinners face a holy God who hates sin and must judge it? The soul who sins shall die.

Well, the good news, the gospel, is that God has made a way for our sins to be washed clean, for us to be made right, reconciled back to God. And he did that by sending his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who came to this earth to live that perfect life.

He did. He sacrificed, right? He left his glory in heaven, humbled himself to come to this earth to even be looked upon as a fellow sinner, even though he never sinned. But he died for sinners.

He went to that cross. God the Father put the punishment for the sins of this world upon his son. And he paid the price, the punishment for our sins. He took the wrath of God in our place.

[ 35 : 15 ] So that that payment for our debt can be applied to us if, and only if, we will recognize we are sinners, repent of that, and put our faith on Jesus Christ alone for what he's done.

He said, All who call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. We can be forgiven, we can be cleansed, we can be reconciled back to God in that relationship. If you are here today and you have never experienced that, that you don't know for sure if you had died today that you would go to heaven, that you would have been made right with God.

Please, see Pastor Jeff, Brother Greg here, you know, see these elders here, let them counsel with you, or someone maybe who brought you. Ask them, Hey, will you help me with this? Please don't leave here today with not knowing for sure that you've been made right with God.

And then after that, God will say, Let me use you. Let me use your life. Wherever I send you, let me use you for my glory. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for your word.

Oh my goodness, Lord, it challenges us, it rocks us into the depths of our hearts and minds to consider these realities today. We need this perspective.

[ 36 : 30 ] I need this perspective. I need to be reminded of this today. God, I thank you for your mercy. I thank you for your grace that sustains us and carries us and teaches us little by little.

Sometimes they seem like really big lessons. Other times they seem small. But you're always faithful to us to teach us, to guide us, to provide for us. Lord, Lord, we know this morning that you would want us to turn to you and say, God, all that we are and all that we have belongs to you.

Lord, we may not even be able to fully understand what that might mean for us. and it could be fearful. It could be terrifying.

And yet, Lord, we know you're good and you're gracious and you stay with us. You never leave us.

You never forsake your children. So, God, no matter how you're challenging us today, no matter the cost, help us to keep this perspective and help us to remember our joy in you.

[ 37 : 54 ] We have you and you are everything. May the things in this world, even the people in this world in the right way just sort of diminish in their value in our minds as we consider you as the ultimate prize and our ultimate treasure.

Yes, Lord, help us to love people as you love them. But help us not to love them more than we love you. Help us not to love or hold on to anything in this world that would be a hindrance to doing your will and treasuring Christ.

In his name we pray. Amen.