

The Gatepost

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The Death of The Firstborn The Failure of All Else to Secure Redemption ("Nothing But the Blood")

God has seen the affliction of His people in Egypt (Exodus 3:7-8), has heard their cry, has been moved with compassion upon their sorrows, and has come down to deliver them from the land of bondage and death and bring them into a land of liberty and life . . . to "deliver them from the power of darkness and translate them into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. 1:13).

He has prepared His servant Moses by forty years in Pharaoh's palace and forty years in Midian's wilderness. He has revealed Himself to His chosen deliverer, made known His commission, and given him an excellent spokesman in his brother Aaron. These men have employed their best diplomacy in pleading for Israel's release. They have demonstrated mighty signs and wonders in Pharaoh's presence, put to shame and defeat his wise men and sorcerers. Four cleverly-phrased compromises, designed to give Israel the illusion of salvation yet leave them in slavery, have been recognized as frauds and rejected. God's mighty plagues and judgments have been unleashed on Egypt: frogs, flies, lice, boils, disease, hail, darkness, death. All this tribulation has failed to reform Egypt, change Pharaoh's mind, or secure Israel's release.

Israel is still in bondage, in fact, worse than before. After all of this, not one Hebrew has yet drawn one breath of free air. This tells us some solemn, immutable facts about redemption.

God's compassion, His electing love, will not save us. God's priests, His prophets, His preachers, His best prepared servants cannot save us. Diplomacy, the best statesmanship, will not induce our captor to loosen his grip. Neither we, nor our representatives and intercessors, can plead nor talk us free. Powerful polemics will not break his will. Mighty signs and wonders will not persuade or intimidate our enemy. We may successfully resist and reject all compromises and still have no liberty. Resisting temptation will not save us. We may suffer great sorrows, privations, sufferings, trials and tribulations, yet die and go to hell. Millions do so daily.

No, there is only one event that will secure one second's freedom for one Israelite child. And when that event takes place, the whole nation, young and old, male and female, rich and poor, great and small, all go free forever! *That event is The Death Of The Firstborn.*

The Need For Redemption Typified ("Out of my bondage, sorrow and night")

And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill, and all the firstborn of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. (Exodus 11:4-7)

We should now remind ourselves of the purpose and intent of redemptive history. Paul states it succinctly in I Cor. 10:11: "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (types): and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." Egypt is the great type of the world, the whole of which lies in wickedness (I John 5:19), and Satan is permitted to be its prince (John 12:31, 14:30) for this present age. It is the house of bondage from whence God's elect people are called. The nation Israel is God's son" (Hosea 11:1), His chosen people, and represents the redeemed of all ages and races and nations, for whom His only begotten Son died. Although chosen in God's eternal love, they nevertheless are held fast in sin's chains. Their deliverance must be actually accomplished in time and space according to God's righteousness.

We shall fully and correctly understand New Testament redemption, dramatized here in prophetic allegory, only by appreciating the principle stated in II Cor. 5:14-15: "For the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And [that] he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." In this passage the doctrines of identification, substitution, imputation, and vicarious suffering are set forth. That is, a person guilty of capital transgression may have his offense imputed to a substitute. He then becomes identified with his substitute; and when that substitute is put to death, that death is accounted to the guilty party. As far as the law is concerned, he is legally dead. Further, if the substitute dies for more than one person, all for whom he died are counted dead. Justice is satisfied, and there is nothing laid to their account. They all may go free. This is the theological heart of the gospel, and the whole of redemptive history revolves around it.

The Object of Redemption Identified

("For such a worm as I")

Who, now, is the convicted criminal under the death sentence? It is Adam who transgressed in the garden under the solemn warning of Jehovah that "in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). But Adam is not alone. The whole world of men was in Adam, both organically and federally, when he sinned. Therefore, by one man's sin all came under the sentence of death (Rom. 5:12). *The whole human race must die.* Each and every human being *will* die for his sins, if not personally, then representatively in a divinely-appointed Substitute.

Exodus 11:6 speaks of the most calamitous day of Egypt's history. It is judgment day! God's punitive judgment of the whole world is symbolized. God is about to be propitiated for men's transgressions. Sin's awful fruit is about to be reaped. All Egypt, the entire world, is about to be put to death. It is important that we realize that it is not only ethnic Egyptians who must die, but "all the land of Egypt," including Israelites. Israel had been in Egypt over 400 years and had absorbed their culture and idolatrous religions, as they would soon prove at Sinai (Exodus 32). They could properly be called "Egyptians" culturally, religiously and morally. The elect are also by nature the children of wrath (Eph. 2:3), and God may not arbitrarily put away their sins without righteous satisfaction.

Now, since this is only a type and shadow, the full and true substance will not come to pass until the end of all things. The shadow, then, is acted out in the actual death of not the whole, but a representative . . . the firstborn. Only a token death is executed in the firstborn, but in this type and symbol is the immutable word of God. As surely as God put the firstborn to death, He will bring every man literally and personally to account. The penalty for sin will still be death . . . eternal death.

Why the firstborn? The firstborn is the heir, in whom the whole family's estate survives or dies. Also, in the divine order of things among men, the firstborn is always rejected and the second accepted. God rejected Cain and accepted Abel. He hated Esau and loved Jacob. He passed over Manasseh and chose Ephraim. As to the King, the government, Saul failed and David prevailed. Typology in the Bible is consistent. By the first Adam came death, but by the last Adam, Christ, came life. And "that [was] not first which is spiritual but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man [is] of the earth, earthy: and the second man [is] the Lord from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:46-47). Men who are born only once are lost forever when the death sentence against Adam is finally executed. It is only those who have been born again, from above, those who receive that second Life, the Lord from heaven, who not only survive the death of the firstborn, but also receive in that death eternal life.

In the death of the firstborn, full salvation is prefigured; that is, it preshadows not only justification, but sanctification as well. Satan and sin have legitimate claim only on the firstborn, Adam, that which is of the earth, earthy. He has that claim because Adam violated God's covenant of life and death and sold his posterity into slavery. The devil, therefore, has an interest in the fallen sons of Adam that he does not have in Christ. If we are to be free to follow and serve Christ, we must have the claims of our former master invalidated. That is what happened at Calvary. "Our old man was crucified with [Him], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that we should no longer be slaves to sin" (Romans 6:6). Pharaoh has claim on and can only hold "Jacob" (supplanter). He cannot hold "Israel" (prince with God). With sin's debt canceled and evil's power broken, the Son has made us free indeed.

Although all in Egypt are about to be judged, God has put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. He did not find, detect, or discover a difference . . . there was none. Israel was every whit as hell-deserving as Egypt. They, as well as the Egyptians, were "all gone out of the way . . . together become unprofitable." None did good or sought God (Romans 3:10-12). The "difference" is what God *put* there. He, in His sovereign, eternal love, determined to deliver them. Therefore the divine avowal, "against any the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast" (Exodus 11:7). This distinction which God makes between His elect people and the rest of the world is to be marked by a feast known as The Passover.

The Means of Redemption

("Whose and How? - The Lord's Passover")

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying: In the tenth [day] of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of [their] fathers, a lamb for a house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take [it] according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take [it] out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike [it] on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. . . . For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side

posts, the Lord will pass over the door and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite [you] . . . And it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that [was] in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. (Exodus 12:3-7,23,29)

The term "passover" is taken from God's promise to pass over the door where the blood was displayed. To "pass over" carries the idea of exempting one from what would otherwise be surely expected. An offense against a person, institution, or government that consistently brings swift and decisive retribution might be passed over if, for example, it was found that the offender was incompetent and therefore not responsible for his action, or if for some peculiar reason he found merciful favor in the eyes of the offended. God promises this "passing over," this exemption, on only one condition: the display of sacrificial blood.

We are told, first of all, that this is the Lord's Passover (Exodus 12:11,27). This truth, almost universally ignored, is of premium importance. Christ is said to be God's lamb (John 1:29), not ours. John so identifies Christ as the fulfillment of Abraham's prophecy of Genesis 22:8, "God will provide *Himself* a lamb." We have a natural man-centered, self-centered mentality and subconsciously perceive of everything as revolving around us. This is carried over into our soteriology. We erroneously think of Christ's death being primarily for us. Christ died primarily not for us, but God. Redemption of man is secondary to the restoration and vindication of Divine Dignity violated by man's rebellion. Had not one of the fallen sons of Adam been saved, a divine sacrifice would have been necessary to put away the divine offense. The suffering of ruined sinners falls far short. And no kingdom may stand if breach of law, authority, and justice is permitted to pass unrectified - certainly not God's kingdom of perfect righteousness. God must first be propitiated, and when consuming fire of Holy wrath is quenched, man may be reconciled.

To this the Saviour agrees. It was not for the love of sinners that He went to the Cross, but for the love of the Father (John 14:31). People who have a sentimental "Jesusology" that has Jesus loving us and intervening to save us from a God who hates us need to take note of this. Our redemption is predicated on the love of God (John 3:16) and the obedience of the Messiah (John 18:11).

Because Christ is the Lord's Passover, He may become *our* Passover (I Cor. 5:7). "Christ, our Passover is sacrificed for us."

The Attempts of Men at Redemption ("Years I Spent In Vanity and Pride")

Every man must have a passover, that is, a hope that he will not be required to pay the penalty for his sins. Every person *has* a passover as surely as he lives and continues to have any semblance of peace of mind. He could not live without it. To have the truth of certain impending eternal torments constantly pressing in upon one's mind with no hope of escape is more than rational sanity can bear. Make no mistake about it - every person has a hope, be it ever so frail and foolish, that he isn't going to hell. Many are the fools who say "no God." Rejecting the clear reasonable revelation of God's Word, they embrace the incredible fantasies and fabrications of evolution. If man is nothing more than a highly-organized glob of meaningless matter that evolved from lower states which created themselves out of nothing, then there is no God, no judgment, no heaven, and no hell. His sins will be passed over when he dies. Some just say, "No Hell." Their passover is the notion that everyone's sins, even the Neros, Caligulas, and Hitlers, will be passed over. God is too good to put anyone in Hell.

For others, their lodges, fraternities, their good deeds, their humanitarianism is their passover. God owes them something and cannot require a penalty for their sins. They have bought the right to sin. Yet others hope in church membership, sacraments, mother's prayers, the priest's liturgy, or the Virgin Mary's intercession. Christ is *our* Passover because He alone is God's Lamb, and therefore our Hope and assurance that we shall not perish. If Christ is to *be* our Passover, He must *become* our Passover. The purpose of His death was to save His people, but they will not be delivered passively, uninvolved, or without whole-heartedly entering into the terms of God's covenant of salvation. The difference put between Israel and Egypt may be discovered by the Word of God sent to His people and a heart to obey it. He has given us a gospel to hear, receive, believe, and obey. Every person who is to be represented by the blood of a substitute must become intimately involved with that innocent one who bears his guilt.

Sinners have no heart for sacred duties. They care neither to draw near to God nor to face the reality, consequences or penalty for their sins. This world's religions, a large part of Christendom included, handily address this aversion with special orders of religious professionals (priests, clergymen, and "holy men"), all competing for the business of relieving religious sinners of these unwanted sacred responsibilities. The following reveals what an outrageous fraud this is.

A lamb was first selected and then shut up with the family for four days. Every member was brought into personal contact with the one who was to be slain in their place. "And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in

the evening" (Exodus 12:6). None escaped this gory duty! No professional butchers were brought in to relieve the squeamish. We must each personally kill our Substitute! This is the awful and effectual heart of gospel repentance. I cannot consider Christ my Saviour unless I take my place as His murderer; for as certainly as He died for my sin, it was my sin, my **SELF** who caused His death. "Died He for me who caused His pain? For me, who Him to death pursued?" (C. Wesley). No man can come to full realization of that and remain the same indifferent sinner he was.

I have seen only one painting that I thought approximated what happened at Calvary. Three prominent features shouted the gospel message: one horizontal crossbeam with an arm and hand stretched out upon it, a spike being driven through the Hand by a man, the face of the man diving the spike was that of the artist who painted the picture. Yes, dear friend, if you have hope in Christ, there is no question for you who crucified Jesus. It was not the Jews or the Romans nor any of the unbelieving world. It was you.

The Application of Redemption ("When I see the blood")

Very well now. The lamb has been slain. We have taken our place as sinners, seen the awful consequence of our crimes. Blood has been shed, and propitiation has been made. But redemption must not only be accomplished; it must be applied, appropriated. We must sprinkle the blood. This is gospel faith. The faith by which we are justified is not a feeling, a sensation, a frame of mind, but an act. It is something you *do*, that can be *seen* (James 2:18), in view of Who God is and in response to what He has said. To the Hebrews, this sprinkling of the blood must have seemed a most trivial and inconsequential act, especially in comparison to the awesome plagues, miracles, and diplomacy that had proved so futile against Pharaoh's intransigence. How could this silly daubing of blood on the front of their houses gain them freedom? Sinners who have long struggled to find deliverance from sin and guilt in good works and religious activities, are hard pressed to believe that what man's might and merit could not secure, childlike trust can. But it is not assurance and confidence that applies the blood, but trusting obedience.

As faith in Christ, evidenced by outward obedience, marks the true seed of Abraham, so was the sprinkling of the substitute's blood an outward sign that separated the occupants of the house where it was applied from all others in the land. When God came through Egypt that night, He was seeking neither Jew nor Greek (nor Egyptian), bond nor free, male nor female. He was not looking for church steeples, denominational names, articles of faith or creeds. He was not checking ecclesiastical records or human history for accolades of good works and commendations of men. Nor was it of any consequence whatever if the occupants of the houses were resting in peace and assurance or cringing in terror. He was looking for only one thing: **BLOOD!** "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." (Exodus 12:13)

It is almost certain that there were Egyptians who heard the gospel, obeyed it, applied the blood, and went out with the Hebrews. It is also quite likely that there were Hebrews who did not believe God would kill their little boy, who believed that they could have a bloodless deliverance, who went to bed in "blessed assurance," and awoke to face the awful certainty of divine retribution. And those who spent the night in restless anxiety, even after faithful compliance with the Word of God, were nevertheless made to know the wonderful faithfulness of God to His oath: "not a dog shall move his tongue against any of the children of Israel."

When God saw the blood, He saw faith. That bloody house harbored confessed sinners. These are those who saw the terrible consequence of their crimes, agreed with God in their just condemnation, and heartily heard His one prescribed remedy.

God is coming through to execute judgment - death upon all of Egypt - but here is blood! Death has already claimed its lawful victim. It can exact no more. All in this house have died, not literally, but in the person of an innocent lamb whose blood is displayed as a testimony to Divine Justice. The firstborn is dead. Now the redeemed must go free.

- C. M.