

A short note on the Passover

(The price and power of redemption)

The price of redemption – the Passover

Exodus 12:3-23

“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 an 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 door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD... 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 the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: **and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt**. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever.”

Exodus 12:30-32

“And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead. And he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, **Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also.**”

The price of redemption – its constitution

We begin by noting the *constitution* of the price of Israel's redemption. First, there was the selection of a *lamb without blemish*, a male of the first year which is figurative of God's holiness and power. Second, there was a *sacrificial death* of the spotless lamb. Third, we observe the *shedding of its blood*. In Scripture the idea of “shed blood” refers to death. “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made He man” (Gen 9:6). So we have in relation to the Lord's Supper the memorials of His body given in death (the bread) and His blood shed in regard to it (the cup) (Lk 22:19-20).

The price of Israel's redemption then was the *shed blood* of a spotless *sacrifice*. But why death and shed blood? Could not God have decimated Egypt and redeemed His people in some other manner? The answer lies in that here God *foreshadows* the price of redemption from the bondage and burden of **sin** – the death and shed blood of the spotless Lamb of God, Jesus of Nazareth. The whole process is typical of the redemption of the sinner through

the death of Christ and gloriously acknowledged in the NT. “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold...But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet 1:18-19). “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7). “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7).

The price of redemption – its application

Apart from the constitution of the redemption price there is its twofold *application* given in the divine principle, “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” First, we have the *Godward* application - what God *demanded*. The death and shed blood of a spotless lamb met the requirements of a righteous God. It brought satisfaction to God, meeting His righteousness. This is known in scripture as the doctrine of *propitiation*. Second, there is the *manward* application – what man *needed*.

That sacrifice and shed blood met three needs in regard to the children of Israel. First, their need for *substitution* - the slain lamb was a substitute for the firstborn. Second, we have their need of *redemption*. “And he [Pharaoh] called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone; and bless me also” (Ex 12:31-32). Third, there was the need for their *justification*. We tend to think of the Passover chiefly in terms of “redemption.” Redemption is associated with deliverance from *judgment*. “When I see the blood I will pass over you.” God had no claim of judgment against those under the blood. In other words, they were *justified*. His judicial eye was not upon the people, but solely upon the blood! The blood was the divine guarantee of immunity against judgment. No matter how fragile or failing the faith of those sheltering under it, a righteous God could not go beyond the blood. If He did, His righteousness would be compromised. If judgment fell on just one house sheltering under the blood God would be unrighteous and “unjust.” No one under the blood could say God had a claim against them.

We have then four interdependent yet related truths in the Passover – *propitiation*, *redemption*, *substitution* and *justification*. They have their ultimate virtue and value in Christ, our Passover who was sacrificed as given in Romans. “Being *justified* freely by His grace through the *redemption* that is in Christ Jesus [*substitution*]: Whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiation* [mercy seat] through faith in His blood, to declare His *righteousness* for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:24-26).

The two particular truths come before us in the Passover. First, **redemption** which means that **sin** has no claim on me. I am free from sin’s bondage. We have this specifically in Romans 6:22. “But now being made free [*leleutheroo* - liberated], from sin, and become servants to God [cf Israel], ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.” Second, we have **justification**, which means that a righteous **God** has no claim in judgment against me. This we have specifically in Romans 6:7: “For he that is dead is freed [*dikaioo* - justified] from sin.”

This was entirely a matter between *God* and *His people*.

The power of redemption - the Red Sea

Exodus 14:16-30

“But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen. And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and **the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:** And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; **and it was a cloud and darkness to them,** but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night. And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea **upon the dry ground:** and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen. And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians. And took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, **Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.** And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen. And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared; and the Egyptians fled against it; **and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.** And the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them; there remained not so much as one of them. But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.”

There was an alternative and quicker route to the Promised Land - the way of the Philistines. But God took them by the way of the Red Sea. There is no doubt that the people were redeemed in Egypt – emancipated on the ground of the shed blood of the spotless lamb. They could be no more redeemed! We noted that they were justified as well in that God in judgment had no claim against them; they were under the blood.

Here it is not a matter of emancipation but *elimination*; not of price paid but *power* displayed. It is vital to the faith of the redeemed that God's *power* in redemption is known and owned and that by *faith*. That is, to personally know that the adversary has been *eliminated* and there is no more threat from him. It lies at the very heart of assurance which is grounded on the truth that it is *God's* power and not ours that defeats the adversary. There they were, redeemed and justified but still the treat of Pharaoh loomed large. He began his hot pursuit. The fearful people were between the Egyptians and the sea. But Moses said “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever” (Ex 14:13). They had to learn as the redeemed of God that Pharaoh had no claim upon them - and this could *only be learnt by faith*. Without faith the power of God and assurance of redemption cannot be known. May the Spirit of God so enable our faith in life us as the cloud was given to enable the faith of the Israelites in that day. *God* rolled back the waters and cleared the way, but *they* had to cross the sea! So we have the testimony in the NT, that “By faith they passed

through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned” (Heb 11:29). And, when they saw the power of divine redemption they sang a song (Ex 15).

This was entirely a matter between *God’s people* and their *enemy*.

As believers in Christ we are forever redeemed and justified. Yet, how often do we feel the hot breath of Satan in pursuit of our assurance and peace. We have to learn afresh by faith that we are dead to **sin** – that sin has no claim upon us. That for the redeemed in Christ there is no condemnation (Rom 8); that our sins and iniquities God will remember no more (Heb 10:17). It is all because of what God has done through Christ – nothing of ourselves! Paul begins his treatise on the Gospel in Romans with the broad truth, that the gospel of Christ is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Rom 1:16). Then, through to chapter 5 he brings out the *price* of redemption (Rom 3) and so too justification (Rom 4), and crowns it with the Passover truth, that “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). Thereafter he presents the assurance of the power of God in that by Christ “we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:1-2). This is followed in Chapter 6 with more of the way of the Red Sea and the *power* of redemption, in that we are “dead to sin” and “freed from sin” (Rom 6:2, 7).¹

The Song of redemption – Exodus 15

It was only when the children of Israel entered into the reality that Pharaoh was vanquished by the power of God and that he had no claim against them, that they broke into heartfelt song. They could then sing of God glorious in *power* and *holiness* (vv 6, 11). “He hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation: He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him” (Ex 15:1).

An instructive omission

If we listen carefully to their song we observe what is *not* resonated – the *redemption of the firstborn of Israel*. We hear a good deal about *elimination* - the defeated enemy and their liberation from the burden and bondage of Egypt, but nothing about the midnight cry, the hand of God visiting judgment upon the firstborn of Egypt while preserving their own firstborn sheltering under the blood.² It was essentially revelling in the rout of the Egyptians by God and being forever free from Pharaoh.

Where then do we find a testimonial to their *emancipation* – the vital event in their lives and the liberty that transpired as the result of the Passover? It is not found in a song but in a “supper” – a memorial feast, the Passover; or more precisely the *ordinance* of the Passover or the commemorative Passover given in Exodus 13. In Exodus 12 we have the *instituted* Passover, which was to be observed with bitter herbs among other things. Not so the

¹ The Red Sea does not typify believers baptism. This we have in the Jordan. In Romans 6 Paul predicates his practical teaching on the **fact** of believers baptism – that a believer can personally point to its occasion and its meaning and so benefit from the sanctifying practical truths in these passages.

² There is a reference in verse 16 to the people having been “purchased” which would implicitly refer to the Passover. However, there is no reference in the song to the redemption of the firstborn and the hand of divine judgment that swept over the land that terrible night.

commemorative Passover. The bitter herbs were gone because judgment had passed and the firstborn were redeemed. But here in Chapter 13 is added the ordinance of the firstborn. “Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance [the Passover] in his season from year to year. And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as He sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, that thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD'S. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem. And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; **but all the firstborn of my children I redeem**” (Ex 15:10-15). In this the Lord claimed for Himself all that had been redeemed on that Passover night – the firstborn.

As the redeemed of God we too have a memorial feast – the Lord’s Supper. It is not kept with the bitter cup associated with judgment, but with the cup of blessing for all judgment for the believer has passed (1 Cor 10). We keep it as those who are the firstborn ones (Heb 12:23), the Church, all of whom God has claimed for Himself in redemption through the sacrificial death of His beloved Son.