

The Powerful Blood Of The Divine High Priest

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[0 : 0 0] Well, folks, we are in Exodus chapter 29, and you are doing well at bearing with me in my exploration of Exodus. I was at a conference yesterday for pastors, and one of the things you'll be glad was one of the things said at this conference was this exhortation for pastors to preach the Word with all patience, 2 Timothy 4, Paul's charge, preach the Word and do it with all patience. And the chap who was teaching us said, because people are being patient with you, they might hear terrible sermons, but they turn up every week. So, good job on bearing with me. Keep going. We're in Exodus 29. It gets a bit strange in this passage. It's unfamiliar territory to most of us. It's not the most enjoyable details, but really, by the end of it, I hope that we see the wonderful things that it foreshadows.

And so, as I read, you might be thinking, what on earth is this about? Bear with me, we'll get there. So, let me read Exodus chapter 29. Let me pray. God, we thank you so much for your Word.

We thank you. Your Word has been preserved, and your Word is powerful. Thank you for the recent reminder of a brother that man does not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God. Speak to us now, God. We pray through your Spirit and through your Word. Amen.

Amen. Okay, Exodus chapter 29. We've just been introduced to the outfit that the priests are going to wear, and now we get to God's instruction to Moses on how he should prepare and ordain and consecrate these priests. Exodus 29. Now, this is what you shall do to them, to consecrate them, that they may serve me as priests. Take one bull of the herd and two rams without blemish, and unleavened bread and unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers smeared with oil.

You shall make them of fine wheat flour. You shall put them in one basket and bring them in the basket, and bring the bull and the two rams. You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting, and wash them with water. Then you shall take the garments, and put on Aaron the coat, and the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breastpiece, and gird him with the skillfully woven band of the ephod. And you shall set the turban on his head, and put the holy crown on the turban.

[3 : 1 6] You shall take the anointing oil, and pour it on his head, and anoint him. Then you shall bring his sons, and put coats on them. And you shall gird Aaron and his sons with sashes, and bind caps on them.

And the priesthood shall be theirs by a statute forever. Thus you shall ordain Aaron and his sons. Then you shall bring the bull before the tent of meeting. Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the bull. Then you shall kill the bull before the Lord at the entrance of the tent of meeting, and shall take part of the blood of the bull, and put it on the horns of the altar with your fingers. And the rest of the blood you shall pour out at the base of the altar. You shall take all the fat that covers the entrails and the long lobe of the liver, and take two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and burn them on the altar. But the flesh of the bull and its skin and its dung you shall burn with fire outside the camp. It is a sin offering. Then you shall take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram. And you shall kill the ram, and shall take its blood, and throw it against the side of the altar. Then you shall cut the ram into pieces, and wash its entrails and its legs, and put them with its pieces and its head, and burn the whole ram on the altar. It's a burnt offering to the Lord. It's a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the Lord. You shall take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on the head of the ram, and you shall kill the ram. Take part of its blood, and put it on the tip of the right ear of Aaron, and on the tips of the right ears of his sons, and on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the great toes of their right feet, and throw the rest of the blood against the sides of the altar. Then you shall take part of the blood that is on the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments, and on his sons, and his sons' garments with him.

He and his garments shall be holy, and his sons and his sons' garments with him. You shall also take the fat from the ram, and the fat tail, and the fat that covers the entrails, and the long lobe of the liver, the two kidneys with the fat that is on them, and the right thigh, for it's a ram of ordination, and one loaf of bread, and one cake of bread made with oil, one wafer out of the basket of unleavened bread that is before the Lord. You shall put all these in the palms of Aaron, and on the palms of his sons, and wave them for a wave offering before the Lord. Then you shall take them from their hands, and burn them on the altar, on top of the burnt offering, as a pleasing aroma before the Lord.

It's a food offering to the Lord. You shall take the breast of the ram of Aaron's ordination, and wave it for a wave offering before the Lord, and it shall be your portion. And you shall consecrate the breast of the wave offering that is waved, and the thigh of the priest's portion that has contributed from the ram of ordination, from what was Aaron's and his sons. It shall be for Aaron and his sons a perpetual Jew from the people of Israel, for it is a contribution. It shall be a contribution from the people of Israel from their peace offerings, their contribution to the Lord.

The holy garments of Aaron shall be for his sons after him. They shall be anointed in them, and ordained in them. The son who succeeds him as priest, who comes into the tent of meeting to minister in the holy place, shall wear them seven days. You shall take the ram of ordination, and boil its flesh in a holy place. And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket at the entrance of the tent of meeting. They shall eat those things with which anointment atonement was made at their ordination and consecration. But an outsider shall not eat of them, because they are holy. And if any of the flesh for the ordination or of the bread remain until the morning, then you shall burn the remainder with fire. It shall not be eaten, because it's holy. Thus you shall do to Aaron and his sons according to all that I've commanded you through seven days. You shall ordain them. And every day you shall offer a bull as a sin offering for atonement. And you shall purify the altar when you make atonement for it, and you shall anoint it to consecrate it. Seven days you shall make atonement for the altar and consecrate it. And the altar shall be most holy. Whatever touches the altar shall become holy. Now this is what you shall offer on the altar. Two lambs a year old, day by day regularly. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. And with the first lamb a tenth measure of fine flour mingled with a fourth of hen of beaten oil and a fourth of hen of wine for a drink offering. The other lamb you shall offer at twilight and shall offer it with a grain offering and its drink offering. And in the morning for a pleasing aroma, a food offering to the Lord. It shall be a regular burnt offering throughout your generations at the entrance of the tent of meeting before the Lord, where I will meet with you and speak to you there. There I will meet with the people of Israel, and it shall be sanctified by my glory.

[8 : 55] I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar. Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate to serve me as priests. I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am Yahweh their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them.

I am Yahweh their God. Amen. Okay, take a moment. So, I'm guessing we all understand that and we can get on with our days.

What a passage. What are we to do with this? Well, certain things in life can puff us up. Certain things can rise pride within us. We can easily think that we are closer to God than another person. Now, think about Aaron here. He is chosen as the high priest. He is allowed into the tabernacle. He is given the role to represent the people.

And so, as he is bearing the people before God, he might be in danger of thinking, I've got this. Don't worry, I'll put a good word in for you. I get to meet with God. I've got this.

There might be a danger that in any interaction with the people, he only sees them as the ones who are in need. And he's just there to represent them. It's a very subtle thing, this thing about thinking, maybe it's just the other person that's in need.

[10 : 45] Maybe I'm closer to God. Very subtle thing. A number of years ago, I remember I was in my training. Not that this cannot happen to any one of us at any time.

But I remember it happened to me in my training. This kind of thinking crept up on me. And there was this chap who was in the church, not this church, this chap who, generally speaking, was a very needy person.

Poorly in health and physical and mental health. And a very needy person. For years, other people attended to him.

And he was wanting something. I can't remember what it was, but because I now was in this role in Calderwood, you know, it comes with a job, doesn't it?

People see a role and then you're the guy that they go to. And so he was wanting me for something. And a thought came into my mind. Many older and more experienced Christians have worked with this person for many, many years.

[11 : 49] And yet, nothing's really changed. This person hasn't changed. Still got the same issues. What on earth can I do to change them?

And as soon as I thought that thought, I felt immediately convicted by the Spirit, challenging me, the Spirit saying, do you think that I only want you to change him?

Maybe I want him to change you. And I felt immediately convicted. What I thought, you know, that crept up in me that help is only in one direction.

No, I'm not exempt from help. And I've never forgot that. I remember exactly where I was standing in a car park when I felt that conviction.

Now, there are various things this chap ought to change if he wants to do well. It wasn't that he didn't need to change, but it was more that I began to think that it was a one-way street.

[12 : 50] And that's a dangerous thing to think. And so, Aaron is in this position as a priest. You see, the Spirit needs to do just as much work in us as in the people that we think need to change.

So, if you can think of someone right now who you think they need to change, just think the Spirit needs to do just as much work in you as in them. We mustn't think that other people are a bigger project to God than we are.

You are no less work to God than any person you think needs to change. And so, if a person does need to change, which we all do, what people really need is not someone to point it out to them.

What people really need if they need to change is they need grace and space to change. They don't need other people putting such high expectations. I know what it's like to put high expectations and only be disappointed.

And yet, know in my heart that I do not live up to those expectations myself. And so, especially if a person has received for themselves the mercy of God, then we should show mercy to others.

[14 : 11] It says in Hebrews chapter 5, the high priest can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this, he is obligated to offer sacrifice for his own sin, just as he does for those of the people.

And so, in our passage, you don't get much higher than the high priest. I mean, that is a position. Yet, he had to have all this done to him and for his own sin before he could ever represent the people.

It sounds glamorous, maybe, at first, being set apart for such a role, brought out, given this special role with special clothes.

It sounds important. It sounds special. But then, in verse 4, look at verse 4. You shall bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance of the tent of meeting and wash them with water.

They need to be publicly washed by someone else. And they're adults. They're not children. They are adults. And so, I spent many years in care work.

[15 : 26] And something that I always thought about as a care worker was how certain folks' disabilities and conditions give them no choice but to be at the mercy of other people offering them help.

And I used to think how difficult it must be for another person to let another person wash you and clean you and help you as an adult. What a difficult thing.

Feeling humiliated or loss of dignity. It's embarrassing. But, if you need it, you need it. And we will all come to a stage of life where we need it.

We all started life needing that. But that's the point. For Aaron and his sons, they can't get around this fact that they need washed. And whatever it is about them, they cannot wash themselves.

They had to learn this lesson that him and his sons were not exempt from needing washed. And that if they want to be close to God, not only do they need to be cleansed, but they cannot do it themselves.

[16 : 28] We cannot cleanse ourselves in the way that we need to be cleansed. So, Aaron and his sons, they need to humble themselves and they need to publicly humble themselves and rely on another person to cleanse them.

The high priest cannot think that only other people need to be changed. Him changing his clothes itself is a reminder that he needs to be changed.

He needed to be washed as much as the next person. He needed the blood of sacrifice for himself as much as the people needed it for their sins. And we will see in a few weeks actually just how desperate Aaron is.

In a few weeks we'll see the kind of incredibly ignorant excuse that Aaron gives for his sin with the golden calf.

It's a ridiculous excuse if ever there was an excuse. and so he desperately needs to be cleansed and covered by blood. Folks if only we remember how great our need is to be cleansed and clothed and consecrated we might be kinder to one another.

[17 : 38] Now we might think that this ceremony is complete. Aaron and his sons are taken to the front of the tabernacle they're set apart they're washed they're clothed in their new priestly outfits and they're anointed with oil.

Man everyone's fairly comfortable. We could end there. But the rest of the chapter we have all these intricate details of animals being sacrificed and blood being flung about everywhere.

And this is where it gets very graphic and messy. You see the washing and dressing dealt with the outside but the truth of the matter is the inside needs cleansed as well.

Have you ever in your life swapped or exchanged something? Maybe exchanged something in the shop or swapped something in the playground?

What was the thing? Maybe it was a gift that wasn't suitable to you or you didn't want and you took it back to the shop or maybe it was in the playground as a child.

[18 : 38] For me it was pogs. Remember pogs? Or football cards? Whatever it was were you ever in a position where you had to swap something or you wanted something you and your friend or maybe your children were sent out to school with something and they came back with something that wasn't theirs?

You're like where'd you get that from? I swapped it with a friend. Well vinyl records maybe it was a car boot sale you swapped instead of buying and selling.

Now have you ever gotten the better end of a deal? I would guess probably more often than not you remember that you got the worst end of the deal. Most of us probably know what it is to feel like we've been duped.

Most of marketing in the world is about that trying to sell us things we don't need for more money than they're worth. That's what the advertising business is all about. Well in our passage we see how more of this ceremony is about blood and death than it is about washing and anointing.

The bigger chunk of the passage is about blood and death and so our holiness requires more than a bath and a baptism. Isn't that true?

[19 : 58] Our holiness requires more than simply getting washed on the outside. It requires death and blood. It requires some kind of exchange.

Verse 1 Animals are brought that are without blemish. They're perfect. They're spotless. They are innocent. In contrast to Aaron and his sons who are not spotless certainly not innocent.

And then if you look at verse 10 15 and 19 we see these three animals every time they're brought Aaron and his sons have to lay their hands on the animal's head as though they are exchanging their sins for the animal's innocence.

As though they are exchanging their death that's due to them for the animal's life. So they get to live now and the animal has to die. Genesis chapter 9 says the life is in the blood just as we'll see just as we know in Leviticus.

And so Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the animal transferring their sins onto the animal transferring their guilt and their unholiness onto the spotless perfect innocent animal.

[21 : 14] And then the animal is killed in their place and the blood is applied in many places. I remember when Jennifer and I went to Egypt it was the first time I saw this now you're probably well familiar with this and I don't know why it was just in Egypt we saw this but do you remember the blue powder that we saw?

I remember seeing this blue powder one of the chaps was trying to sell this and he said this washes your white clothes to be brilliant white and I thought to myself that sounds like a scam.

If I put that anywhere near my white clothes they're going to turn instantly blue like Catherine's jumper. I thought no way absolutely no way.

Now are you familiar with blueing powder? Who's familiar with blueing powder? No? I thought I was the only one. Well blueing powder is a laundry technique basically that uses chemicals and stuff but it's a complicated thing but anyway it's a real thing.

Blueing laundry you can look it up later. Blueing powder for laundry. Anyway it really actually does make your white clothes white but it's counterintuitive. You're like no way sounds like a trick.

[22 : 34] It sounds like a trick but consider this in our passage consider this aspect of blood being used to cleanse this life blood that is splattered all over the place and they did that for generations.

You need to use blood to cleanse and you think man that sounds like a trick. We know have you ever I mean we have gone through countless nosebleeds with Levi and it's it really makes a mess of white bed sheets.

Doesn't seem like blood cleans things. Hebrews 9 says without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. Yet lest we be confident in our own blood in our own life to do that.

Consider this in the law in the law of the Old Testament our own blood makes us unclean. And so throughout the Old Testament you see this you see this in Jesus' day blood makes a person unclean.

Yet how is it that our blood is not sufficient yet the blood of an animal can make you clean? How is that possible? Well our blood is not sufficient because we are not without blemish.

[23 : 54] And so our blood makes us unclean whereas an animal which by nature is innocent is different. Our life blood is not without blemish.

Our life blood is not righteous. And so even in the Old Covenant the blood needed was from one who was without blemish a spotless and innocent animal.

No other blood could be found on earth. There was no other blood found on earth. That's why they had to use animals because no other blood could be found on earth that was spotless without blemish and righteous innocent.

All the human blood was now unrighteous and unholy and unclean. No other blood but it seems like a trick. Can blood really clean?

How can blood make someone clean? I thought about that blue powder for making white clothes clean and I just thought it was some kind of trick.

[24 : 55] A scam to make you buy this powder and then you would only realize later when your clothes were absolutely ruined. It ruined your white robes. But then I thought about how the devil and this dark and ignorant world wants us to think the same about the blood of sacrifice.

It's a trick. How can it be that blood should cleanse you from sin? Don't be fooled into trusting blood to make you clean. It sounds like a trick.

Whether you are a Christian or not and here's a test for you. Whether you are a Christian or not if you have heard about the blood of Christ has the tempter never suggested to you that relying on such blood has got to be a trick.

Has the tempter ever suggested to you that relying on the blood of Christ is never going to work? How could it work? The blood of another man clean you?

Have you ever thought that? I'm sure every single person in here has thought that. I'm sure the tempter has tempted every single person with that thought because there's absolutely no way he wants anyone relying on that blood because that blood is powerful.

[26 : 17] And so as it says in Revelation chapter 7 think about that blue powder making your white clothes clean. It says in Revelation 7 they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.

Now consider this in our passage how crude it is that an animal should cover the sins of a man. How is it that an animal should cover the sins of a man?

Are we not made higher than the beasts? Yet it was so for a while because there was no better blood. For all humanity was guilty even the one who would be the high priest was guilty.

And look at how many animals had to be killed continually from generation to generation every day morning and night. Every day a reminder when you wake up a reminder when you go to sleep that you need this exchange.

Yet it was a shadow of the good things to come as Hebrews 10 says in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year for it's impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

[27 : 27] We need a life that is more effectual. We need a better exchange. And thank God there is something far better to take away our sins and that is God's own son.

John the Baptist said pointing to Jesus behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. His blood is more than sufficient while the blood of an animal is innocent passively.

His blood is righteous with active perfect obedience. You see that? An animal an animal is innocent passively but Christ is righteous actively.

Perfect obedience. While the blood of an animal is of a mortal life his blood is the life of the ancient of days. His blood flowing with the life of immortal divinity.

it is more than sufficient to be offered once both for all sins and for all time. Hebrews 10 says we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

[28 : 35] and when Christ has offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins he sat down at the right hand of God waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool under his feet for by a single offering he has made he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

So consider this beautiful exchange. 1 John 1 7 says the blood of Jesus God's son cleanses us from all sin.

And on this verse the great John Bunyan found hope for his sorrow and guilt because in his book you might have read it grace abounding to the chief of sinners he tells of a time when he was walking in a field he was walking under a hedge and he saw a little stone and he was feeling sorrow great sorrow and guilt for his sin and he saw this little stone and he thought about that verse the blood of Jesus God's son cleanses us from all sin and he saw this stone in the midst of a great field and he said this he said my sin when compared to the blood of Christ was no more to it than this little stone before me is to the vast and wide field that I see here.

You see though our sins are great and many they are nothing compared with the blood of Christ. For unlike Aaron Aaron who was washed clean and then anointed Jesus is not washed for his own sins but when he enters the Jordan River to be baptized he is literally washed in all the sins of everyone else who went into that river.

Think about all the people who were baptized for their sins and Jesus walks in and is baptized into their sin. He doesn't need washed for himself and when he rises out he is not anointed with oil but anointed with the Holy Spirit.

[30 : 35] When Aaron needs the blood of a spotless lamb sprinkled on himself from head to toe and he eats the body of the animal to cleanse him on the inside Jesus offers his own body and blood to cleanse us on the inside and bring peace and fellowship between man and God.

As a high priest Jesus is not of the order of Aaron but of a priest after Melchizedek as Hebrews 7 tells us Melchizedek was a priest of the most high God before the priesthood of the law was introduced and when Abraham met him Abraham was subject to him Melchizedek was superior to Abraham and so Abraham offered him tithes and so the priesthood of Melchizedek is superior to the priesthood of Levi which was in Abraham Hebrews says that Melchizedek was the king of righteousness and the king of peace and so it says when another priest arises like Melchizedek rather than like Aaron we see the true and superior priest of the most high God who has no beginning and who has no end who is not priest by tribe or descent but by the power of an indestructible life as it says in Psalm 110 you are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek so unlike Aaron

Jesus doesn't need this exchange for himself rather he is the one exchanging himself for us his life for ours his blood for our sins we are like Aaron and need to lay hands on the life that will be exchanged we need to lay our hands on the life you see the act of role in that it's not going to be applied to us automatically we need to lay our hands on Christ for the exchange to take place so that is the way the exchange goes but Jesus on the other hand he's like the altar in verse 37 the altar shall be most holy and whatever touches the altar will be made holy the exchange is happening the other way normally you would make a holy thing unholy when something unclean touched it but not this not this altar if you touched it you were made holy and that is like Jesus no one's going to make him unholy but he is going to make you holy and so the two directions of the exchange from us flows unholiness from him flows holiness there are many more details in this passage that we haven't specifically looked at but that's okay if we just get this basic idea of why washing and dressing isn't enough there is all this need for death and blood and this chapter it seems distasteful experiencing this would have been disturbing but this is how we need to understand our sin it's not just that we need this blood to make us holy enough to dwell with God as though a relationship with God is something we can take or leave only those who want to dwell with God need this blood no sin is destroying every one of us sin is destroying our very being it's a disease that defiles us from the inside out it robs us of our humanity and is in constant barrier to our purpose of our being we cannot find our purpose as human beings we cannot find our satisfaction in this life because sin keeps getting in the way we are made to know God and to dwell with him nothing less will do he is the source of our life and all our satisfaction so we all need this when people think that they would rather not dwell with God it's only because he seems like a terror to their sinful desires but not knowing all the while that their desires are killing them

I think we all have such a view a view of God that is just too low we think of God too little our understanding is dulled by sin that we cannot imagine what God is truly like we just cannot imagine the sheer beauty and glory of his presence the absolute delight and joy of his character the unapproachable intensity of God's light the utter immensity of life and goodness that comes from God and the unrelenting waves of his love for us immeasurable we can't imagine what God is truly like if ever we think that we shouldn't dwell with God we just have missed who God is it's only sin and blindness it is only unholiness and darkness that would ever make any creature not want to dwell with God here it is for this very purpose that he gave his son and the theme of this whole series in Exodus has this repeated phrase throughout Exodus that all may know that I am Yahweh so all the earth may know his name and for that purpose the all sufficient blood of Christ was freely offered the end of our chapter

I will dwell among the people of Israel and I will be their God and they shall know that I am Yahweh their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them I am Yahweh their God that we might know folks we might know the God who rescues us from the slavery to sin and darkness that we would know that he is the Lord Jesus Christ who rescued us to dwell with us for he is our Lord and God and there is no one greater and so let me end with Philipians 2 that says God has highly exalted him he has bestowed on him the name that is above every name that they would know that I am the Lord the name that is above every name at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the glory of God the Father let me pray

[37 : 21] God these are difficult things for us to understand but if nothing else help us to see your great need for the blood of Christ and help us to see how freely you have offered that help us to see how effectual the blood of Christ is to cleanse us rescue us and release us from all sin we thank you for Jesus in his name we pray Amen