

Exodus - The Blood of the Lamb

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Turn with me this morning to Exodus chapter 12. We're going to be looking this morning at the story of the Passover, the story of God's people from which that song, that beautiful offertory they just sang, originates.

We're talking together as we head towards Easter about images of the cross, getting a picture of what it is that God has done for us through sending His Son to die and to rise on Easter from the dead.

We're looking at some Old Testament passages that serve as foreshadows, as images that will help us understand more of what Jesus did and appreciate more fully that climactic event in all of human history.

Last week we looked at Leviticus chapter 16 at the Day of Atonement and we saw that Jesus is our scapegoat. The one who's sent away from the presence of God so that we can be welcomed in to God's presence.

[1 : 13] We were focusing on the issue of our being unclean, defiled, not worthy of being near a holy God, unable to be near Him and live.

But God in His grace is determined to dwell with us, isn't He? He's so committed to that that He sends His Son away to die so that we can come near Him and live.

This morning as we prepare to come to the Lord's table, I want us to look back at the first Passover. To think specifically about not just our uncleanness and being defiled, but our sin.

To think about our sin and the problem that it creates for us. How the cross of Christ addresses the problem of our sin. Before we read, remember the context of this fateful night for God's people.

They have been slaves in Egypt for years and years. And God has raised up Moses to go to Pharaoh. And what's Moses going to tell Pharaoh? Let my people go.

[2 : 20] And Pharaoh refuses over and over. Pharaoh refuses to let his slaves go. And he and the Egyptians have suffered through nine terrible plagues already.

Where God puts on display His power over creation and over all the other gods of Egypt. But still, Pharaoh refuses to release the slaves to let God's people go.

And so God threatens one final plague. The death of the firstborn of every household and every animal in the land of Egypt. And God comes to His people and He says, And here's what I want you to do in light of that.

You're going to take a lamb. And what we were just singing about in that song. You're going to put His blood on the door. And let's read about what God says to His people.

Exodus 12. We'll start at verse 12. We'll read verses 12 and 13 right now. This is God's word to His people. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night.

[3 : 25] And I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. Both man and beast. And on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments. I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are.

And when I see the blood I will pass over you. And no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. Pray with me.

Father, we have sung about this. We have read about this. Would You help our hearts to understand Your word.

Would we know not just about facts and events that took place many, many centuries ago. Would we know what You would have them to mean and to do in our hearts today.

Would You show us Jesus again clearly this morning. And would You give us joy in what He has done for us. We ask it in His name. Amen.

[4 : 32] I am not probably the most skittish person in the world when it comes to blood. But I am enough skittish that I would not be a good surgeon.

Okay. The sight of too much blood makes me a little bit queasy. Anybody else? Am I? Yeah. Okay. Many of us. That's just not our thing. I remember going with my wife when she was pregnant with Caitlin to all of those prenatal appointments.

It seemed like the thing that a loving husband would do. Right. And they kept drawing blood every time. And I'd have to find a wall to kind of lean against while that happened. Because I was a little lightheaded watching that.

So we eventually decided that while it sounded like the loving husband thing to do. That maybe making sure Christy didn't go to the hospital for me when she was the one pregnant was wise. Just keep your distance a little bit during that part of the appointments. I think part of my discomfort with blood comes from the fact that I so rarely have to deal with it.

[5 : 37] I'm protected in many ways from many of the bloody parts of life that most societies for generations and generations in the history of human society would have had to face just for survival.

Just to eat day in and day out. My hamburger is made for me most often. I don't think that I've ever met a cow that I also knew as a hamburger.

I don't walk through that whole process. But in an agrarian society this would be very different.

Right. Blood would be much more common. In ancient Israel blood would have been even more commonplace because of all the sacrifices that were going on.

Right. Constantly they're making these sacrifices. They're seeing them. They're seeing blood very regularly. And what blood meant in that culture was life.

It's often very helpful to realize that when you're studying the Old Testament that blood represents life which makes sense doesn't it? Our bodies without blood in them are dead.

[6 : 46] Lifeless. Blood is a matter of life and death isn't it? And that's actually why blood comes up in the story of the Passover.

Because this is a story about life and death. The sin of the idolatrous unjust Egyptians has caught the attention of God.

And in a unique way his just judgment has begun to be unleashed on them. And flies and boils and locusts and darkness.

And now death itself. Look at verse 12. I will pass through the land of Egypt that night. And I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt.

Both man and beast. And on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments. I am the Lord. I am Yahweh. And I will come and the firstborn in every home in Egypt.

[7 : 44] And in every livestock in Egypt will die. Yahweh is a just God who punishes sin.

God's just judgment on sin is certain. This verse is assuring us of that. It will happen. He will come and He will judge and He will bring death.

In fact if you flip forward to verse 29 we read what happened that Passover night. At midnight the Lord struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt. From the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne.

To the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon. And all the firstborn of the livestock. 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 someone was not dead. Can you imagine that? Across the whole nation of Egypt. Not a house in which someone was not dead.

[8 : 46] Death has come in this passage. Mankind's rebellion against God has always been a matter of life and death. All the way back to the garden, right?

Where Adam and Eve are told you must not eat of the fruit of this tree. Or you will what? Surely die. In the New Testament, Romans 6.23.

We find out that the wages of sin is death. It is what our sin earns us with a holy God. We are turning in our sin from the one who gives life.

The one who created it and gives life to all. And we are choosing death. God says. That's what we've earned. That's what we deserve. That's what a wage is.

Another way to say it would be to say that the blood of sinners is demanded by the just God of the universe. It must be taken.

[9 : 48] Their life is forfeit. They're facing the punishment due for their sin. That's where we all find ourselves, isn't it? Not just the Egyptians.

In a scary place. Facing the punishment of our sins. Jonathan Edwards described it as sinners in the hands of an angry God in a famous sermon of his.

That there we are and we've earned God's wrath. A God who promises by his very character to punish sin. To punish those who are convicted and are guilty.

And we stand as such. For those of us who are sinners by nature. For every selfish desire.

For every careless word. For every neglected duty. We deserve to die. It is our blood that is demanded by the just God of the universe.

[10 : 51] My campus minister in college used this picture to describe our situation. I don't have a lot of object lessons. I'm just not really good at that as a teacher in general.

But this is one of them that had an impact on me. Kids, you can probably help us with this object lesson this morning. What's this? Can you see what this is? This is an egg.

It's a white egg. You don't really know what's inside, do you? For sure. But this is an egg. And this egg is a lot like we are. As sinners before God.

We may look nice and clean on the outside. It's white, isn't it? Nice and shiny and clean. But we are sinners. We like to do things our own way.

We have hateful thoughts in our heads. We say things to others that are unkind. Things that are untrue. We're sinners. Even though we sometimes look good on the outside.

[11 : 52] We are sinners. And so the hammer of God's wrath. Yes, see, this is also helpful because we used hammers at the work day.

But I didn't really know what they were for. The rest of the guys knew what to do with them. I'm going to use them for a sermon illustration. But the hammer of God's wrath is what we deserve for our sin.

That He's just and God punishes sinners who say unkind things and who do things their own way. And who have hateful thoughts in their hearts.

It is certain that God's wrath will come down on sin, isn't it? He promises that it will. God must punish sin. That's who He is.

And so, kids, how do you think it goes when the hammer of God's wrath comes down on us sinners? When it smashes? We'll wait for that.

[12 : 49] What would have happened? How would the egg have done? How do sinners fare in light of the hammer of God's wrath towards their sin?

It would crush us, wouldn't it? It would destroy us and no one would ever sit on the front row of church again. Although that's not a problem already.

These aren't the ones y'all fight over, are they? Right up here. You didn't even know I was doing this. But that's what would happen is that God's wrath would crush us.

It is coming towards us. It's coming down on our sin. And then it stops. Because there's something else going on in this story of the Passover, isn't there?

What happens as God has promised that the angel of death is coming? That He's coming to take blood, to kill for sin.

[13 : 46] God has a plan for His people. He tells every family to do what? To take a one-year-old lamb without blemish or defect, to get that pure, spotless lamb, to kill it.

And to take some of the blood and put it on the doorposts of their houses. It looks kind of like that second panel. Sorry, go back for just a second. It looks just like that second panel up there. Some blood on the doorposts of the house, right?

That's what they're going to do with the blood of the lamb that each family has killed. And so what did God promise would happen when they did that?

Verse 13 again. The blood is going to be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you. And no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

What does God say to His people? When I see the blood, I will pass over you. Instead of the angel of death coming in to take the life of the firstborn, he will pass over.

[14 : 53] That's where we get the word Passover, right? The angel of death would see the blood and pass over those homes. The homes of God's people. No firstborn son would die.

No person at all would die in that home. But a lamb would die, wouldn't it? In every home where no person would die, a lamb would die.

So that his blood could be put on the door frames of the house. It would die in place of the firstborn son. The lamb would be the substitute and would protect the firstborn son from death.

Because blood had to be shed. But God graciously accepts the blood of a substitute in place of the one whose blood deserved to be shed.

In other words, when we look at the cross and think about what's happening on the cross of Christ, even though God's judgment for sin is certain, Christ's death for sin is sufficient.

[16 : 03] Just as the blood of the lamb protected all these firstborn sons in Israel, so the blood of the lamb covers us from God's wrath.

Back to the egg for just a second. Here we are sinners, right? Facing God's just wrath. He's coming. His wrath has to crush us for our sin.

And then something else happens. And then Jesus comes. And instead of the hammer of God's wrath coming down on sinners and crushing them because of their sin, Jesus on the cross receives the wrath of God poured out on Him for sin.

What deserved to hit us instead is poured out on Jesus. And the full weight of God's wrath comes crashing down on Jesus on the cross.

It was the will of God to crush Him and cause Him to suffer. So that those of us who are protected by the blood of the lamb are safe.

[17 : 20] Because the hammer didn't stop, but someone else stood in the way. Someone else's blood was shed. We are saved by what?

By the blood of the lamb, right? That's what saves us. Not because we were strong. Not because we were better than the next guy. Not because we held up to God's scrutiny.

But because the blood of the lamb covers us. Put the blood of the lamb on the doorway. And death will pass right over. That was Israel's hope.

That's our hope. That it's the blood of the lamb that protects us. You see, as we look at the cross and as we wonder at what Jesus has done, we've got to realize that the hammer of God's wrath is coming.

It's serious because of our sin. Some people have suggested that the death of Jesus on the cross was just a way to set a good example for us. Or that it was a way for God to teach us about sin and about sacrificial love.

[18 : 28] And we should learn some things from it. But in fact, the story of Passover reminds us that our blood was on the line. Not just us learning some new information.

The wrath of God against our sin was great. And He poured it out on Jesus instead of on us. He crushed His Son on the cross instead of crushing us.

That's what happens when Jesus goes to the cross. When He sheds His blood. God takes Jesus' blood as full payment for our great debt.

It's Hebrews in talking about these things that reminds us that without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins. Blood has to be shed, right?

There has to be a Lamb if you're going to survive the Passover night. And for us, there's a Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[19 : 33] John chapter 1. You may be familiar with the way 1 Peter writes about it. That Jesus comes and it's not that we were ransomed from the ways we'd inherited from our fathers with perishable things like silver or gold.

What ransoms us? What pays our penalty? The precious blood of Christ. Like that of a Lamb without blemish or spot.

That's what protects you. It's the blood of the Lamb. What can wash away my sins? What can protect me from the wrath of God?

What can rescue me from eternal death and provide for me life? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. It is absolutely sufficient for the worst sinner. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. So where the blood of the Lamb covers the sinner, there is no condemnation any longer.

[20 : 42] For anything you've done in the past, for anything you will do in the future, the blood of Jesus has protected you from the wrath of God for your sin.

Before we celebrate this at the Lord's table, let me apply this truth to at least three areas of our lives. Three times when seeing this aspect of the cross, the blood of Christ covering us from God's wrath and offering us life instead of death really transforms us.

I think the first area it helps us is when we're spiritually dry. Like my throat. When you feel little passion for God, when you get to those places in your life where you just don't get passionate about anything spiritual, the zeal is not there.

There's no joy at all toward the things of God. Maybe other things are creeping in and they're starting to seem more valuable to you, more important, to be more worthy of your time.

You know you're always worshipping, right? We're always worshipping something. And we go through those seasons where the worship of our hearts is not going towards God, that other things seem more valuable or we treasure them more or we love them more.

[22 : 14] So maybe your heart is longing for any number of things other than God and being with Him. Maybe you're tired of trusting God like perhaps the Israelites in Egypt may have been.

Years upon years without seeing any results and you're tired and you're down because of that. You're just spiritually dry. You know what that feels like.

God's deliverance of His people at the Passover becomes the source through the rest of the Old Testament until the cross of Jesus. That deliverance at the Passover becomes the source of their praise and worship of God.

They look back to it constantly and it brings them to praise Him. It starts just on the other side of the Red Sea, doesn't it? When they start writing and singing songs celebrating God's deliverance. And then every year at Passover, they stop and they celebrate it again. God has delivered them from captivity. One psalm after another that they sing every Sabbath day references this great redemption and the blood of the Lamb through which they were spared.

[23 : 28] Are you spiritually dry today? Has your zeal for God waned? Has your passion for His worship seemed to disappear?

You just don't feel anything at all. Come see the cross again this morning. Get a fresh glimpse of what Jesus has done for you.

How God has delivered you eternally through the blood of the Lamb. One of the things I love about this church is that's the theme of all of our worship when we gather corporately every week.

That it's what God has done for us in Christ to deliver us and we gather to praise Him for that and to rejoice and encourage each other because of it. The good news of our deliverance through our substitute ask God this morning to renew your zeal to enliven your heart again at the marvel of your deliverance from the hammer of His wrath by the blood of the Lamb.

So we need this glimpse of the cross when we're spiritually dry but also when we're spiritually proud. When do you get spiritually proud? There's almost always something going on when that starts to happen.

[24 : 45] You're usually comparing yourselves to others. Right? That's where spiritual pride comes from. We compare ourselves to others and we start to feel strong or at least stronger than you or worthy or at least worthier than someone else we happen to have in mind.

And perhaps it's what Israel would have been tempted to feel coming out of Egypt and entering the promised land that they were better than these other nations. Right? Perhaps they were spared because even though they weren't perfect they weren't like that politician or they weren't like those other parents who do things that way.

Maybe they walked into the promised land and looked around and look at the leaders of these other nations immoral kings leading their people into idolatry and they began to feel a little bit better about themselves.

Look at these parents and the nations around us and what they do with their children sacrificing children to idols. Awful. And they felt like pretty good parents. They started to feel strong.

And Passover is intended to remind them that Yahweh alone is the strong one. That He is the one who brought them out of Egypt with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.

[26 : 07] It is the Lord's Passover. Verse 27. Verse 51 says Yahweh brought us out. That's what we celebrate. That's what we tell our children.

Yahweh brought us out. You know, sometimes we kind of think our eggshells a little bit stronger and brighter and shinier than others. You know, we've been working on it.

We've done some good things. We certainly haven't been to the places that others have. And so maybe we're looking a little bit better than them. How much is that going to help? Does it matter how white the eggshell is? Is it feeling a little bit thicker than some? I mean, what about if I hard-boiled it? Would that make a huge difference? Maybe only for the people on the front row.

We weren't saved because our eggshell was a bit brighter or a little stronger than most others. Our gracious God saved us.

[27 : 06] Why? The blood of the Lamb. And our hearts that love to get prideful need to be reminded of that, don't they? Last one, last area of our lives that I think we need to see this help our hearts.

I think it may be the one that would be most pertinent and most helpful for God's people. We need to see the Lamb of God in our place on the cross for our sins when we're spiritually weak.

Have you ever struggled with doubts about your salvation? Do you ever wonder if heaven is really secure? Are you ever fearful that you're gonna get what's coming to you one day?

Because of what you know about God, you know He's just. That He punishes sin. And you know yourself all too well, don't you? You know the things you've thought and the things you've said and the things you've done.

And you start to dwell on that. And what you know about God and what you know about yourself makes you think, He's gonna find a way to get me. It's coming somehow.

[28 : 22] And you begin to see your sin and it's disgusting and it's discouraging and it makes you doubt maybe your own salvation. Maybe it happens for you in seasons of depression.

Maybe it's the day after you've yelled at your kids and you feel like such a failure. Maybe it's after a tragedy has happened in your life and you feel like God's just out to get people and He's really not the kind of God you'd hoped He was and everything seems dark and hopeless.

You just begin to doubt. You're fearful. Your faith seems weak. This is when we need to see the blood of the Lamb for us again.

A pastor theologian named D.A. Carson suggests thinking about it this way. I think it's so helpful. He says, Go back to the first Passover. Imagine the afternoon before that first Passover night there's two Israelite fathers coming in from the field talking to each other.

And the first one says, Hey, how are you feeling about tonight? And the second father says, How am I feeling about tonight? I mean, what do you mean? And the first guy says, Well, I mean this whole angel of death thing.

[29 : 39] I mean, I'm pretty scared about this. There's a lot that's been going on around here lately. It's been pretty strange. There's been flies and locusts and boils and darkness and now we hear about this angel of death and the killing of firstborn sons.

And it just makes me uncomfortable. I'm pretty nervous about that. I love my kids. And the other guy says, Well, didn't you kill a lamb and put the blood on the doorposts like God told us to?

And he says, Well, yeah, yeah, of course I did that. Of course I put the blood on the doorposts. I mean, God told us to. But I gotta tell you, God's pretty scary. I mean, He's done some pretty amazing things and I trust Him.

I've done what He told us to do. But I gotta tell you, I'm not gonna sleep real well tonight. And the other guy says, Well, man, I don't get that. I'm gonna sleep great tonight. Yahweh told us what to do.

I did it and I trust Him. I feel totally comfortable. It's just another night. I'm gonna sleep like a baby. There's nothing to worry about. Fast forward to the next morning after Passover.

[30 : 53] Which one of those fathers lost His son to the angel of death? Which one had His firstborn son die? Neither, right?

Neither. Not the guy who was worried and stayed up fretting all night. Not the guy who slept through the night peacefully, confident in God's promises. Why?

Because the angel of death passes over both of those homes on what basis? Because of the blood of the Lamb. Not because He looks inside and the faith of one family is stronger than the other.

Not because the family inside never has doubts or fears. No. It's because of the blood of the Lamb. There's where our assurance and confidence rests, Christians.

Right? It doesn't change. You can stand firm in that. The blood of the Lamb for you. That's where your hope is on your darkest days.

[31 : 58] On the days where you doubt the most. Where you feel the weakest. When the angel of death comes by your house, what matters is the blood of the Lamb.

When the accuser of the brethren comes to your life, what matters is the blood of the Lamb. When the anxiety of your heart comes to the surface and you doubt and struggle, what matters is the blood of the Lamb for you in your place.

When I see the blood, I will pass over you, God says. Remember again, isn't that glorious? When I see the blood, I'm looking for one thing. I'm looking for the blood of my Son covering you. Remember again, your hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and His righteousness. Even as you struggle with doubts, with fears, you can say with me this morning, believe the promises of God's Word. I need no other argument.

[33 : 16] I need no other plea. It is enough that Jesus died and that He died for me. that's what this table is all about.

That's why we love to celebrate it because this table says it's the blood of the Lamb that brings you into relationship with God. It's the blood of the Lamb that allows you to have a lousy week and then walk in here and act like God's okay with you.

Like He loves you. Like He wants to eat with you. It's because He looks and sees the blood of the Lamb on your doorpost because the blood of the Lamb speaks better than anything you could have offered.

His sins are forgiven. He's covered. The full price has been paid. Listen to the way Paul describes the institution of this sacrament in 1 Corinthians 11.

Paul says, I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread and when He had given thanks He broke it and said, This is my body which is for you.

[34 : 27] Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also He took the cup after supper saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. You proclaim not how well you've done. You proclaim not how well you intend to do next week. You proclaim the Lord's death when yours was the one that should have happened. You proclaim that Jesus died and shed His blood so you wouldn't have to shed yours.

Amen? That's what we do at this table. That's why we celebrate the Lord's Supper because Jesus has shed His blood for us. Kids, you may, some of you who have professed faith in Christ who've joined the church get to celebrate this with us.

All of you, I want you to think about something. When God's people talk about the Passover it's supposed to teach the kids something. The parents are supposed to be telling their kids this is what happened when God delivered us from Egypt.

[35 : 36] We do this because we celebrate Jesus died to deliver us from our sins. It doesn't matter how old you are, you can come up with your parents and watch and see what happens and talk with them later about what's going on and what we celebrate here.

This table is for all of those who have trusted in Christ not just Presbyterians, for all those who've trusted in Him and who are actively saying, I don't want my sin to be what represents me to God, I want the blood of Jesus to be what represents me to God.

All of those who have joined the church and who have publicly said, this is what I want my relationship with God to be based on. Come and feast.

Kids, if you aren't yet at that point where you've talked with an elder and where you've become a member of the church and said, this is what I believe too, we'd love to talk with you about that.

We get so excited when our kids understand what's going on here and know how much Jesus loves them. That's why we celebrate this. One more thing before I pray.

[36 : 48] We come to the Lord's table recognizing our sin, right? Why is there blood in the first place? Why does there have to be, why can't you just waltz in here and have dinner with God?

Because of sin, right? Because our sin separates us from Him and blood has to be shed to cover that. We're going to take just a moment and privately consider our sin as we come to the table.

We're not going to stop at considering our sin but we're going to start there and then let the joy of the blood of Christ covering it be ours. Take a moment, contemplate your sin, confess it to the Father and then I'll pray for us.

Father, all of the things that we have just thought about and prayed and confessed to You are true.

It's what we've done. It's the ways we've wandered from You. We're sinful. But it is even more true that we don't stand before You with that as our record but that the blood of the Lamb has been shed for our sins.

[38 : 19] That it fully washes them away so that we stand before You perfect and without blemish in Your sight because we have the record of Christ.

Would that so encourage our hearts when we struggle, when we doubt? As we eat and drink, would You encourage our faith and strengthen it that we might trust You more?

Set aside these elements that they would do that in our hearts, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread and He broke it and gave it to His disciples as I'm ministering in His name.

Give this bread to You. And He said, take and eat. This is My body, broken for You. Do this in remembrance of Me. In the same way, He took the cup and said, this cup is the new covenant in My blood.

In the old covenant, there was blood from lots of different animals. In the new covenant, it's My blood, the blood of one sacrifice once for all. Drink from it, all of you.

[39 : 26] Remember that I've paid your penalty in full. The host team will usher you forward and back and we will celebrate together that the blood of the Lamb covers our sins.

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