

Title: Redemption!  
Text: Exodus 12.1-28  
Theme: Death for Life  
Series: Exodus #12  
Prop Stmt We are saved from God to God.

Read Text:

Every person in this room lives with a desperate need for redemption. You have been sinned against, and you have also done the sinning. You have been the recipient of and the source of injustice to others. What can you do to make up for your failures?

Richard Dawkins would have us believe that there is no God. It's all a delusion, a power play if you will by those who like to control others. I grant you that history is full of diabolical examples of people who in the name of God exploit others for their own wicked purposes. But, the fact remains that within the human heart, we long for redemption. The very concept of redemption is built upon an understanding that on a practical level is shared by all humanity, even by the ones who philosophically argue against it. We know that there are expectations of us. When we fail to measure up, we can disappoint other people and in some cases hurt people deeply. But there is a deeper issue of which all human relationships are a reflection. How can I be okay with God?

Every religion, in some form or other, attempts to answer this question. How can I know that I am okay? The message that God is loving, God is forgiving, God is merciful and gracious is very attractive. And, that message is true. God is loving, forgiving, merciful and gracious. But, if God is so loving, then why can't he just forgive us and that be the end of it? Well, there is more to God than that. To only preach about His love, would be to mock His love. You cannot appreciate His grace, unless you understand His righteous justice. Which is why, in July, I am taking a short break from Exodus and doing a series entitled, "The other half of the cross." (recovering the glory of God in the doctrine of penal substitution) I have become convinced of the need of this because of my study of Exodus 12 this week.

Up until this point in the story, so much attention has been placed upon Pharaoh and his servants. Then, like a bad date, this guy is dropped right out of sight. God is now directing his attention and his commands to the people of Israel. And what God says, is rather staggering. I mean, you talk about a beginning. God is starting a brand new calendar for a new people. This event, this last plague is going to mark the beginning of their year because this event marks their beginning as a people freed from slavery to "freedom". But you are only free when you are in service to God. All of this becomes so very clear from this chapter. Verses 1-13 deal with the immediate issue of the 10<sup>th</sup> mighty act of judgment that is about to come upon Egypt. Over and over Pharaoh has thumbed his nose in the face of God and refused to listen to the Word of God. So, God is bringing a judgment upon Pharaoh and Egypt that is so severe that he will finally surrender. But this is more than getting Israel out of Egypt. Beginning in verse 14, God makes it clear that what the people of Israel are to do in preparation for this, is part of a

much bigger picture. The 1<sup>st</sup> Passover is just the beginning. It's the beginning of an annual ritual that will mark the life of the people of Israel for the rest of history. It is a ritual that is anchored in the past that affects life right now by pointing to the future. But, even the Passover itself is part of a bigger picture that ultimately points to Christ. The Passover is fulfilled and accomplished in Christ, who, for the church replaces Passover with communion. Communion is a God-ordained ordinance that is anchored in the past (the cross), that affects life right now and points to the future. The symbolism is intentional. It is deeply significant and ultimately rich and satisfying. Because of that, I have chosen to preach this text based on the ultimate point that God is making with all of these instructions. The immediate issue is getting the people out of Egypt and making them into a viable community and a nation with a deep identity rooted in God. The ultimate issue is that God is using Israel as a specific and historical illustration of His plan for his people from all over this world.

God chose the unlikely, broken, slaves of Israel to be His people. He delivered them from Egypt. They could not deliver themselves. After He delivered them He established a covenant with them and actually lived with them. This covenant functioned as a constitution that governed life for them. He led them, corrected them, fed them, fought for them, and directed them to a land that He had provided for them. He then planted them in the land and told them to live before the world as His people. While they were the people of God, they were the people of God for the purpose of pointing to something even bigger. The Passover Lamb pointed to Christ, who, by virtue of his death, paid the price for the sins of people from every tribe and nation and language of this world. God's plan is bigger than Israel. Those who are covered by the blood of THE LAMB of God, are placed into a covenant relationship with God, in whom and with whom God lives. These people are known as the church. God lives in us and among us. He is leading us, correcting us, feeding us and fighting for us and will one day come back to this earth as our King and will physically establish His kingdom on this earth, where we will rule and reign with Him in the land. The bondage of Israel in Egypt is like our bondage to the kingdom of sin and Satan. Their deliverance by the death of a lamb is an illustration of our deliverance by the death of Christ. The destruction of Egypt illustrates the destruction of all those people and every earthly nation and empire who refuses to bow the knee of the heart before Christ. Chapter 12 is not just history. It is future! From Egypt to Canaan, into exile and back, and even to the upper room with Christ and his disciples, the Passover has always reminded the people of God of what they were delivered from and what they were delivered for. Today, communion is a sacred ordinance committed to the church. I would argue that for the believer it is more sacred for us than even Passover was/is for the Jews. How could I make so bold a claim? Communion points us to Christ, the very One of whom the Passover was a prophecy of. Like some of the chapters that came before, this chapter is intense drama. Everything before is pointing to this event. And this event, make no mistake is screaming something that you must come to grips with.

1. **Redemption can only be accomplished on God's terms.** (1-13)

The people of Israel had a problem that they could not solve. They were in bondage. They were paying a debt that would never be satisfied. They had a taskmaster who would never release them. They could never work enough. Only God could bring them out. They had to have a Savior. They could not save themselves. God promised to do that and now God was delivering on His promise. But, their bondage was so strong, that God used a mighty hand and an enormous sacrifice to accomplish their deliverance. But, in order to participate in the deliverance, every person had to follow exactly what God said to do.

I want to be very clear about this. These events recorded in this chapter accurately reflect what happened. But this is here for more than historical purposes. God ordained these events in order to show us what ultimate redemption is all about. Like Israel, we have a problem that we cannot solve. We are in bondage to sin. We owe a debt that we can never pay. Only God can rescue us. We have to a Savior outside of us. Through the life and the death of Christ, God delivered on His promise. But, the cost of our redemption is so high, that it required a terribly awesome sacrifice for our deliverance. And, in order for you to participate in the deliverance, in order for you to be redeemed, you have to follow what God says to do. Redemption can only be accomplished on God's terms.

#### **A. Redemption is accomplished by the death of a perfect sacrifice.**

- 1) Clear Stipulation - A lamb (word can mean lamb or kid goat – cf. v.5)
- 2) Careful Selection - A male lamb without defect
- 3) Conscientious Protection - for four days
- 4) Slaughtered at twilight

The type of sacrifice, the timing of the sacrifice, the sacrifice itself and the application of the sacrifice are extremely important to God and to the salvation of the Hebrew nation. For the people of Israel, all of these stipulations probably sounded a bit strange. What on earth does all of this have to do with us leaving Egypt? What a strange command! How do we know if it will work? At midnight, God is going to come through the land and kill the firstborn of every family, unless your doorway has had the blood of a lamb applied to it. The point is clear. Death is coming to every family. It is coming now, through the death of a lamb, or later through the death of the firstborn. There are no exceptions. At this point in redemption history, God does not explain how all of this fits in with Christ. He simply says what He is going to do, what the people have to do and His reasoning is, "I am the LORD". (v.12) Redemption is not only accomplished, it must be applied.

#### **B. Redemption is applied through a personal substitute**

- 1) Every person must be covered by blood. (3-4)

The basis of salvation that night had nothing to do with ethnicity, and had everything to do with the blood of a lamb. If a Hebrew family did not believe the word of the Lord, then they would have born the same consequence as every Egyptian family. If an Egyptian family had believed the word of the Lord, and would have given evidence of

that belief by obeying these commands, they would have been spared. It is natural for us to wonder about the Egyptian families that did not hear the warnings and the commands from Moses. I point that out, because I want you to be aware of how critical it is for you to hear the Word of the LORD. If we do not hear the Word, we have no hope. Listening to the preaching of the Word is absolutely critical for your soul.

Each family had to have a lamb as a sacrifice. That night, the people of Israel became a nation of priests. Everyone had to participate in the sacrifice. If your family was too small to eat an entire lamb, then you could share the lamb with another family. But the blood of the lamb had to be publicly displayed by being applied onto the sides and tops of the door frames of every home. Later on (v.22) Moses said, not to leave the home until morning. You had to be under the cover of the blood.

2) Every person must be involved. (eating) (3-4)

In these verses, eating is mentioned seven times. Even what you ate was prescribed by God. Bitter foods were used, no doubt to remind them of the bitter years they had spent in Egypt. Unleavened bread (bread without yeast) reminded them of how fast they must eat, in order to be ready to leave. Ready to leave?! The command to leave was going to come fast, and had to be obeyed quickly. How do you leave to go to another country quickly? You eat fast, so you can pack fast, and leave quickly.

3) Every person must be ready to leave.

Come to the table dressed to run. Eat this meal with urgency!

But why? Why this way? Why pick a lamb (without blemish) and watch it for four days, and then kill it? Why drain the blood into a basin and then use the hairy leaves of the hyssop plant to paint this blood on the doors. Why all of this death? And, how does it work? How many firstborn sons guarded the lamb that was going to be killed and wondered, how am I saved through the death of another? How am I saved by the death of this lamb?

If God is so loving, why can't he just forgive and be done with it? Why all of this death and violence? It sounds so unrefined, so vulgar and base.

4) The death of a substitute is for you and for God.

The issue that I desperately want you to grasp is this. Israel did not offer a lamb to rescue themselves from Egypt. Each home sacrificed a lamb to rescue themselves from God. It was God who came that night. Now, in my zeal to make that clear last week, I was pretty adamant that God did not use any secondary means. I may have been wrong. The wording of v.23 opens up the possibility that God may have used a secondary means (plague, angel – or it could be wording that refers to Himself in the role of destroyer), but the text is clear, the origin of this act of judgment is God. That night, Israel was saved out of Egypt because she was saved from God's wrath.

- i. Expiation – your sin is covered
- ii. Propitiation – God’s wrath is appeased

Today, when we speak of a person coming to faith in Christ, we need to be very, very clear in our explanation of the gospel. The gospel is ultimately not about being saved from sin, but how we can be saved from the wrath of God. We are saved from the penalty of sin, only because we are saved from the wrath of God. That is what propitiation means. It is a great truth that is expressed by Paul in Romans 3.21-25 (ESV)

*But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it – the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.*

The ultimate act of redemption through the death of Christ was previewed on the night of the Pass-over. The Hebrew nation was saved from God and saved to God. Salvation is being saved from the wrath of God and being saved to the people of God. Now, in our church culture, we love to talk about being forgiven. Through Christ, we are forgiven, but grace is not amazing when forgiveness is cheap. We do not realize how much wrath God poured out upon His own firstborn – Christ, the lamb of God, who took upon Himself the just and righteous response that a holy God has to have toward our sin.

Don’t come to faith in Christ so that you can fix your marriage. Don’t come to faith in Christ so that you can get a girlfriend. Don’t come to faith in Christ so that you can get the power that you want to overcome drug or alcohol or some other substance bondage. Run to Christ, trust in Christ so that you are saved from the wrath of God against your sin and Christ alone has absorbed that for you when He poured out his life on the cross in your place! And then, what happens? Being saved from God’s wrath, you are saved to God’s family. That is the other side of the coin.

## 2. God’s People are established on the basis of Redemption. (14-28)

This idea has already been introduced back in v.3 and v.6. “Tell *the whole community* of Israel.” “...when all *the people of the community* of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.” That night, God redeemed a people. That night, the people all participated in the same act, killed the same sacrifice, ate the same meal, and dressed the same way. The threat of death hung over them all. The deliverance by the death of the lamb was something they all had in common. They ate as families, but they were redeemed as a people. That night, individuals died, but a nation was born.

### A. **Redemption is to be Commemorated.** (14-16)

Every year, this event was to be re-enacted. Never forget, that your life came from death.

### **B. Redemption is to be Celebrated. (17-20)**

The seriousness of this issue is what leads to such an intense celebration and joy. Do you remember what Jesus said to Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7.47? Simon had invited Christ to come and eat in his home and during the meal, a former prostitute came in and anointed the feet of Christ with it after she had washed them with her tears and dried them with her hair. Jesus said to Simon that she loved much because she was forgiven much and “he who has been forgiven little loves little.” When we understand how deep and high is the love of God expressed to us through Christ who took on Himself our wrath, we cannot help but love and joy and sing and worship. We don’t need strobe lights and fog machines, we just need the gospel. And those of you who cross the arms of your heart and stand unmoved and unchanged, and bored, please understand, I am not against you, but you stand that way because you have not been forgiven. You have no reason to celebrate. Historically, intellectually, you may understand the gospel, but when you personally come to grips with it, it lights you up.

### **C. Redemption demands a response of Worship. (24-28)**

#### **3. God’s Offer of Redemption is a serious call to surrender. (29-36)**

Who were the real slaves in this chapter? Pharaoh and the Egyptians were the ones in bondage. Their bondage to their sin (rebellion against God’s word) brought catastrophic consequences upon them. The Hebrews were the ones who were free, even though circumstantially, they were slaves. They were freed from slavery in Egypt, in order to become the servants of God. That is redemption. We are redeemed from, in order to be redeemed to. The choice is yours. Slave to sin, and live under the delusion that you are living your own life, while sin is sucking it right out of you. Or, servant of God and live under the reality that you belong to God and you acknowledge that God has the right to do with your life whatever He wants.

Verse 28 presents quite a contrast. When the people of Israel heard of the impending act of judgment, they responded with obedience. I would imagine that most of the dads showed their sons the blood that was on the door, or had them with them when the blood was put on the doorframe before they ate the meal that night. You know that it was in the mind of every Hebrew parent and every Hebrew firstborn old enough to understand. What was it about a lamb that would cause God to pass over? Why did he choose this? Would it work? Those questions would one day be answered on a cross. But that night, there was nothing you could do, but trust in the blood of the lamb. And it worked.

At midnight, the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt where the blood of a lamb was not applied. Moses had told Pharaoh that there would be a cry in the land that would be the worst that nation had ever experienced. Pharaoh, his officials and every Egyptian home was torn with grief. Immediately, Moses and Aaron are summoned to appear

before Pharaoh. As Moses predicted, Pharaoh orders them to leave. There is no negotiation on his part, he is overwhelmed and he surrenders to the demands. The urgency in his tone is reflected in the commands that he gives. The people of Egypt surrender as well. They give the Israelites whatever they ask for, which is God's way of re-paying the Hebrews for their work as slaves for all those years. But, there is more to it than that. The Hebrews do not crawl out of Egypt's back yard under a hole in the fence. They march down main street. They march out with the fear and the respect of the Egyptians, and with dignity. No longer are they the slaves who are treated like dogs, they are the people, the nation of Yahweh. Israel, the firstborn of God, was resurrected that day, while the Egyptians buried theirs. What made the difference? The Lamb.