

# The Passover and the Red Sea Exodus 12-14

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in the blood of Christ and redemption from God's judgment and the power of Satan.*

**Scripture:** Exodus 12:13, Exodus 14:13

**Topics:** "Redemption", "Judgment"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the dual themes of judgment and deliverance in the context of the Passover and the Red Sea. He explains that God's judgment is universal and that the world is already condemned due to unbelief, while the blood of the Passover lamb signifies salvation for those who submit to God. The Red Sea represents God's power in delivering His people from their enemies, illustrating that true redemption comes through faith in Christ. Darby highlights the necessity of complete submission to Jesus, as rejecting Him leads to judgment, while acceptance brings eternal life. Ultimately, he reassures believers that their security lies in the blood of Christ, which protects them from judgment and assures their deliverance.

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## Transcript

We always find in the deliverances of God's people that God is also going to punish the world. He bears testimony against it, a universal testimony, without excepting anybody. The law distinguishes men according to their acts, but the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, because they have not believed on Him whom God has sent. Hence the gospel begins with treating the world as already condemned. God has made trial, in every way, of the human heart. The gospel supposes that this probation is closed, and declares all the world lost. Souls often desire, and therefore need, to prove what their own strength is, and find they have none; even converted souls sometimes try to commend themselves thus to God. But it is to dishonour Jesus, and to deny their own condition as judged of God.

In Egypt God was content with the first-born of each house as a manifestation of His judgment. Pharaoh would not let the people of God go. When God demanded as a right that they should serve Him, the world - Pharaoh its prince - would not yield. Signs and plagues were then wrought to arrest their attention, and enforce the rights of God, but Egypt would not listen. Pharaoh was hard, then hardened, and at last becomes a monument of judgment for the instruction of all men. So it was in the days of Noah, and so it is now that the world once more is warned of the approaching judgments of God. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and on them that obey

not the gospel.

Meanwhile God demands a complete submission to His revealed will. He demands that the world should submit to Jesus: all those who will not shall be forced to do so when judgment comes, and then to their own confusion and endless sorrow. God presents His Son in humiliation, in order to save the world; but without submission to Jesus all is useless, because this is what God requires and values. To believe in the Son is eternal life, is salvation; to reject the Son of God is judgment. God will have a surrender of the heart to Jesus, as Saviour and Lord, a surrender to His own grace in Him. Thus is the heart and everything else changed, and all question as to good works is set aside. All here turns on receiving or rejecting Jesus. God passes over everything. Zaccheus may speak of what he has been in the habit of doing, but that is not the point now: "This day is salvation come to this house." If Jesus is welcomed, there is life; if Jesus is refused, there must be vengeance by-and-by for those who do not submit. How happy for the poor convicted sinner that he has not to search in himself for something to present to God! If the heart is open, Christ is the grace and glory and perfection that is needed, and the moral effects soon and surely follow.

159 Still, the word of God presents the certainty of judgment. Satan has possession practically of the world, but God retains His rights. The unconverted are deceived by the enemy, and are in his power. Satan does all he can to make the world believe that they are free and happy, that they are, or may be, righteous and good enough. But God has His rights. The world will not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and hopes to escape judgment. Satan, too, takes advantage of all that God would employ to awaken and bless the soul. Thus, with the unconverted in Christendom, natural conscience is ashamed of that which the heathen do even in their religion. But this is used of Satan to persuade men that they can present themselves before God, and worship Him in private or public, because there is nothing in these lands so gross as among Pagans. But God holds to His rights, and nothing is well if Jesus be not received in faith.

In Jesus all that is perfect in God and man is presented to the conscience. The holiness of God is there, not condemning, but in perfect grace; but God will have an entire submission to Jesus. Nobody that comes is cast out. He is God in all His goodness to attract hearts, He is man in all His lowliness to exercise no will, no choice, but to receive every one that comes to Him, for such is the will of Him that sent Him; but God desires submission to Jesus. If Jesus is rejected, this is the conclusive proof that the heart will not have God in any way that He takes in presenting Himself to man. It is the evidence of man's heart, of his pride, his hardness, and his levity. Nothing like these can stand in the presence of God, and Jesus manifested His presence in love. Pride is ashamed of the cross. Vanity cannot go on before Jesus, despised and rejected of man. God searches the heart in this way, and man does not like it. He is bound to own himself a sinner, to submit his conscience, and give up his will; but he will not. It is the joy of Jesus to seek the wanderer; but to return in his rags, to shew his wretchedness, is most distasteful to man's nature: grace alone can make him do so. His pride therefore hates grace more even than law. The heart cannot endure to be laid completely bare; but if man is to be blessed, God must search the heart, and He saves the soul for ever. God acts according to what He is, not according to our thoughts. If man will not believe in Jesus, God will manifest what He is by judgment.

160 Egypt must be smitten. But first we have the security of such as submit to God, confiding in the sprinkled blood of the Lamb. Israel was well aware of the judgment about to be executed upon the land of Egypt, It should always be thus with renewed souls. They ought to consider the ways of God when He will judge the world in righteousness.

When God reveals the judgment, He reveals also the means of escaping it. The soul which has the fear of God keeps close to His word, and the question is raised between God and Israel. Could Israel stand if God came in judgment? The Egyptians were sinners, and would surely be judged; but if God came down to judge, what were the children of Israel? Where were their sins? God directs Moses that they should take of the blood of the slain lamb, and strike it on the two side-posts and on the upper door-post of their houses. "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." To the mind of man it was folly, but the simplicity of faith honours the word of God, and acts upon it. The destroying angel of Jehovah passed through the land, and if there had been Israelites ever so honest, but without the blood on their door-posts, he must enter and slay. For God was under this sign judging sin, and sin levels all distinctions; and where the blood was not, there sin was in all its hatefulness to a holy God - sin unatoned for and unjudged.

So now it is, Christ and salvation, or no Christ and no salvation. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not on the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. There is the utmost certainty for those within the blood-sprinkled doors. It is the Lord who executes the judgment by His angel. It is impossible for Him to be deceived, and impossible for man to escape: but He says, "when I see the blood I will pass over you." There need not be a doubt, whatever the judgment.

161 It is not said, when you see the blood, but "when I see" it. The soul of an awakened person often rests, not on its own righteousness, but on the way in which it sees the blood. Now, precious as it is to have the heart impressed with it, this is not the ground of peace. Peace is founded on God's seeing it. He cannot fail to estimate it at its full and perfect value as putting away sin. It is He that abhors and has been offended by sin; He sees the value of the blood as putting it away. It may be said, But must I not have faith in its value? This is faith in its value, seeing that God looks at it as putting away sin. Your value for it looks at it as a question of the measure of your feelings. Faith looks at God's thoughts.

God, then, sees the blood: on that we rest to escape judgment, not upon our own view either of sin or of the blood of the Lamb. God Himself estimates the blood of His own Son, as He it is who fully hates our sin: we feel both most when we enter into this, and rest on it in faith. Faith lays hold of His judgment of sin, and feels the need of His value for the blood of Christ.

This is the first great question - a question between a holy God and a sinful people. God appears as judge. The expiatory blood of redemption bars to Him the way as judge, and it secures the people infallibly; but God does not enter within - its value is to secure from judgment.

The people, having eaten in haste with the bitter herbs of repentance, begin their journey; but they do so in Egypt; yet now God can be, and he is, with them. The more we know Christ, and enjoy His purity, the more gravely shall we feel our sins. It was then that the Israelites ate the Lamb, but they ate it in security. It would have been sin to have thought that God could fail in His word or His deliverance: and it is sin now to doubt that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin.

Israel may be in Egypt, but they are no longer slaves there. Their loins are girded that night, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in hand. Such, too, is our position in the world. Israel begin their journey with the question of sin settled. They had been secured, and they knew it, even in the midst of God's judgment of sin. When the revelation of God enters the heart, one cannot find peace till the revelation of His grace is as clear to us as that of His dealing with sin. The Christian finds his judgment fallen on Christ Himself; he

begins with submitting to the righteousness of God, who condemns our nature and acts, root and branch, but shews us the condemnation borne by the Lord Jesus.

162 Have you submitted to Jesus? God demands it. He asks for no other offering nor sacrifice; He presents Jesus, and shews you what you are. The worst sinners in the world may be received in grace by Jesus. "Behold now is the accepted time: behold, now is the day of salvation."

When Israel went forth, the rage of Satan knew no bounds. Pharaoh made ready all the chariots of Egypt, and his horsemen and his army, and pursued after. Never had Israel been so sad as they were on the eve of their new deliverance. But now that sin in their case was settled, it was a question solely between God and the enemy. "And Moses said unto the people, 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 for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. 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. Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses."

It is well to distinguish the judgment of the first-born from that of the Red Sea. The one was the firstfruits of the other, and ought to have deterred Pharaoh from his rash pursuits. But the blood, which kept the people from the judgment of God, meant something far deeper and far more serious than even the Red Sea, though judgment was executed there too. What happened at the Red Sea was, it is true, the manifestation of the illustrious power of God, who destroyed, with the breath of His mouth, the enemy that stood in rebellion against Him. It was final and destructive judgment which effected the deliverance of His people by His power. But the blood of the paschal lamb signified the moral judgment of God, and the full and entire satisfaction of all that was in His being. God, such as He was, in His justice, His holiness, and His truth, could not touch those who were sheltered by that blood. Was there sin? His love towards His people had found the means of satisfying the requirements of His justice; and at the sight of that blood, which answered everything that was perfect in His being, He passed over it consistently with His justice, and even His truth. Nevertheless, God, even in passing over, is seen as judge. Hence, likewise, so long as the soul is on this ground, its peace is uncertain, its way in Egypt, even though all the while truly converted; because God has still the character of judge to it, and the power of the enemy is still there.

163 At the Red Sea, God acts in power according to the purposes of His love. Consequently the enemy, who was closely pursuing the people, is destroyed without resource. This is what will happen to the people at the last day, already, in reality - to the eye of God - sheltered through the blood. As to the moral type, the Red Sea is evidently the death and resurrection of Jesus, and of His people in Him; God acting in it, in order to bring them out of death, where He had brought them in Christ, and consequently beyond the possibility of being reached by the enemy. We are made partakers of it already through faith. Sheltered from the judgment of God by the blood, we are delivered by His power that acts for us from the power of Satan, the prince of this world. The blood keeping us from the judgment of God was the beginning; the power which raised us up with Christ made us free from the whole power of Satan who followed us, and from all his attacks and accusations.

The world who will follow that way is swallowed up in the waters. This is a solemn warning; for the world who call themselves Christians do take the ground of a judgment to come, and the need of righteousness; but not according to God. The Christian goes through it in Christ, knowing himself otherwise lost and

hopeless - the worldling in his own strength, and is swallowed up. Israel saw the Red Sea in its strength, and thought escape was impossible. So an awakened conscience dreads death and judgment. But Christ has died and borne judgment for us, and we are secured and delivered by that which in itself we dreaded. The worldling, seeing this, adopts the truth in his own strength, as if there were no danger, and is lost in his false confidence. To the believer, what was the subject of his fear - death and judgment - gives him joy, now that he knows the results, in God's hand, of the death of Christ. "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." Honey is taken out of the lion's carcase. The resurrection of Christ is the standing witness that the Christian's judgment is past, and that the world's judgment is coming (Rom. 4; Acts 17). Christ is risen, and therefore we are justified in Him; so is the world to be judged by Him.

## The Red Sea and the Wilderness

Exodus 15.

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It is easy to understand Israel's distress, - the sea before, shutting them in, and Pharaoh and his host pursuing, so that they were sore afraid, and cried unto the Lord, and said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" Although, as we see, they had cried to the Lord, they had not in their hearts reckoned on His delivering them. It must, therefore, have been a wondrous thing to them when God was so publicly manifested to be on their side. And so is it with our hearts, when thus tested with trial on every side; shut in, as it were, with trouble of one sort or another, our hearts are often found buried under the circumstances, instead of calculating upon the God who is above them either to sustain us under them or deliver from them.

Israel, we can see, was dealt with in unqualified grace, whatever might be their murmurings, etc., till they reached Sinai, that they might know how entirely God was for them. Afterwards, through their folly in putting themselves under the law, which they ought to have known they could not keep, they brought upon themselves a different line of treatment. In the sixteenth chapter, when they murmured for food, God gave them quails (as well as manna) without any reproach, that Israel might know that God was feeding them on the ground of perfect grace. But afterwards, when they again murmured for flesh (being then under law), we read that, while it was yet in their mouths, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote them with a very great plague. But God would first have them know how entirely bent He was on doing them good, bad as they might be.

It is well to distinguish, for our souls' profit, the difference between the Passover and the Red Sea. For a person may hear the gospel and receive it with joy, and be rejoicing in the forgiveness of sins; he may see the loveliness of Christ, and have his affections drawn out towards Himself; but if full redemption is not known, as typified by the Red Sea, if he does not know himself to be risen with Christ on the other side of death and judgment, he is almost sure to lose his joy when temptation comes and he feels his own weakness. The joy of chapter 15 is that God has absolutely redeemed them out of Egypt and brought them in His strength to His holy habitation. A very different thing from the joy of the Passover - being delivered from just and deserved judgment. In the Passover Jehovah had made Himself known to them as the God of judgment. The blood on the door-posts screened them from judgment; it kept Him out, and He did not come into their houses to destroy. Had He come in, it must have been in judgment. At the Red Sea it was another thing - even God coming in strength as their salvation. The Passover delivered them from

His judgment, the Red Sea from their enemies. The moment His people are in danger from Pharaoh, He comes in. The very sea they dreaded, and which appeared to throw them into Pharaoh's hands, becomes the means of their salvation. Thus through death God delivered them from death; like as Christ went down into the stronghold of Satan, went down under the power of death, and, rising again from the dead, delivered us from death. Thus was there an end of Pharaoh and Egypt to them for ever. The Red Sea is redemption out of Egypt; God Himself is their salvation. He whom they had feared, and justly, as a Judge, is become their salvation. They are redeemed; no longer were hoping for mercy, but able to rejoice that judgment was past, and to sing His praises for having brought them to His holy habitation - to God Himself; in the light as He is in the light; and brought there before they had taken one step in the wilderness, or fought one battle with their enemies.

166 There is no conflict properly till redemption is known. They did not attempt to fight with Pharaoh, but only to get away from him. They groaned under his yoke, but did not combat against him. How could they? They must be brought to God first - be the Lord's host before they can fight His enemies or their own. And so it is with an individual soul. I have no power to combat Satan while I am still his slave. I may groan under his yoke, and sigh to be delivered from it; but before my arm can be raised against him, I must have a complete and known redemption. The Israelites are not only happy in escaping the pursuer: it is a full conscious redemption from Egypt and Pharaoh; and they can count on God's power for all the rest. "The people shall hear and be afraid, 11 the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away," v. 14, 15. Their joy does not arise from having no enemies, but from God's own divine power taking them up, and putting them in His own presence.

167 "Thou shalt plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance," v. 17. This was yet to be done; but they were already with Him in His holy habitation - not theirs but His. And thus are we in His presence, brought to God, though not yet in the place prepared for us on high. So, in Ephesians 1, the apostle prays "that they may know what is the hope of His calling, and the glory of His inheritance in the saints." It was God's land they were to dwell in the Father's house in which our home shall be. It is His glory, and He will bring us into it. No fear of the enemies by the way: to faith they are powerless. Full confidence belongs to redemption. Is it then, as men would say, all plain sailing now? In no wise. It is the wilderness, and there is no water; and, mark, it was by the Lord's command they pitched in Rephidim.

Does this make redemption uncertain? Not at all. Yet it is a dreadful thing to have no water; it was certain death in those countries. Had He then brought them through the Red Sea and unto Himself to kill them with thirst? When at length they did come to water, it was bitter. But this was to prove them, and bring out what was in their hearts. The bitter water did not shew what was in God's heart (redemption had shewn that); but in their hearts lay much that had to be manifested and corrected. They must drink into the power of death. Being redeemed for ever, they must learn that there is nothing for them in the wilderness. All supply must be from God Himself. This is the very effect of redemption, and there is so much in us to be brought out and corrected. But He makes the waters sweet.

We must all learn death (being redeemed we have life) and it cannot be learnt in Egypt. They had no Marah in Egypt. It is wilderness experience. Redemption must be known first, and the effect will be death to sin, to selfishness, to one's own will; and all this is very trying. A person might be tempted to say, All this trial comes upon me because I have not redemption. Not so; it is just because you are redeemed. We may seek to avoid the bitter waters of Marah, but God will bring us to them. He must break down all that is of the old man, and then, in His own good time, He will put in that which sweetens all. But because God has brought me to Himself, He is putting His finger on everything (be it love of the world, setting up self, my

own will, or whatever it may be) that hinders complete dependence on Him, or my soul's full enjoyment of Himself. But count it not strange, though it be a fiery trial which is to try you; for as surely as you are redeemed, so will He break down your own will. Yes, beloved, God will make you drink of the very thing (death) that redeemed you.

168 And now Israel is going on with God, and He is dealing with them. He gave them statutes, etc. He did not do so before He had redeemed them. They had been troubled before by Pharaoh, but now it was from God. This was the effect of having to do with God, and now they learn God in a new character - "the Lord that healeth." A different thing from His promise, that if obedient He would bring none of the diseases of Egypt upon them. They are exercised by God, but it is that they may know Him as the Healer: it is for this that the whole heart has to be brought out before God. We cannot escape it. He will so order circumstances as to bring it about. Sometimes we are humbled before men: this is very trying and bitter water; but then what a wretched thing it was to be seeking to magnify oneself! As soon as the tree (the cross) is in the waters, they refresh the soul. This is joy in tribulation - joy in redemption first, but now in the healing. First, God makes us to sing in the knowledge of redemption; and then, if we are to have the practical effect of redemption, which is the enjoyment of God Himself in our souls, the flesh, which would always hinder this, must be broken down in whatever form it works. It was to prove them. God knew what was in their hearts; but they did not, and they must learn it.

After this they come to Elim. Now they experience the natural consequence of being with God - the full streams of refreshment - as soon as they were really broken down. Had Elim come first, there would have been no sense of their dependence on the Lord for everything, and nature would have been unbroken. But trial produces dependence, and dependence, communion. It is only for this that He delays, for He delights in blessing His people. The numbers 12 and 70 are different figures of perfection: perfect refreshment, perfect shelter, and all this in the wilderness, and rest then.

They must be exercised at Marah, that they may fully know and enjoy Him at Elim. Redemption brought them indeed to God, but now it is joy in God. And so it is with us. Although we are redeemed, we cannot have these springs from God Himself, flowing through our souls, with unbroken flesh. But whatever trial we are in, however deeply we may have to drink into death, there is resurrection as well as death: and when we see God's hand in it, when we see the cross of Christ in the bitter waters, we understand God's mind and purpose in them, and they become sweet to us. We cannot walk in the way of faith without faith, so we must be put to the test. Not that, for the present, tribulation seems joyous, but grievous; but afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits unto them that are exercised thereby.

169 Flesh is not faith. If I lose my trust in God for one minute, that very minute the flesh comes in, under some form or other. Whenever I feel perplexed or at a loss, the eye is not single: it shews I am out of communion' otherwise I should know what to do. If the eye were single, the whole body would be full of light. Or there is something yet to be detected in us, something we have not yet found out in our own hearts. It may not be wilful sin; but there is something He will exercise our hearts about, something as to which He will manifest Himself as Jehovah the Healer. Thus we learn to rejoice in tribulation also, and then to rejoice in God - finding springs of joy, refreshings in the wilderness in that God who brought us there. Let us, then, not count trial a strange thing; for we know its purpose, even that we may joy in God Himself.

Priesthood

The apostle says, Moses made all things according to the patterns shewed to him in the mount; and again, these "things were patterns of the heavenly things." The doctrines themselves are in the New Testament; the details of things connected with them are in the types.

Priesthood supposes accomplished redemption: not to bring us in, but what we get when brought in. "See how I have borne you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself," the Lord says to Israel. As a people, they were brought to God; but, a feeble and infirm people, they needed this help by the way. We are brought by redemption into the light as God is in the light; but down here we want His priesthood to maintain our walk before Him in the light. The priest is clothed in special garments. These garments are merely figures of that which is real in Christ in the exercise of His priesthood. That which was peculiarly the priest's garment was the ephod. "Doeg turned and fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons who did wear a linen ephod." David with the ephod "inquired of Jehovah." The ephod was made of two pieces: one before and one behind. There were two shoulder pieces, joined at the two edges; a girdle wound round the body to confine it; above that, a foursquare - double, to be a breastplate, containing the names of the children of Israel. There was to be a holy mitre on the head, and upon the skirt of the ephod the bell and the pomegranate.

All was connected with His people in the priests' garments. If it is the breastplate, the names are engraved in it. If it is the shoulder pieces, the names of the children of Israel are there. If it is the Urim and Thummim, the names of the children of Israel are there. Again I say, it was not to acquire righteousness, but to maintain their cause before God. He is there, acting before God on the people's behalf.

It is not true, then, that we have to get some one to go to God for us who believe. Christ is there for us; and grace is exercised, not because we return, but to bring us back. It is not said, "If any man repent," but, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." The love Christ exercises about us springs directly from Himself. With Peter, it was not after he had fallen that Christ says to him, "I have prayed for thee," but before. His intercession for Peter was going on all the time; and it is because of our getting wrong, not because we are right, that it is exercised. Our feebleness and failure become the occasion for the exercise of this grace. When the intercession of Christ answers in the way of warning, chastening is not needed. Christ looked upon Peter, and it was before Peter wept. The look was just at the right moment. We know not what Peter might have done next, but the look causes him to weep,

171 The priest goes to God for us, not we to the priest. Righteousness and propitiation are there already, and by virtue of His being there, and being what He is there, He can set them right.

Priesthood is Christ undertaking the cause of His people, through the wilderness, maintaining us in the presence of God; keeping us in God's memory, so to speak - "for a memorial." This is a different thing from His shepherd character, strengthening the sheep down here; but it is sustaining them according to the power of inward grace before God. He bears them all in a detailed way, each by name, engraved. As a shepherd He calls His sheep: but also, according to our particular individuality, He bears us on His heart and shoulders. God looks upon us according to the favour He has for Christ Himself. If a person sends his child to me, I receive it according to the affection I have for the father. The priest was there in the garments proper to his office.

When we think of Christ as a priest, we should have in remembrance our individual imperfectness. In one sense we are perfect, but that is in our membership with Him - union with Him our Head.

The breastplate was never to be separate from the ephod, v. 28. "That the breastplate be not loosed from the ephod." Whenever the high priest went into the presence of God, it was in his garments. He could not go without representing the people. It is impossible for Christ to stand there in the presence of God without us.

The girdle was a sign of service; it is the characteristic of a person in service. Christ is a servant for ever. When He became a man, He took upon Him the form of a servant. He might have asked for twelve legions of angels, and gone out free; but then He would have gone out alone. No! He says, I have got my work to do, my wife to care for. And thus He chose to be a servant for ever. He became a servant when incarnate, but He was bound a servant for ever when He gave up His life (Ex. 21). Yes, and He will be the servant; for "He shall gird Himself, and will make them sit down to meat, and come forth to serve them." His divine glory never changes, of course; but He will never give up this character of servant: for ever and ever we shall have this "First-born of many brethren," this new Adam head of the family.

172 Verse 29, "Aaron shall bear the names," etc. Whatever value the Priest has in God's sight, He brings it down upon them. He bears them on His heart. All the love that Christ has for them, He bears them before God, according to this love. Then in answer they get whatever they need: it may be chastening, it may be strength. He obtains for us all the blessing we need, according to the favour that God bears Him. There is not only the personal favour, but the Urim and Thummim, the ground of their favour, which is in God Himself. The blessing is given according to the light and perfections of God (the meaning of the words being lights and perfections). He bears our judgment according to the light and perfections of God. That is where we are as regards daily judgment. We walk in the light as God is in the light: and as we want cleansing, there is the blood. If I commit a fault, what then; am I condemned? No, because Christ the righteous One is there; but then God must deal with an individual according to this light and perfection. He deals with us according to our need and weakness. He will make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear, because Christ is there. He deals with us just where we are, taking into His account our standing as to grace of course. When they have to learn things of God, it is by the Urim and Thummim also. It is according to the light and perfections of God that He instructs and guides me.

The feebleness, failings, and infirmities, instead of being the occasion of condemnation to me, are the occasion of instruction. The names He is bearing are those for whom there is no wrath. Christ bears Peter on His breast, and He does not pray that he should not be sifted, because He saw the self-sufficiency of Peter needed to be broken down; but He bore him on His heart, and obtained for him the thing he needed, that his faith fail not. His priesthood is exercised for me in putting my heart in a right position before God (not on account of wrath), and He bears us continually before the Lord.

173 There is reference here to another thing we have in virtue of Christ having gone up on high - the Holy Ghost. He received of the Father the gift of the Holy Ghost. He received it alone; but we, the skirts of His garments, get it shed upon us in virtue of His finished work - His accepted work (Psalm 133). The bell and the pomegranate may signify the gifts, testimony and fruit of the Holy Ghost, when Christ went into heaven, and when He will come forth again. "And his sound shall be heard when he goeth into the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not." The mitre is "holiness unto the Lord," and it was to be always upon his forehead.

It is not only when I have failed that Christ intercedes for me, but in holy things; when I go up to worship God, there comes in something that cannot suit the holiness of God - something that has not a bit of sanctified feeling in it; a distracting thought, admiration of fine music, etc., and this for want of habitual communion with the Lord. Well, then, can I say, I have failed, and let it go? There is holiness in Christ for our worship. True, we ought not to be satisfied without the full tide of affection going up to Him from us; but we are accepted because of His work. The iniquity cannot be accepted, but it never goes up. The Christian is always accepted, because in Christ. I may always go to God, because of the continual priesthood exercised. Christ bears my failures that they may be judged; my weakness, that I may get strength; but His heart is always engaged for us. Not merely the abstract love of God for us, which is always true, but this love of Christ ever ready for our necessities. There is evil that wants correction, but He will not put us out of His sight for it: but because you are accepted, He will remedy it.

The object of it all is that our soul should be up there with Christ, walking according to the perfectness of God Himself. When we see Christ for us there, we can venture to apply this light and perfection to our ways. How He has provided for us in love and holiness, for holiness we see stamped in great letters upon it! He is the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. The sinner wants the Apostle, the message from God about acceptance. The saint wants the High Priest.

174 Priesthood

Exodus 2.9.

There is a desire at all times in the people of God, whether in Jewish ignorance or Christian life, that they should always have God dwelling with them. Thus, in Exodus 15, as soon as Moses had come out of Egypt, he said, "He is my God; I will prepare him a habitation." So we are "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

We do look to God's dwelling amongst us; yet we have much more thought of dwelling with Him. This was not the case with Israel. We have boldness to enter into the honest, Christ having passed through the heavens for us, as Aaron passed through the tabernacle for them. Israel could not enter within the veil; but Christ has rent it, and opened a new and living way, which He has consecrated for us. God having, in the cross of Christ, put sin away, we can stand in the light of His presence. Here we find the presence of God among them. This is not redemption, the object of which is that we should be with God. We could not meet God without redemption. Christ suffered, the "just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

We learn in this chapter how we can thus be in the presence of God constantly and abidingly. We are really, in title, made "kings and priests to God and His Father"; our provision and character being this, provision is made in Christ for us, so that we can be continually in the presence of God. There was to be the burnt-offering continually at the door of the tabernacle, the place where the Lord met with the people. We are consecrated to God to be priests. Christ has not yet taken upon Him His office as King; but He has taken the priesthood, and therefore we have got, even now, our priesthood. He exercises in heaven continually a perpetual priesthood, filling up in this respect the figure of Aaron, though the order be of Melchisedec.

We see here how we are put in the place of priests, and yet Christ is personally distinguished. Aaron goes first (v. 5-7) alone, to represent Christ; then the sons (v. 8) to represent the whole Church, the priests. In referring to the cleansing of the leper, we have the way a sinner is cleansed from the evil that is in him. It is the same ordinance as regards the leper and the priest; but the leper wants to get cleansed as a sinner,

the priest that he may be consecrated to God. If not cleansed in every respect we could not stand before God at all. There was sprinkling of blood on the leper, on the right ear, the right hand, the right toe: his thoughts, his acts, his walk, must be all cleansed, by being brought under the "blood of sprinkling." So in this chapter we are consecrated in the same way. In verse 4, "Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle," etc. You do not find Aaron washed by himself, because Christ did not need it. They are washed together as a figure of the Christian body. Christ as a man identifies Himself with the Church (1 Cor. 12:12). Aaron was anointed (v. 17). The Holy Ghost descended upon Christ when He had been baptized.

175 But before unction we need to be cleansed. The word of God applied to the heart and conscience with power by the Spirit is called washing with the word. "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." This is not habitation but washing. Christ came not by water only, but by water and blood. The blood was for expiation, the water for washing, in order to meet God. In anything of Christ's work, it is not a question merely of atonement, but of meeting God. If I think of meeting God, it is what God requires. There must be perfect cleansing. It turns the eye on God Himself. I shall always know evil in myself; but if God is satisfied, so may I be. It is wholesome to look within and judge myself; but I shall not get the blessed peace that flows from faith, if I am looking for it into my own heart. When we see God is satisfied with Christ, then comes in peace; it gives the highest standard of right and wrong, but peace, because God is satisfied with Christ. Washing by water is repeated, not by blood.

Moses clothes him with the priest's robe, and there is no sacrifice here, because Christ required none. He was a perfect man in obedience and love. As man, Christ identifies Himself with His people. He comes into the same place as regards the walk of holiness. He was anointed with the Spirit and with power. All He did was in the power of the Spirit (v. 7, 20 21; Acts 10:38). Christ was anointed as man. When He ascended on high, there He received the promise of the Father, and sent down the Spirit to the saints, so constituting them the Church.

Next, we come to the sons of Aaron (v. 8, 9). We are going to get them introduced into the priesthood, and now comes the sacrifice. Aaron needed none (v. 10-13, 14). There is no sweet savour in the sin-offering or trespass-offering. It must be burnt without the camp. Here it is a sin-offering - sin must be totally put away before our consecration. It is the nature judged before God. Christ is made sin for us, that we may be made priests. We have these two aspects of the value of Christ's work. First, the sin is charged upon Him. In the Hebrew there is no difference between "sin" and "sin-offering." Here He is the sin-offering; He who "knew no sin, made sin for us," etc. Secondly, the other character was offering Himself up to God, all the devotedness of a life of obedience offered up; this was a sweet savour to God. "Therefore hath my Father loved me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again," John 10.

176 In verses 15-18 we find Aaron and his sons not merely having sin taken away, but accepted of God in all the perfection of Christ. If I am looked at as a sinner in myself, the sin is put away, but this is not all. Aaron and his sons put their hands upon the sin-offering; they also identified themselves with the burnt-offering. All the savour of everything that Christ has done, we are in: everything was consumed (v. 18), and put to the test; nothing failed; it is all gone up, and we are in it before God. Here we get our blessed position, previous to consecration as priests. For this, it is not a question of what I think of myself; but the measure of my acceptance is what Christ is in God's presence and estimate. We cannot measure grace by any thing that is fitted for us, but by what is fitted for God.

Verses 19, 21. We come now to the proper character of those persons that are cleansed and accepted. Now it is to consecrate, and, as in cleansing the leper, the blood is put on the right ear, right hand, and right foot - the acts, thoughts, and walks. We are now consecrated to God in all these. We have to render unto the Lord our bodies as well as our spirits; for we are not our own, but bought with a price. Every act that Christ did was as perfect as His sacrifice, but every step made it increasingly difficult. So we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Christ's conduct and Christ's devotedness are the measure of our walk before God. There is not so much as to set one's foot on left for self-will. Christ did not come to do His own will. Even to death He went, the death of the cross, So with us, if the eye is single, the whole body is full of light. If the heart is right, it makes the aim right. The apostle says, "Not that I have already attained . . . but this one thing I do," etc. He exercised himself day and night "to have a conscience void of offence." Then it is real liberty. If the heart be right, it will be joy; if not, it will be terrible, because there is not the smallest liberty given to self-will. In many things we fail; but if we feel what sin is and the claim God has on us, it will be our privilege to do His will. It is not a pretence that we are set up as something wonderful. No, it is faith in the blood of Christ that has cleansed us as to purpose and thought according to the perfectness of Christ; and now we are consecrated to serve God. It is simple Christianity.

177 Verse 21 shews them consecrated by the blood put upon their persons; but not only so, for there is the anointing with the Spirit of God to give power and energy for action. It was put on the "sons' garments with him." I have got the power of Christ in heaven, and the power of the Spirit that comes down from Christ for garments (that is, for all that I appear in before the world). It is "with Him," a thorough, complete association by the power of the Spirit with a crucified Christ who is now in heaven. Thus we get real thorough joy and gladness of heart. The first fruits are with God, the result are in what we shew to men. If peace and joy are in my heart, let me go in that, and it produces joy and gladness in my ways. The beginning of all practical fruits is from what we have with God, and then there is a testimony to men. What we really are with God shews itself out. It is, or should be, the effect of the consciousness of union with Christ.

This anointing of the Spirit can be put on us, because the blood is on us. Aaron had no blood put on him. The Spirit is the seal. The least relic of sin would prevent Him from sealing; but when the blood has cleansed from sin, then the seal is applied. The presence of the Spirit is the witness of the blood-shedding; the fruits are the witness of the Spirit. We thus get a wonderful power, stamp, and measure of holiness. If we believe in Christ., we are so cleansed that the Spirit can come and dwell in us. The Spirit is the seal to the value of Christ's work, not to what He is going to produce. Now He can fill Aaron's hands (v. 23, 24). What is produced by the Spirit is Christ's after all. I can come with an object now that I know God delights in it. Suppose I praise Christ's name, I know God's delight rests on it; it may be imperfectly done, but I know what the thing is to God, not the manner of my presenting it. It is the sweet savour of Christ to God.

178 We feed on Christ (v. 31, 32), now that He has given us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. We gather strength and grace, and comfort, the perfectness of Christ Himself, as our souls' food. "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me." We come so to think of Christ, so to realize in our hearts and spirits what He is, that we live Christ. What a man thinks is what he is, more than what he does. A man may think of sin, and love it, and desire to do it, but will not because of his character; he may be a hypocrite. If I realize Christ in my heart, I am a Christian.

Verse 42 shews a continual burnt-offering at the place where God meets the people. Christ is before God day by day continually, a sweet savour. I cannot go to God without finding the savour of Christ there, in the perfect sweetness of His offering.

The reason (we hear in Genesis 8) God gave for not cursing is that He looks to Noah's sacrifice, not to the sin. God deals with us in virtue of what the Mediator is, instead of what we are. It ought to be always in our hearts, but it is always before God. When the daily sacrifice was taken away, the Jew could not go to God; there was no savour; see Dan. 8:11.

In verses 42, 43, it is "I will meet you to speak there to thee." It is through Christ we gain everything. Finally, God says (v. 45, 46), "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God." It is by the Spirit He does so now. The whole Church is His dwelling-place. He is not merely a Redeemer, but a constant dweller with the people; as verse 46 shews, it was not to do an act and then leave them. So it is with the Church in a still more blessed way.

But let us never forget that sin is put away first; then there is the continual savour where God meets us; and we are consecrated to His service. It supposes that the heart is right; for I cannot wish to be consecrated to God and have my own will. The death of Christ will never find its intelligent value in our hearts, if we want to escape the consequences of consecration. If we are consecrated, the motive of every action should be that Christ may be glorified. You cannot be happy unless Christ be everything. We may have to condemn ourselves daily; but when we think what a savour is before God we on with confidence.

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