

Christ Our Passover

Pre-Passover

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Psalm 111:1-4 Praise you the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation. The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honorable and glorious: and his righteousness endures forever. He has made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.

Psalm 111:6-10 He has showed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. The works of his hands are verity and judgment: all his commandments are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness. He sent redemption unto his people: he has commanded his covenant forever: holy and reverend is his name. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endures forever.

Psalm 111 is the first of three of what the scholars call the *Hallelujah Psalms*. I think they give it that name because in each one of these psalms the word "Hallelujah" appears in that first clause. The first two of these—Psalm 111 and Psalm 112—are written in the acrostic style in which the first verse begins with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and then in this case, each following 21 clauses begins with the following letter of the Hebrew alphabet. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet.

This form of poetry does not make for smooth reading, or even for a logical development of any kind of a theme, but it was excellent as an aid to memory. Unfortunately, this does not come through in the English translations, but in this particular psalm, the intent was for the people to *remember* specific acts of God.

It is interesting that the Jews associated this psalm with Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in turn it is closely associated with "the Lord's Supper" and "Easter" by the Protestant religion. The purpose of the psalm is not merely to be an aid to remember God's deeds, but rather to motivate them to search into them for wisdom.

Notice what it says in verse 2 in the *King James Version*, "The works of the LORD are great, *sought out* . . ."

That is not a real good translation. It is not in error, but it is not as descriptive as it could be for us today. It means, "studied." "God's works are studied," but they are studied "by those who have *pleasure* in them."

There is a reason for this verse being here in this psalm, and this is because regardless of how great and how exalted God's works are, they can only be beneficial to those who have deeply considered their significance in light of God's great purpose.

It is entirely possible for people to experience great events and yet miss their significance entirely. This is exactly what Israel did coming out of Egypt and wandering in the wilderness for forty years. What they saw and what they heard, according to Hebrews 4:1-2, was not mixed with faith, and they perished in the wilderness despite personally and directly experiencing some of the greatest events in the history of mankind.

The last clause in Psalm 111:3, where it says, "His righteousness endures forever," is pointing to the eternal characteristics of all of God's acts. They are not only right at the moment that they are done, they are *eternally* right.

There is absolutely nothing situational about them, and this is *very* important for us to understand. He does not exercise His decisions and power in an arbitrary manner. He does not do things willy-nilly. His mind is focused always on the end result of what He is working out, and therefore His works are always a reliable guide for one to trust, because they are always in accord with the immutable dictates of what is right. So for a person to trust in them and make them a part of his life is *always* going to be right regardless of when that person is living.

This truth applies not just to the great events that occurred to Israel during the exodus from Egypt, or during the destruction that preceded the Exodus, or in the pilgrimage of going through the wilderness. This principle also applies to our individual and seemingly small and insignificant lives as sons of God.

Brethren, how important is the life of each one of your children to you? Would God, with His perfect character and love, do anything less than what a human would do? No. His care and concern for His children is exceedingly greater. It is immeasurably greater, and therefore the psalm reaches the conclusion that God should be *reverenced*. Indeed, it says "feared" because therein lies great wisdom. Reverence and fear drive us toward Him and toward submission.

When one compares God's works with man's works, the closer one looks at man's works the more flaws one sees. The closer one looks at God's works, the more perfection one sees. Man's works are finite. God's works are infinite. Man's works are mutable, changeable. God's works are immutable.

Consider how adept God is in using one creation to do many different jobs. For example there is air. Air is invisible and appears to be weightless, and yet when certain laws are brought to bear upon it, air will support an airplane weighing many tons, carrying hundreds of people and all of their luggage besides. Air supplies the lungs, and therefore life, with oxygen. It will support fire, but yet when it is separated into its component parts, it is capable of putting out a fire. Air conveys heat and cold. It carries moisture. It will move ships. It conveys sounds and scents, and I am sure many other things as well.

By way of contrast, man has the tendency to have to create a special tool for every purpose, and frequently his attempts at doing this turn out to be quite clumsy. When man attempts to combine many tools into one package, he comes up with something like a Swiss army knife, and there is not one tool in that whole package that is anywhere near as good as the real thing.

For some there is a tendency to overlook how profound God is when we study, because in this age we have been trained by the system that is out

there to look for quick answers, and therefore we just tend to *accept* what God says without really searching it out. But God's Word is like God's work. His Word is just as much of a creation as is air. It has infinite depth and breadth and manifold uses that seem to me are inexhaustible.

Did you ever think upon that illustration that is given at the tail end of the book of Ezekiel? When Ezekiel stepped out into the river he describes how the water came up to his ankles. And then he marched several furlongs out into the river and the water was up to his knees. Then he went some more multiple furlongs, and it was up to his hips. You see, that river represents the Spirit of God, and God's Word is spirit, and God's Word is deep and profound and has uses far beyond what meets the eyes at first reaping.

Look at how many applications have been made to scriptures by the ministry that you are familiar with that the ministry uses to reinforce with authority God's Word some point in a sermon. I dare say, any one scripture can be used in dozens, in scores of different sermons, each one in a slightly different way.

I do not know who the author of this psalm is, but he had his mind in the right place.

Psalm 119:18-20 Open you my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law. I am a stranger in the earth: hide not your commandments from me. My soul breaks for the longing that it has unto your judgments at all times.

This author had the right idea. He is asking God for illumination. He is asking God for conviction. He is asking God for understanding.

We are on our way to the Kingdom of God, and we are to view ourselves as pilgrims. But it is a long haul, and we need guidance because we have never been this way before. That is why the author calls himself "a stranger" in verse 19. When you are in an area that you have not been before, you are a stranger and you need direction, unless you are a man driving a car. I think you get the point. It is always good to ask questions, and that is what this person is doing. He is a stranger in a land in a way that he has not walked before, and he is asking for directions. That is wisdom.

If we ignore God's Word, or take it lightly, we will wander aimlessly along the way, and I will tell you, we are going to make an awful lot of wrong turns. So to look on the mere surface is one thing, but to look more deeply into the Bible is another thing altogether, and it is work, and it is time-consuming. As I said earlier, we have been trained by the busyness of this culture to just accept things. We do not want to spend the time all too frequently to ask God, and then to pick up the Book and begin to go through it deeply. Each section, indeed sometimes each verse, may have several purposes just like air does in the physical creation. That is one reason why there can be the dual application that we are so familiar with.

I want us to take this principle and think of this in relation to Jesus Christ.

Matthew 16:13-14 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that you are John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.

Can you see that there was confusion about Him, about who He was, about His identity?

Let us look in John 7 where much later in Jesus' ministry the same thing is still going on.

John 7:5 For neither did his brethren believe in him.

His brethren right in His own house did not believe in him. They really did not get it.

John 7:12 And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, No; but he deceives the people.

John 7:20 The people answered and said, You have a demon: who goes about to kill you?

John 7:25-26 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this He, whom they seek to kill? But, lo, He speaks boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?

To the average Jew He was a mysterious fellow. They did not understand Him, and yet they liked Him. He did fantastic things. To the Pharisees and Sadducees He was an archrival, a competitor, the ringleader of a new cult, and He was a threat to their authority. To the Romans He was a Jewish troublemaker, even a magician. Pilate said He was harmless, but to avoid a seditious riot he allowed Christ to be put to death.

The question is, "What is He to *you*?" What is He at this moment to *you*? What have you thought about Him in the past in regard to your relationship to Him, to what He has done in your behalf, and to what He was? This is very important at this time of year, because **He** is what Passover is all about. Indeed, He is what **salvation** is all about.

In the Bible, Jesus is revealed as Creator, Prophet, Priest, and King. He is shown as the Redeemer of physical Israel, and the Redeemer of spiritual Israel. We see Him as Savior and Deliverer in a multitude of situations, including being Provider, Healer, and High Priest. He is the *paraclete*, the *archegos*, the Lamb of God. He is seen in over 200 different guises in God's Word. But at Passover, the focus is on Him as the sacrificed Lamb of God slain for the sins of the whole world.

Romans 10:4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes.

Another way of putting that is: "Christ is the *object* of the Bible."

I have in my possession in my office at home the *New Testament Commentary*. They translated that verse: "For Christ is the goal of the law so that there is righteousness for everyone who puts his trust in Him."

The law, brethren, points to the righteousness that is attainable only through trust in Christ. This in no way eliminates works, but trust in our works will

not save us. Salvation is a matter of trust in a relationship with Jesus Christ. The idea is this: Does anyone want to understand the meaning and substance of the Old Testament law? Then you study *Christ* to find out what the meaning is. The very purpose of the law is the establishment of love, and Christ is the very personification of that love, both in His life and in His death. He fulfilled the law perfectly. He exemplified God's desires in everything that He did, and we, brethren, are to grow into His likeness—"to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." If you want to know what the goal in life is, study *Christ*!

Christ is the personification not only of perfect love, but also of perfect government. He is the perfect man. He is God in the flesh. He is the standard toward which all men are to strive. The law is seen as one aspect of the whole scheme of salvation. So the end, the goal of the law, like everything in God's purpose, is to bring us to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

There was a book out a number of years ago titled, *If You Don't Know Where You're Going, You're Liable To End Up Somewhere Else*. That was really its title. Do we know where we are going? See, all too often the goal is a fuzzy, hazy Kingdom of God; but Christ is much more sharply defined and drawn in the Word of God than is the Kingdom of God by far. His actions fill up four books mostly just on His ministry, just three years of His life. The apostle John said He did so much more that all the books in the world could not be filled in with what He did. But He is what is to be studied into if we want to know what Christianity is all about.

Matthew 13:10-11 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speak you unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

A biblical mystery is not a puzzle difficult to solve. It is a *secret* impossible to penetrate. It is something that is impossible to interpret *until* it is revealed. Then it becomes plain. It becomes plain over time. It does not always become immediately plain, but it must be revealed before we can even begin

down the path. "Mystery" in Greek theological sense was a term used to describe something that was crystal clear to those who were on the inside, but unintelligible to those who were on the outside.

In like manner, the fullness of Christ, and therefore of Christianity, can only be understood from the inside out. This is why the unconverted scoff against it. I do not mean that they scoff against every part of it, but they scoff against enough for us to eventually see that they really do not get it. This is why they scorn it as being unworthy of their time. Understanding it requires submissive obedience to God's will. That is what Psalm 111:10 says. "A good understanding have all they that do His commandments."

As a result of this combination of revelation and obedience, we understand the scheme of salvation. Much of this awareness comes from the keeping of the festivals of God. In so doing, of course, we are obeying Him. The festivals give an outline of salvation, and the keeping of them not only opens more and more understanding of them, it tends to keep us *in the way*. It is like they are steps that are leading to a destination, and that destination in its broadest sense is the kingdom and family of God. In a more precise sense, it is leading us to be like Christ. So even as a broader, deeper understanding of the festivals is revealed to us as we travel along the way keeping them, so is a broader deeper understanding of Jesus Christ required of us as well.

We all have a tendency to develop blind spots. They are places where we personally tend to overlook maybe, weaknesses in our understanding and practice. One flaw that some of us have is that we tend to recoil at the way those outside present Jesus Christ. What they tend to do is to present Him as a Savior, yes, but in a maudlin, overly sentimental way that personally makes me depressed. But sometimes we too have tended to see Him in only one guise as well, and we seem to go to the other extreme, seeing Him as an angry conquering warrior, lawgiver, and judge who seems bent with every intent of taking human life. Somewhere there is a correct discernment of Him, and I am not sure you are going to get all of that out of this sermon. It takes oodles and oodles of sermons.

What is the gospel of the Kingdom of God? There is a tendency in us to think of this in narrow terms as well. We tend to think of it as inheriting God's Kingdom, or God's government coming on earth. But there are bits

and pieces of it scattered throughout the entirety of the Bible. The gospel is the *sum total* of the message, the life, the works, the example, and the promises embodied in Jesus of Nazareth.

Now what is He most directly to us? I am going to name eight of them. Remember, this is part of the gospel.

He *is* the Creator who has been with the Father from eternity.

He *is* the very Son of God who revealed the Father.

He *has* conquered and disqualified Satan, and therefore is the soon-coming King of the Kingdom.

He *is* the Savior who was crucified and then resurrected after three days, according to the Scriptures.

He *is* the Firstborn—our elder brother.

He *is* the Captain of our personal salvation who loves us with an intensity impossible for us to understand, even in our deepest moments.

He *is* the Head of the church.

He *is* our High Priest who sits daily at our Father's right hand, making intercession for us.

Jesus Christ is *everything* that we are not. We cannot let this powerful Personality—this Christ and Savior, this tender-loving elder Brother, who and what He was and what He accomplished, and what He now is, and what He *will* accomplish—ever get very far from our mind each and every day.

What all this confusion shown about Christ in the Bible means (Matthew 16 and John 7 are examples in context), is that people could look at Jesus with their eyes and never understand the significance of His person, or read or hear His message and never grasp the implications to them personally. And so the parables, indeed most of the Bible, are not just general illustrations of moral and spiritual truths, but their fuller understanding depends upon the

active recognition and application in one's life of Jesus as Savior, King, and High Priest within the message of the gospel of the Kingdom of God.

I Corinthians 11:25-29 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

That is what this sermon is about. It is about discerning the Lord and His application, His meaning to Passover to us at this time of the year. Every holy day, every festival has significant preparation, but a day that is not even a holy day—Passover—has the most important preparations of all. In fact, Passover itself is preparatory, because it prepares one for participation in the remainder of God's plan since it begins the annual rehearsal of God's purpose.

The *cup* in this series of verses symbolizes the blood Jesus shed in sacrificing His life. We all know that the life of the flesh is in the blood, and so we can understand that God is saying that it is through or by means of the sacrifice of the life of Christ that He is *sealing* His agreement of salvation with us.

You can read about the sealing of the Old Testament in Exodus 21 through 24. When the Old Covenant was sealed, it was sealed when Moses sprinkled the blood of a sacrificed animal on the people. The blood actually was *placed* on them. That blood symbolically represented *Christ's* blood sprinkled on *you* and *me*.

You do not even get out of Genesis 3 and God has already given His promise that there would be a Savior, but through Christ's death He is certifying it. That is what I Corinthians 11 is telling us, that the covenant is certified,

validated, confirmed by the blood of Christ. It is God validating His agreement to give us salvation, and by doing it this way He accomplishes two things.

First of all, He gives powerful evidence of how serious He is, and He provides the means that enables Him to forgive the payment of *our* life that we owe Him because of our sins, and such a sacrifice must be fittingly remembered. If Passover ever becomes just a ritual or a pious habit it loses its significance because Christ is not really being remembered and memorialized. It is *Christ* who is not really being remembered, and *who* and *what* He was. Rightly considered, Passover goes a long way toward establishing the right attitude for successfully doing our part in working out God's purpose in us.

The people in Corinth were rushing into it and through it without deeply considering its meaning. Satan today is working very hard in our time to establish a rather blasé attitude toward violence and death in us. He has had very great success with the immature. Passover's purpose is not just to remember certain historical facts or certain historical events, and it is not just to celebrate His memory, but also to get the *point*, the ***significance*** of His death. If we do not get the point, there is a higher probability we will treat His death unworthily.

It seems to me, that besides the subject that we are dealing with right now, there are three other subjects being dealt with in chapter 11, and in chapters 10 and 12. Those subjects are:

1. Our own personal relationship with God. Right in the midst of that comes Christ's sacrifice—the Passover service—reminding us that we *have* a relationship with God because of what Christ did.
2. Our relationship with other members of the body—those who share in the benefit received from the sacrifice of Christ.
3. Its spiritual liberty and life through the forgiveness of sin, because the penalty of sin has been broken.

The point—the significance—is that the singular, unique means by which all three are made possible, and made as good as possible considering the circumstance of having to live in this sin-filled world, is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Without it there is, very bluntly, no hope. It is over, *kaput*, done. With it, every hope and dream that you have ever had in regard to being in the Kingdom of God is possible.

The word, "examine," as it is used here, means *to test, to prove, to approve, to scrutinize* to see whether a thing will be *genuine*. Is the sacrifice of Christ genuine? What about your own participation in it? Is it really genuine? Is your conversion genuine? "Examine yourself." In other words, what we are looking at here is a demand that we make an evaluation. Connected to that is the word "discern." This word means *to separate into parts; to discriminate*, and thus to *learn* through the process. It means to put things in order for the purpose of judging—putting them in a logical progression that leads to a conclusion.

The purpose in this context is to make a distinction, to prefer, and thus to yield preference, favor, and honor to the one preferred. That is Christ. The whole purpose is to prevent a careless and unappreciative taking of the Passover.

I have used this illustration before, but it really struck me at the time that I saw it, and it really impressed me. Two times I have had the opportunity to see a round of golf at the Augusta National Golf Course during the Masters Tournament. What I am about to relate occurred the first time. This was first time that I had ever been to a golf match of this level in my life, and so I was able to watch people like Jack Nicklaus and Arnold Palmer when they were much closer to their prime, which was back in the late seventies. This included Lee Trevino, and many others beside that.

As I watched, I gradually became aware of what was going on around me rather than just on the course. In the people who were watching the professionals play golf, I began to see that there was a deep, respectful appreciation for what these men were doing. It then dawned on me *why* there was such a respectful appreciation, and that was that virtually everybody who was watching had tried to do the same things, and failed time after time

after time, and for them to see someone actually do it was something that they could hardly grasp.

There was almost a reverence in seeing these men do things—hitting a ball on a little piece of grass. If they had hit it, it would have gone in the drink. If they had hit it, it would have only gone about fifty yards. If they had hit it, who knows!

Now just apply that to Christ. That is what God is asking us to do—to watch the Master, through His Word, do these things, and then compare it to our own performance, and *then* build a deep respectful appreciation of this One who did so well, that we fall so short in accomplishing when we begin to evaluate and compare ourselves against Him. And so by "unworthy manner," he means we should not be rushing into taking Passover without seriously considering and appreciating its meaning and value. If we do not, then instead of honoring Christ's sacrifice, Paul says we would be sharing in the guilt of those who crucified Christ.

Awareness of our sins should not keep us from taking Passover, but actually drive us to it. So take the Passover thoughtfully, because by so doing we are stating our faith in Jesus Christ as not only the payment for our sins, but also as the One who opens the way to the relationship with God mentioned earlier, and those who believe as we do.

This is a time of self-examination, but please understand that the focus of Passover is not on *us and our sins*. It is not on our sins, but on the *payment* for our sins. Passover is a time for focusing in on the most elementary precepts of our salvation, and especially to focus on the part Jesus Christ played in this, or we will never truly and deeply understand that salvation is by grace through faith.

Think of the following scriptures in terms of Passover.

II Corinthians 10:12 For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

II Corinthians 13:5 Examining yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?

"Counterfeit" is a better translation of the word.

Consider these two principles together. We understand, as we head into Passover and Unleavened Bread, that it is our responsibility to examine ourselves, but we sometimes miss the focus for our examination, and there is a snare or two here if we are not careful.

One snare is that we will permit ourselves to judge ourselves in light of other people. This can be a fatal trap, because it deceitfully provides us with self-justifications for the way that we are. The result is there will not be any repentance. We are not discerning correctly. There will be no growth, because how can we change perfection? Doing this also promotes pride, thus making change all the more difficult.

The second snare is also dangerous in that our examination of ourselves is so rigorous that we become depressed to the extent that we feel that salvation is impossible. But brethren, this is utterly self-indulgent as well. The focus is on the self in a "woe is me," "please pay attention to me" fashion. This too is a self-justification and is a not-too-subtle blast against God's judgment in calling us, and against His promise, and against His grace.

In both of these scenarios the focus is on the self. At Passover the focus is on the *payment* of sin through the sacrifice of Christ. The focus is on the grace of God. During Unleavened Bread the focus shifts to overcoming sin and coming out of this world through the enabling power that is also the grace of God. With Passover, it is the grace of God *justifying* through the blood of Jesus Christ. With Unleavened Bread, it is the grace of God *sanctifying* as we progress toward the Kingdom of God and glorification.

Anyone who is comparing himself with others is not exhibiting faith in God. Anyone who allows himself to become so remorseful that he is threatening not to take the Passover, his faith is not in the promises of God either.

I Peter 1:17-21 And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conduct received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you. Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave Him glory: that your faith and hope might be in God.

Jesus was dead, and His death and His resurrection are the foundation of our faith. His glorification is God's pledge to us that there is hope for our future.

Look again at verses 19 and 20. "Jesus was the Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world." That is not merely foresight; brethren; that is purpose. God *knew* that Adam and Eve were going to sin before Adam was created, and mankind's redemption was purposefully placed in God's plan before creation. Think on that. Verse 19 stresses the *value* of the sacrifice by using the word "precious." That same word is translated "honor" three times in chapters 2 and 3. What it shows is that there is a very high value placed upon something. In this case that "something" is Christ's blood.

We use the term "precious" for things that we value highly. This is what we are to examine in preparation for Passover. How *precious* is the blood of Jesus Christ to you and me? There is that interesting comment that Malachi makes, where this word "precious" is used, and it says:

Malachi 3:16 Then they that feared the LORD spoke often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name.

That is what this sermon is about. It is about thinking. It is about coming to an understanding of the significance. It is about *studying into*.

Malachi 3:17 And they [those who thought upon His name] shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels [those precious things]; and I will spare them as a man spares his own son that serves him.

God considers those who fear Him and meditate on His name as His jewels. They are precious to Him, and He is going to spare and preserve them through the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord to come. He takes special recognition of them. Now how much is that sacrifice of Christ worth to you? What kind of a value do you place upon it? How much does a relationship mean to you? What would you be willing to give for it?

We take very special care of those things that we value highly, do we not? The value we place on Christ's sacrifice is a *major* issue for meditation and study at this time.

I Peter 1:18 stresses the words, "Forasmuch as *you know* ..." The Christian life is lived out of the revelation of the knowledge of the redemption Christ accomplished. The value of the redemption is the value **you** place on the life given you for forgiveness. What is it worth? The life that we then *live* day by day reveals evidence of the value that we place upon it.

Peter says that our former life, which we received from our fathers, was aimless because of the value we place on material things and self-satisfaction. That is why it was aimless. Now our lives are to center on the value that we place on that sacrifice and all the attendant spiritual things that accompany.

Hebrews 10:26-29 For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and

has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

Do we realize that ultimately this is what the unpardonable sin accomplishes? It is a rejection of the very basis of the covenant—the blood of Jesus Christ—regardless of what the individual sin is that is committed over and over again as a way of life, the constant practice of it. It is a rejection of the very basis of the Covenant. Christ's blood is rejected as being just a common thing. At Passover, the focus is on the blood of Jesus Christ, the unblemished Lamb of God.

When God was planning for this creation, and He considered His purpose and our free moral agency, He had to devise a payment for sin that was so profound in its implications for the heirs of salvation, that out of overwhelming gratitude they would *drive* themselves from sin. This was not the death of anyone common, but of the sinless God-man, Jesus Christ. But the person who treats it as a thing of no value, and continues to have a self-centered attitude and conduct in his life, is headed on the path of this sin that is spoken of here in Hebrews 10.

There is a three-fold indictment here: 1) The repudiation of an oath taken at baptism. That is what we are doing at baptism. We are going to be faithful and obedient to God. 2) It is a contemptuous rejection of Christ as a person and as a sacrifice, and 3) it is an insulting outrage against the gracious merciful judgment of God in forgiving our sins in the first place.

Exodus 12:1-7 And the LORD spoke unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak you unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: you shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And you shall keep it up until

the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

Exodus 12:13 And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you 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.

The focus on Passover is on the **Lamb**. It has been that way from the very beginning. It is not on our sins. Certainly an awareness of our sins is necessary in order to provide the contrast to the sinless, spotless, unblemished Lamb of God. We do not wallow in our sins, but rather in the unique Individual who makes our deliverance possible.

The lamb was separated on the tenth day, and this gave those people four days in which to observe it even more closely than they had before it was originally chosen. Perhaps in that case only the father had done that. When the lamb was brought home it was separated then for all of the family to analyze. By the time it was slain there was a fairly intimate knowledge of it.

Think of the offering in these terms. The animal that was sacrificed was in many cases virtually a member of the family. In many cases it was a pet, and this pet's life was given through the slitting of its throat. Now how often do you kill an animal that you love? I am very sure that if you ever had to do it you avoided using a knife. But God had to come up with an exercise that would *forcefully* illustrate as only the death of an innocent can do.

John 15:1-5 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that bears not fruit he takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, He purges it that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide [or continue] in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can

you, except you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing.

Jesus Christ is **everything** to us. We need Him so badly that words are inadequate. He is the Savior, the Example, the Lord, the Intercessor, Brother, Teacher, our Strength, and Salvation. At this time of year it focuses in on His sinless sacrifice so that we might start out each and every sacred year on track, and with the right perspective.

In John 13:7-8, which is right during the Passover service, He told them that unless they did this they had no part with Him. The whole process is designed to focus in on our weakness and Christ's strength, our need and Christ's abundance, our sinfulness and His perfection, our facing of death and oblivion and His offer of life.

Hebrews 10:8-10 Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin you would not, neither had pleasure therein; which are offered by the law: Then said He [Christ] Lo, I come to do your will, O God. He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Sacrifice is revealed throughout the Bible as **the holy act**. It is the very essence of love. "God so loved the world that He *gave*"—gave in sacrifice. In the context of this chapter Jesus says, "I have come to do Your will." That is, to offer His body as a sacrifice for sin. He is recognizing His body, and therefore His life given as a gift in order that God's will may be accomplished. The animal sacrifices could not accomplish God's will, but this sacrifice *did*. It has the power to cleanse from sin so that a New Covenant—a whole new religious order—may be established which is based on a personal relationship with our Creator *unparalleled* in its intimacy.

One of the major weaknesses of animal sacrifices is that they failed to produce a desire in the offerer to obey God. They just do not have the impact, because the offerer does not place much value on the life of an

animal. But when a human dies, we feel it. When they die for us, we feel it immeasurably more, and we feel that we owe something in return because of gratitude for what that sacrifice accomplished. In this case, the most valuable Life that has ever been lived was given for us.

Gratitude, worship, and obedience are the only appropriate response to such a sacrificial gift as the body of Jesus Christ. There is *no other acceptable sacrifice* for sin. Now I ask you, is *that* significant enough to motivate you?

The theme—the focus of Passover—is the awesome cost of salvation. It is manifested in the sinless sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It was not just a mechanical sinlessness, but sinlessness with *full* understanding, intense temptation performed in innocence, and with sympathy, empathy, compassion, and kindness for the eternal welfare of all the helpless slaves of sin so that we might feel the towering injustice that such a One should die for us, and feel a deep sense of revulsion, combined with appreciation, indebtedness, and thanksgiving that motivates one to depart from sin.

Psalm 111:2-3 The works of the LORD are great, sought [studied] out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honorable and glorious; and his righteousness endures forever.

Psalm 111:9 He sent redemption unto His people: He has commanded His covenant forever: holy and reverend is His name.