

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF EXODUS

by

Charles H. MacIntosh

Copyright © 1862

by

F. H. Revell

Exodus 13

In the opening verses of this chapter, we are taught, clearly and distinctly, that personal devotedness and personal holiness are fruits which redeeming love produces in those who are the happy subjects thereof.

The dedication of the firstborn and the feast of unleavened bread are here set forth in their immediate connection with the deliverance of the people out of the land of Egypt.

“Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine. And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten.”

And again, **“Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days: and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee: neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.”**

Then we have the reason of both these significant observances laid down.

“And thou shalt show thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.” And, again, **“It shall be, when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the Lord brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage. and it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the Lord slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.”**

The more fully we enter, by the power of the Spirit of God, into the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, the more decided will be our separation, and the more whole-hearted will be our devotedness. The effort to produce either the one or the other, until redemption is known, will prove the most hopeless labour possible.

All our doings must be “**because of that which the Lord hath done,**” and not in order to get anything from Him.

Efforts after life and peace prove that we are, as yet, strangers to the power of the blood; whereas the pure fruits of an experienced redemption are to the praise of Him who has redeemed us. “**For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works lest Any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared that we should walk in them**” (Ephesians 2:8, 10).

God has already prepared a path of good works for us to walk in; and He, by grace, prepares us to walk therein. It is only as saved that we can walk in such a path. Were it otherwise, we might boast; but seeing that we ourselves are as much God’s workmanship as the path in which we walk, there is no room whatever for boasting.

True Christianity is but the manifestation of the life of Christ, implanted in us by the operation of the Holy Ghost, in pursuance of God’s eternal counsels of sovereign grace; and all our doings, previous to the implantation of this life, are but “**dead works,**” from which we need to have our consciences purged just as much as from “**wicked works**” (Hebrews 9:14). The term “**dead works,**” comprehends all works which men do with the direct object of getting life. *If a man is seeking for life, it is very evident that he has not yet gotten it.* He may be very sincere in seeking it, but his very sincerity only makes it the more obvious that, as yet, he has not consciously reached it. Hence, therefore, everything done in order to get life is a dead work, inasmuch as it is done without life - the life of Christ, the only true life, the only source from whence good works can flow. And, observe, it is not a question of “**wicked works;**” no one would think of getting life by such. No; you will find, on the contrary, that persons continually have recourse to “**dead works,**” in order to ease their consciences, under the sense of “**wicked works,**” whereas divine revelation teaches us that the conscience needs to be purged from the one as well as the other.

Again, as to righteousness, we read that “**all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.**”

It is not said that “all our wickednesses,” merely, “are as filthy rags.” This would, at once, be admitted. But the fact is, that the very best fruit which we can produce, in the shape of religiousness and righteousness, is represented, on the page of eternal truth, as “**dead works,**” and “**filthy rags.**” Our very efforts after life, do but prove us to be dead; and our very efforts after righteousness do but prove us to be enwrapped in filthy rags. It is only as the actual possessors of eternal life and divine righteousness that we can walk in the divinely-prepared path of good works. Dead works and filthy rags could never be suffered to appear in such a path. None but “**the redeemed of the Lord**” can walk therein. It was as a redeemed people that Israel kept the feast of unleavened bread, and dedicated their firstborn to the Lord. The former of these observances we have already considered; as to the latter, it contains a rich mine of instruction.

The destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt to destroy all the firstborn; but Israel’s firstborn escaped through the death of a divinely-provided substitute.

Accordingly, these latter appear before us, in this chapter, as a living people, dedicated to God.

Saved by the blood of the lamb, they are privileged to consecrate their ransomed life to Him who had ransomed it. Thus it was only as redeemed that they possessed life. The grace of God alone had made them to differ, and had given them the place of living men in His presence. In their case, assuredly, there was no room for boasting; for, as to any personal merit or worthiness, we learn from this chapter that they were put on a level with an unclean and worthless thing.

“Every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck; and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem” (Ver. 13).

There were two classes, the clean and the unclean; and man was classed with the latter.

The lamb was to answer for the unclean; and if the ass were not redeemed, his neck was to be broken; so that an unredeemed man was put upon a level with an unclean animal, and that, moreover, in a condition than which nothing could be more worthless and unsightly.

What a humiliating picture of man in his natural condition! Oh! that our poor proud hearts could enter more into it. Then should we rejoice more unfeignedly in the happy privilege of being washed from our guilt in the Blood of the Lamb, and having all our personal vileness left behind for ever, in the tomb where our Surety lay buried.

Christ was the Lamb - the clean, the spotless Lamb. We are unclean. But for ever adored be His matchless name! He took our position; and, on the Cross, was made sin, and treated as such. That which we should have endured throughout the countless ages of eternity, He endured for us on the tree. He bore all that was due to us, there and then, in order that we might enjoy what is due to Him, for ever. He got our deserts that we might get His. The clean took, for a time, the place of the unclean, in order that the unclean might take for ever the place of the clean. Thus, whereas, by nature, we are represented by the loathsome figure of an ass with his neck broken; by grace we are represented by a risen and glorified Christ in Heaven. Amazing contrast! It lays man's glory in the dust and magnifies the riches of redeeming love. It silences man's empty boastings and puts into his mouth a hymn of praise to God and the Lamb, which shall swell throughout the courts of Heaven during the everlasting ages. *

*** It is interesting to see that by nature we are ranked with an unclean animal; by grace we are associated with Christ the spotless Lamb. There can be nothing lower than the place which belongs to us by nature; nothing higher than that which belongs to us by grace. Look, for example, at an ass with his neck broken; there is what an unredeemed man is worth. Look at “the precious blood of Christ;” there is what a redeemed man is worth. “Unto you that believe is the preciousness.” That is, all who are washed in the blood partake of Christ's preciousness. As He is “a living stone,” they are “living stones;” as He is “a precious stone,” they are “precious stones.” They get life and preciousness all from Him and in Him. They are as He is. Every stone in the edifice is precious, because purchased at no less a price than “the blood of the Lamb.” May the people of God know more fully their place and privileges in Christ!**

How forcibly is one here reminded of the apostle's memorable and weighty words to the Romans, "**Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace**" (Romans 6:8-14).

We are not only ransomed from the power of death and the grave, but also united to Him who has ransomed us at the heavy cost of His own precious life, that we might, in the energy of the Holy Ghost, dedicate our new life, with all its powers, to His service, so that His worthy name may be glorified in us according to the will of God and our Father.

We are furnished, in the last few verses of Exodus 13 with a touching and beautiful example of the Lord's tender consideration of His people's need. "**He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust**" (Psalm 103:14).

When He redeemed Israel and took them into relationship with Himself, He, in His unfathomed and infinite grace, charged Himself with all their need and weakness. It mattered not what they were or what they needed, when I AM was with them, in all the exhaustless treasures of that name. He had to conduct them from Egypt to Canaan, and we here find Him occupying Himself in selecting a suitable path for them. "**And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: but God led the people about through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea**" (Ver. 17, 18).

The Lord, in His condescending grace, so orders for His people, that they do not, at their first setting out, encounter heavy trials which might have the effect of discouraging their hearts and driving them back. "**The way of the wilderness**" was a much more protracted route; but God had deep and varied lessons to teach His people, which could only be learnt in the desert.

They were, afterwards, reminded of this fact, in the following passage: "**And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee, these forty years, in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years**" (Deuteronomy 8:2-4).

Such precious lessons as these could never have been learnt in "**the way of the land of the Philistines.**"

In that way, they might have learnt what war was, at an early stage of their career; but **“in the way of the wilderness,”** they learnt what flesh was, in all its crookedness, unbelief, and rebellion. But I AM was there, in all His patient grace, unerring wisdom, and infinite power. None but Himself could have met the demand. None but He could endure the opening up of the depths of a human heart. To have my heart unlocked anywhere, save in the presence of infinite grace, would plunge me in hopeless despair. The heart of man is but a little hell. What boundless mercy, then, to be delivered from its terrible depths!

“Oh! to grace how great a debtor
Daily I’m constrained to be;
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to thee!”

“And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness. And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: he took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.”

The Lord not only selected a path for His people, but He also came down to walk with them therein, and make Himself known to them according to their need. He not only conducted them safely outside the bounds of Egypt, but He also came down, as it were, in His travelling chariot, to be their companion through all the vicissitudes of their wilderness journey. This was divine grace.

They were not merely delivered out of the furnace of Egypt and then allowed to make the best of their way to Canaan. Such was not God’s manner toward them. He knew that they had a toilsome and perilous journey before them, through serpents and scorpions, snares and difficulties, drought and barrenness; and He, blessed be His name for ever, would not suffer them to go alone. He would be the companion of all their toils and dangers; yea, **“He went before them.”**

He was a guide, a glory, a defense, to save from every fear. Alas! that they should ever have grieved that Blessed One by their hardness of heart. Had they only walked humbly, contentedly, and confidingly with Him, their march would have been a triumphant one from first to last. With the Lord in their forefront, no power could have interrupted their onward progress from Egypt to Canaan. He would have carried them through and planted them in the mountain of His inheritance, according to His promise, and by the power of His right hand; nor should as much as a single Canaanite have been allowed to remain therein to be a thorn in their side. Thus will it be, by and by, when the Lord shall set His hand, a second time, to deliver His people from under the power of all their oppressors. day the Lord hasten the time!

~ end of chapter 13 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
