

Title: **A LAMB FOR AN ASS**

Text: Exodus 13:11-13

Subject: *Redeeming the Unclean*

Date: Tuesday Evening — January 15, 2008

Tape: Exodus #62

Readings: *Bob Duff and Rex Bartley*

Introduction:

Throughout the Mosaic dispensation, every day in the Jewish nation opened and closed with the sacrifice of a lamb. A lamb was offered upon God's altar, at the door of the tabernacle every morning to begin the day; and another lamb was sacrificed every evening to conclude it. The Lord God said, "*I will meet you to speak there unto thee*" (Exodus 29:42). The lamb sacrificed was the place of meeting. God came to his people and his people came to him by a sacrificed lamb. There was no other way for the two to come together. If God came to man, it was by a lamb sacrificed. If man came to God, it was by a lamb sacrificed. That lamb sacrificed was given to the children of Israel for a token, a sign, upon the hand that made the sacrifice and in the eyes that beheld it. And this is what the token promised, this is what the Lord God said by the sign, — This is how I will dwell among you and be your God, this is how you "*shall be sanctified by my glory*" (Exodus 29:38-46).

(Exodus 29:38-46) "Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. (39) The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: (40) And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering. (41) And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the LORD. (42) This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. (43) And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. (44) And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. (45) And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. (46) And they

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shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God.”

Don't miss this. — According to the typical revelation of the law given in Exodus 29, sanctification was by the sacrifice of a lamb; and in verse 43 we are told that it is by God's glory. Does the Lord God mean for us to understand that all our salvation and all his glory is in that Lamb to whom these typical lambs pointed, the Lamb of God, Christ our Passover, the Lamb of God sacrificed for us? Indeed, he does! **All our salvation and all God's glory is in the Lamb of God slain for sinners.**

With that as the background, let's look at Exodus 13:11-13. The title of my message is — **A LAMB FOR AN ASS.** In the 2nd verse of chapter 13 the Lord God commands, “*Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine.*” But what about the unclean animals? The Lord God gave very specific command, forbidding that any unclean beast be offered to him (Leviticus 27:11). **He makes two commandments that seem to contradict one another.** If one is fulfilled, it would appear that the other cannot be. He demands that all the firstborn of man and beast be sanctified unto him. Yet, he also forbids offering anything that is unclean to him. How can such a law (the law is one) be fulfilled? **How can all the firstborn be sanctified to the Lord, and no unclean thing be offered to him?** The Lord God himself answers that question in our text. — The ass was redeemed, made clean and accepted by God, by the sacrifice of a lamb.

(Exodus 13:11-13) “And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, (12) That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males shall be the LORD'S. (13) And 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.”

There are **four things** in these verses that I want you to see. Of course, everything here stated is to be understood typically. That which was required by God in the law was typical of our Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation of our souls by his sacrifice of himself for us (Hebrews 10:9-14).

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(Hebrews 10:9-14) “Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. (10) By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (11) And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: (12) But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; (13) From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. (14) For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

UNCLEAN UNACCEPTABLE

First, the ass, being an unclean thing, could not be accepted by the holy Lord God. Even so, fallen man, being unclean, cannot be accepted by God. According to the law of God, no animal was considered clean except that which both divided the hoof and chewed the cud. By that standard of the ceremonial law, every man is unclean. But the Lord God sacrificed a Lamb, his own dear Son, the Lamb of God for chosen sinners, and made the unclean altogether clean before him!

This is the great wonder of grace. — Being redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, we are the sheep of God, the lambs of Christ’s flock, made fit to sit far above principalities and powers in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus! Lost by sin through the fall, and utterly unclean, God’s super-abounding grace has made us utterly clean, without spot and without blame, through the sin-atonement blood of his dear Son!

I just had to tell you that first, but my point for now is this: — **Like the unclean ass, fallen man is incapable acceptance with God** because “*we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*” (Isaiah 64:6). We are unclean: unclean at heart, unclean in nature, unclean in thought and unclean in deed! That means that it is impossible for any man to do anything acceptable to God. — “*Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one*” (Job 14:4).

- You cannot obey God’s law.
- You cannot do good.
- You cannot justify yourself.
- You cannot make yourself clean.

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Stay with the image given in our text. A man might wash his filthy donkey and make it smell better; but it would be unclean still. He might put separate the filthy thing from others like it, and put his ass in the field with his sheep; but a donkey grazing with sheep is still a donkey. It is still unclean. A man might even, by torturous devices, spilt the hooves of his ass and make it look like one of those clean animals that divided the hoof; but it was still unclean. There was only one way for the unclean ass to be made clean and acceptable with God, only one way it could be sanctified unto the Lord, a lamb had to die in its place.

So it is with fallen man. You and I cannot, we never can, strive as we may, be made clean and accepted before the thrice holy God, any more than the ass could be acceptable at the altar of God, except by the sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God (Job 9:20, 30-31; Psalm 143:2; Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16, 21).

(Job 9:20) “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.”

(Job 9:30-31) “If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; (31) Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.”

(Psalms 143:2) “And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.”

(Romans 3:20) “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”

(Galatians 2:16) “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.”

(Galatians 2:21) “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”

A LAMB FOR AN ASS**GOD'S CLAIM**

Second, the Lord God would not receive the ass. He refused to accept the ass, because it was unclean. Yet, the Lord God would not relinquish his claim upon it. He said, "*It is mine*" (v. 2).

(Exodus 13:2) "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine."

God claimed all the firstborn of man and beast, clean and unclean, and that claim he refused to relinquish. Nothing has changed. God still claims his rights as God. You and I are his. The sinner cannot be accepted by God and cannot serve God. Still, God's claim is upon us. He still demands that we be sanctified, holy and clean before him (Leviticus 20:7; 1 Peter 1:15-16).

(Leviticus 20:7) "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God."

(1 Peter 1:15-16) "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; (16) Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

There are many who tell us that God does not require more of a man than he can perform, that man is not responsible for what he cannot do; but that simply is not true. As he commanded Abraham, so he commands you and me. — "*I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect*" (Genesis 17:1). The gospel does not lower the demand. In our text, the law demands, redeem the ass or break its neck. And the same gospel that declares "*the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" declares "*the wages of sin is death!*"

- Your inability to pay your debt does not remove your debt.
- Your inability to obey God's law does not relieve you of your responsibility to do so.

Can you imagine a man standing before a judge and saying, "Your honor, I cannot be help myself. I have such an irresistible tendency to steal that I simply cannot stop robbing people whenever I find the opportunity. Since I am a man without principle, the law has no claim upon me"?

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I hasten to add this: — The sinner’s inability to trust Christ as his Savior and Lord does not relieve him of his responsibility to do so. **Man’s inability is not his misfortune. It is his sin.** Therefore it is written, “*He that believeth not shall be damned!*”

(Proverbs 1:23-33) “Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. (24) Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; (25) But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: (26) I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; (27) When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. (28) Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: (29) For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: (30) They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. (31) Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. (32) For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. (33) But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”

(Proverbs 29:1) “He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”

The ass could not be accepted, but still the ass belonged to God. And fallen man cannot be received as is, sinful, guilty and unclean. But God will not relinquish his claim. He says, “Redeem the ass, sanctify it unto me, or break its neck.” The Lord Jesus declares, “*Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment*” (Matthew 12:36). If you will not be sanctified unto him he will condemn you. If you refuse to trust Christ, you shall be called to account in the day of judgment and cast into hell.

REDEEMED BY A LAMB

The third thing I want you to see in our text is this: The Lord God met the difficulty by providing a substitute for the unclean ass. Though the ass must be God’s, it could not be, because it was unclean. Look at our text again. The opening line of verse 13 reads, “*Every firstling of an ass thou shalt*

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redeem with a lamb.”

What a sweet, beautiful picture this is of the glorious gospel of Christ! The Lord God often compares man to an ass. It is written, “*God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth*” (Job 11:6, 12).

(Job 11:12) “For vain man would be wise, though man be born *like* a wild ass’s colt.

You and I are all born by nature “*like a wild ass’s colt,*” foolish, senseless and stubborn, given to lust and debauchery, and wild. As the wild ass will not bear the yoke, so none will ever bow to the yoke of Christ, except the Son of God break him. Man by nature is like “*a wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up wind at her pleasure*” (Jeremiah 2:24; Job 39:5).

In the movies you see old men and women riding donkeys, and get the idea that they are nice, gentle, sweet animals, the kind you would like to have for pets, if you just had the room. But that is never the case by nature. It is their nature to be mean. If you try to get one to ride you, to carry a load, to pull a cart until he is broken and tamed, he will buck and kick and bite. If all else fails, he will just sit down.

That’s petty good picture of man. Made by God and made for his glory, all men ought to gladly give thanks to him, submit to his rule, worship him and give him his due. But...

- Just try to get one to worship God. — Watch him kick!
- Tell these sweet, religious wild asses the truth about man, about God, about Christ, about redemption and grace. — Watch them buck and bite!

Such wild asses we are by nature, unclean, unfit for God, unfit for service to God, unfit even to be sacrificed to God! Yet, the holy Lord God said, I will take the wild ass, the unclean thin, make it clean, use it for my service and show my glory in redeeming it with by a Substitute, by the blood of the Lamb. He said, they “*shall be sanctified by my glory!*” He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to die in our stead, as the Lamb of God, our Substitute; and that is his glory!

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(Romans 5:6-8) “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

(2 Corinthians 4:4-6) “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (5) For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. (6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

(2 Corinthians 5:17-21) “Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (18) And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. (20) Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech *you* by us: we pray *you* in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. (21) For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

(2 Corinthians 6:1-2) “We then, *as* workers together *with him*, beseech *you* also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (2) (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.)”

This is the gospel I preach to you every time I stand in this pulpit. — Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God, was offered to God as a Substitute for ungodly, unclean, unacceptable man.

- Christ died, that we might never die.
- He was cursed, that we might not be cursed.
- He was rejected, that we might be forever accepted.
- He was despised, that we might be approved of.

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- He was forsaken, that we might never be forsaken.
- He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him!

If you would understand this Book, you must begin here and end here — Substitution. The Book of God is all about Substitution!

“The heart of the gospel is redemption, and the essence of redemption is the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ”

(C. H. Spurgeon).

This is the only hope of the sinner, and the only joy of the true believer. I am talking about the great transaction that took place at Calvary two thousand years ago — The great substitutionary work of Christ, — the mighty transfer of sin from the sinner to the sinner’s Surety — The punishment of the Surety in the sinner’s place — The pouring out of the vials of Divine wrath, which were due to us upon the head of our Substitute.

This is the greatest transaction that ever took place upon the earth, the most marvelous sight that men ever saw, and the most stupendous wonder that heaven ever executed. Jesus Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Jesus Christ, the spotless Son of God, was made sin!

That Jesus Christ was punished in our stead; — that the wrath which was due to his people was endured by him; — that he drained the cup of bitterness we ought to have drunk; — that he has put away our sins by the sacrifice of himself; — that he has suffered all the fury of God’s holy wrath that we should have suffered, and so fully and completely satisfied divine justice by his death that our God now declares to his redeemed “*fury is not in me;*” — that he who knew no sin was made sin for us, he who was altogether clean was made unclean for us, that we might be clean before God and forever “*accepted in the Beloved,*” is the grandest of all truths, a gospel so sublime that if every child of God in the world were to be burned in one dreadful holocaust, the price would be but little to maintain this precious revelation of grace in its integrity upon the earth.

Christ Jesus came into the world to take our sins upon himself and to be punished for them. If Christ was punished for our sins, we cannot be punished for them. Justice will not allow it. Christ’s being punished in our

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stead was the full discharge of our debt, the debt we owed to divine justice. If Christ died as a Substitute for me, if the Lamb of God was sacrificed to redeem this wild ass of a man, though I am nothing but an unclean ass in myself, I can no more be damned than Christ himself can be damned. Hell cannot me! Either the ass or the lamb must be slain, but never both! If both were slain...

- Where is the justice of God?
- Where is the honor of God?
- Where is his glory?
- What difference does the sacrifice make?

Perhaps you think, “How may I know that Christ died for me?” Do you trust him? Will you trust him now? If you do, that is the evidence that you have been redeemed by the Lamb of God.

- Christ took your place upon the cursed tree.
- You are without sin, altogether clean and righteous before God. — God says so!
- You shall never die!

I ask the tongues of all who know it is to be redeemed with the precious blood of God’s dear Lamb to tell it out everywhere to everybody. Tell the sick, tell the dying, tell the young, tell the old, tell sinners of every degree and in every place, that salvation is not by what they do, nor by what they feel, but in what the Lamb of God has done!

“Nothing, either great or small,
Nothing, sinner, no;
Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago.

When He from His lofty throne
Stooped to do and die,
Everything was fully done:
Hearken to His cry: -

‘It is finished!’ Yes, indeed,
Finished every jot:
Sinner, this is all you need,
Tell me, is it not?

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Weary, working, plodding one,
Why toil you so?
Cease your doing: all was done
Long, long ago.

Till to Jesus' work you cling
By a simple faith,
Doing is a deadly thing,
Doing ends in death.

Cast your deadly doing down,
Down at Jesus' feet,
Stand in Him, in Him alone,
Gloriously complete!"

NECK BROKEN

Bless God for the good news of those words, "*Every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb!*" But there is a fourth thing in our text that I must tell you. The law declares, — "*And if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break its neck.*" There is no alternative. Every firstling of an ass must either be redeemed by a lamb, or it must be slain at God's altar. You must have Christ as your Substitute, or justice demands that you must be slain as the unclean ass you are.

- Calvary or hell!
- Christ or damnation!
- Forever clean or forever unclean!
- Turn or burn!
- Believe or be damned!

If now you believe on the Son of God, you have everlasting life; you have been redeemed by the sacrifice of God's Lamb. Oh, God help you to believe on his Son! Come, bathe your soul in this Fountain, and be clean!

(Romans 8:1-4) "*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. (3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the*

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flesh: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

If you will not believe on the Son of God, your neck shall be broken forever in hell, under the wrath of God.

How they deserve the deepest hell,
Who hate the Son of God!
What chains of vengeance must they feel,
Who trample on His blood!

Christ, the Clean, was made unclean, that he might make the unclean clean forever! Blessed Lamb of God! Blessed, blessed Savior, adored be your matchless name forever! That's the Gospel! God help you to believe it!

Amen!