

June 9th, 2023

Passover Pt. 4: The Mortification of Sin

Exodus 12:14-20

The gospel in the OT

If you are just now joining us, God has unleashed 9 plagues on Egypt punishing them and their gods for not letting Israel go. Being all-powerful God could have released Israel day one, but His greatest desire and the greatest need of the world is to see His glory. That is life itself. The Exodus account happened for one main purpose: *the glory of God*. He told Pharaoh “But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, *so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.*”¹ The Exodus is about God and His glory. Passover is about God and His glory. And the greatest display of the glory of God is God sending His Son into the world to save sinners. That’s what Passover was. Israel had to choose a Lamb without blemish—Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God perfectly righteous, perfectly loving, perfectly obedient. That lamb was to be roasted in the fire, it’s head, legs and inward parts—Jesus Christ was roasted in the fire of God’s wrath on the cross. That lamb died so Israel could live, likewise Jesus being our Substitute died so we could have everlasting life with Him. The destroyer cannot touch us, because the blood of the True and Better Passover Lamb has marked us forever. That’s what God was up to in the Passover. It is the gospel of the OT.

¹ Exodus 9:16

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

Now we move to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Surely this is just OT ceremony *right*—something that has no relevance for us in the modern world *right*? Wrong. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a picture of the entire Christian life, *after salvation*. What do we do now that we have been saved by the Lamb? How are we to live? Are we to continue to live like the Egyptians? No, we are to put away the old leaven—the sin that we used to be enslaved to—and live as free men and free woman. “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”² As those who have come into saving union with Jesus Christ *by faith*, we must mortify or kill our sin.

The Big Idea...

Being saved by the Lamb of God *means* that now we must mortify our sin

★ Our Doctrine

★ Our Duty

★ Our Delight

² John 8:36

I. Our Doctrine

Outline

There's a lot here so what I want to give you is brief summary of the text, using those *who? what? where? when? why? how?* questions.

1. Who? To whom is this feast directed?

- 1) To the congregation of Israel, *the Church* in the OT. (v.19)

2. What? What was their duty?

- 1) To *celebrate* a 7 day **feast** *after* Passover (v.14, 15, 17). Definitionally a *feast* is “religious anniversary characterized by rejoicing’(rather than fasting).”³ The Spanish Word is *fiesta*. In 1 Corinthians 5:8 Paul calls this feast a festival—something to be celebrated. He says “Let us therefore celebrate the festival.” The prophet Isaiah calls the gospel a great feast. Isaiah 25:6 On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.” The point here is that this was not a dour, glum, morose holiday. It was a holy party, a joyous, happy, blessed event—in a word: a *celebration*.

3. Where? Where were they to hold it?

- 1) We’ll see later in Exodus 23 that this feast was to be *before the LORD God* which would have required travel to wherever the tabernacle was located. Once they gained possession of the promised land, it

³ Source: <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=feast> Accessed July 8, 2023. It continues by saying “The Latin carries the meaning of festive, joyful, merry. The *ea* in feast points to an abundant meal.” 1828 defines feast as “A ceremony of feasting; joy and thanksgiving on stated days, in commemoration of some great event, or in honor of some distinguished personage; an anniversary, periodical or stated celebration of some event; a festival; as on occasion of the games in Greece, and the *feast* of the passover, the *feast* of Pentecost, and the *feast* of tabernacles among the Jews.”

would eventually be in Jerusalem. All males and their families would travel to Jerusalem to celebrate this feast.⁴ In Luke 2:41 we see Jesus' family travel to Jerusalem for this feast: "Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at *the Feast of the Passover*."

4. When? When was this feast supposed to be held and for how long?

- 1) v.14 says it would be *a memorial day, to be kept throughout [their] generations as a statute forever*. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are technically two feasts, but they overlap. Passover is on the 14th day of the 1st month—Abib. And the Feast of Unleavened Bread runs from the 14th - 21st. These feasts were to be kept yearly as long as Israel remained a nation. It was their annual celebration of independence.

5. Why? Why did God command them to celebrate this feast?

- 1) It was a celebration of His redeeming them from their slavery in Egypt. Look at v.17 "And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, *for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt*." The Feast was a celebration of Yahweh.

6. How? How were they to celebrate it? Three very particular ways.

- 1) *By* abstaining from all work, except preparing food, on the 1st and 7th days so that they could hold a holy assembly (v.16). God wanted them to rest from their work *so that* they could celebrate His work of redemption.

⁴ This became one of the three pilgrimages that all the males - Exodus 23:14, 17. Although this requirement probably meant that their whole family traveled to Jerusalem. Why would they have left all their females behind? It seems from Exodus 34:24 that they left their homes with no one there. Case in point, 1) Luke 2:41-41 says that Jesus' family traveled to Jerusalem with him for Passover (Also see John 2:13; 11:55 for Jesus's other pilgrimages during Passover). 2) Many women, all of which probably did not live in Jerusalem, were in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration (cf. John 19:25; Mark 15:40; Luke 24:10)

- 2) *By* abstaining from eating leavened bread (v.15, 18, 19, 20).
- 3) *By* removing all leaven from their homes (v.15, 19).

What does leaven represent?

And so we arrive at *the heart* of this feast. It is to be celebrated without *leaven*. There's no doubt leaven is what is in view. It's mentioned 9 times in our passage; the feast is called The Feast of *Unleavened* Bread. As we've seen in previous messages, Exodus is very typological it teaches us truths through types. What did this leaven—this yeast represent here?⁵ Well we don't have to guess. Please turn with me to 1 Corinthians 5. Paul tells us *precisely* what leaven means here. Here Paul is rebuking the Corinthians for not excommunicating the man who is sleeping with his father's wife. Look at v. 6

“Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little *leaven leavens* the whole lump? ⁷Cleanse out *the old leaven* that you may be a new lump, as you really are *unleavened*. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with *the old leaven*, the *leaven* of malice and evil, but with *the unleavened bread* of sincerity and truth.”

Leaven is the works of the flesh

Paul is telling us the leaven in the Feast of Unleavened Bread represented malice and evil. In other words, it represented sin. But it also represents the *progressive power* of sin. Leaven grows and grows and grows. Only a little is

⁵ It is incorrect to say that leaven uniformly means sin in Scripture. There was at least one offering in which the Jews were to offer leavened bread (Leviticus 7:11-13). It would be unfitting for them to offer to the Lord that which represents “sin.” Likewise the Kingdom of God is compared to leaven in Matthew 13:33. There, Christianity or the Kingdom of God is represented as a joy—bread—for all mankind that will fill the earth.

needed and it will spread through the whole lump. So here's the connection to this Feast: the LORD is telling Israel "I have redeemed You from death through the Passover Lamb—now as you are leaving Egypt, leave the Egyptian leaven behind that you have been consuming for all these years. Leave behind your old lives of slavery and sin, and idolatry and immorality. Don't bring that with you. It will only grow and corrupt you, and turn you against Me."

Our Doctrine: the mortification of sin

That brings us to **our doctrine**: *Being saved by the Lamb of God means that now we must mortify our sin.* To *mortify* means to kill. Puritan John Owen says here

"To 'mortify' means to put any living thing to death. To kill a man, or any other living thing, is to take away the principle of all its strength, vigor, and power...Indwelling sin is compared to a person, a living person, called the 'old man'"⁶

The beauty of Passover

Here's *the beauty* of Passover. At Passover, 'the old man' was put to death in the lamb that was sacrificed. As sinners, they were under the death penalty—the destroyer was coming through Egypt and every firstborn not under the blood would die. The blood on the door said "the execution has already taken place here" and the Angel would *Passover* that home. In the death of that lamb was the death of their 'old man'—their old sinful way of life. And this is true of every Christian. Romans 6:6 "We know that *our old self was crucified with him* in

⁶ John Owen, *The Mortification of Sin*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2016), pg. 3

order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.”

The feast that follows

How then was Israel to celebrate being free from Egyptian slavery? By removing every vestige of that former life—by removing all Egyptian leaven. They were to do this for 7 days—the number of completion—signifying a life long battle. And that is precisely what the Christian life entails: *cleansing out the old leaven*. Putting to death the old man that once characterized our old way of life. Consider three proofs of our doctrine. The first is right here in 1 Corinthians 5.

Proof #1: 1 Corinthians 5:7

“*Cleanse out the old leaven* that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”⁷

Proof #2: Ephesians 4:22-24

Please turn there with me. “*Put off your old self*, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires,²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,²⁴ and to *put on the new self*, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”

Proof #3: Colossians 3:5-9

Please turn there with me. “*Put to death* therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is

⁷ also cf. Galatians 5:9

idolatry. ⁶On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have *put off the old self* with its practices ¹⁰and have *put on the new self*, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

‘Kill sin, or it will kill you’

For the Jews, being saved by the Passover lamb, meant they were to rid themselves of their old sinful Egyptian way of life. For us who have been saved by Jesus Christ, it means that we can no longer live as we once lived, but must daily kill our sin. John Owen famously said “Alway be killing sin, or it will be killing you.”⁸ So that is **our doctrine**: *being saved by the Lamb of God means that now we must mortify our sin.*

II. Our Duty

Informatory Use

Our **first duty** is to understand that *only believers can mortify their sin*. Dear congregation the order of this feast matters. Passover comes before the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Lamb is slain for them *before* they are told to put away their former way of life. If we get the order wrong, we get the gospel wrong. The LORD is *not* telling them “*If* you put away your sin, *then* I’ll rescue you.” No. He’s saying “I’ve already rescued you so now put away your sin.” Unconverted

⁸ *Ibid*, pg. 5

men cannot put away their sin. They are like the woman who had the discharge of blood for 12 years. She spent all her money on doctors and no one could heal her. Only when she put her faith in Jesus Christ could she find healing (Luke 8:43-48). Likewise unbelievers can spend their entire lives trying to put away their sin, and it is all in vain, unless they put their faith in Jesus Christ. John 6:63 “It is the Spirit who gives life; *the flesh is no help at all.*” The man who tries to reform his life without Christ is what Jesus talks about in Luke 11:24-26. This man tries to clean up his own house, he sweeps it clean, he puts it in order. He ‘casts’ out the unclean spirit by moralism. What happens? We read the unclean spirit “goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is the worse than the first.” The person who tries to kill their sin in their own power is worse than if they tried nothing. What do you call persons who try to kill sin without Christ? Pharisees. Self-righteous. Moralists. If you are here this morning and you are not converted, if you are not born again, then hear this: your *main problem* is not this particular sin or that particular sin. Your *main problem* is not that you drink too much or that you look at pornography or that you lie and cheat and steal.

Your main problem is *you*.

You are not a sinner because you sin, you sin because you were born a sinner. The rotten fruit is not problem, the problem is the root. Your heart. Jeremiah 17:9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” Only Christ can. Only Christ has the cure for you. Only Christ can make you whole. One Christ can raise you to life. Look to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Abandon all hope anywhere else. Trust

Him. The Scripture says “there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”⁹

Hortatory Use

Dear believer, our **second duty** is two-fold—straight from v.15. **1)** Don’t eat leavened bread; **2)** Don’t even have leaven in your house. **First**, *don’t eat leavened bread*. It is repeated six times. The emphasis could not be greater. Children, boys and girls, remember last week what I said about eating food? What happens when we eat food? When we eat, the food into union with our bodies. The food becomes bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh, cell of our cell, DNA of our DNA. Here’s the issue, as believers, if we have eaten Christ in the Passover—that is we’ve trusted Him for salvation, then how can we also eat sin? Meaning, *how* can we come into union with it? How can we continue to live as Egyptians and say we belong to the Lamb? **1** John 2:15 “Do not love *the world* or the things in *the world* [not meaning the physical world, but the system in rebellion against God]. If anyone loves *the world*, the love of the Father is not in him.” If anyone says they have eaten Christ yet they continue to eat sin, make a practice of sin, love their sin—*the love of the Father is not in Him*.

What I don’t mean

Don’t over hear me. No Christian will ever be free from sin in this life. **1** John 1:8 says “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” No one is able keep the commandments of God perfectly in this life. The Apostle Paul himself said in Philippians 3:12 “Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect...” We are daily defective. Galatians 5:17 “...

⁹ Acts 4:12

the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, *for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.*" So we will continue to sin until glory. But, we are not to come into union or agreement with that sin. We are not to say things like "nobody is perfect" and that use that as a cover to continue to disobey God's commands. When we find ourselves eating sin, we are to spit it out of our mouth, to vomit it up out of our stomachs. That's called repentance. Christians are not people who have stopped sinning. Christians are people who repent daily for their sins.

The progressive nature of sin

The **second** charge in our passage is to *not even allow the leaven in your house*. v. 15 says "On the first day *you shall remove leaven out of your houses.*" v.19 "For seven days *no leaven is to be found in your houses.*" One author says here that "In the later history of Israel, on the day before the feast, the father, with a lighted candle, led the children in a search, throughout all the house, for leaven."¹⁰ The idea is that we ought always to be searching our hearts for any indwelling sin that may get a foothold. Dear congregation, you must understand the progressive nature of sin. One little bit of leaven left alone can leaven the whole lump. David's great sin of adultery and murder started with the tiniest bit of leaven. The leaven he left in his house was *sloth*. As king he was supposed to go out to war with his troops in the spring. But instead he stay home and lounged on his couch (2 Samuel 11:1-2) And that leaven of sloth grew into lust, and then lust grew into

¹⁰ Rousas John Rushdoony, *Commentaries on the Pentateuch: Exodus*, (Vallecito, CA.: Ross House Books), pg. 134. "...even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses; out of their dwelling houses, which were to be diligently searched for that purpose, and every hole and crevice in them; and not only their lower rooms, their dining rooms and parlours, but their upper rooms and bedchambers; because it was possible a man might sometimes go into them with a piece of bread in his hand, and drop or leave some of it behind him" Gill's Commentary, Source: <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/exodus/12-15.htm> Accessed July 8, 2023

adultery, then adultery into conspiracy, and finally conspiracy into murder. Sin is always progressive just like leaven. We must never flirt with it, we must never keep it around *just in case*. Children, boys and girls, imagine if you go to your friend's house and your friend kept a little baby rattlesnake as a pet. Just a little one. And they didn't keep it in a cage, they just let it roam around the house. What would you say to your friend? You would say "Get rid of that thing, it will kill you." What if they said, "no it's just a little snake?" Would you not think they were crazy? Children, little sins that are left alone are much more dangerous than baby rattle snakes. A little leaven never stays little. If we don't kill sin, it will kill us.

Admonitory Use

Finally our passage gives a *warning*. It's repeated in v.15 and v.19 "If anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, *that person shall be cut off from Israel*." To be cut off here mean excommunicated, removed from the covenant people, cast out, delivered over to Satan just as the man in 1 Corinthians 5 was. One author says here

"The excommunication for refusal to celebrate the Passover simply confirms the folly of the man who cuts himself off from the atonement and chooses his own way of life and deliverance."¹¹

If a professing believer continues to eat leaven—to join himself to sin, to live like an Egyptian while professing Christ—they must be removed from the Church.

¹¹ Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law: The Intent of the Law*, (Vallecito, CA.: Ross House Books, 2nd Printing 2009), pg. 15-16

“For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness?”¹² May this never be true of us dear congregation, may we never return to the vomit of our former lives and find ourselves outside of the covenant.

III. Our Delight

Cannibals

October 13, 1972 Uruguayan Air Force Flight 571 crashed into the Andes mountain. 45 people were on the flight. 16 survived. For over 10 weeks they had to survive in subzero temperatures before they were rescued. For those of you familiar with the story, it was their diet that made this true story especially unique. In order to survive, they ate the bodies of their dead. As repulsive as it is, they ate human flesh.

Expulsive power

Thomas Chalmers wrote one of the most important sermons in the last 500 years entitled “The Expulsive Power of New Affection.” In it, he demonstrated how our souls work. It is not enough to be told—we need to stop sinning. The desire for sin can only be overcome by greater desire. He says this in the opening paragraph.

“There are two ways in which [one] may attempt to displace from the human heart its love of the world: (1) either by [demonstrating to it] the world’s vanity, so as that the heart shall be prevailed upon simply to withdraw it’s

¹² 2 Corinthians 6:14

regards from an object that is not worthy of it; or (2) by setting forth another object, even God, as more worthy of its attachment, so as the heart shall be prevailed upon not to resign an old affection, which shall have nothing to succeed it, but to exchange an old affection for a new one.”¹³

Chalmers goes on to demonstrate that the first method never works. “The human heart must have something to cling to.”¹⁴ To *only* do the work of negation, he says is “to leave the heart in a state which to even the heart is insupportable.”¹⁵ Our hearts must feast, God has put eternity into our hearts, and something must fill it. Just like those passengers stranded on top of the Andes, they ate dead bodies because, well, they had to eat something. The point is, in order to put away sin, its not enough to tell you how bad it is, how destructive it is, how dishonoring to God it is, how miserable it is. That is only the work of negation. It leaves the heart in vacuum, and unsupportable state. It leaves you stranded on top of the Andes mountains. You will eventually succumb to sin. You have eventually have to eat something. Those dead bodies look like a horrible meal, but you will eventually eat. Without a doubt those survivors would have never have never turned to cannibalism if there was a 5 star hotel on top of those mountains, with a feast of rich food, and well-aged wine. The power of a greater affection would have destroyed any other debased appetite.

The feast God prepared

¹³ Source: <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/Chalmers,%20Thomas%20-%20The%20Expulsive%20Power%20of%20a%20New%20Af.pdf> Accessed July 9, 2023

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ *Ibid*

Beloved, that is *precisely* what the point of our passage is. Isaiah 25:6 says “On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.” When God is calling us to put away our leaven—the old man—the sin of Egypt, it is because He has prepared a far greater meal. That is *why* Passover precedes The Feast of Unleavened Bread. We already have the Lamb to feast on. So consider 5 feasts that God has prepared for us, empowering us to put away the leaven of sin in our lives. These feasts are *the normative means of grace* that will replace your appetite for sin by working in you a deeper appetite for Christ.

Feast #1: The Gospel of the Lamb

What did that roasted lamb at Passover accomplish for you? When Jesus was put forward as a propitiation for Your sake, your relationship with sin forever changed. In God’s eyes You have been made entirely righteous. You may not feel it. You may not understand it. But listen to the ground of Paul’s logic. 1 Corinthians 5:7 “Cleanse out the old leaven [that’s what we’ve been saying] that you may be a new lump, *as you really are unleavened*. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” Dear saint, you already are unleavened! Before God, and the angels in heaven, and the devils in hell, and all the universe, you have been declared righteous by the death of Christ. You sin died when He died. That’s your legal status. God pardoned all your sins, and accepts you as righteous (unleavened) in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to you and received by faith alone. Feast on that and you will lose your appetite for sin.

Feast #2 The Word of the Lamb

How do you feast on the Gospel of the Lamb? By reading and meditating and memorizing the Word of the Lamb—the Scripture. Sin loses its power when you feed Yourself the Word. Jeremiah 15:16 “Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts.” If God’s word becomes the joy and delight of your heart, sin will look repulsive to you. Commit yourself to reading Scripture daily. Romans 12:2 “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” Daily time in the Word will transform Your mind and lessen your appetite for sin.

Feast #3: The Prayers of the Lamb

Prayer is mighty weapon against sin. The problem is that we often fail to find delight in it. We get a few sentences out and we run out of things to say. And we often fail to see how this means of grace can help us in our fight against sin. Dear congregation, God wrote a prayer book for us to use—it’s the book of Psalms. Everything that you could ever want to pray is in that book. Start praying with it. Pray the Psalms and you will find a power against sin.

Psalm 121: 1-2 “I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? ²My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”

Psalm 8:1 “O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.”

Psalm 139:7 “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?”

Feast on the Psalms loved ones, learn to pray them and you will find power against sin.

Feast #4: The Songs of the Lamb

Our hearts were made to sing and we live in an age and a place where we can listen to Christ-exalting music daily. Plug into the music of heaven and find a source of strength against sin.

What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer
 There is no more for heaven now to give
 He is my joy, my righteousness, and freedom
 My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace
 To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
 For my life is wholly bound to his
 Oh how strange and divine, I can sing: all is mine!
 Yet not I, but through Christ in me

Feast #5: The Gathering of the Lamb

God is so wise and generous that He has given us a Sabbath one in every seven days. The Lord's Day is a feast of rich food, and of well-aged wine. Hebrews 6:4-5 says this is the time when we taste the heavenly gift, share in the Holy Spirit, taste the goodness of God and the powers of the age to come. Commit yourself to never missing a day unless you are sick. Even if you are out of town on vacation, find a local church, don't miss feasting on Christ in the singing, the praying, the preaching the sacramenting and you will mortify your sin.

Summa Theologica

Dear people of the Lord, this is how we put the leaven away, this is how we mortify our sin. Not by telling ourselves—stop sinning. But by feasting on the Passover Lamb in the regular means of grace. 1) Feast on the Gospel of the Lamb; 2) Read the Word of the Lamb; 3) Pray the prayers of the Lamb; 4) Sing and listen to the songs of the Lamb; and 5) Always attend the gathering of the Lamb on the Lord's Day.