

## Christ Our Passover

Augustus Montague Toplady  
(1740-1778)

Augustus Montague Toplady (1740-1778), was educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Dublin, he was converted through a Methodist lay preacher, took Anglican orders in 1762, and later became vicar of Broadhembury, Devon. In 1775 he assumed the pastorate of the French Calvinist chapel in London. He was a powerful preacher and a vigorous Calvinist, bitterly opposed to John Wesley. He wrote the *Historic Proof of the Doctrinal Calvinism of the Church of England* (2 vols., 1774) and *The Church of England Vindicated from the Charge of Arminianism* (1769). His fame rests, however, on his hymns, e.g., "A debtor to mercy alone"; "A sovereign Protector I have"; "From whence this fear and unbelief?"; and especially "Rock of Ages" (appended to an article calculating the "National Debt" in terms of sin). This article is taken from Toplady's own manuscripts.

*"Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take unto you a lamb, according to your families, and kill the Passover."* — Exodus xii, 21.

THE types by which our Lord was prefigured to the Jews of old, are distinguished into *real* and *personal*, or typical *things*, and typical *persons*. Among the great variety of typical *things*, which, under the Mosaic dispensation, were emblematical of Christ and pointed to Him, none was more eminent and expressive than the *Paschal Lamb*: an account of which sacrifice, together with the occasion of its appointment, we have in the chapter from whence I have taken the above passage. Without a long introduction, I shall enter immediately on that which I design; namely, to show that the Jewish sacrament of the passover, or the slaughtering of the paschal lamb was exactly typical of the sufferings and death of the Son of God: between which, the analogy was evident, and the resemblance so exact, that St. Paul himself draws the parallel, and asserts, without the least hesitation, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

It is observable, that it was to be a *lamb*, which the Jews were to sacrifice for the passover. But why a *lamb* rather than any other creature? For these reasons: to reproach the folly and wickedness of the Egyptians; lambs were *worshipped* by the Egyptians, and it was a tacit reproof of their idolatry, when that which was the object of their adoration was slain and offered up in sacrifice to the true God. Another reason why a lamb was pitched upon, was, that it might be a more lively emblem of that Redeemer, who, in the fulness of time, was to offer Himself up in sacrifice for the sins of His people. Of all creatures a lamb is one of the most innocent, and therefore the fittest to shadow forth the purity and goodness of the future Messiah. Lambs are likewise remarkable for

their meekness and patience. "As meek as a lamb" is a common proverb. Hence, the prophet says of Christ. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted; He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so opened He not his mouth." Lambs are much exposed to injury and danger; their innocence renders them an easy prey to almost every assailant. And was not our Lord persecuted and afflicted — Did He not endure the daily contradiction of sinners against Himself? and was He not set up as a mark for the arrows of evil men and evil spirits? No wonder, then, that on all these accounts, John the Baptist should say, concerning Christ, "Behold the Lamb of God".

In one particular, indeed, the comparison fails; lambs are exposed to various dangers, but they are feeble, timorous animals, and unable to help themselves: whereas Christ, though He underwent what no one but Himself *could* have undergone, yet all His sufferings were matter of mere condescension: He *voluntarily* endured them, though He was possessed of infinite power, and had all the hosts of heaven at His command, and could, had it pleased Him, have melted even the hearts of His bitterest persecutors into duty and love. But *He* whom, on account of His dignity and strength, the Scripture styles "the lion of the tribe of Judah," vouchsafed to suffer as a helpless lamb; that mankind, whose griefs He bore, might be eternally happy; that mankind, for whom He died, might live for ever.

The paschal sacrifice was not only to be a lamb, but a lamb *without blemish*: it was to be entire and free from all defect. Herein, likewise, it was typical of Christ; who, as the apostle says, was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. He was born free from the infection of original, and lived utterly unacquainted with *actual* sin; and St. Peter, no doubt, had the paschal lamb in view, when, speaking of Christ, he calls Him a lamb "without spot or blemish."

The lamb that was to be slain for the passover, was to be put by itself, and separated from the rest of the flock; and did not the holiness of Christ, as it were, separate and distinguish Him from the rest of mankind? and since the paschal lamb was the same in nature with those other lambs from whom it was selected, so our blessed Lord, though in point of Deity infinitely superior to men and angels, yet assumed our human nature, and was as truly and properly a man, as we: or, to express it in the Apostle's language, "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself took part of the same."

The paschal Lamb was not to be sacrificed until it was a year old: and, in like manner, our Lord was not to lay down His life in His infancy, but was to continue on earth until the glorious work of His ministry was fully accomplished; until all His amiable perfections were displayed, in doing good to the souls and bodies of men, and until He had experienced, in their utmost extent, all the temptations and afflictions incident to life. And all that Satan or his emissaries could do, was not able to cut Him off, before He had by a course of the most absolute and perfect obedience, glorified His heavenly Father, and wrought out a complete righteousness for the justification of all that believe in Him. And, as the paschal lamb was to be a year old, so it was not to *exceed* a year; it was to

be slain in the full prime and vigour of its age. So our Divine Passover, the Son of God, laid down His life not when worn out with age, or enfeebled with sickness: but in the very flower of His days; amidst all the bloom of health, and all the vigour of manhood.

The paschal lamb was to be slain by none but Jews only. It is said in the 6th verse of this chapter, "And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it." So the Jews were the murderers of that Divine person, of whom the paschal lamb was a figure: He was condemned, indeed, by Pilate the Roman governor, but it was the Jews who were, from first to last, the authors of His death: *they* caused Him to be apprehended; *they* bribed Judas to betray Him; *they* suborned false witnesses against Him at His trial, and insisted on His execution.

And, as the paschal lamb was to be slain by none but Jews, so neither was it to be slain by them in private, but *publicly*, and in the presence of all the people. In like manner was Christ put to death in the most public and ignominious manner. He was crucified on a conspicuous mountain, within sight of Jerusalem, their capital city; and that too at the very time of their annual celebration of the Passover; when there was the greatest resort of strangers from all parts: many of whom consented to His death, and all of whom were witnesses of it.

The blood of the paschal lamb was not to be spilt on the ground, but to be carefully caught in a bason; to intimate that the Redeemer's sufferings and death, of which the blood of the paschal lamb was typical, were infinitely meritorious in *themselves*, and should not be lightly regarded; on the contrary, believers are to look on the atonement of Christ, and the blood which He shed for their sins, as the only ground of their forgiveness, the procuring cause of their exemption from punishment, and the inestimable price by which their salvation was purchased. The blood of the paschal lamb, being caught in a bason, was to be *sprinkled* on the doorposts of the Israelites' houses, that when the destroying angel passed through the land, to slay the first-born of every Egyptian, he might, on seeing the blood thus sprinkled on the doors, pass over the families of Israel, and spare them from the general ruin; as we find it at the 23rd verse of this chapter, "The Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood on the lintel, and on the two side-posts the Lord will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come into your houses to smite you."

Now, this deliverance of the Jews from temporal destruction, by the sprinkling of the blood of the passover was expressive of our deliverance from everlasting death, by the mediation of Christ in our behalf, and by His offering Himself as a sacrifice to His Father's justice in our stead: "Being justified by His blood," says the Apostle, "we shall be saved from wrath through Him"; and as the Jews, had they neglected to sprinkle the blood of the paschal lamb on their doors, would have shared in the calamities which the Egyptians experienced; so they who do not depend for pardon on the atonement of Christ, must expect nothing, and will receive nothing but destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power: and as sure as the Jews, by using the means appointed, escaped unhurt, while their Egyptian neighbours perished by thousands; so sure shall they who believe in the merits of Christ, with the faith that

works by love, be saved from condemnation, and made partakers of His heavenly kingdom.

The paschal lamb, after being bled to death, was to be roasted with fire, Anciently, fire was an emblem of the wrath of God; as appears from several passages in Scripture: and the passover being roasted with fire, imported, that the sufferings of Christ on our account should be inconceivably great and intense; and that He should sustain, in His own blessed person, that vengeance and wrath of God, which *we* deserved to bear, and which we actually *must* have borne, had not *He* endured it for us. Though He was all purity, without alloy; though He had no dross to lose, no chaff to be consumed, but was in every respect perfectly holy and righteous; He, nevertheless, passed through the furnace of inward and outward sufferings, that we might be exalted by His fall, and healed by His stripes. He was treated as a sinner, that we might be accepted as righteous; or, as St. Paul expresses it, “He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Nothing short of this could have atoned for our iniquities. Infinite justice, which we had offended, required an infinite satisfaction.

Should it be objected, as it has been by some, that “the sins of finite creatures can never require an infinite atonement”; I answer, that all sin is *objectively* infinite; it is infinitely evil, because it is committed against God, the infinite good; it offends infinite majesty; it is a contempt of infinite authority; an affront to infinite sovereignty; an abuse of infinite mercy; a provocation of infinite justice; a contrariety to infinite holiness; a reproacher of infinite glory; and an enemy to infinite love. From all which, it appears, that every sin properly deserves infinite, or endless punishment; and likewise, that the death of Christ must have been infinitely meritorious, or it could never have *averted* this punishment: and the reason why it is averted is, because He has suffered as our surety. Had not the dignity of Christ, as God, derived infinite efficacy on His sufferings as man, His atonement would not have been proportioned to our offences. The wrath of the infinitely just and holy God, was contracted, as it were, to a point, and poured out, at once, *intensively* on Christ, which must, otherwise, have been spending itself *extensively* on us to all eternity. This is what we call the doctrine of the *satisfaction*, or the atonement of Christ; namely, the compensation which He made to the law and justice of God, by obeying and suffering as our substitute and representative.

It is observable, moreover, of the paschal lamb, that it was not only to be roasted, but *thoroughly* roasted; signifying, that Christ should not only suffer the penalty we had incurred, but that He should suffer it in its *fullest* extent, and in its *utmost* latitude; He was to exhaust the *very dregs* of the bitter cup, that so not one drop of wrath might fall on His people: and therefore the Psalmist, speaking in the person of the Messiah, says, “Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and Thy hand presseth me sore.”

From David’s time, the paschal lamb was not to be sacrificed out of Jerusalem; and Christ, the true paschal lamb, was put to death within the precincts of that city, and there was also another circumstance very worthy of notice; namely, that our Lord suffered upon the cross, at the very time of the day that the passover was ordered to be

sacrificed: for we read, at the 6th verse of this chapter, that the paschal lamb was to be killed in the evening; or, as it is more literally translated in the margin, “between the two evenings”; in order to understand which expression it should be observed, that the Jews reckoned *two* evenings in the day; that which they call the *first* evening, commenced when noon was over, and lasted till sun-set; the second evening, in their account, lasted from sun-set to dark night: and as the passover was to be sacrificed in the month *Nisan*, which answered pretty nearly to our *March*, the Jews, in order to fulfil the command, which required the paschal lamb to be offered between the two evenings, constantly sacrificed it a little after what they termed the *ninth* hour of the day, that is, between three and four in the afternoon.

It appears from scripture, that our Lord was fastened to the cross, about the third hour; that is, about nine o’clock in the morning, or a little after; and that He did not expire till some time after the *ninth* hour, that is till between three or four in the afternoon: so that the time of day, wherein the passover was slain, exactly answered to the time of the Messiah’s death.

But the circumstances already mentioned, are not the only ones in which the paschal lamb was typical of Christ, for both in killing and dressing it, a particular command was given, that a bone of it should not be broken: and this was eminently fulfilled in Christ; for when the Roman soldiers, according to the custom of that nation, came to break the legs of the thieves that were crucified with Him, His, by the immediate providence of God, were left untouched; that both the type and prophecies concerning Him might be fulfilled.

The paschal lamb served the Israelites not only for sacrifice, but also for *food*: and Christ not only gave Himself a sacrifice for us, but is, likewise, in a mystic and spiritual sense, the food of every believing soul. Hence our Lord Himself says, “He that eateth Me shall live by Me”: and “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you”; which expression is not to be understood in the gross, unnatural sense in which some people take it; who would fain persuade us, that, in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, every single piece of consecrated bread is changed into the real flesh of Christ, and that the wine is changed into His real blood: this is quite contrary to our Saviour’s meaning; who, when He speaks of our eating His flesh and drinking His blood, meant no more than our being united to Him by faith, and partaking of those benefits which are the effect of His assuming our nature: for, as our animal life is maintained by a continual supply of food; so our spiritual life results from faith in Him, and our everlasting life is owing to our being interested in His merits.

And, as the paschal lamb, after it had been slain in sacrifice, was to be *eaten* by the Israelites, so they were to eat it with bitter herbs, which implied the extremity of our Redeemer’s sufferings, and the severe afflictions He should meet with in the world; and likewise to show us, that as the Jews eat the passover with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, so they who are interested in Him, must not think to be totally exempted from troubles and distresses of various kinds. If Christ Himself was a man of sorrows, and

acquainted with grief, let us not expect to get to heaven unexercised with trials by the way. We must sometimes be content to eat the passover with bitter herbs.

I might mention several more particulars, wherein the paschal lamb was a type of Christ: but what *has* been observed, may suffice to show how exactly *that* was emblematical of *Him* as a *lamb*. It was typical of the innocence and purity of Christ; of the sufferings to which He was exposed, and of His meekness under them. Was the paschal lamb to be without blemish or defect? So was Christ, in a moral sense, the mirror of holiness, and the standard of all perfection. Was it to be sacrificed in the full vigour of its age? Christ likewise was put to death in the prime of His days, when He had scarce attained the age of three-and-thirty years. Were the Jews the only persons appointed to slay the paschal lamb? They too were the contrivers and accomplishers of the Mediator's death. Was the lamb to be slain in the most public and conspicuous manner? So was Christ. Was the blood of the passover to be caught in a bason, as a thing sacred and valuable? This shows us both how inestimable the Redeemer's sufferings were in themselves; and how immensely precious His atonement should be in our esteem. Was the blood of the victim to be sprinkled on the doorposts of the Israelites' houses? So, spiritually speaking, must the blood of our great High Priest be sprinkled on our consciences; that is, in other words, the merit of His death and sufferings must be made over to us, as the cause of our redemption, and the foundation of our pardon.

And did the blood of the paschal lamb, thus sprinkled on their houses, secure the Israelites from the death of their first-born? So the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice secures His redeemed from everlasting punishment, which is the second death. Was the passover to be roasted with fire? This pointed out the fierceness of those sufferings which the Saviour was to undergo. Was the paschal lamb to be offered up in Jerusalem? There it was that Christ was arraigned, mocked, and condemned; and in the precincts of that city He was crucified and slain. Was the passover to be killed about the ninth hour of the day? Precisely at that time, the Son of God expired. Was not a bone of the paschal lamb to be broken? No more were Christ's, though officers were sent on purpose to do it. Did the Israelites *feed* on the sacrifice when it was slain? So do we, spiritually, on Christ. Believers are united to Him in one spirit, and partake of the benefits of His death, through which they live a spiritual life of grace on earth; and shall live a life of glory in heaven.

This subject plainly points out the great end which our Lord had in view, in suffering and dying for His people, namely, that He might put away sin, by the sacrifice of Himself. He gave Himself for us, says the Apostle, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, that is, from the whole punishment *due* to our iniquities, by dying for us, and causing us, in return, to show our gratitude, by a life of devotedness to God. Hence you see that obedience, which flows from love on *our* side, as well as forgiveness on *God's*, is a fruit of our Lord's atonement; and to hope for one, without being careful to maintain the other, is to put asunder what God has joined together. But this can never be; the blessings of pardon and sanctification always go hand in hand: all the people of Christ

are, for His sake, in a state of favour, and those who are really so, are careful to excel in all the works of practical and Undefined religion.

And let it ever be remembered, that our works do not precede us to the bar of God, so as to open the door of heaven, nor yet as heralds to clear our way there; but simply as witnesses, to give in their evidences, and deposit their attestation to the reality of our election, redemption, and conversion.

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