

THE BEGINNING OF MONTHS

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A SERMON
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“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.”
Exodus 12:1, 2.

IN all probability up to that time the year had been supposed to begin in the autumn. The question has been raised at what season of the year did God create man, and it has been decided by many that it must have been in autumn, so that when Adam was placed in the garden he might at once find fruits ripe and ready for his use. It has not seemed probable that he would have begun his career while as yet all fruits were raw and green; therefore many have concluded that the first year of human history began in the time of harvest, when fruits were mellowed for man's food. For this reason, perhaps, in the old times the new year began when the feast of harvest had been celebrated. Here, at the point of the Exodus, by a decree of God, the commencement of the year was altered, and so far as Israel was concerned the opening of the year was fixed for the time of our spring—in the month called Abib or Nisan. We know that a little before the barley was in the ear (see Exodus 9:31), and on the Sabbath after the Passover, the produce of the earth was so far advanced that the first fruits were offered, and a sheaf of new barley was waved before the Lord. Of course, when I speak of spring, and then of ears of barley, you must remember the difference of climate, for in that warm region the seasons are far in advance of ours. You must pardon me if my ideas should become a little mixed, you can correct them easily at your leisure. From the time when the Lord saved His people from destruction by passing over them, the ecclesiastical year began in the month of Abib, in which the Passover was celebrated. The jubilee year was not altered, but began in the autumnal equinox. The Jews seem to have had two or three beginnings of the year in relation to different purposes, but the ecclesiastical year, the great year by which Israel reckoned its existence, commenced from then on in the month Abib, when the Lord brought His people out with a high hand and an outstretched arm.

It is with God to change times and seasons as He pleases, and He has done so for great commemorative purposes. The change of the Sabbath is on the same manner, for whereas the day of rest was formerly the seventh, it is now merged in the Lord's Day, which is the first day of the week. As Herbert says, “He did unhinge the day,” and He set the Sabbath on golden hinges by consecrating the day of His resurrection. To every man God makes such a change of times and seasons when He deals with him in a way of grace, for all things are become new within him, and therefore he begins a new chronology. Some of us used to think our birthday fell at a certain time of the year, but now we regard with much more delight another day as our true birthday, since on that second natal day we began truly to live. Our calendar has been altered and amended by a deed of divine grace

This morning I want to bring to your mind the fact, that, just as the people of Israel when God gave them the Passover had a complete shifting and changing of all their dates, and began their year on quite a different day, so when God gives to His people to eat the spiritual Passover there takes place in their chronology a very wonderful change. Saved men and women date from the dawn of their true life, not from their first birthday, but from the day wherein they were born again of the Spirit of God, and entered into the knowledge and enjoyment of spiritual things. The Passover is, as we all know, a type of the great work of our redemption by the blood of Jesus, and it represents the personal application of it to each believer. When we perceive the Lord's act of passing over us because of Christ's atoning sacrifice, then it is that we begin to live, and from that day we date all future events.

So this morning we shall first *describe the event*. Secondly, *mention varieties of its recurrence*, and thirdly, *consider in what light the day of this grand event is to be regarded* according to the law of the Lord.

I. First, then, let us DESCRIBE THIS REMARKABLE EVENT, which was to stand at the head of the Jewish year, and indeed, at the commencement of all Israelite chronology.

First, this event was *an act of salvation by blood*. You know how the elders and heads of families each one took the lamb and shut it up, that they might examine it carefully. Having chosen a lamb without blemish, in the prime of its life, they kept it by itself as a separated and consecrated creature, and after four days they slew it, and caught its blood in a basin. When this was done they took hyssop and dipped it in the blood, and sprinkled the lintel and the two side posts of their houses. By this means the houses of Israel were preserved on that dark and dreadful night, when with unsheathed sword the angel of vengeance sped through every street of Pharaoh's domain and slew the first-born of all the land, both of men and of cattle. You will remember, dear friends, the time when you yourselves perceived that God's vengeance was out against sin, you can even now remember your terror and trembling. Many of us can never forget the memorable time when we first discovered that there was a way of deliverance from the wrath of God. Memory may drop all else from her enfeebled grasp, but this is engraved on the palms of her hands. The mode of our deliverance is before us in the type as Moses describes it. The angel could not be restrained, his wing could not be bound, and his sword could not be sheathed, he must go forth, and he must smite. He must smite *us* among the rest, for sin was upon us, and there must be no partiality, "the soul that sins it shall die." But do you remember when you discovered God's new way, His blessed ordinance by which, without abrogating the destroying law, He brought in a glorious saving clause by which we were delivered?

The clause was this,—that if another could be found who could and would suffer instead of us, and if there could be clear evidence that this surety did so suffer, then the sight of that evidence should be enough for our deliverance. Do you remember your joy at that discovery? For, if so, you can enter into the feelings of the Israelites when they understood that God would accept an unblemished lamb in the place of their first-born, and if the blood was displayed upon the door post as the clear evidence that a sacrifice had died, and a substitute had suffered, then the angel would know that in that house his work was done, and he might therefore pass over that habitation. The avenger was to demand a life, but the life was already paid, for there was the blood-mark which proved it, and the exactor might go on his way. It was the night of God's Passover, not because the execution of vengeance was left undone in the houses passed over, but for a reason of the opposite kind—because in those houses the death-blow had been struck, and the victim had died, and as the penalty could not be exacted twice, that family was clear.

I do not know whether there is any truth in the statement of a correspondent that whatever part of the earth the lightning once strikes it never strikes it again. But whether it is so or not, it is certain that wherever the lightning of God's vengeance has once struck the sinner's substitute it will not strike the sinner. The best preservative for the Israelite's house was this—vengeance had struck there and could not strike again. There was the insurance mark, the blood-streak. Death had been there, no matter though it had fallen on a harmless lamb, it had fallen on a victim of God's own appointment, and in His esteem it had fallen upon His Christ, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. Because the claims of retribution had been fully met there was no further demand, and Israel was secure. This is my eternal confidence, and here is my soul's sweet hymn—

*"If You have my discharge procured,
And freely in my place endured
The whole of wrath divine—
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety's hands
And then, again, at mine!
Turn then, my soul, unto your rest.
The merits of your great High Priest
Have bought your liberty—
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear your banishment from God,*

Since Jesus died for thee."

It was to me the beginning of my life, that day in which I discovered that judgment was passed upon me in the person of my Lord and that there is therefore now no condemnation to me. The law demands death—"The soul that sins, it shall die." Lo, there is the death it asks, and more. Christ, my Lord, has died, died in my place, as it is written, "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Such a sacrifice is more than even the most rigorous law could demand. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Therefore do we sit securely within doors, desiring no guard outside to drive away the destroyer, for, when God sees the blood of Jesus He will pass over us. "In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. 23:6). I say again, it was the beginning of life to me when I saw Jesus as dying in my place. I beheld the first sight that was worth beholding, let all the rest be darkness and as the shadow of death. Then did my soul rejoice when I understood and accepted the substitutionary sacrifice of the appointed Redeemer. That is the first view of this event—the blood of sprinkling made Israel secure.

Secondly, that night *they received refreshment from the lamb*. Being saved by its blood, the believing households sat down and fed upon the lamb. They never ate as they ate that night. Those who spiritually understood the symbol must have partaken of every morsel with a mysterious awe mingled with an unfathomable delight. I am sure there must have been a singular seriousness about the table as they stood there eating in haste, and especially if every now and then they were startled with the shrieks that rose from every house in the land of Egypt, because of the slain of the Lord. It was a solemn feast, a meal of mingled hope and mystery. Do you remember, brothers and sisters, when you first you fed upon Christ, when that hungry spirit of yours enjoyed the first morsel of that food of the soul? It was dainty fare, was it not? It was better than angels' bread, for—

*"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love!"*

I hope you have never risen from that table, but are daily feeding upon Jesus. It is a very instructive fact that we do not go to our Lord's table, like Israel, to eat in haste, with a staff in our hand. We come there to recline at ease with our heads on His bosom, reposing in His love. Christ Jesus is the daily bread of our spirits.

Observe that the refreshment which Israel ate that night was the lamb "roasted with fire." The best refreshment to a troubled heart is the suffering Savior, the Lamb roasted with fire. A poor sinner under a sense of sin goes to a place of worship, and he hears Christ preached as an example. This may be useful to the saint, but it is scant help to the poor sinner. He cries, "That is true, but it rather condemns than comforts me." It is not food for him; he needs the lamb roasted with fire, Christ his substitute, Christ suffering in his place. We hear a great deal about the beauty of Christ's moral character, and assuredly our blessed Lord deserves to be highly exalted on that score. But that is not the aspect under which He is food to a soul conscious of sin. The chief relish about our Lord Jesus to a penitent sinner is His sin-bearing and His agonies in that capacity. We need the suffering Savior, the Christ of Gethsemane, the Christ of Golgotha and Calvary, Christ shedding His blood in the sinner's place, and bearing for us the fire of God's wrath. Nothing short of this will suffice to be meat for a hungry heart. Keep this back and you starve the child of God.

We are told in the chapter that they were not to eat the lamb raw. Alas! There are some who try to do this with Christ, for they preach a half-atoning sacrifice. They would make Him in His Person and in His character to be meat for their souls, but they have small liking for His Passion, and they cast His Atonement into the background, or represent it to be an ineffectual expiation which does not secure any soul from vengeance. What is this but to devour a raw Christ? I will not touch their half-roasted lamb. I will have nothing to do with their half substitution, their half-complete redemption. No, no, give me a Savior who has borne all my sins in His body, and so has been roasted with fire to the fullest. "It is finished," is the most charming note in all Calvary's music. "It is finished," the fire has passed upon the Lamb. He has borne the whole of the wrath that was due to His people, this is the royal dish of the feast of love.

What a multitude of teachers there are who must necessarily have the Lamb boiled with water, though the Scripture says, "Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water." I have heard it said that a great number of sermons are about Christ and about the gospel, but yet neither Christ nor His gospel is

preached in them, if so, the preachers present the lamb boiled in the water of their own thoughts and speculations and notions. Now, the mischief of this boiling process is that the water takes away a good deal from the meat. Philosophical discourses upon the Lord Jesus take away much of the essence and virtue of His person, offices, work, and glory. The real juice and vital nutriment of His glorious Word is carried off by interpretations which do not explain, but explain away. How many boil out the soul of the gospel by their carnal wisdom! What is worse still, when meat is boiled, it is not only that the meat gets into the water, but the water gets into the meat, and so, what truth these gospel-boilers do hand out to us is boiled with error, and you receive from them dishes made up partly of God's truth and partly of men's imaginations. We hear in some measure solid gospel and in larger measure mere watery reasoning. When certain divines preach the atonement, it is not substitution pure and simple; one hardly knows what it is. Their atonement is not the vicarious sacrifice, but a performance of something they are long in defining. They have a theory which is like the relics of meat after months of boiling, all strings and fibers. All manner of schemes are tried to extract the marrow and fatness from the grand soul-satisfying doctrine of substitution, which to my mind is the choicest truth that can ever be brought forth for the food of souls. I cannot make out why so many divines are afraid of the shedding of blood for the remission of sin, and must stew down the most important of all the truths of revelation. No, no. As the type could only be correct when the lamb was roasted with fire, so the gospel is not truly set forth unless we describe our Lord Jesus in His sufferings for His people, and those sufferings in the place of sinners, presenting absolutely and literally a substitution for them. I will have no dilution, it is substitution—"He bore our sins." He was made sin for us. "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed." We must have no mystifying of this plain truth, it must not be "boiled at all with water," but we must have Christ in His sufferings fresh from the fire.

Now, this lamb they were to eat, and the whole of it. Not a morsel must be left. Oh that you and I would never cut and divide Christ so as to choose one part of Him and leave another. Let not a bone of Him be broken, but let us take in a whole Christ up to the full measure of our capacity. Prophet, Priest and King, Christ Divine and Christ human, Christ loving and living, Christ dying, Christ risen, Christ ascended, Christ coming again, Christ triumphant over all His foes—the whole Lord Jesus Christ is ours. We must not reject a single particle of what is revealed concerning Him, but must feed upon it all as we are able.

That night Israel had to feed upon the lamb then and there. They might not put by a portion for tomorrow. They must consume the whole in some way or other. Oh, my brothers and sisters, we need a whole Christ at this very moment. Let us receive Him in His entirety. Oh for a splendid appetite and fine powers of digestion, so as to receive into my inmost soul the Lord's Christ just as I find Him. May you and I never think lightly of our Lord under any light or in any one of His offices. All that you now know and all that you can find out concerning Christ you should now believe, appreciate, feed upon and rejoice in. Make the most of all that is in the word concerning your Lord. Let Him enter into your being to become part and parcel of yourself. If you do this, the day in which you feed on Jesus will be the first day of your life, its day of days, the day from which you date all that follows. If once you have fed upon Christ Jesus, you will never forget it in time or in eternity. That was the second event which was celebrated in each succeeding Passover.

The third event was *the purification of their houses from leaven*, for that was to go in a most important way side by side with the sprinkling of the blood and the eating of the lamb. They were told that they must not eat leaven for seven days, for whoever did partake of leaven should be cut off from Israel. It shows the deep importance of this purification, that it is put in equal position with the sprinkling of the blood. At any rate, it might not be separated from it upon pain and penalty that he who divided the two should, himself be divided from the congregation of Israel. Now, it is always a pity when we are preaching justification by faith, to bring in sanctification as to make it a part of justification. But it is also a horrible error when you are preaching justification, to preach it as to deny the absolute necessity of sanctification, for the two are joined together by the Lord. There must be eating of the lamb as well as the sprinkling of the blood. And there must be the purging out of the old leaven, as well as the sprinkling of the blood and the eating of the lamb. Very carefully the Jewish householder looked into every closet, corner, drawer, and cupboard, to sweep out every crumb of stale bread, and if they had any bread in storage, even if it was new and they intended to eat it, they must throw it all away, for there must not be

a particle of leaven in the same house with the lamb. When you and I first came to Christ, what a sweep there was of the leaven. I know I was clean delivered from the leaven of the Pharisees, for all trust in my own good works went, even the last crumb of it. All confidence in rites and ceremonies must go too. I have not a crust left of either of these two sour and corrupt confidences at the present moment, and I wish never to taste that old leaven anymore. Some are always chewing at that leaven, glorying in their own prayers, and alms, and ceremonies. But when Christ comes in, this leaven all goes out. Moreover, the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy, must be cleared out. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” Guile must go, or guilt will not go. The Lord sweeps the cunning out of His people, the craftiness, the deceit; He makes them true before His face. They wish that they were as clear of every sin as they are clear from insincerity. They once tried to dwell before the Lord with double dealing, pretending to be what they were not, but as soon as they ate of Christ and the blood was sprinkled, they humbled themselves in truth, and laid bare their sinnership, and stood before God as they were, with their hypocrisy torn away. Christ has not saved the man who still trusts in falsehood. You cannot feed on Christ and at the same time hold a lie in your right hand by vain confidence in yourself, or by love of sin. Self and sin must go. But oh what a day it is when the old leaven is put out—we shall never forget it! This month is the beginning of months, the first month of the year to us, when the Spirit of truth purges out the spirit of falsehood.

A fourth point in the Passover is not to be forgotten. On the Passover night there came, as the result of the former things, *a wonderful, glorious, and mighty deliverance*. That night every Israelite received promise of immediate emancipation, and as soon as the morning dawned, he left the house in which he had sheltered during the night, and leaving his home, he left Egypt too. He left forever the brick kilns, washed the brick-earth for the last time from his hands, looked down on the yoke he used to carry when he worked amid the clay, and said, “I have done with you.” He looked at every Egyptian taskmaster, remembered how often he had struck him with the stick, and he rejoiced that he would never be struck again, for there he was at his feet begging him to be gone lest all Egypt should die. Oh what joy! They marched out with their unleavened bread still on their backs, for they had some days in which they were still to eat it, and I think before the seventh day of unleavened bread was over they had reached the Red Sea. Still eating unleavened bread they went down into the depths of the Red Sea, and still with no flavor of leaven in their mouths, they stood on its shore to sing unto the Lord the great Hallelujah because He had triumphed gloriously, and the horse and his rider had been cast into the sea. Do you remember when the Lord purged you from the love of sin, from trust in self, and when He brought you clean out, and set you free, and said, “Go on to the promised rest, go on to Canaan”? Do you remember when you saw your sins drowned forever, never to rise in judgment against you—not merely your destruction prevented, not merely your soul fed with the finest food, not merely your heart and your house cleansed of hypocrisy, but yourself delivered and emancipated, the Lord’s free man? Oh, if so, I am sure you will grant the wisdom of the ordinance by which the Lord decreed, “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months, it shall be the first month of the year to you.” Thus much, then, on describing the event.

II. Now, secondly, I want to MENTION THE VARIETIES OF ITS RECURRENCE among us at this day.

The first recurrence is, of course, on *the personal salvation of each one of us*. The whole of this chapter was transacted in your heart and mine when we first knew the Lord. Our venerable Brother and Elder White, when I saw him the other night, said to me, “Oh, sir, it is very precious to read the Bible, but it is infinitely more delightful to have it here in your own heart.” Now, I find it very profitable to read about the Passover, but oh, how sweet to have a Passover transacted in your own soul by the work of the Holy Spirit! Moses wrote of something that happened thousands of years ago, but the substance of it all has happened to me in all its details, and to thousands who are trusting in the Lord. Can we not read this story in Exodus, and say, “Yes, it is even so”? Every word of it is true, for it has all occurred to me, every atom of it, even to the eating of the bitter herbs, for I recollect right well that, at the very moment when I had the sweet flavor of my Lord’s atonement in my mouth, I felt the bitterness of repentance on account of sin, and the bitterness of struggling against the temptation to sin again. Even the minute touches of that typical festival are all correct, as thousands know who have participated in its antitype.

This Passover record is not a story of olden times alone, it is the record of your life and mine—I hope it is. Thus by each separate saved man, the paschal feast is kept.

But then it happens again in a certain sense *when the man's house is saved*. Remember this was a family business. The father and mother were present when the lamb was slain. I dare say the eldest son helped to bring the lamb to the slaughter, another held the knife, a third held the basin, and the little boy fetched the bunch of hyssop, and they all united in the sacrifice. They all saw father strike the lintel and the side posts, and they all ate the lamb that night. Everyone that was in the house, all that were really part of the family, partook of the meal, they were all protected by the blood, they were all refreshed by the feast, and they all started the next morning to go to Canaan. Did you ever hold a family supper of that kind? “Oh,” some fathers might say, “it would be the beginning of family life to me if ever I might eat bread in the kingdom of God with all my sons and daughters; oh that every chick and child around my table truly belonged to Christ.” A family begins to live in the highest sense when as a family, without exception, it has all been redeemed, all sprinkled with the blood, all made to feed on Jesus, all purged from sin, and all set at liberty to go out of the domains of sin, bound for the Kingdom. Joy! Joy! Joy! “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” If any of you enjoy the privilege of family salvation, you may well set up a monument of praise, and make a generous offering to God, by whom you are thus favored. Engrave it upon marble, and set it up forever—“This household is saved and the day of its salvation is the beginning of its history in connection with the Lord’s Israel.”

Extend the thought—it was not only a family ordinance but *it was for all the tribes of Israel*. There were many families, but in every house the Passover was sacrificed. Would it not be a grand thing if you that employ large numbers of men should ever be able to gather all together and hopefully say, “I trust that all these understand the sprinkling of the blood, and all feed upon Christ”? Dear men and women that are placed in such responsible positions, you might indeed say, “This shall be the beginning of months to us.” Labor for it, therefore, and make it your heart’s desire. If you live to see a district in which you labor permeated with the gospel, what a joy! If we shall live to see London with every house sprinkled with the redeeming blood! If we should live to see all England feeding, not as many do at Christmas to excess on the delicacies of earth, but feasting spiritually, where there can be no excess, upon Christ. Oh, what a beginning of years it would be to our happy island! What a paradise it would be! If it should be so with France, if it should be so in any country, what a day to be remembered it would be. Commence a nation’s annals from its evangelization. Begin the chronicle of a people from the day when they bow at the feet of Jesus. There will come a day to this poor earth when all over it Jesus shall reign. It may be far away yet, but the day shall come when Christ shall have dominion from sea to sea. The nations which are called Christians, although they so little deserve the title, do already date their chronology from the birth of Christ, and this is a sort of faint foreshadowing of the way in which men shall one day date all things from the reign of Jesus, for His unsuffering kingdom shall yet come. God has decreed His triumph, and on all the wings of time it hastens. When He comes, that month shall be the beginning of months unto us. I say no more.

III. And now, in the last place, I come to SHOW IN WHAT LIGHT THIS DATE IS TO BE RE-GARDED, if it has occurred to us in the senses I have mentioned.

Primarily, if it has occurred in the first sense to us, personally, what about it, then? Why, first, the day in which we first knew the Savior as the Paschal Lamb should always be *the most honorable day* that has ever dawned upon us. The Israelites placed the month Abib in the first rank because it was the month of the Passover, put down the date at which you knew the Lord as the premier day, the noblest hour you have ever known. It eclipses your natural birthday, for then you were born in sin, then you were “born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.” But now you are born into spiritual life, born unto eternal bliss. It eclipses your marriage day, for union to Christ shall bring you greater felicity than the happiest of conjugal bonds. If you have ever known a day in which you received the honors of the State, or gained distinction in learning, or attained to a position in society, or arrived at a larger wealth, all these were but dim, cloudy, foggy days compared with this “morning without clouds.” On that day your sun rose never to go down again, the die was cast; your destiny for glory was openly declared. I pray you never in your thoughts degrade that blessed day by thinking more of any pleasure, honor, or advancement than you do of the blessing of salvation by the blood of Jesus. I am afraid that some are striving and struggling after other distinctions, and if they could once reach a certain event, then they would be

satisfied. Is not your salvation worth vastly more than this? They would feel that they were made for life if a certain matter turned out right. Brothers and sisters, you were made for life when you were made anew in Christ Jesus. You came to your estate when you came to Christ; you were promoted when He received you to His friendship. You gained all that you need desire when you found Christ, for a saint of old said, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire." Do not, therefore, if the Queen should knight you or the people should send you to Parliament, think that the event would overshadow your conversion and salvation. Think of that act of grace as the Lord thinks of it, for He says, "Since you were precious in My sight you have been honorable, and I have loved you." Unto you that believe Jesus is honor, in Him you boast and glory, and well you may. The blood-mark is a believer's chief adornment and decoration, and his being cleansed and set free by grace is his noblest distinction. Glory in grace and in nothing else; prize the work of grace beyond all the treasures of Egypt.

This date is to be regarded as *the beginning of life*. The Israelites reckoned that all their former existence as a nation had been death. The brick kilns of Egypt, the lying among the pots, the mixing up with idolaters, the hearing of a language which they understood not—they looked on all Egyptian experience as death, and the month which ended it was to them the beginning of months. On the other hand, they looked upon all that followed after as being life. The Passover was the beginning, and only the beginning, a beginning implies something to follow it. Now then, Christian men and women, whenever you speak about your existence before conversion, always do it with shamefacedness, as one risen from the dead might speak of the morgue and the worm of corruption. I feel grieved when I hear or read of people who can stand up and talk about what they used to do before they were converted, very much in the way in which an old seafaring man talks of his voyages and storms. No, no, be ashamed of your former lusts in your ignorance, and if you must speak of them to the praise and glory of Christ, speak with bated breath and tears and sighs. Death, rottenness, corruption are all most fitly left in silence, or, if they demand a voice, let it be as solemn and mournful as a knell. Let your sin story be told in a way which shall show that you wish it had never been true. Let your conversion be the burial of the old existence, and as for that which follows after, take care that you make it real life, worthy of the grace which has quickened you.

Suppose these Israelites had loitered about in Egypt? Suppose one of them had said, "Well, I did not finish that batch of bricks. I cannot go out just yet. I should like to see them thoroughly well baked and prepared for the pyramid"—what a foolish fellow he would have been! No, but they left the bricks, and the clay, the stuff behind, and went straight away, and let Egypt take care of itself. Now, child of God, quit the ways of sin with determination, leave the world, leave its pleasures, leave its cares, and get right away to Jesus and His leadership. You are now the Lord's free man, shall the blood be sprinkled for nothing! Shall the lamb be eaten and mean nothing! Shall the leavened bread be purged out in vain! Shall the Red Sea be crossed, and the Egyptians drowned, and you remain a slave? The thought is abhorrent. That was the mischief about the Israelites, that they had still a hankering after the leeks and garlic of Egypt. These strong smelling things had scented their garments, and it is hard to get such vile odors out of one's clothes. Alas, that Egyptian garlic clings to us, and the smell of it is not always so abominable to us as it ought to be. Besides, they pined for fish which they ate in Egypt in plenty, muddy fish though it was. There were better fish for them in Jordan, and Gennesaret, and the Great Sea, if they had gone ahead, and sweeter herbs were on Canaan's hills than ever grew in Egypt's mire. Because of this evil lusting, they were kept dodging about for 40 years in the wilderness. They might have marched into Canaan in 40 days if it had not been for that stinking garlic of theirs, and their Egyptian habits and memories. Oh, that God would cut us quite free, and enable us to forget those things of which we are now ashamed.

I have nearly concluded when I have added this, that inasmuch as the Passover was now the beginning of the year to them, *it was the putting of all things right*. I told you that the year had formerly begun in autumn, according to most traditions, was this really the best season to pitch upon? Upon second thoughts, was autumn the best season in which to begin life, with winter all before you and everything declining? By the institution of the Passover, the year was made to begin in what is our spring. If I judge from the condition of our land I should ask—"When could the year begin more fitly than in the spring-tide of early May?" It seems to me that it actually does begin in the spring. I do not see that the year naturally begins today, though it does so arbitrarily. We are in about the middle of winter, and the year as

yet lies dead. When the birds sing and the flowers rise from their beds of earth, then the year begins. It seems to me a strange supposition that our first parents commenced life in autumn, amid lengthening nights and declining forces. No, we say, by all means, let the date be fixed in spring, so that the salutations of the new year shall be sweet with fragrant flowers and rich with joyous songs. Nor would the time of our spring in the East be a season without supplies, for in April and May the first ears of corn are ready, and many other fruits are fit for food. It was good for the Israelites to have the feast of the first fruits in the month of Abib, to bring the first ears to the Lord, and not to wait till they were ripe before they blessed the Giver of all good. We ought to be grateful for green mercies, and not tarry till everything comes to ripeness. In some parts of the East there is fruit all the year round and why not in Eden? In the delightful country where I have sojourned, which bears a very close resemblance to the East, there are fruits still ripening upon the trees, and one tree or another will be found to bear fruit every month all the year round, so that if Adam had been created in the month of April there would have been food for him, followed by a succession of fruits which would have supplied all his needs. Then he would have had summer before him with all its ripening beauties, and this is a more paradisiacal outlook than winter. It is right that the year should begin with the first fruits, and I am sure it is quite right that the year should begin with you and with me when we come to Christ and receive the first fruits of the Spirit. Everything is out of joint till a man knows Christ, everything is disorderly and bottom upwards till the gospel comes and turns him upside down, and then the right side is up again. Man is all wrong till the gospel puts him all right. Though grace is above nature, it is not contrary to nature, but restores true nature. Our nature is never so truly the nature of a man as when it is no longer man's sinful nature. We become truly men, such as God meant men to be, when we cease to be men such as sin has made men to be.

Our life, beginning as it does at our spiritual Passover, and at our feeding upon Christ, we ought always to regard our conversion as a festival and remember it with praise. Whenever we look back upon it, the memory of it should excite delight in our hearts. I wonder how long a man ought to thank God for forgiving his sins? Is life long enough? Is time long enough? Is eternity too long? How long ought a man to thank God for saving him from going down to hell? Would 50 years suffice? Oh no, that would never do, the blessing is too great to be all sung of in a millennium. Suppose you and I never had a single mercy except this one, that we were made the children of God and co-heirs with Christ Jesus—suppose we had nothing else to enjoy! We ought to sing about that alone forever and ever. Yes, if we were sick, cast on the bed of pain with a hundred diseases, with our bones sticking through our skin, yet since God's everlasting mercy will sanctify every pain and every affliction, should we not still continue to lift up happy psalms to God and praise Him forever and ever? Therefore, let that be your watchword all through the year—"Hallelujah, praise the Lord!" The Israelite always closed the Passover with a hymn of praise, therefore let us close our sermon this morning with holy joy, and continue our happy music till this year ends, yes, till time shall be no more. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EXODUS 12.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—1,035, 1,036, 370.**

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