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Sanctify The First-born Or Redeeming The Ass

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following message was preached by Brother Abraham Varghese at Bryan Station Baptist Church. It has been taken from a tape and edited for publication in the "Pioneer Baptist". We hope it will be a blessing to your hearts as you read it. Other tapes by Brother Varghese are available through our tape ministry here at the church.

For our Bible study tonight, turn with me to the Book of Exodus, chapter 13, verses 1 and 2. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." This was a commandment of the Lord. Jehovah, the Lord of the people of Israel, commanded to His own people by the mediator, Moses, and said: "Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." I do not know why the Lord made this statement unto the people of Israel about the first-born, but I do know one thing; when the Lord made the statement, when the Lord made this law, He meant it. In this same chapter, verse 13, the same God talks to the same man, and to the same people, and said: "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..." In simple language, we can conclude that the Lord wanted all of the first-born boys and girls born in the home; and all of the first-born animals, but He didn't care for the ass. He said, "If you want to see an ass live, it will cost you."

An ass may not be an appreciable animal when we consider the rest of the animals. An ass may not be an expensive animal. So, the Lord said: "If you want to see a first-born ass live at your home or on your farm, it will cost you a lot more than the price of an ass." The Lord said that the first-born of the ass must be redeemed with a lamb. If you don't have a lamb or are not willing to sacrifice the price to buy the lamb, then you must kill the ass. The Lord said to break his neck and kill him. The Lord made the law very plain and clear to kill the ass because he was under the law of Jehovah. "Break his neck;" destroy him, I don't care for him. That is the way I wanted to express it.

Suppose you have 99 asses, and you know that one ass has to be killed tomorrow. At the same time you have only one lamb. You know the law of God which says that the first-born of the ass must be killed. If you don't want to kill it, you must take a beautiful lamb and sacrifice it in the place of the ass. If you want to save the lamb, you must kill the ass. If you had this choice, what would you do? Well, I would kill the ass since I have a whole bunch of them. I wouldn't care enough to kill my only lamb in order that the dumb ass may live. I use this word because they are dumb creatures. The Lord made this law so clear and plain—the ass was subject to death.

Now after studying this passage of scripture, I have often asked myself why the Lord made this law to the ass, that he must be put to death. Perhaps it was because the ass is a dumb creature, or the ass is one of the most stubborn creatures

we can think of. You tell an ass to run, and he will stop. You ask an ass to stop or halt, and he will run...and you will be in trouble. Maybe that is the reason the Lord said He did not want a whole bunch of them. but to kill them, ..."Break his neck."

Now, if an ass has a stubborn nature to you and I, just imagine what kind of nature we have before God. People—human beings—are the most stubborn creatures of all the rest that God has made. God says, "Abraham, will you walk?" "No, I will run." "Abraham, you listen to me." But Abraham says, "Oh, you listen to me now!" "Now, Lord, let me give you some advice."

The Lord told Abraham in the Old Testament to go to the land of Canaan where he would find a permanent dwelling place, where milk and honey would be plenty, and He promised to dwell with him, keep him and give him all he wanted. But Abraham ended up in Egypt. The Lord never told Abraham to go to the land of the Egyptians. Once the Lord told Moses to speak to the rock and it would give water supply enough. But Moses came and struck the rock. The Lord did not ask Moses to strike the rock. That was his own will. One day the Lord said to Jonah, "Jonah, you go unto the land of Nineveh and preach the gospel." But he never had the determination to go there at first. Now, if preachers have this much trouble with their nature before God, how much more the layman. Or, if saved people have this much rebellious nature in themselves, how much more others have it. This brings me to another subject.

The first-born of the ass must be put to death. This was the law of God. On the other hand, another law from the same book from the same God says that the "wages of sin is death." If you work your whole life for different motivations, and to different themes, and to a different person—that is, to the devil, at the end of your work, you shall receive a large amount of due wages. And they shall spell "death". Now, for this law there is no alternative that any person can take; no other exit to escape this law because it comes from the Lord Who said, "the wages of sin is death." Just as the ass in the Book of Exodus was subject to death and there was no way that he could escape unless a lamb was offered, we who are human beings stand before God in the same position—subject to death. The law of God says the wages of sin is death; therefore, Abraham included, all of you stand under the law of God. God looks through that law and says, "Break the neck of Abraham and kill him, and I don't care." We have broken the law of God; we are sinners by nature and by practice, standing before God condemned to death; standing before God as children of the devil; unworthy and dirty creatures. But when God looks upon these dumb creatures—you and I—He sees on one side a whole bunch of human creatures

subject to death without any escape. There's no other way that these asses can live. But on the other side, God, the Father, had one Lamb, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. Just imagine and see that God, the Father, had one little Lamb, one, only one Lamb, and He could either spare that Lamb or kill these asses. Or, He could spare these asses and kill the only Lamb. Now God, the Father, killed the one and only Lamb that He had, so that we who are subject to death may live today. And tonight as we come here to worship and pray, we have a reason that we can open our hearts and say unto the Lord, "I thank you because I was subject to death, but through your infinite love, you didn't spare your one Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. You sacrificed Him; therefore, I live today." We have the Holy Spirit to convict our lives and hearts, that we are safe and secure in Jesus Christ.

In the Book of Matthew, Chapter 21, we see another occasion of an ass. The earthly ministry of our Saviour is coming to a close, and a few days before, the Lord called His disciples. Verse 1 and 2 says, "Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. And if any man say aught unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them." Now this ass here also was subject to death. You say, "No, Abraham, it was not subject to death." The ass was tied and if you keep an ass tied long enough to a strong pole, the ass will die because he has no nourishment. He has no way to eat grass or drink water. Therefore, the ass was subject to die there. But the Lord said to His disciples, "Go and loose the ass, bring them unto me; I need them." We see the Lord gives this command, and His words have power, dynamic power. We who are Christians can understand this passage of scripture better than any other person...that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only one person who has the right to give this great command; "Go, loose Abraham." Now we were tied to the pole that was the law; tied to sin, sinful pleasure, a sinful nature, and subject to death. But the Lord said, "You go and preach the gospel: loose them; bring them unto me."

The Bible says in Verse 6: "And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set Him thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way, others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way. And the multitude that went before and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?"

I thought why was the Lord pleased to use an ass? One day this ass was an unworthy animal, subject to curse and death, but here is an ass in the Book of Matthew that the Lord was pleased to use. And they brought the ass, and it didn't open its mouth. How come the Lord didn't select a horse from Kentucky? There are a whole bunch of them here. They can run better, they look better, they have more power. Why didn't He use another animal like a lion, tiger, or a bengal? Why was the Lord pleased to use an ass? The Book of I Corinthians, Chapter 1, especially Verse 18 to the end of the Chapter, and even Chapter 2, explains how we can see this truth. Verse 26 says, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." You see, not many wise people, not many wealthy people, not many nobles of the world are called. I'm not saying that rich people cannot be Christians, or wise people cannot be Christians; but, as far as the world is concerned, we are a whole bunch of fools. The Bible says that God has chosen us who are fools by the world that we may bear Jesus Christ. Now the ass was probably a neglected animal, but God has chosen that which was neglected; that which was condemned to death; that which was not pleasing before the world.

He may be a foolish animal, but when God chooses and puts His approval on him then there is no question. When God chooses us and sets His approval on us, and we submit our lives into the hands of a great God, then He occupies our lives, if we let Him. We say, "Lord, control me, ride on me, use me; and when He does, the Bible says the whole city was moved. Now, this should show us a lesson, that we are called by the Lord, and the Lord has occupied our lives tonight that we may go forth and tell others about Him. He is the King of Kings, and that is the message I have. Brother, if God can control our lives, if God can drive us, we shall be used better. And the whole city of Lexington will know that Bryan Station Baptist Church has something peculiar...that is the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are without Jesus Christ, brother, I don't want to call you an ass because I am no better than one. But, you are no better than that ass which was condemned to die. There's no other way for you to escape. You are working for that way. You have a check already paid by the devil. You are on your way to die; on the way to condemnation with nothing but punishment. On the other hand, you see a Lamb has already died.

Simply trust Him and believe on Him; believe that He died in your place. Accept Him by faith, receive Him and say, "Lord, ride me. I want to be used by the Lord." May the Lord bless this in your hearts tonight.

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