

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and the full assurance that our faith brings.

I had been singing *Happy Birthday to Me* for the better part of a week. For in my enlightened way of thinking, the best way to get the Chief Financial Officer of the West Household to approve my request to go on 7-day tour of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trial in Alabama was to do just that. For the first part of the week, my plan worked to perfection. The first day, my baritone rendition of *Happy Birthday to Me* planted the seed because it produced this question: "what do you want for your 31st birthday, O sacrificial husband?" To which I responded, "that's a great question Chief Financial Officer, I'm so glad you asked. I would like to take a 7-day tour of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trial in Alabama so that I can learn to appreciate the beauty of God's creation along with my golfing buddies who need to learn the same lesson." I took her lack of a response as a "let me think about it" because she didn't say "no." The next day, I watered the seed by singing *Happy Birthday to Me* in my *Staying Alive* Bee Gee's falsetto. When she didn't respond, I figured I'd just have to settle for a gift certificate to the driving range. But the third time must have been the charm because after I sang it in the same Bee Gee's falsetto she responded with these words: "Derrick, you can go on the golf trip, but I have one request before I'll approve this expenditure." Happily, I quipped, "sure, babe, anything for the West Household CFO. What is it?" "You have to take my mother and I to our favorite New Orleans restaurant." That was the day I knew golf was an addiction because I found myself agreeing to something that involved a mother-in-law and uncooked fish.

Unfortunately, that dining experience turned out to be our last New Orleans supper, quite literally. And the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail trip never materialized. The uncooked fish barely had enough time to settle when we learned from the weatherman that Hurricane Katrina had taken a weird loop in Florida and was now churning in the Gulf of Mexico heading straight for New Orleans. We evacuated the next day with just a Chevrolet Cavalier and a suitcase. We never returned because the levees broke less than a quarter mile from the first place we ever called home. The storm produced 1,833 fatalities, and caused \$125 billion dollars in damage, including everything we owned. We lost everything in a plague of a storm we never saw coming. And it changed our lives, forever. There are storms you encounter that you never see coming. But, church, I don't want to talk to you this morning about storms you don't see coming. I want to speak to you instead about the ones that you do. And the reason you see them coming is because God has made it clear to you in a variety of different ways. Before those storms, you have one of two choices to make. You can prepare it by acting and doing exactly what God has prescribed for you to do. Or you can ignore the warning and continue to make plans for golf trip that I'll assure you that you will never get to experience. And here is why: There is only one plague that comes with specific instructions for God's people on how to prepare for it. It stands alone in severity and significance. It's not like the others. It's the tenth plague, the plague of the necessary Passover. And here is why you need to listen more today than you ever have before: God loved the Israelites enough to tell them what was coming in their world so that they could and would be prepared for it. Church, I've got a pastor's intuition that some of the darkest times in this world and our nation are on the immediate horizon. And the purpose of the message today and next week is to prepare you for them. To do that, please turn with me to Exodus 12:3-7, 12-13.

³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb¹¹ for his family, one for each household. ⁴ If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. ⁵ The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. ⁶ Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. ⁷ Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs....¹² "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. ¹³ The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

How Do You Prepare Before the Upcoming Storm?

1. You prepare with something personal — A lamb without blemish (12:5)
 - **The Greatest Incubator for Germs:** (1) Not schools, hospitals, churches, mud puddles, pet stores; (2) It's the tomato display at Publix; (2) You have to wait in line 30 minutes to buy tomatoes every time you go in that joint because some old sick decides he wants to touch and inspect every single tomato; (3) And the guy after him does it exactly the same thing; (4) Both in a quest to find the one tomato in the store without defect.
 - **Main Idea of the Point:** God spared the Israel's sons not because they were better Egypt's sons, but because a lamb without defect died in place of their sons.
 - **Textual Emphasis (5):** *⁵ The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.*
 - **Teaching Emphasis – A Lamb Without Defect:** (1) First lambs chosen to be sacrificed to be consumed in the ancient world were exactly the opposite: lambs with defects. (2) But a lamb without defect or blemish has no need to be put to death. There is nothing defective about it that it should warrant a death sentence. (3) Nor has it done anything to warrant death. It is a totally blameless creature that's taking the place of guilty people.

- **Significance For Us:** God doesn't ask us to provide the lamb. He provided one himself.
2. **You prepare with something acceptable — A lamb who has passed the scrutiny (12:6)**
- **Mimamagaziphobia** — (1) There's a new word for your lexicon; (2) It's also a phobia that has "plagued" me for years. It's the fear of department stores; (3) Here's why. My mom used to take me to buy school clothes as a child. It wasn't enough to go in the dressing room and try them on. You had to walk out of the dressing room in front of God and everybody just to see if the pair of Jordache jeans measured up to her critical scrutiny. (4) That night there will give you a case of mimamagaziphobia for the rest of your life.
 - **Main Idea of the Point:** It wasn't enough to provide a lamb that appeared to the sons of Israel as spotless. They had to examine it over a period of four days to ensure it was suitable. In the New Testament, Jesus passed the scrutiny the first four days of Passion Week and became our substitute on the day of sacrifice.
 - **Text (12:6):** *"Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight."*
 - **Textual Emphasis: Watching the Lamb** — (1) They chose the lamb on the 10th day of the month and sacrificed it after watching it over a period of four days; (2) During this period of time, all eyes were upon the lamb. Every move the lamb made, every step, every grumble, every attitude, every personality trait. (3) But hands were on the lamb as well. They examined every wool hair; every fiber. Is this lamb suitable for sacrifice.
 - **Significance for Us: They Watched the Lamb in the New Testament Also** — (1) It started with Pharisees complaining that the crowd was crying Hosanna; (2) And continued when he decried the temple they had made a den of thieves; (3) Then it continued as Jesus was examined before Pilate, Herod, Caiaphas; (4) The disciples even scrutinized Jesus and abandoned him. All in a period of four days. (5) On the fifth day, the lamb was sacrificed. Do you know what day of the Jewish calendar that happened to be? That's right. The same one they sacrificed the lamb in Exodus for Passover. What a mighty Savior!
3. **You prepare with something necessary — blood of the Lamb on the doorpost (12:7).**
- **Vero Beach Home Architecture** — (1) There's a plethora of architectural styles in our community; (2) You go to some places and you'll see Colonial Homes with Colonial doorposts; (3) In other places, you'll see Spanish architecture with Spanish doorposts; (4) In other places, you'll see DR Horton Homes with DR Horton doorposts; (5) In other places, you'll see mobile home architecture with mobile home doorposts; (6) Just before the 10th plague, it mattered not the type of home. The only thing that mattered to God was the blood of the lamb on the doorpost.
 - **Main Idea of the Point:** It wasn't enough to provide a suitable lamb and examine it for sacrifice. They had to sprinkle the blood of the Lamb on the doorpost in order to survive the wrath of God on Egypt. For without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. In the New Testament, the only blood suitable for satisfying the wrath of God in our Egypt is Jesus.
 - **Text (7):** *"Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs."*
 - **Teaching Emphasis: Specific Way the Blood Was Applied to the Door Post:** (1) It had to be on the top of the frame, on the bottom of the frame, on the right side of frame, and on the left side of the frame; (2) The blood had to be applied in all directions; (3) After putting blood on all sides, the household must pass through the blood on the doorpost and enter into the house. Lock the doors and do not come out until the morning. (4) And when the spirit of the Lord passed through Egypt and saw the blood on the top, on the bottom, on the right, and on the left — **IN THE SHAPE OF A CROSS** — he would pass over.
 - **For Us:** One can only be saved and enter into a protected place by passing through the blood smeared in all directions in the shape of the cross.
4. **You prepare with something stable (12:13) — The Promises of God**
- **Examining the Outside Tables and Chairs at a Restaurant:** (1) When you go to a restaurant and the waitress informs you that the only tables left are the ones outside, what's the first thing you do when you get to the table? (3) It's a high top so you shake the table to make sure it's sturdy. Then you do the same with the chairs. The last thing you want to do is lean on the table or sit in the chairs and break them. (5) God is exactly the opposite. You can never break his promises by leaning on them.
 - **Main Idea of the Point:** When God saw the blood he promised to pass over to spare us from the worst type of judgment. In the New Testament, he still does. For Jesus is our Passover Lamb and our night of feasting is when we asked him to be our Lord and Savior. Glory to His name.
 - **Text (12:13):** *"The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt."*
 - **Teaching Emphasis: The Blood as a Sign of the Promises:** (1) Promise One: I will pass over; (2) Promise Two: No destructive plague will touch you.
 - **Standing On the Promises:** Standing on the promises that cannot fail. When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail. By the living Word of God I shall prevail. Standing on the promises of God. Standing on the promises I cannot fail. List'ning ev'ry moment to the Spirit's call. Resting in my Savior as my all in all, Standing on the promises of God.
 - **Concluding Thought:** How do we prepare for the storm approaching? Resting in my Savior as my all in all. That's the only way. Praise be to God.