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Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, January 2, 2011
The Lord's Table
"Starting Right"
I Corinthians 11:23-34

"Do This In Remembrance Of Me."

These are the words of the Lord regarding what we call the Lord's Table or the Communion Service.

Jesus said those words in the context of establishing His table, something new, in the midst of the Passover Festival, which was something old.

In so doing, Christ was saying that the Passover Festival was all about Him in His Person and in His Work.

"Do this in remembrance of ME."

What's involved in that statement of Christ?

I. There is retrospect (looking back) – I Corinthians 11:26.

1. Looking back at the death of Christ.

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death. . . ."

Partaking of the Lord's table, the believer is making a proclamation.

The word used for proclamation is the word that means to announce, to make known, publish, like to preach a sermon.

So as we partake of the bread and the cup today, we announce that the Lord has died. But not just that He died, but that He died for you and me to pay the penalty for our breaking God's law which is death.

(1) Christ died to satisfy God's righteous demands of justice – propitiation.

As John penned, Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but those of the whole world (I John 2:1-2)

(2) Christ died to win for us His redemption, to pay the penalty for our breaking god's law.

We have redemption through His blood the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7).

(3) Christ died to reconcile us to God so that we are no longer God's enemies but we become His friends.

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled we shall be saved by His life (Romans 5:10).

It's interesting here that as we partake of these elements today, the bread and the cup, we do not proclaim or make known the life or the sufferings of Christ. Why? These cannot provide us forgiveness and eternal life before God.

Certainly, Christ had to live a perfect life on earth, fulfilling completely the law of God, to be the perfect sacrifice for our sin. He did suffer indescribable treatment before going to the cross and excruciating pain and agony while on the cross before He committed His Spirit to His heavenly Father.

But His perfect life and sufferings would not pay our penalty for breaking God's law, would not satisfy God's justice and righteousness, and reconcile sinners such as we to God.

That's why the text reads that in partaking of the Lord's Table, we proclaim the death of Christ.

In looking back at the death of Christ for us, there is also

2. Looking back at Christ's fulfillment and termination of the Passover/Unleavened Bread Festival in His death.

In looking back to the death of Christ, we also know that the Lord in His death was fulfilling the Old Testament Passover festival which was a yearly celebration for the Jewish people. It was their reminder that God had delivered them from Egyptian bondage, Egyptian slavery. That's why Paul in I Corinthians 5:7 wrote that "Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed for us."

The children of Israel were delivered from Egyptian bondage as the blood of the yearly unblemished lamb or goat was put on their lintel and two doorposts, so when the angel came that night he would pass over their homes. On the basis of the blood being shed, redemption came for the nation of Israel, as Pharaoh let the nation go under the leadership of Moses. **Freedom would be theirs, looking forward to the eternal freedom the believer in Christ has today.**

It is well to point out here that the blood placed on the lintel and two door posts was a picture of the cross. In fact the furniture placed in the tabernacle was in the form of a cross. The passover, the other festivals, the tabernacle, the offerings in the Old Testament all looked forward to Christ and what He would do in His death. Isaiah 53 was the prophecy of it all.

II. There is introspect (Looking inward at one's self) -I Corinthians 11:27-34.

One of the challenges that the Corinthian believers were having in that day was growing in their faith walk with Christ.

From I Corinthians 11:17-22, it is clear that the believers were still very immature in their life with their Lord. There were divisions and factions (self chosen ways – heresies) in the church body. When they came together to fellowship and worship as a body, they were acting very disorderly and dishonoring to the Lord. It was not the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 11:20).

I understand in that day they had a "Love Feast" in connection with the Lord's Supper. This was a time for a fellowship meal, receiving communication from other churches, and collecting money for widows and orphans. It appears that the more wealthy were eating first and not sharing with those who were poor. Some were even coming drunk to the love feast. It would be better for them to eat at home before coming to partake of the Lord's Supper.

This is why Paul gives the instructions in I Corinthians 11:27-34.

1. A believer should not eat the bread and drink the cup in an unworthy manner (11:27).

Unworthy means in an improper way, that is in a disorderly manner, or with unconfessed sin in one's life. The one who does so will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord (guilty of sin against Christ's death and bodily resurrection).

2. A believer must examine himself or herself before participating in the Lord's Supper (11:28-30).

There must be preparation in one's life before participating in the Lord's supper. The person who is going to partake of the Lord's Table must take time to scrutinize his own life to see if there is any sinful thought, attitude, or action that he has committed.

The one who doesn't examine himself will receive the Lord's judgment. In that day, evidently some had died prematurely for their ungodly action before the Lord in regard to the Lord's Supper.

3. A believer must judge himself, that is confess his or her sin to the Lord before partaking of the Lord's Supper (11:31).

Each believer is to take time before his or her Lord to confess any known sin in one's life before partaking of the Lord's table.

4. Believers are to come together orderly and with love for one another (11:32-34).

If they don't discipline themselves, God will discipline them. It is better for them to eat at home before coming for the Lord's Supper. God wants all things to be done decently and in order with believers putting each other first and enjoying their fellowship with the Lord and one another as they commemorate the Lord's Supper.

5. Believers can give thanks to the Lord for the privilege to live for Him.

As the believer proclaims the death of Christ by partaking of the bread and cup, the believer also proclaims that he has died with Christ and risen with Him. For the text also says, "Until He Come."

(1) The believer can give thanks that His life with God is not based upon his feelings and emotions.

This does not mean that this table negates our feelings and emotions.

Rather, this table is the reminder today that our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. We dare not trust the sweetest frame but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand.

The believer's life is built on the unchanging Christ's cross and open tomb, and the unchanging Word of God. When we are discouraged, we know that God is there to encourage us. When we are disappointed, we know God is there to give us hope. When we don't know which way to turn, we can turn to the Lord for His wisdom and grace. Yes, our emotions will fluctuate by virtue of what we are experiencing, but it is the cross and the open tomb that gives our emotions stability in the midst of our storms. His still small voice tells us, "Peace, Peace Be Still, I am with you in the storm. This too shall pass."

(2) The believer can give thanks that his life is not based upon his own performance.

The believer in Christ is accepted by Christ, graced with all grace. He can do no more to gain God's approval and acceptance (Ephesians 1:6).

Christ has done it all for the believer. The believer just needs to live for Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament economy was "if you do this you will be blessed." Now in Christ the believer has been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, therefore in the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer spontaneously serves the Lord regardless of the task. He doesn't have to compare himself with others. He serves the Lord with joy even giving a cup of cold water in Jesus' name.

(3) The believer can give thanks that his life is standing in God's grace.

The believer's tendency can be to focus on all the negative in one's life. Yes, the sins which one commits. But this table tells us that Jesus died and rose again to pay the penalty for our sin against God. Through faith in Christ we are forgiven and have the wonderful position of being in Christ – now we can focus on God's grace, not on our sin or sinfulness.

Christ knew what He was getting into when we accepted Him and He took us into his family. He accepted us and made us His adopted sons and daughters, mature believers in Him.

That Apostle Paul told the Corinthians that He was what He was by the grace of God, Yes, Paul said that he was the least of the apostles, because he persecuted the church of God, but he was what he was by the grace of God.

Neil Anderson is quick to point out that this is what is not understood by many followers of Christ – Who they really are in Christ. We look at ourselves as sinners saved by grace, always beating upon on ourselves for not being what we think we should be before God. God, on the other hand, wants us to grasp who we are in Christ – His saints, His chosen people, His lights, His witnesses for His glory, and let that in the power of the Holy Spirit motivate us to live for Christ.

Norman Wright penned this prayer.

Dear Lord,

I praise You for Your act of choosing me, adopting me, and making me Your heir. Thank You for forgiving my sin and sealing me with your Holy Spirit. Thank you that I am never out of Your mind. Thank You for not being disillusioned about me. Thank You for Your continuing determination to bless me. Thank You for the never ending joy You have over me. Saturate me with the truth of who You are and what I am becoming because of my identity in You. I know there are times when I disappoint myself and others, and this causes me to wonder how Your love and acceptance can be so constant. But I pray the way I live my life will reflect the value You place on me. I pray that I

will draw others to open their lives to You. May they be able to discover what you have done for them. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Yes there is retrospection – looking back at the death of Christ as we come to the Lord's Supper.
There is introspection – looking inward as to how we are doing in our relationships with Christ and giving Him thanks to HIM for who we are in HIM and what we have in HIM.

But there is also . . .

III. There is prospect (What the future holds) – I Corinthians 11:26.

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He come."

"Until He come."

That means as mentioned above that Christ has conquered the grave, He has ascended into heaven bodily, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father on high to be our Savior, our Intercessor, and our coming Savior and coming King.

That means that the believer in Christ has the living hope that Peter talks about. The hope that is not thinking that something might happen, but the incredible reality that something good is going to happen in God's time in God's will for the believer in Jesus Christ.

In the darkest hour of our lives, there is the living hope for the believer in Jesus Christ, for whether we live or we die we are the Lord's.

His living presence is with us always, and He lives within us, Christ in you the hope of glory.

Not only is there God's hope in the midst of our challenges, but that wonderful blessed hope of the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

Christ's return for His church could be today. He could return this year, 2011. What a day of rejoicing that will be. In the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, the dead in Christ will rise first, and we who are alive and remain will be caught up with them to ever be with the Lord.

The Lord's table tells us that Christ is the center of our lives, He forgives our past, enables us to live for Him presently, while providing us a living eternal hope for the future – to be with Him forever That's why Paul said, "For me to live is Christ. . . ."

That's why Christ's table tells us that He is the Alpha and Omega the Beginning and the End. This Table is the starting point for life, the continuing point for life, the beginning point of a new life with the Lord some day for all eternity. Christ is all that pertains to life and godliness.

That's why Paul said that his only glory was in the cross of Jesus Christ.

**That's why the song writer penned,
When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.**

**Forbid it Lord that I should boast, save in the cross of Christ my God;
All the vain things that charm me most I sacrifice them to His blood.**

**See from His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?**

**Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.**

Let's follow our Lord's direction to, "Partake of His table in remembrance of HIM!"

