

Living Church: Remember God's Grace

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[0 : 00] Exodus chapter 12, it's on page 68 of the Church Bible. So Exodus chapter 12 and it's verse 1 to 14.

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month, each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.

If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with the 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. The animals you choose must be year-old males, without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.

Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses where they eat the lambs.

[1 : 23] That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast. Do not eat the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire, head, legs and inner parts.

Do not leave any of it until morning. If something is left till morning, you must burn it. This is how you are to eat it, with your cloak tucked into your belt, and your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand.

Eat it in haste, it is the Lord's Passover. On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn, both men and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt.

I am the Lord. The blood will be assigned to you on the houses where they are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

This is the day you are to commemorate for the generations to come. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord, a lasting ordinance. Okay, this reading is from 1 Corinthians 11, verse 12, and that's on page 1152.

[3 : 01] That's 1152. I think I have a book in verse 17. Oh, right.

Okay. Yeah, that's 1 Corinthians 11, verse 17. In the following directives, I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good.

In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval.

When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else.

One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?

[4 : 03] What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not. For I receive from the Lord what also passed on to you.

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke and said, This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, saying, This is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. Do this whenever you drink in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

So, please keep your Bibles open at 1 Corinthians 11.

Kirstie's or Angelina are handing around pens and sheets. If anybody would like that to take notes, please feel free to do that. Looking at different aspects of our gathering on Sundays when we meet together.

[5 : 22] Looking at things like hearing God's word from the Bible, prayer, singing together, and something we also do is to remember Jesus' death.

So, this morning we celebrate the Lord's Supper and we're going to focus and look in that and hopefully what we do this morning is going to help us. It will shape a little bit more of how we should think about this very simple meal.

Well, let's pray together and ask for God's help in this. Our Father, thank you again for your amazing grace.

Thank you for the word of your grace. Thank you that we can hear you speak to us by your Spirit.

and we pray that you would continue to change us and transform us and as we think about the Lord's Supper, something we do very often and maybe we just do without thinking, we pray that we would learn afresh what it is all about, how it changes us and how it helps us to understand your grace better.

[6 : 50] So, we ask for your help in this this morning. In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, depending on your church tradition, the celebration of the bread and wine is known by different names.

So, if you happen to come from a Protestant tradition, you might call it something like Holy Communion or the Lord's Supper. If you come from a Catholic tradition, you might call it the Eucharist, which simply means Thanksgiving or the Sacrament.

But we're not so much interested in various church traditions. We want to hear what the Bible has to say. Primarily, when we're thinking about the Lord's Supper, it is a dramatic visual picture of the Gospel.

The good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and that we can be forgiven. That's why we can call it, or as I have termed it, the Grace Meal.

As we gather, we remember and we participate in God's grace to us. It flows from God to us.

[8 : 06] And as we gather, we practice and we announce God's grace to each other. So we receive God's grace and we give God's grace.

The detail of this Grace Meal is mentioned only five times in the New Testament. We read about it three times in the Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, and there's a couple of references, one of which is here in Corinthians.

It's a command from the Lord Jesus as we read in verse 23 of chapter 11. This is Paul writing, he says, For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you.

So he got it from the Lord, the Lord Jesus instituted it and he passes it on to his church, to his people. So let's have a look at what this Grace Meal is all about.

And to do that, we're going to look at four things as we share in this meal. First one, we remember God's grace. Second, we participate in God's grace.

[9 : 13] Third, we practice God's grace. And fourth, we announce God's grace. So we're going to look at those four things to help us better understand this simple meal.

First, we remember God's grace. Look at verse 24. When he, that Jesus, had given thanks for the bread and broke it, he said, This is my body, which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after supper, he took the cup saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this whenever you drink it in remembrance of me.

But what is it that we are remembering about Jesus? Well, there are two events that we need to look at. The first has to do with the Passover.

Look at verse 23. He says, For I received from the Lord what I also passed unto you. The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread.

[10 : 17] But what happened on that night? The first time Jesus celebrated with his disciples. Well, Paul is giving us a context to help us to understand what we are to remember.

He's bringing to our minds to think back to what happened when Jesus was with his disciples on that night. Let me read to you what happened on that night.

It's Matthew 26, verse 17. Just listen to these words. The disciples said to Jesus, Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?

Jesus replied, Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, The teacher says, My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.

So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. Now, as we read just a moment ago in Exodus, the Passover was a special annual meal to remember the rescue of Israel from their slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt.

[11 : 32] And because Pharaoh would not release Israel, God's people, from their slavery, God had promised a plague. He was going to send the angel of death who would pass over every home in Egypt.

And the eldest son in each home, God said, would die as a sign of his judgment and his justice because of their sin, because they would not let the people go.

But it wasn't just Egypt. We have to ask the question, how would Israel, God's people, also survive the angel of death? Because, well, let's face it, they were as messed up as everybody else.

They weren't pure and perfect. So as this angel of death was going to pass over, how would they survive? Well, they were told by God to take a lamb, to kill this lamb, to eat it.

And then they were to take some of the blood from the lamb and they were to put it on the door frames of the house. And through this very act, the people were learning that this little lamb would die instead of them.

[12 : 50] The lamb that they would eat together as a family was being sacrificed in their place. So when the angel of death passed over and when he saw the blood on the door, he would pass over that house and all inside were kept safe from God's judgment and justice.

And as we read in Exodus, every year following, they were to remember this rescue with a Passover meal. Every year, they were to remember God's rescue and liberation of his people.

That was until Jesus gave it a new meaning and a new interpretation. Because as Jesus celebrated that Passover meal with his disciples, on that occasion, that very night, something very significant happened.

Look at verse 24 of Corinthians 11. Jesus took some bread. And when he had broken it, when he had torn that bread apart, he gave it to them and said, this is my body broken for you.

This is for you. And then he took some wine and he poured it into a cup and he said, this is my blood.

[14 : 32] It's for you. So here we have a bread, a torn body. We have this wine representing spilt blood.

Jesus is obviously talking about a terrible and a violent death. Except Jesus is no longer talking about what happened to the lamb in the Passover meal.

Jesus is talking about himself. You see, in this text here in Corinthians 11, there's no mention of a lamb.

There's no lamb here. Why? Because Jesus is the true lamb. What happened in the Passover meal was only a sign of something far greater.

The lambs that were broken, that were torn. The blood that was spilt and that was put across the door frames could never deal with sin and deal with God's judgment and justice.

[15 : 34] They pointed forward to the greater need for a bigger and a greater sacrifice, a perfect one and a complete one. So as Jesus sat with his disciples to celebrate this meal, he was talking about his death and the cross which was just about to happen.

His body broken for you. His blood spilt for you. Jesus was saying to his disciples, I have come to die for you.

I have become the sacrifice for you. I am the lamb, the lamb that was cut and torn up and eaten. I am that lamb who's come to deal with the judgment and the justice of God so that you can be kept safe.

So first, as we remember or come to this simple meal, it's a simple remembrance of God's amazing grace demonstrated as Christ died on the cross.

And second, we not only remember but we participate in God's grace. We're not only to remember this meal, we are to get involved in it.

[16 : 50] Look at the words. He says, do this, take this, eat this bread, drink this wine. Flick back to chapter 10, verse 16.

chapter 10, verse 16. He says, is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ?

And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? You see, if we are to experience God's grace, if it's going to change us and transform us from the inside out, we've got to participate in this meal.

We've got to be involved in it. Now, there's two very different traditions when it comes to participating in this grace meal. And I'm not wanting to pinpoint or direct things in any particular way because both of what I'm going to say, both, I don't think, get it right.

So hear me out. First of all, the Catholic teaching takes the literal view. It says that the bread and wine actually become the body and the blood of Jesus.

[18 : 12] So when you eat the bread and when you drink the wine, you automatically receive the saving grace of God. In other words, you can only get eternal life, you can only have forgiveness of sins when you eat and drink.

Theologians call it transubstantiation. Now, the problem with looking at it like that is that the participation is just simply physical.

It doesn't require you to engage the heart. It's just a physical act, something you do that you don't necessarily have to understand or enter into or be involved and it's just there to cover over sin until the next time.

So, sin this week, take something, cover over, and so on and so on. There's no assurance. In fact, it goes against everything Jesus teaches because he is saying that it's not what you do, not even what you eat and drink, that brings salvation.

It's faith in what Christ has done and completed on your behalf. So, that's the literal view. Protestant churches talk about the symbol view.

[19 : 28] So, as Jesus ate the meal with his disciples, he didn't mean that the bread and wine actually became his body and blood. No, it was a symbol, a sign of his death to come.

The bread and the wine represent Jesus. We look beyond them to what Jesus had done. So, when we see the bread being broken, when the wine is being poured, it's a visual picture of the gospel, the good news that Christ died for us.

Now, I think that's beginning to get to a right interpretation. We do treat the bread and the wine as symbols. But there's also a problem with that view. The emphasis that the bread and the wine are just symbols and that they can never change you seems to go against what Jesus is teaching.

In other words, we can go so far to try and correct a literal view that we lose something of its actual effect and our involvement and our participation.

So, how do we participate in this grace meal? How can we experience God's grace? Well, look at those words in chapter 10 verse 16 again.

[20 : 53] Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

You see, as we eat the bread, as we drink the wine, by faith, we are participating in Jesus' sacrifice for us.

The very physical act of taking something in your hand, of holding the bread in your hand, of drinking the wine, reflects our absolute dependence upon the sacrifice of Jesus.

As I eat the bread, I am saying, Jesus had to be broken for me. As I drink the wine, I am saying, Jesus had to be slain for me.

That if he didn't do it, I'm lost, I'm nothing, I need God's grace, and I need to take it into my life. But more than that, we are to take the grace of God by faith, so that it becomes part of us.

[22 : 08] And I think this is what Jesus wants us to grasp when he says, take and eat, this is my body, this is my blood, drink from it, all of you.

John Stott, an Anglican minister, he's now in heaven, he wrote and he put it like this, our faith looks beyond the symbols to the reality they represent.

bread and even as we take the bread and wine and feed on them in our mouths by eating and drinking, so we feed on Christ crucified in our hearts by faith.

we must eat and drink, we must as it were take in by faith the grace of God, we must realise that we are so needy people that without God's grace we are nothing.

And so our participation isn't just thinking, oh well these are just symbols and they're never going to change me or do anything to me and you know it's just as much as reading the Bible and going to church is never going to save me, so doing this is never going to save me.

[23 : 23] Yeah that's right, but we are to engage, we are to be involved and see that in eating and drinking we are by faith taking in God's grace to transform us and to change us.

So we must participate in God's grace. Third, we must practice God's grace. This grace meal is something we don't just do alone, we participate together, that's why we're all here.

We don't just have our little individual meals at home. But you know what, there was a problem whenever this church in Corinthians were meeting and I don't think it's unlike most churches.

Look at verse 18 of chapter 11. He says, in the first place I hear that when you come together as a church there are divisions among you and to some extent I can believe it because, well, you know, we're people and people make mistakes.

Verse 20. When you come together it is not the Lord's supper you eat. For as you eat each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else.

[24 : 38] One remains hungry and another one gets drunk. pretty mad, eh? You see, unlike our church practice, the early church would have met for a meal beforehand.

And then they would have shared in the Lord's supper. It was a little bit like a potluck lunch. Everybody brought their own bit of food and, well, they were all meant to share it and be together in it.

But what they were doing was they were all doing their own thing. Some were just plain greedy and they had lots of money and had nice food and, well, they could just eat away. And there were poor people there who didn't have money and maybe the only actual meal they were going to have was the bread and the wine that was there for the Lord's supper.

And others were just too busy getting drunk on the wine that they bought to notice the needs of anybody else. There was chaos. And Paul was furious.

Verse 22. He says, don't you have homes to eat in and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you?

[25 : 46] Am I going to praise you for this? Well done, you're behaving very well. Absolutely not. It's a disgrace. Now, I don't think we have to be too hard on these guys.

Well, we have to be hard on them because, well, they weren't doing what's right. But I don't think we're any different to some extent. not saying that we're all turning up drunk or anything else like that, but we're all messy people, aren't we?

And we fail to understand the workings out of God's grace. And instead of joining together as a family, and he's at these people here, they were all huddling into cliques.

The rich were with the rich and the poor with the poor and the insiders were separated from the outsiders, and well, all the good people who read their Bible and went to church and went to prayer meetings, they all huddled together, and then all the bad people who kept messing up and failing, well, they were all over here.

It was quite ironic that the meal that was supposed to unite the family of God was becoming a meal of division. And in response, Paul directs them back to the grace meal.

[26 : 58] We are to remember God's grace. We are to participate in God's grace so that we can practice God's grace to each other.

You see, the grace meal is a great leveller, isn't it? It brings us all into line. We all think, well, I'm here and they're there. Well, actually, no. Regardless of our class or our culture, our religious background or our heritage, we are all brought into line equally.

The reality is none of us deserve God's grace. We're all in desperate need of God's grace. We're all outsiders, but we have become insiders through the sacrificial death of Christ.

So when we gather together, we are reminding ourselves through the grace meal that there's no room for superiority, nobody can think of themselves better, and there's no room for inferiority to think that I'm no good.

By remembering and participating in this grace meal, we accept one another, we welcome one another, just as Christ accepted and welcomed us.

[28 : 14] So third, we are practicing grace as we meet together. Fourth, we're announcing God's grace.

Because this grace meal is not just to be kept for ourselves. It is to be announced, to be proclaimed. Look at how this meal finished in this passage, verse 26.

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim, you announce the Lord's death. You talk about his grace until he comes again.

At one level, this meal is exclusive. It is for all those who come to Jesus by faith to receive and experience God's grace.

But in another way, this meal is open. There's an inclusiveness to this meal. There is this open invitation to all those who see their need of grace to participate in it.

[29 : 27] The grace that we have received from God is not private. It is to be proclaimed. It's to be announced. Jesus came for sinners and I reckon that we're not the only sinners.

As we're reminded in this text in verse 23, that it all happened on the night, Jesus was betrayed. Remember Judas, the one who turned his back on Jesus, the betrayer, the failure, the sinner, was present at that meal.

And grace was offered to him. He rejected it, but it was offered. And in the same way, we are to announce God's grace to all who will come in faith to receive and experience God's amazing grace.

So four things that help us to grasp and understand a little bit more what we're going to celebrate, and we're going to do that in just a minute.

We remember his grace as we look back to the cross. We participate in that grace as we involve ourselves by faith.

[30 : 51] And we practice grace to one another, welcoming each other as Christ welcomed us, and we announce that grace, saying that God's grace is available to all who will come in faith.

we're going to sing Behold the Lamb, which is a song that really takes us through the whole story of the grace meal.

We're going to sing it all the way through, and then we're going to share in that simple meal together. But just use these words to reflect, to meditate, and also to give thanks to the Lord Jesus for what he has done.

We'll stand together as we sing this. Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away, slain for us.

And we remember the promise made that all who come in faith find forgiveness at the cross.

[32 : 07] So we share in this bread of life, and we drink of his sacrifice at the time of our palms of peace.

Around the table of peace. The body of our Savior, Jesus Christ, torn for you.

Read and remember the wounds that heal, the death that brings us life, save the pride to make us one.

so we share in this bread of life, and we drink of his sacrifice at the side of our bones of love.

Around the table of the king, the blood that cleanses every stain of sin shed for you.

[33 : 37] Drink and remember he drained death cup that only enter in to receive the life of God.

so we share in the bread of life, and we drink of his sacrifice at the side of our bones of grace.

Around the table of the king, and so with thankfulness and faith we rise to respond, and to remember our call to follow in the steps of Christ, as his body here on earth.

As we share in his suffering we proclaim Christ will come again and we'll join in the feast of heaven around the table of the king.

Please do take a seat. So as we gather to share in this grace meal, we want to come and we need to involve all of who we are.

[35 : 34] We need to bring, if you like, our senses to this meal. We need to use our eyes, we need to use our ears, and our mouth as we taste, as we celebrate in this grace meal together. prayer. We need to use our life as we visualize. We think of the cross of Christ.

We think of Jesus holding the bread, speaking of his day. His body broken, torn for us, ripped for us, broken for us, we visualize and we remember Christ.

And when he comes to the cross to the light, we visualize and we remember himself. His blood shed, slain for us, dying for us.

a visual picture, a reminder of a broken body, blood in the sense, the true man sacrifice for us.

[36 : 56] So we use our eyes as we visualize, but we use our ears to listen, listen to this from God's words, for his words give interpretation and meaning to the bread and to the wine.

I tell you the truth, Jesus says, he who believes, who has faith, has everlasting life. Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth, unless you can eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise them up at the last day, for my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood, remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

So we use our eyes to visualize, our ears to listen, and in a moment we're going to use our mouths as we taste and eat and drink and by faith we receive and experience the grace of God.

[38 : 35] Before we do that we're going to read together a portion of a psalm, Psalm 32. If you turn to that's Psalm 32, that's Psalm 32. We come without any masks, we come without any sense of pretense, we may hide our sin, our secret sin from one another, but the Lord knows us and he invites us to come as we are with all of our sin and all of our mess and our failures to receive his forgiveness because he took our sin on himself and died in our place.

So let's read this as a means of our confession and reminding us of the grace of forgiveness. Let's read Psalm 32 verses 1 to 5 together.

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me, my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

[40 : 33] God's will pass the bread around and you will taste, you will visualize and you will hear those words we have just read.

Hold on to that piece of bread and then we will eat together because we participate together and we practice grace together as God's family.

so please take the piece of bread, hold on to it and then we will eat together. As we visualize and we remember Christ's body torn, broken for us, taking our sin upon himself, by faith we participate to experience and receive his grace.

Let us taste and eat and remember let's eat together. Let us eat together. he made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel.

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever.

[42 : 21] He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. we're going to sing together.

Only by grace can we enter because it is only because of the grace of God it picks up something of that theme that we were looking at.

It's not by our human endeavor, nothing that we do, but by the blood of the Lamb, but by Jesus Christ. we'll remain seated as we sing this through a couple of times.

verse. Only by grace can we enter, only by grace can we stand, not by a human endeavor, but by the blood of the Lamb.

[43 : 52] Into your presence you call, we call us to come. Into your presence you jolt, and now by your grace we come.

Now by your grace we come. Lord, if you mark our transgressions, who would die? Thanks to your grace we are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.

Lord, if you mark our transgressions, who would die? Thanks to your grace we are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.

The blood of the Lamb. Only by grace can be enter, only by grace can be stand, not by our human endeavor, but by the blood of the Lamb.

Into your presence you call, you call us to come. Into your presence you draw.

[45 : 14] Now by your grace we come. Now by your grace we come. Now by your grace we come.

we continue to visualize as we look at the wine we remember Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

his blood our faith in his death for us that rescues us and forgives us. As this is being passed around drink as you receive but let's use this as an open time to give thanks and to praise.

We have had our personal reflection and repentance but now we celebrate his forgiveness we celebrate that new life.

So let's take this time as it's being passed around to pray if you want to pray out loud or read something of prayer or of praise to do that as we gather together.