

Remember what God has done (Pre-Communion)

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Preacher: Gordon Martin

[0 : 00] Reading at verse 20. Reading at verse 20.

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That's not a small thing. And so we've been reminded in chapter 3 just of their faith. Okay, the reality of their faith.

whether you really assess it like that or not.

[5 : 14] When people are converted, Jonathan Edwards said, you know, it can be a massive confusion. But, you know, if you love the Lord and if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that itself is miraculous.

It's by God's grace. And maybe as you recognize that, you will be willing to take a step and go forward in faith and make public a profession. These people, these priests, had to take steps towards the river.

Actually, when I read the passage, it always reminds me of being a pedestrian in France. If you've ever been in Paris, you know, the traffic in Paris is just horrendous. And you've got to take a step in faith.

You've got to just put your feet onto the road. Because there doesn't be any traffic lights that I recall. But the minute you put your feet on the road, the traffic stops for you.

Or they used to. And it's an amazing thing. I didn't cross the road very often in Paris. But it does happen. I've seen it happen. I've done it.

[6 : 17] But it's a scary thing. But not as scary as putting your feet into the river. Chapter 3 is dealing with the crossing of the Jordan. There's lots of detail. It's a great story. Chapter 4, somebody said, has got hardly any action.

There's very little in it. It's really just about the gathering of stones. And the picking up of stones. And the building of monuments. It would appear from this version.

One in the middle of the river. And one on the other side of the river. Why? Why? Why? Is there a whole chapter devoted to the building of a monument?

Why is so much detail over so little action? Why is it so long and drawn out? Why? And the answer is in verses 20 to 24.

These 12 stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. And he said to the people. And he gives reasons. You see, the people were told to build a monument.

[7 : 30] To build a memorial. To remember what God had been doing and had done for them.

I think it was Dale Ralph Davis in his commentary who said something like this. Remembering is important. And forgetting is so very, very easy.

We just forget all the blessings of God to us. You know, marriages can go wrong, can't they? Because one party, maybe both parties in the marriage, they just forget their blessings.

They forget the preciousness of the part of the spouse. And over the years the relationship just kind of grows cold through forgetfulness.

And the life of faith can be like that too. We should be excited. We should be excited to come to church. We should be excited to read the Bible. We should be excited to sing the praises of God.

[8 : 35] We should be excited to think about coming to the Lord's table. The privilege that ours. But, but, are we excited? Or is it just a routine? Is it just something we do out of habit?

Is our life so much just going through the motions? Well, there's just a little few verses reminding us that God recognizes our humanity and that the whole process of remembering is really, really important.

It's not, you know, it's not an accident that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. It's not just one of these things.

It's there because we need it. Because we would forget Him very, very quickly. We would fail to appreciate Him the way we ought to.

At least, speaking for myself. But, the Lord's table, the Lord's Supper is there. And there He's saying to us, Remember me.

[9 : 46] Remember me. Don't forget me. Don't forget all that I've done for you. So, these people are commanded to build a monument.

And three reasons are given for this. And you could just pick them up. Or at least I've given you three reasons. One is education. One's encouragement. And one is exaltation.

So, education first of all. Verses 21 to 23. And He said to the people of Israel, When your children ask their fathers in times to come, What do these stones mean?

Then you shall let your children know, Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you, until you passed over.

As the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up for us, until we passed over. Remember, memorials give an opportunity to tell a story.

[10 : 48] War memorials. You know, when you're growing up, you don't know what they're about. And so maybe if you've got a sufficiently inquisitive mind, you might actually ask people, Why is there that monument in this village?

Why is there that big war memorial? Why do people gather round it at certain times every year? And of course, when you have that monument, and when you have that question, it gives you the opportunity, not just to tell one story, but one story requires many, many other stories to make sense of the story you want to tell.

And so when the children of Israel, in future generations, would come and be asking their parents, and asking the elders, would be saying to them, What do these stones mean?

It's an opportunity to speak. An opportunity just to tell people the story of God. To tell them about Him, and to tell them everything He's done.

And surely the table is like that as well, the Lord's table. Now I'm saying this in a kind of idealistic world.

[12 : 09] I don't ever, ever remember asking as a child, What does it mean? And I don't think any of my children have ever asked, What does it mean? And that maybe just says something about me, and something about my children.

Maybe it's been different in your homes. It would be nice to think it would be. And I guess, you know, as parents, and there's children here that tonight is great, you know, somehow we need to be creative.

We need to be creative enough to create discussions, to create opportunities for, or create a puzzle in children's minds so that they will be asking the question, they'll be forced to ask the question.

And they celebrate the Passover, the Jewish Passover, the children were given questions to ask. It was part of the routine, wasn't it?

The table educates. The Lord's Supper should be something that educates us, educates our children, indeed goes on for all generations.

[13 : 18] And when they get the chance, when we're asked, sorry, when we're asked questions about, what does it all mean? We get the chance to speak about Jesus. And you know, you just can't say, well, it's about Jesus.

You're then going to say, well, it's because he died. And then you've got to explain, why did he die? Well, he died for our sins. Why did he need to die for our sins? Because, because he's holy. God is holy.

And the only access into the presence of God is through faith in Jesus. And that's only because he died for our sins as a sacrifice. So, you see, just by having one thing to talk about, you've got to talk about other things.

And isn't that a great opportunity just to educate ourselves and our families? So, the table is an educational tool as much as a celebratory tool.

I think also these memorials and this memorial here would have been there for an encouragement. We live in difficult days as Christians in the West.

[14 : 24] We look to the developing world. We look to different continents and we see the church growing. And we look around and we see God seems to be almost abandoning us in the West.

I've heard that said in a prayer meeting just recently. You seem to be taking your eyes off us. You seem to be abandoning us.

You seem to be withdrawing the power of the Holy Spirit. Less and less people that would appear in our country in the Western world are being converted. It's good to take these issues to God.

It's good to take these issues to God in prayer and make our complaint known to Him. Make our prayers known to Him. There will be times in your life when things appear to be going pear-shaped.

When nothing's going quite as you predicted when you were young. When life's journey is difficult. When the valley is darker than you ever thought it might be.

[15 : 31] And the mountaintop seems so far away that you're never going to get to that mountaintop experience again. Isn't it good to know that God's people have been in that kind of situation before?

You know there's nothing new. God's people have been in difficult circumstances before when things appeared impossible. And yet God commands them how to live.

God commands them what to do. God takes them through the Red Sea. He takes them through the Jordan and the Red Sea. He conquers their enemies. He conquers Pharaoh. They're released from slavery and bondage there.

Think about the cross. Does it ever look more bleak for the church of God, the fledgling church at the cross?

Does it ever look more bleak than when the Lord Jesus Christ was hanging there and when He died? To them who seemed, even having been with Jesus for three years, who seemed not to grasp what the story was.

[16 : 51] They seemed not to grasp despite having been told that Jesus was going to die. They seemed to think that wasn't going to happen. And they hadn't grasped until afterwards that there would be such a thing as a resurrection.

It was very bleak. And they all kind of just scattered. Church has been in difficult circumstances before.

And you and I have to remember that God is able and He's able to deal with the enemies in your life and He's able to deal with the difficult situations in your life.

He's able to deal with these barriers that come up against you in your life. And through prayer you can conquer. Through faith you can move mountains.

If it looks bleak spiritually in our land today, it has been bleak before. There have been times when the church in the UK was very, very low.

[17 : 59] And then revival comes. And God just brings you know the church alive again. And people are converted.

Now that's not to say we're waiting for revival. It's not to say we just pray for revival. It's not to say we don't do what we have to do. Of course we do. But just in case you are discouraged, just remember God's in control and God can, God can, God will accomplish His own purposes.

And He will bring glory to Himself. To take encouragement. He's never, He's never, ever, ever going to abandon His church.

He's never going to abandon His people. It's not through our strength, it's not through our abilities, it's through His Spirit that great things will be accomplished as you well know.

So there's encouragement and there's also exaltation. Exaltation of God. Verse 24.

[19 : 07] Why has He done this? Why has He done this? Why has He dried up the water? So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.

Through this, God is bringing glory to Himself. And see His purpose. His purpose isn't just for Israel.

His purpose is national and international. It's so that all the peoples of the earth might know. You know, Psalm 98, you know, that great Psalm, I'm sure we'll be singing it over this weekend at some point, it speaks about, you know, just broadcasting the message of salvation.

The whole earth knowing. and you think about what was accomplished in that small corner outside Jerusalem and how that message has been broadcast into the whole world as the gospel of Jesus Christ goes out and reverberates throughout the whole world.

God saving His people then, God accomplishing salvation for His people at the cross, God broadcasting that and not just for the benefit of the people for us.

[20 : 39] We enjoy it, we receive it, but it also brings glory to Him. And then secondly, that you might fear the Lord your God forever.

Now, not slavish fear, not a cringing fear, not a fear of bondage, not a fear that the Spirit brings when He convicts us of sin for the first time, not that kind of fear, but that fear that has to do with reverence and has to do with love.

Why? Why build the monument? So that you might revere the Lord, so that you might fear Him, that you might love Him, that you would serve Him.

What's the purpose of the table? It's a memorial, yes. It's communion, yes. We want a sense of the presence of Christ with us.

We want the sense of the presence of His people with us. We want to enjoy that time of fellowship together, but it's also a means of grace. It's a strengthening so that we will go away from the table stronger.

[21 : 50] What does it mean to be stronger? It does not mean that we go on to serve Him with all of our hearts. We go on with reverence. We go on with love.

And we dedicate our lives to Him day by day by day because of all that He's done for us. And at the table we're remembering what He's done for us.

What are our lives meant to be like? I suppose we could say they're meant to be characterized by worship. Why have you done this?

Why have you helped us cross the Red Sea to fulfill your promises that cross the Jordan to fulfill your promises? Yes. He's done that. But He's saying there's more than that.

It's not just that you'll be safe. It's so that you'll love me and it's so that you'll serve me and worship me.

[22 : 53] Are we that kind of people? Are we learning? Are we a learning people? Will we learn from joining round the table tomorrow eating and drinking?

Will we learn something? Will we be educated, re-educated again? Will we be encouraged? I hope we will. And will we give glory to God or will it fall short?

You know, we're in great danger I think of just being so introverted or well, it's not really introverted that's not really a term selfish is the term.

We're so we're in such great danger of just being selfish and just thinking about ourselves and forgetting. that God has saved us to serve Him.

Saved us to be holy. Saved us to bring us glory bring Him glory with all that we are and all that we have. Build a build a memorial remember Jesus says remember don't forget remember let's bow our heads in prayer.

[24 : 24] Forgive us oh God for our selfishness forgive us for thinking it's all about us it's all about what we can get out of the celebrations all that we can get out of the worship service we ask that you would cleanse our heart we ask that you would remove any kind of apathy any kind of coldness we pray that your Holy Spirit would be at work in us that He would indeed be strengthening our faith and that He would be transforming us into the kind of people that you want us to be and Lord since we have spoken about how things appear to be so bleak in the western world we bring the situation of the church before you knowing that you have not forgotten it knowing that you never abandon your people but we plead

Lord that you would renew your church that you would bring reformation that you would bring reformation to our own denomination and reformation to other denominations also that truth would be incredibly important to us beyond truth that God Himself would be important to us that we would worship you and serve you and bring you glory so go with us we pray in Jesus name Amen we sing from page 192 page 192 Psalm 147 verses 1 to 7 to God's praise

Day Amen Saint J Holy Spirit Amen Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen.

[28 : 53] Glory to His Name. and now may grace, mercy and peace from God Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon each one now and evermore Amen