

## The Lord's Supper: In Memoriam

Why do we remember the Lord's death every week? In a typical memorial service we usually focus on a person's life, not their death. You might ask, would we not do better reading a chapter of Edersheim or Guikie each Sunday? Paul wrote, *"as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show forth his death till he come."* Yes, we remember his death, but what we do is not a recurring funeral, but rather a memorial. We celebrate. The Lord's Supper is a celebration and an elevation (it lifts us up as we lift Him up). It is also an illustration for us to appreciate and remember the great redemption work done for us. What do we think about when we think about his death? His death was violent. It was also voluntary. It was vital and vicarious. And yes, (take this out and it would just be a sad funeral) it was victorious.

### I. His death was violent.

A great mob in Jerusalem followed the weakened, stumbling, blood-soaked Savior as he made his way along what is called the Via del la Rosa. Up for days without sleep, found and bound in Gethsemane, he was led like a lamb to the slaughter. Judas' kiss, still stinging on his cheek—he was dragged from one venue to another, smacked in the face, spat upon, mocked and ridiculed. He was stripped of his robe, blindfolded and punched in the face and head repeatedly by his captors. "Guess which one of us hit you," they taunted him. God incarnate was ordered struck by the High Priest and then Herod's henchmen.

Then it was off to the Roman Governor and the Judgement seat where Pilate tried to dance between his conscience and political convenience. "I find on fault in this man," he said. He made a feeble attempt to wash Christ's blood off his hands after he was caught in his own devices and the crowd cried out for Barabbas. He turned Jesus over to the Legion's lash and had him whipped to within an inch of his life; and then, only then, after he was exhausted, spent, drained and dripping with crimson from the crown of thorns, to his bloodied back (plowed as a farmer's field), a cross was laid upon him as a beast of burden. Jesus Christ staggered through the narrow streets of the city as the blood-crazed crowd joined what must have seemed to them to be a parade. To remember His death is to remember it was Violent. As the awful jib bit dug into his tenderized, pulverized flesh, the abrasion of the rough wood must have been unimaginable and his body must have been crying out in an inaudible agonizing pain. His walk would have been slow and unsteady, and no doubt, it was more do to impatience than pity that caused the centurion to conscript Simon the Cyrene to carry the wooden gallows the rest of the way to Mt. Calvary.

There on the mount, God's Son was stretched out upon that instrument of Hell and, as Psalm 22 described a thousand years before, "they pierced [his] hands and [his] feet." A Roman spike was driven through each hand (bang, bang) (thud, thud). Then one foot was awkwardly placed over the other. A nail was first driven through the one and into the other beneath it. The human body itself must have howled as nerves and ligaments were torn and shredded, and muscle was penetrated by the spike. With veins lacerated and blood pouring out, every eye in Heaven was on Him.

Then the cross was raised up. Christ's pain was exaggerated with every movement, his head swirling, dizzy by vertigo, and a world with no center or foundation spun around at his feet. The cross would then have dropped into its socket with sickening thud. Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

Who could witness such a spectacle and not be broken? No wonder the old Negro spiritual says, 'Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble.' There have been violent deaths, but never one like this one. It would have been awful to watch, but more awful to experience. Had Eve been transported to stand by Mary at the foot of the awful scandalous sight and could see what her sin would come to, she no doubt would have thrown the serpent out of the garden herself. Unfortunately that spiritual contagion led to the cross. When we remember 'His death,' we first remember it was violent, and it breaks our heart.

## II. His death was Voluntary

When we remember his death we must remember it was voluntary. He did not have to go.

He could have called ten thousand angels or just refused to go  
He could have come down from Calvary, with one word his power show.  
He could have summoned all God's host or called the raging seas  
to drown the troop of charlatans, cut the world down at its knees  
He could have said, "enough's enough" and broke the cross in two.  
He could have walked away from man and said that he was "through."  
He could have wiped the spittle, removed the crown of thorn  
and made each wicked sinner wish they never had been born  
But this the son of Mary, would on the cross display  
a love for God with all his heart, on this the world's worst day  
and also love his neighbor too, the second great command  
endured the pain and ridicule and do what God had planned.  
Instead he stayed to do God's will, and take the cup God passed  
and drink it all to every drop, God's Son the First and Last  
Not so much his love for me, thought loves me it is true;  
but he loved the Father more, and the Father's will would do.

His Death was voluntary. Jesus said, "no man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down myself..."  
He also scolded Peter, "Put up your sword, thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? From the eternal depths of some sacred place we hear the question, "Who shall we send? Who will go for us?" And then the reply "Here am I send me. This should open our hearts with awe. His death was voluntary.

## III. His Death was Vital.

When we remember his death each Lord's day we remember it was vital. There was no other way. Sin was so serious, contagious, catastrophic, and deadly, there was no other cure. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." Peter was emphatic, "Neither is there Salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." The blood of bulls and goats could only remind sinners of our sin. An ocean of blood from innocent beasts could not atone for a single sin. When we remember his death, we remember it was vital.

## IV. His Death was Vicarious

The record is clear. "Christ died for us according to the Scriptures (1Cor. 15:3). Isaiah wrote, "He was

wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.” He took my place. He took your place. The punishment, the lash, the nails, the pain should have been mine. Although it is impossible to fathom, the modern chorus may be close to the mark. When He was on the cross, I was on his mind. This should humble our hearts.

#### V. His Death was Victorious

Without this the remembrance would be a funeral dirge instead of a memorial feast. Though He died in this the world’s greatest battle and was laid in that borrowed grave, His sacrifice was the plan and payment for our salvation. He was victorious. On the third day He arose, according to the Scriptures as he said He would. By His stripes we are healed. We do not place a flag by a tombstone each Sunday. We come to a table with Him in the midst. This should make our hearts overflow with praise, gratitude, and joy unspeakable full of glory. -id