

# A Place at the Table: Rediscovering the Wonder of the Lord's Supper (Part 3)

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## Introduction

### The Text

<sup>14</sup> And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. <sup>15</sup> And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup> For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." <sup>17</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. <sup>18</sup> For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." <sup>19</sup> And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>20</sup> And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. <sup>21</sup> But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. <sup>22</sup> For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" <sup>23</sup> And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

<sup>24</sup> A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. <sup>25</sup> And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. <sup>26</sup> But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. <sup>27</sup> For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

<sup>28</sup> "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, <sup>29</sup> and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, <sup>30</sup> that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Luke 22:14–30)

### Part 3 (of 4!)

A. Well it's been a couple of weeks at this point, but you'll recall, perhaps, we're now in part three in our dealings with this text and that which is commonly referred to as the Lord's Supper.

1. We've determined to take on the subject from two different angles . . .

B. In the first sermon we attempted to discern just what the Lord's Supper means for Jesus. We came up with three things: It's (1) Picture; (2) Promise; and (3) Plea.

1. It's a Picture of what He's about undergo on the cross for us and of the heavenly banquet we shall one day enjoy with Him in His kingdom.

2. It's a Promise, the sign and seal of a New Covenant, the covenant spoken of long ago by the prophet Jeremiah and others, whereby God would grant us in Christ a new record in His righteousness, a new heart by His Spirit, a new relationship with Himself, and, in the end He'll ultimately bring us into a new world.

3. And for Him it's a Plea. With this meal, He's pleading with men, even like Judas, even like you and I, to come sit down, take, eat, drink, and enter into genuine, saving relationship with Him.
- C. So that was it from Jesus' perspective, but then in sermons two and now three we're considering the Lord's Supper from our own perspective. What does this meal mean for us? Again, we've got three things here. But last time I only got through the first. We see that for us it is: (1) Fellowship; (2) Food; and (3) Fuel.
1. By Fellowship we just talked about how to share a meal with others, especially in Jesus' day, it was an intimate thing, a sign of close fellowship. And so this meal represents for us close connection with our Savior.
    - a. We talked about different aspects of this Fellowship, how it's established by His sacrifice, which means you and I don't clean ourselves up before we come to this table, like you normally would when you're going out for a nice dinner with family or friends or with people you're trying to impress. No! This table is different. We don't get cleaned up so that we come we come so that we can get cleaned up!
    - b. And we saw how this Fellowship is spiritual in nature, He's not physically here with us anymore as He was with the disciples, but He's here nonetheless, and in a uniquely powerful way, I think, when we partake this meal together in remembrance of Him.
    - c. We saw also that this fellowship we enjoy with Jesus brings us into fellowship with each other as well, we are brought into a family, a covenant family, the children of God.
    - d. And then lastly, we saw the fellowship we have now around the table with Christ and one another is just a foretaste of the end and the fullness of fellowship that's coming. It's an appetizer of the main course, it's like the warmth of a Spring day breaking into to the dead of winter a few months ahead of it's time. It's like a kid at Christmas, peeling back the wrapping paper when his mom isn't looking. He gets a glimpse of all that's coming, but he can't fully enjoy it yet.
      - i. This is what I mean when I say this meal for us is Fellowship.
- D. So that leaves us then now with the second and the third items on our list. This meal for us is not just Fellowship, it is also Food and Fuel. So let's consider these now for the remainder of our time . . .
1. I should mention here, yet again, we're not going to be done. I thought I'd get us through [vv. 24-30](#), but it's not going to happen. I'm in no hurry. Can't you tell. I don't care how fast we get through things, only that we truly understand what's here and are changed by it. That's my agenda . . . every week. So stay tuned for Part 4 : )

## (2) Food

### “Give Us This Day Our Daily Grace”

- A. I’m going to be rather quick on this one, but I didn’t want to miss this. It’s so obvious, we are actually, perhaps, prone to overlook it.
  - 1. Hear me: Jesus doesn’t just tell His disciples the gospel here, He serves them a meal. And that’s so important. He could have just given them words, but instead He gives them bread and wine.
    - a. He tethers the truths of the gospel and the grace of God, to food. Why?
- B. Well, there are many reasons of course, and that’s what I’ve been trying to bring out, but part of it is to get us thinking about the gospel and God’s grace the same way that we think about food. Namely, we need it . . . all the time.
- C. If you have kids you especially know what I mean. They’re asking for snacks all day long, like every hour. You’re trying to think, you’re trying to work, and in they come: “Dad, can I have a snack.” And you’re thinking: “Where is all this going? I just got you something ten minutes ago.”
  - 1. And, I mean, really it’s not much different for adults, right? You had a killer meal last night perhaps but, no matter how big it was, no matter how good it was, no matter how many calories you consumed . . . you wake up the next morning hungry again.
    - a. You can’t get by today on yesterday’s bread. Hour by hour . . . we need food.
- D. And the same could be said of grace, even more so.
  - 1. You remember Jesus when He’s fasting in the wilderness there and when the devil comes tempting He says: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). “His word, His love, His presence that’s my bread! I need God even more than I need food.”
- E. So Jesus connects grace to food here, in particular I think, to help us start to get this.
  - 1. It’s the same sort of thing He’s doing in the Lord’s prayer really when He’s teaching us to pray and He says, okay, every day here’s what you need to do, say: “<sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread, <sup>12</sup>and forgive us our debts . . .” (Matt. 6:11–12).
    - a. Why put those two back to back there? Well, it’s to again get us to see:
      - i. Just like I need bread every day for my body, so too I need forgiveness and grace every day for my sin.
      - ii. And just like God is happy to provide my food moment by moment, so too He is happy to pardon my iniquity whenever I have need of it . . . which is all the time!

- F. We're so prone to drift from this reality of grace on either side of this really.
1. Either we're prone to forget we need it like our bread.
  2. Or we're prone to forget that God is happy to provide it like our bread.
- G. But the Lord's Supper is about driving those realities deeper in. It's given to help us remember. That's why Jesus says as I read earlier: *"Do this in remembrance of me"* (v. 19).
1. "You're going to be prone to forget—both how desperate you need grace and how delighted I am to supply it—so let this meal help you remember! You need to be here, and you're welcome here. Come, take, eat, drink!"

## Not Just Food . . . a Feast!

- A. One other thing to say about this idea of Food is: if you really look at how the Passover was celebrated and then how the early church seems to have kept things going with the Lord's Supper, it was not just food, like we have it today—a cracker and some juice.
1. It was something closer to a feast.
- B. I love Tim Chester's book *Meals with Jesus*. I quote from it often. He's got some great things to say on this point as well.
1. I read this to my Home Group a few weeks ago and wanted to read it to you all now as well. It really got me thinking. Because I was wondering, okay Jesus *"earnestly desired"* (v. 15) to eat this meal, right? So why don't we? I mean, honestly, when's the last time you earnestly desired to come in and eat a tiny piece of some stale cracker and drink this little thimble of juice? And what Chester's going to point out is that therein may lie the problem. Let me read it . . .

"What we call 'the Lord's Supper' is a foretaste of 'the Lamb's Supper' in Revelation 19. It's a beginning of the feast we eat with Jesus and his people in the new creation. It's not just a picture. It's the real thing begun in a partial way. We eat with God's people, and we eat with the ascended Christ, present through the Holy Spirit.

The Lord's Supper should be a meal we 'earnestly desire' to eat. We should approach it with anticipation. With longing. With excitement. With joy. The Lord's Supper should be a joyous occasion. A vibrant meal with friends. A feast.

Our earnest desire must surely affect how we celebrate the Lord's Supper. Today it has commonly become ritualized. We're the group in town whose central meal involves a fragment of bread and a small sip of wine. How is this a foretaste of the messianic banquet?

The bread and wine in the New Testament are part of a meal. Luke says of the Jerusalem church, 'Breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts' (Acts 2:46). Commentators often can't decide whether this refers to meals in general or Communion. That's because we assume they're two different things. We think of a meal taking place around the dining table at home while we think of Communion as a solemn rite in a church building. But in Jerusalem followers of Jesus ate meals together in their homes, eating bread, drinking wine, remembering Jesus, and celebrating the community he created through his death.

These were feasts of friends. Some in the church at Corinth were abusing the meals, but Paul doesn't tell them to separate the bread and wine from the meal. Quite the opposite. He tells them to wait for one another so they can eat the meal together. Communion should be a feast of friends shared with laughter, tears, prayers, and stories. We celebrate the community life that God gives us through the cross and in the Spirit. We can't celebrate it with heads bowed and eyes closed, alone in our private thoughts and strangely solitary even as we're surrounded by other people.

When we recapture the Lord's Supper as a feast of friends, celebrated as a meal in the presence of the Spirit, then it will become something we earnestly desire. It will become the high point of our life together as the people of God. In this sad and broken world, the Lord's Supper is a moment of joy, because it's a moment of the future" (118-119).

- C. It's so obvious that it's groundbreaking isn't it? A feast of friends. Of course! Jesus institutes this at a feast, why in the world don't we ever remember it and celebrate it at a feast? It just makes sense.
  - 1. Now, of course, logistically this is challenging. So I don't know how we may try to apply this. I was thinking, post-COVID we could try doing something maybe quarterly or at least once a year as a church or as Home Groups where there's a bigger meal we engage in together. I don't know, we'll see.
- D. But bottom line, this is Food. And, more than that, it's a feast with friends. It's desirable. It's satisfying at deep levels.

### (3) Fuel

#### Pleasure and Propulsion

- A. But then, related to this idea of the Lord's Supper as Food, we also come to see it as Fuel.
- B. Think of how we handle physical food, at least how we should. We eat and drink not just for the sake of our taste buds, but because our bodies need it to function. We derive not just pleasure and satisfaction from it, but energy and strength for life from it as well.
- C. So too it is with the gospel and God's grace to us in Christ.
  - 1. It's not just a source of great pleasure for us, though it is—to know I'm forgiven, accepted, received, loved, cherished . . . it fills my heart with joy!
  - 2. But this grace which is a source of pleasure is also a source of immeasurable power—power for full-throttled engagement of the Christian life. It's where we get our energy and zeal for good works. It's our fuel.
- D. When I'm trying to get Levi to eat his dinner, sometimes it makes things a little easier for him if I come up with analogies he understands to help him see why it's important that he eats. He likes cars and things, so I'll tell him "Bro, we're trying to put gas in your tank. We want you to go fast, we want you to go far, and if you don't eat, you won't."

1. And the gospel is that for us. It's gas in our tank. You spend time feasting among friends around the table of God's grace . . . and it energizes you, it changes you. You take in the gospel of grace and you're propelled out towards a life of love.

## A Couple Texts (Ephesians 2 + Titus 2)

A. Let me put a couple texts on this for you . . .

B. I thought Pau and his classic statement on this in Eph 2:8-10: “<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,<sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

1. Did you see it? We are not saved by our good works, he says, but solely by the grace of God. But do not let that confuse you, brothers and sisters. For though we are not saved by good works we are nonetheless saved for them.

a. Grace doesn't just forgive sin, it fuels righteousness.

C. So he says similarly later on in Titus 2:11-14: “<sup>11</sup>For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people,<sup>12</sup> training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,<sup>13</sup> waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,<sup>14</sup> who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

1. “Grace has appeared”—why, do you say? So that we should no longer have to concern ourselves with good works? No! Quite the opposite: to train us away from sin and towards “godly lives in the present age” (v. 12).
2. “Jesus gave Himself for us to redeem us from our sin”—why, do you say? So that we no longer have to worry about how we live? No! Quite the opposite: “to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works” (v. 14).

a. Zealous for good works? I would think grace would make us not zealous for good works but uninterested in them, apathetic towards, casual and careless concerning them. If I'm saved by works, well then I better get working. But if I'm saved by grace, why should I trouble myself with working at all?

## A Couple Perspectives (Supernatural + Natural)

A. That's the way many think of grace. But to think this way about grace is to gravely misunderstand it. You see, we could talk about this from both a supernatural and simply natural perspective.

B. With regard to the supernatural, we must remember that grace doesn't merely cover our sins from the outside, like one might drape sheepskin over a wolf. That's not what God is doing here.

1. He covers sin so that He can come in, do you see, and change us from the inside out. Yes grace is a covering, but it is also a transforming power, it's the fountainhead not just of my pardon but of my regeneration. There's a supernatural work of God on the sinner here. Grace gives me a new heart. And this new heart is zealous for good works.
    - a. So Spurgeon writes: "A man who is really saved by grace does not need to be told that he is under solemn obligations to serve Christ. The new life within him tells him that. Instead of regarding it as a burden, he gladly surrenders himself – body, soul, and spirit- to the Lord who has redeemed him . . ."
    - i. So that's one thing. There's this supernatural transformation instigated by grace.
- C. But we get this even without the supernatural piece, even in the way we naturally feel in our human relationships. I mean you tell me who are you going to work harder for?
1. The boss who's always on your back, barreling down, belittling you, slapping your wrist with a ruler, grumbling about your progress, all the while unwilling to lift a finger to help?
  2. Or the boss who genuinely cares about you, corrects you, sure, but encourages you, empathizes with you, gets in the dirt with you and helps you succeed.
    - a. You see, you work hard for the first boss because you have to. But you work hard for the second boss because you want to.
      - i. So again, Spurgeon writes: "If Christ has died for me, I cannot trifle with the evil that killed my best Friend."
      - (1) In other words, you're going to want to run from sin, not to earn Jesus' love—you better work hard because He's demanding and critical. No! You run from sin not to earn His love but because you already have it and you've tasted of His grace and lovingkindness and you don't want to go back to that old nasty stuff. You want to serve to please Him!
- D. It's interesting. Even secular business leaders are starting to see this.
1. So Tim Sanders, in his book *Love Is the Killer App* writes: "The most important trend in business is the downfall of the barracudas, sharks, and piranhas, and the ascendancy of nice, smart people" (as quoted in Perman, *What's Best Next*, 96).
    - a. You see, they're realizing that the bosses who are just jerks, who are just in it for themselves and everyone knows it, are actually losing ground, because people don't want to work for them, they do it for a little while out of fear, but it doesn't last, not like love does.

- E. So I suppose, in one sense, it feels like a gamble—grace can be abused, people can take it and run, so to speak, or at least so it would seem. But when it's truly received, truly accepted, truly taken into your life . . . it changes everything . . . it changes you! It's a powerhouse, an engine, fresh fuel!
  - 1. That's what this meal represents. You take it in not just as food but as fuel. Feeding on the gospel and grace energizes the life of godliness and love.

## From Head to Heart to Hand

- A. This is some of the stuff on my mind when I posted the other day to Facebook the following: "As Christians, the full range of religious motion must move from our heads through our hearts to our hands. If knowledge of God and the gospel only fills our heads and nothing more, then we are self-blinding hypocrites. If it travels on to fill our hearts and nothing more, then we are self-centered sentimentalists. But if knowledge of God and the gospel moves from our heads through our hearts to our hands, well then my friends . . . we are Christians after all!"
- B. There's a whole lot of talk these days about Christians and their nationalism and racism and things. We've got a bad rap out in the culture now—a lot of negative preconceptions already stacked against us, because of what some are doing in Jesus' name.
  - 1. These guys in the Capitol cursing and swearing and hitting and smashing and then praying, holding out their hands and worshiping.
    - a. And I'm saying: please stop assuming these folks are Christians just because they say so. Just because they wave a flag with a cross on it next to the guillotine they constructed for Mike Pence doesn't mean they represent the heart of Jesus or the hearts of those who follow Him.
      - i. Russel Moore, President of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission for the SBC, said, when he saw these things his response was just one of "rage." The mixing of Christian symbols with violent insurrection, Moore said, "communicates to the outside world something that is the opposite of who [Jesus] actually is."
- C. So, listen, I don't know for sure where each of those individuals were at with Jesus—Christians can certainly fall into grave sin, right? The Bible's full of that sort of thing. So I'm not saying I know either way.
  - 1. But we have to understand that just because a person claims Jesus' name doesn't mean they truly have His heart and a real relationship with Him. It doesn't mean they've truly encountered grace and been changed by it! There's a different kind of gas in the tank, right? Something else can be fueling these actions.
    - a. As Oswald Chambers writes: "We [can] serve Jesus in a spirit that is not His, and hurt Him by our defense of Him. We [can] push His claims in the spirit of the devil; our words sound all right, but the spirit is that of an enemy."



D. So to be Christian is so much more complex than we make it. We can fall out all along this range of motion I speak of.

1. I'm not a Christian just because I say so. I'm a Christian when grace breaks in through my head as I hear the gospel and read God's words, down to my heart as I repent and believe, and erupts out through my hands in loving concern for God and neighbor.

## "Grace Works": William Wilberforce

A. Matt Perman's written a very helpful book on biblical productivity entitled *What's Best Next*. And in it he writes about the massively productive life of William Wilberforce, the well-known politician there in England, in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. And he looks at what really drove the man. Listen in, we're going to see how "grace works" . . .

"William Wilberforce was one of the most productive people in history. And, he was productive in the best possible way. The banner that waves over his whole is that 'he lived to do good.' He was so prolific in doing good that his biographers and friends noted that 'he lacked time for half the good works in his mind' and that 'factories did not spring up more rapidly in Leeds and Manchester than schemes of benevolence beneath his roof.'

As is well known, chief among his good works was the massive social good of bringing an end to the slave trade and, ultimately, slavery itself in the British Empire.

So Wilberforce was immensely productive and lived to do good. He also wrote a very influential book seeking to reform the moral outlook of his nation. In light of that aim and his amazing[ly] practical bent, we might expect the book to focus chiefly on strategies for being more effective in our lives. Yet Wilberforce's book did not focus primarily [there]. . . . Rather, it was essentially on doctrine. And, specifically, . . . the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Which is strange.

Why was one of the greatest social reformers and most productive people of all time so concerned about doctrine? Why did he care about it so much that, in the . . . book he wrote . . .—with the aim . . . of improving the morals and Christian practice of Great Britain—he focused on doctrine?

It's because Wilberforce understood the massive practical action for good that comes about not first as a result of moral exhortation or appeals to change but rather as a result of understanding and embracing doctrine—most centrally the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

In other words, embracing the truth that God accepts us apart from good works is the precise thing that causes us to excel in good works. Or, to put this in the context of productivity . . . the only way to be productive is to realize that you don't have to be" (103-104).

B. I have the book Perman references. I've read it. It's called *Real Christianity*. And on the cover it says: "[This is] the book that helped end slavery in England!" And, again, it's all about justification by faith alone in Christ alone through grace alone apart from works. It's not a book about social action or political engagement. It's a book about the free grace of God for unworthy sinners in Jesus.

1. And that's the fuel that powered the engine that dismantled the slave trade in Britain?! Yes! How?! Why?!
  - a. Because grace works. Think about it, if you truly embrace the gospel, take into your heart by faith life food, let it nourish and satisfy your soul, what is the gospel but the

fact that while we were enslaved to sin, God came down into our story and set us free, not because we deserved it, but because He's just that good.

- i. Listen, if you take that into your heart, how can you dare not speak up for the oppressed and the enslaved in your midst? Grace works! It's food that fuels.

## So What About Us?

- A. So what about us? What are our lives all about? Isn't hard right now, not to want to make it all about us? There's so much going on out in the world, I just want to hunker down in my little shelter and worry about me—watch some movies, play some games, surround myself with comforts, get all my plans in order, and my desires . . . just think about me. Some of us are going down that spiral.
- B. Listen, the table, the Lord's Supper was given to us by Jesus as a means of rescuing us out of that.
  1. You come find your place around the table, you feast with friends in the presence of God, you remember the price Jesus paid to redeem you, at cost of His life.
    - a. Think about what He says there: *"This is my body, which is given for you" (v. 19). "This cup [that is the new covenant in my blood] . . . is poured out for you" (v. 20).* You've got to let that sink in. It's not just for them out there somewhere. But for you. He's laying His life down in love for you.
- C. If you truly embrace His cross and the grace pictured in this meal, if you take that in like your daily bread, like food, listen, not only is it going to satisfy your heart . . . it's going to change it. It's going to fuel you.
  1. If you're feeding on the gospel, no longer do you need to figure out how you can bend everything in your life in to serve yourself. No! You're thinking about: Who can I go to? Who needs help? How can I serve others?!
    - a. That's really what we're going to dive into more next week when we finally get to [vv. 24ff](#). But for now let me just leave us with this . . .
- D. In Jesus, we've got our food, we've got our fuel. We've got all we need. And I just want to encourage you then: go find your cause!
  1. Go find some specific application of the gospel that you can give your life for and tell people about Jesus and the cross while you're living it out in front of them. Go find those good works He's prepared for you to walk in.
    - a. It might not be ending the slave trade. It might be something a little simpler like discipling your kids, or picking up trash around the city, or offering to adopt a child that was going to be aborted, or serving the homeless, or passing out gospel tracts on a street corner, or prayer walking around the neighborhoods on Sundays, or whatever.

- i. Just—God please help us—may we not spend our days getting fat on grace, going on, bellyaching about ourselves. We’ve been created and redeemed for so much more.

E. And that’s what this table is all about!