



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Articles

Remembering Our Rescue: A Communion Meditation

David Anguish

Not long ago, I decided to re-read C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*. It's one of many books I own that I read with a yellow highlighter in hand, and I've kept one handy as I'm reading it again. It fascinates me to see what I highlighted in previous readings and even more to see what I *didn't* highlight—passages that because of life experiences and more study impress me more now.

One passage I didn't highlight appears in the chapter entitled, "We Have Cause to Be Uneasy." The uneasiness Lewis had in mind is the innate sense we have—confirmed by our experience—that sin is pervasive in our world and in fact includes the sin of each of us. And *that*, Lewis said, is the beginning place for making sense of Christianity. Here's the passage I highlighted this time:

Christianity tells people to repent and promises them forgiveness. It therefore has nothing (as far as I know) to say to people who do not know they have done anything to repent of or who do not feel that they need forgiveness. It is after you have realized that there is a real Moral Law, and a Power behind the law, and that you have broken that law and put yourself wrong with that Power—it is after all this, and not a moment sooner, that Christianity begins to talk (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, [Macmillan pb. ed., 1952], 38-39).

"Christianity begins to talk" at that point because it is the story of how we are *rescued* from the sin that put us wrong with God. And, in an interesting irony, it sometimes helps us more fully appreciate our deliverance to think again about the sin that made it necessary to be rescued in the first place.

From reading Romans, I suspect Paul would have agreed with that assessment. Yes, Romans is about salvation, grace, and faith—the words translated by those terms are used 99 times in the letter. But before Paul elaborates on those ideas, he devotes most of the first three chapters to the subject of sin, a topic he returns to several more times throughout the letter; he uses the words for sin 55 times. Oh, and he also mentions the wrath of God 12 times, four times in chapters 1–3, but eight more times in chapters 4, 5, 9, 12, and 13 (1.18; 2.5, 8; 3.5; 4.15; 5.9; 9.22; 12.19; 13.4–5).

I don't think Paul dwelled on his sin or couldn't really believe he was forgiven. But I don't think he forgot it either—he did say he was the “foremost of sinners” (1 Tim 1.15). His healthy memory of what he had been rescued from allowed him to have a deeper appreciation of what it means to *be* rescued. And so, as he tells and retells the story, he often reminds us of our common sin problem, a reminder that helps us more fully appreciate our rescue from sin. Romans 5.1–11, a passage that states its conclusion before giving the reasons for it, illustrates what I mean. Beginning with v. 6:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (5.6–11 NIV).

Now notice what he says about the blessings of that deliverance:

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us (5.1–5 NIV).

I submit that this rescue and its blessings are what we remember, celebrate, and confidently rest our hope on as we share the Lord's supper. Let us give thanks.

www.davidanguish.com

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