

EVERLASTING LOVE

(Some thoughts on the Lord's Supper)

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"I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31 :3).

When we take part in the Lord's Table, what are we reminded of? Most of us will say that we are reminded of the Lord's death, but there is something deeper than that. In a very symbolic way the Lord is saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love". In Rev.13:8 (last part) we read, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." We know that our Lord Jesus died on the cross only about 2,000 years ago, but in the plan of God, He was slain from the foundation of the world. Long before any part of the universe came into existence, the Lord thought of us and planned our salvation. You may have been born again a few years, or even a few weeks or days ago, but in the mind of God you were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1 :4). God knew about us before this universe was created, -before the sun or moon or stars came into existence. If our Lord has thought about us for such a long time, surely this tells us that His love is everlasting. How can anyone comprehend such a love? The Lord's Table is one way by which God makes us understand the greatness of the measure of His love. God's love cannot be understood easily by any man, and certainly not by reading books, or by any verbal explanation, yet God has made a heavenly plan, by means of which His love can be comprehended, understood and enjoyed by His people.

In Ephesians 3: 14-19 we have the prayer of the apostle for the believers at Ephesus, and in that prayer all the believers are included. Those believers had made very rapid progress spiritually. Unlike the people of Corinth, who spiritually remained as babes through their carnality, the Ephesians believers became spiritually mature. When the apostle wrote to them, he told them that he was praying for them with a great burden. He was very happy that they were growing spiritually, and that they were able to understand heavenly things. But he wanted them to have a still greater experience, even that they might know the love of Christ which passeth all understanding. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and - length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, hat ye might be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph.3:17-19). That was God's highest thought for them, and that was the substance of the apostle's prayer. He told them that the love of Christ cannot be comprehended or understood by human knowledge, or even by Bible knowledge, and that it is by knowing that love that we can be filled with all the fullness of God. That is something beyond our comprehension. If someone were to tell us that all the water in the whole world could be contained in a small bottle, would we believe it? How can the water of the oceans, so deep and so wide, be filled into that one little bottle? The thought of God's fullness and might is something even greater. The purpose of the great and living God is to fill us with His fullness. That is why He came into the world to die for us; that is why He rose again, and that is what He had planned from eternity.

When man wants to do a great work, he spends many years in planning it. Our Lord planned His great work from eternity, and because it is so true, so wonderful and so mysterious, He had to choose His own method to teach us so great a truth. That is why He ordained the Lord's Supper of Remembrance. Alas! the Lord's Supper has become a mere ritual and ceremony or formality in many parts of the world. On a day like Easter Sunday, for instance, you will find crowds inside and outside a church building waiting to take part in what they call the Holy Communion. Smokers, gamblers, fornicators, drunkards, who have not been to a church building for many months, and have not prayed one word of prayer for many months, go to a church building and take part blindly in what they call Holy Communion. Yet this is not a mere ceremony in which to take part! There is not the least suggestion in any part of the Bible, to indicate that it was intended to be a ceremony or rite. Our Lord Jesus Himself ordained it. "This do in remembrance of me" He said (1 Cor. 11 :24,25). So simple and clear are His words: "This do in remembrance of me!", yet people take part in it like Hindus take 'prasadam' in their temples. Please note that the Lord's Supper is not a 'prasadam' or a ceremony.

The Lord's Supper was ordained by the Lord Jesus Christ to enable us in a symbolic way to comprehend the love of God which passeth all knowledge. When we see the bread and the cup on the Table, we are reminded that our Lord gave ALL that He had. He could not do anything more than what He did to save us. He emptied Himself completely to redeem us, to make us His own. He emptied Himself of His heavenly glory, and in a human body came to a humble home. When at last He went to the cross, He gave His whole body. His hands and feet were pierced, and His face was spat upon. He gave His head to be crowned with thorns; He gave His back to the smiters; He gave His ears to hear the words of filthy abuse, which were spoken against Him. Finally He gave His life itself. Thus, He gave all that He had. In the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross of Calvary, He took upon Himself the sins of the whole world. What a terrible burden it was to His sinless soul! That is why John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29).

The Lord Jesus Christ not only bore physical suffering when He gave Himself, but He suffered in His soul also. He was made sin for us. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor: 5:21). All the burden of our sins was transferred to Him. Supposing someone is asked to drink all the dirty water of all the filthy gutters; would it not be unthinkable? No one could even endure the smell of all that filth, much less drink it. But our sins are far worse than that filthy water. The smell of the gutter can be removed by phenyle, but the stink of our sins cannot be removed by any kind of soap or water or disinfectant. Yet the Lord bore the awful filth of our sin and travailed in the garden of Gethsemane, and when He hung on the cross, the sun was hidden and there was great darkness. That is why He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt.27:46). He bore all our sins in His own body on the tree (1 Pet.2:24). This is the first thing we are reminded of at His Table, that our Lord gave Himself for us and suffered willingly. He is not asking you to shed tears for that, for His purpose in suffering was that we might be filled with His fullness. He wants us to think of His love as we partake of the feast of remembrance.

When we have our food, it becomes a part of our body, being changed into blood. That is how we become strong in the flesh. Spiritually, we should receive new life in our spirit, every time we partake of the Lord's Table, and go on doing so till we

are filled with His fullness. That is why, when we partake of the Lord's Supper, we must judge ourselves and partake worthily, because symbolically we are partaking of His flesh and blood. He is our life. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1: 27) and again in Col. 3:4, "Christ, ...is our life", When you partake in the bread and cup, you are saying in a symbolic way to everyone around you, "My Lord is living in me. He is my life, my hope and my food. I know that one day He will make me altogether like Himself". When a child is born you know that one day it will be fully grown; so with hope you go on giving nurture to it, knowing how the bones will grow in the body. So also spiritually, by eating and drinking and feasting on the Lord Jesus Christ, one day we shall become like Him. He is our hope, our life, our joy and our glory, and one day we are going to be like Him.

As we take part in the Lord's Table, we are reminded again and again that God's purpose and plan is to fill us with His fullness, but for this we require the fellowship of fellow-believers throughout the world. It is not the question of merely taking part in the bread and the cup. The Table should remind us of our hope to see our Lord one day face to face. So before we take part, we should spend some time in worship together, that all those who take part may come into the understanding of what they are doing. The more we enjoy fellowship with the Lord together with the saints, the more we understand the fullness of divine love.

God's love cannot be fully comprehended by ourselves alone. It is something we can comprehend only with all saints, as Paul says, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge---! (Eph.3: 18).

That is why believers should come together as a church, and take part in the Lord's Table by faith, knowing that believers in other parts of the world are doing the same. If by faith we take part worthily and rightly, the result will be a greater love for fellow-believers, a greater longing to see the Lord face to face, and a greater desire to be like Him and with Him in all His fullness. Your standard will be Himself, you will want to be like Him only, and not like any preacher or prophet. He is our standard, and the stature of God's standard for us, that we may overcome all limitations. Do we realize that God is doing a work in each one of us and that work will go on, till this body of clay is laid aside? When men build a building with cement, in the beginning there is only the mould, and into this they pour the concrete and cement. Outsiders see only the mould, but inside the cement builds up into a wall. When the work is complete, the mould is removed, and the building can be seen by all. That is how God is working in us. Outside is the body of clay, full of frailty; bones and muscles and flesh that are full of pain and weakness. But within us God is building His own life. In our spirit, that work will go on till we become like the Lord Jesus Christ. This body of clay will one day be cast aside, and we shall have a new body, in which we will overcome present limitations, for that body will contain the fullness of God. In preparation of that, the Lord is now working in us that we may receive His Divine life in fullness. Sin, failure, and disobedience, hinder the flow of that life. Before you partake of the Lord's Table you should examine yourself, and you will see all kinds of faults and failures which prevent the life of God from flowing freely in and through you. When those failures are confessed and washed away, there will be a great and constant flow with the result that life will be fuller, and there will be a greater longing to see the Lord face to face.

That is why we need to examine ourselves before we go to worship. If we have any bitterness in our hearts, or jealousy, or hatred, communion with our Lord and His saints will be clouded, and there will be no joy nor true appreciation of His love. If there is anyone with whom we are not on talking terms we should first be reconciled. "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt.5: 23-24). Otherwise the Lord's Supper is a mere ceremony or ritual, without true meaning. If however we come with joy, having our sins confessed and our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience (Heb. 10:22), we shall surely come to know "... with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And ...the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge", that we might be filled with all the fullness of God (Eph.3:18-19). Therefore "let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (1 Cor.11 : 28).