

TABLE TALKS

Lessons to Help Center Attention on Jesus and the Cross

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Table Talks

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FOREWORD

All history, both ancient and modern, looks to the Cross of Jesus. What Jesus accomplished at Calvary is at the core of the Christian Faith. The most vital truths that a worshiper needs to know about his or her own salvation comes through understanding the meaning of the redemptive events of the Cross. The Lord's Supper was designed and instituted to keep Christian worshipers focused on the Cross. The moments before the Supper provide the opportunity for the richest, most needed and most meaningful view of the Cross.

This book contains fifty-two "Table Talks," rich in biblical truths and substantive for faith building and inspiration. Through the use of these table talks, Christ will be honored and exalted and worshipers will be moved to greater gratitude and commitment. "Table Talks" serve well both in multiple ways : a reader will be more deeply instructed in the meaning of the sacrifice of Jesus, they can serve as seed thoughts to be expressed in one's own words, or used as written. If used well they will greatly enhance a valued part of the worship of the saints that too often has become a lifeless routine, a meaningless event.

The profound knowledge of the biblical word and the convicted faith of Gerald Paden comes through in every page. His career-long teaching of the Levitical Sacrificial System of the Old Testament and of the book of Hebrews to students at Sunset International Bible Institute comes to bear on the whole of this publication. This publication addresses a long standing need in the church.

We will be long in debt to the author of these Table Talks, Gerald Paden, and to the publisher, Virgil Yocham.

Truman Scott
Dean Emeritus,
Sunset International Bible Institute

FORWARD

There is no one in our brotherhood better prepared to lead us at the Lord's Table in remembering the death, burial, resurrection and coming of Jesus than Gerald Paden. No one is more conversant with the Old Testament "sacrificial" background of the "supper." For almost four decades Gerald has taught a course at Sunset entitled "The Sacrificial System." He also teaches I John, highlighting dramatic insight into the "body" and "blood" of Jesus Christ. Teaching I Corinthians for years has helped to focus Paden's heart and mind on proper emphasis and conduct around the "Lord's Table."

Beyond mere textual insights, our brother has had a close relationship with the object of our devotions at the "table" for almost 80 years. First, growing up in a godly home, then as a missionary, then as a teacher of preachers and church planters, and finally in an "elder statesman" and respected brotherhood Bible scholar, Gerald Paden has led literally hundreds of "table talks" and participated on thousands of gatherings around the "table."

If you believe that the celebration of the "supper" holds a special place of emphasis in our Sunday assemblies, then these fifty-two devotional messages will serve you well. In congregations large and small these "table talks" could be read before the communion service or they could be studied as a basis for a prepared devotional or sermon. In addition to providing guidance and information for use in an assembly setting, these insightful messages make excellent personal "quiet time" or "family devotional" guides. Regardless of one's specific use, these messages will draw readers and hearers closer to the cross and to the Christ who died there for our sins, was raised for our life, and is returning for our eternal joy.

Truitt Adair
Chancellor, Sunset
International Bible Institute

PREFACE

“This do in memory of me”

We know that history is important to God, because he wrote it down, and then repeated it often. Since his people easily forget even very significant events he often asks them to “remember” those days. “*And Moses said unto the people, ‘Remember this day, in which you came out from Egypt’*” (Exodus 13:3). One of the Ten Commandments was: “*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.*” That was a weekly assignment. Then he asked them to “remember” why: “*And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt*” (Exodus 20:8; Deuteronomy 5:15). They were to write the commandments on the “*fringes of their garments*” so that they “*may look upon it and remember all the commandments of Jehovah*” (Numbers 15:39). Psalms 22 foretells of the sacrifice of Christ, and then promises: “*All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto Jehovah; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee*” (vs. 27).

God ordained the celebration of communion service on the first day of every week. He did not want his people to lose touch with what happened at the “*place of the skull.*” So, the night before he was betrayed, Jesus instituted the celebration of a new feast, called “*the Lord’s supper.*” He wanted his disciples to “remember” that his sacrificial atonement was the foundation of their salvation. Therefore, he commanded, that in the breaking the bread and drinking of the “*fruit of the vine*”

the purpose of the feast must be maintained as a memorial: “*Do this in memory of me.*” (Luke 22:19).

This book is a collection of communion talks that are designed to increase our understanding and appreciation of the sacrifice Jesus made for our salvation. Hopefully these readings will help focus our attention more deeply on the celebration of the supper.

The Divine-Human Sacrifice

Without doubt the greatest portion of the sacrifice of Christ was made before he came to earth. That occurred when, according to Philippians 2:5, he who was *“existing in the form of God”* did not *“count being on an equality with God”* a position to cling to, *“but he emptied himself.”* There is no way we can measure the distance God must travel to *“empty himself.”* That required that he surrender all the privileges and prerogatives intrinsic to his God-ness! He cannot *“empty”* himself of his deity, for by definition, deity is eternal. But he can suppress every external expression of his divine knowledge (omniscience), his divine power (omnipotence) and his divine presence (omnipresence). He must sacrifice all the honors, glories, dignities, universal worship, communion with the Father and the Spirit, and unnumbered other qualities of divine nature of which we are completely oblivious. That *“emptying”* was prerequisite to his becoming a man. The many scriptures that speak of his deity must be factored into the *“emptying”* process.

- John 1:1 – *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,”* or *“and God was the Word.”*
- John 1:18 – *“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten God (says the Greek) who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”*

- Romans 1:3 – Christ *“was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared (not born) to be the Son of God with power (his miracles), according to the spirit of holiness (his own divine nature), by the resurrections from the dead.”*
- Romans 9:5 – speaking of Jesus’ roots in Israel, of *“of whom is Christ, as concerning the flesh, who is over all, God blessed for ever.”*
- Colossians 1:15, 17 – Christ *“is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation...and he is before all things, and in him all things consist.”*
- Colossians 2:9 – *“For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”*
- I Timothy 6:14-16 – By the *“appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in its own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal.”*
- Hebrews 1: 8-9 – *“Of the Son, he saith, Thy throne, O God is forever and ever; and the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of thy kingdom, Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness of thy fellows.”*
- I John 5:20 – *“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This (one) is the true God, and eternal life.”*

Now all the privileges inherent in each of these scriptures must be suspended for the entire span of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ.

Then there is another significant portion of the sacrifice of our Lord that relates to what the same Philippians 2:5-10 passage affirms, when he *“was made in likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.”* That covers what Hebrews 5:7 refers to as *“in the days of his flesh”* when he was cursed, abused, flogged, scourged and humiliated. His body was ravaged when *“he was despised and rejected of men”* and *“stricken, smitten of God and afflicted”* (Isaiah 53:3-4). *“His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men”* (Isaiah 52:14). In the Garden of Gethsemane. *“being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground”* (Luke 22:44). From there he endured a mock trial, was falsely accused as a blasphemer, was ransomed for Barabbas, condemned, and *“by the hands of lawless men was crucified and slain”* (Acts 2:23).

It took that greatest portion of his sacrifice as God, together with that other significant portion of his sacrifice as a man to understand what an awesome price the God/man, Jesus Christ paid for our salvation.

Salvation Words in the New Testament

The story of salvation is more deeply appreciated when understood, and more fully defined by the New Testament words that are used to describe it. The process of redemption is so comprehensive that just a few words cannot embrace its fullness. The following terminology depicts only some aspects of Christ's work. Each word is rooted in some way in the moral, legal, spiritual, social, doctrinal and judicial issues that human sin creates.

ADOPTION — sin committed by the unregenerate creates an orphan status. Obedient believers have “*received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba Father,*” and were “*foreordained to adoption as sons*” (Romans 8:15; Ephesians 1:4).

ALIEN — defines the condition of a foreigner, who is estranged from God's family, but in Christ he has been given “*citizenship in the kingdom*” (Philippians 2:20).

BOUGHT — “*with a price,*” explains how God is able to possess us as his people. Of course the “*price*” was the blood of Christ (I Corinthians 6:19).

DEATH — is the “*wages of sin*” that were earned by every sinner through his transgressions of God's law, but the “*free gift of God is eternal life*” (Romans 6:23).

CALLED — is heaven's invitation to all men to leave the world, and enter the kingdom of heaven, therefore it is a "*heavenly calling*" (Hebrews 3:1), that is extended through the preaching of the Gospel (II Thessalonians 2:13-14).

CLEANSED — is God's solution to the pollution sin brings into our lives, and it results in spiritual purity and chastity. It begins at the baptism when we are "*cleansed by the washing of the water through the word*" and it continues as we "*walk in the light*" where the blood of Christ "*cleanses us of all unrighteousness*" (Ephesians 5:26; I John 1:7).

CLOTHED — our sins expose the spiritual nakedness of our souls, but God provides "*white garments*" when we "*were clothed with Christ*" at the baptism (Revelation 3:18; Galatians 3:27).

GRACE — is undeserved favor, for by "*grace have you been saved through faith,*" not earned by us, otherwise "*grace is no more grace*" (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 11:6).

JUSTIFY — Divine action that makes the unjust to be just, when God credits the guilty with an innocent status because of his faith (Romans 3:23-24).

LOOSED — means to be released from guilt because of "*Him who loved us and loosed us from our sins by his blood*" (Revelation 1:5-6).

MERCY — is Divine pity bestowed upon the helpless, for "*God, being rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us. . .he made us alive*" (Ephesians 2:4-6).

NEW CREATURE — stands in contrast with the former condition of the lost; the obedient man is now “*a new creation*,” because from baptism he is “*raised to walk in newness of life*” (II Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:4).

PROPITIATION — Christ “*satisfied*” God’s justice; He paid the debt incurred by our violation of his government, “*through (our) faith in his blood*” (Romans 3:25).

RANSOM — relates to the price paid for our release from guilt; it defines the mission of Jesus who “*who gave his life a ransom for many*” (Matthew 20:28).

RECONCILE — means to restore peace, recreate harmonious relations between us and God through Jesus, who “*reconciled all things to himself*” (Ephesians 2:16).

REDEEM — is the fruit of Christ’s sacrifice that absolves the guilty, and restores a condition of virtue and innocence; “*he obtained eternal redemption*” having “*redeemed us of all iniquity*” (Hebrews 9:12; Titus 2:14).

REMIT — means to unshackle from the penalty of sin, and to liberate former captives into freedom, which also results in of our mission assignment to the lost: “*whosoever sins you remit, they are remitted*” (John 20:23).

SAVED — is the result of being delivered from our lostness, and from eternal judgment. God “*would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth*” (I Timothy 2:4).

WASHED — is the result of a cleansing of our conscience, removing all pollution when “*the body is*

washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:22). The church was “sanctified, and cleansed by the washing of water through the word” (Ephesians 5:26).

At the beginning of this talk, we said that the salvation process could not be adequately explained in a few words. Yet, let me suggest just one word that will cover it all: JESUS!

The Fountain for Cleansing

“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness” (Zachariah 13:1). There is redemption prophetically announced in this verse. *“Sin and uncleanness”* stains and condemns the souls of men. But this passage predicts the availability of God’s future soul-cleansing plan. In the Lord’s church we frequently sing a song that is rooted in this prophecy about the sacrifice of Jesus. It proudly proclaims: “There is a fountain, filled with blood, drawn from Emanuel’s veins.” The song continues to announce that “sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stain.”

We readily rejoice in the prospect of being cleansed from our guilt, but we could easily ignore all the judicial implications involved in the *“opening of the “fountain.”* Verse seven explains what God must do to make *“cleansing”* possible for God’s people. Hear heaven’s decree: *“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.”* That *“sword”* was the righteous instrument of God’s judgment and punishment against the *“sin and uncleanness”* of mankind. It was destined to fall either upon the guilty, or upon One whom God has ordained to be the guilt-bearer. So, by divine decree, the *“sword”* did not smite the sheep, who were those guilty of the

“sins and uncleanness.” Rather, by divine decree, the *“sword smote”* the One that was given three names in this context. That One was *“the shepherd,”* the One who was called *“the man,”* whom God also called *“my fellow.”* This *“shepherd/man”* is God’s *“fellow”* in deity! These definitions only fit one person: Messiah!

The *“sheep that are scattered”* initially relate to the apostles, particularly in the context of the crucifixion of the *“God/man/shepherd.”* Jesus explained Zachariah’s prophecy to the apostles in the upper room: *“All of you shall be offended in me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad”* (Matthew 26:31). That *“shepherd was smitten”* for the sins of his future *“sheep,”* which include all present day kingdom people.

We may easily assume that Jesus is thinking of Zachariah’s prophecy when he said: *“I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep”* (John 10:14-15). Above, we mentioned that the *“scattered sheep”* related initially to the apostles, but it also related to all Christians. For, Peter wrote of us: *“For ye were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls”* (I Peter 2:25).

As we now break the bread, and drink the cup, let us remember that it was the *“God/man/shepherd”* who *“his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we having died unto sin, might live unto righteous, by whose stripes ye were healed”* (I Peter 2:24). Little wonder that Paul exclaimed: *“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift”* (II Corinthians 9:15). Finally,

thank God for that “*cleansing fountain,*” that keeps on “*cleansing us of all our sins*” (I John 1:7).