

Stones Of Remembrance

Story: In April 1863, in Columbus, Mississippi after decorating the graves of her two sons who had served during the Civil War as Confederate soldiers, an elderly woman also decorated two mounds at the back corner of the cemetery. An observer asked, “What are you doing? Those are the graves of two Union soldiers.” The lady replied, “Yes, I know. I also know that somewhere in the North, a heart-broken mother or young wife mourns for these young men as we do for ours.”

That little band of ladies in Columbus, Mississippi, set in motion what was soon to become Memorial Day. Within a few short years the practice of placing flags and flowers on military graves had spread throughout both the north and south, and was being called “Decoration Day.”

Following World War I, Decoration Day became a national holiday known ever since as Memorial Day. This special day was dedicated to remembering all the men and women, who have died in any war or military conflict for the freedoms that we enjoy. Memorial Day was initially held on May 30, regardless of the day of the week, on which it fell. This was changed in 1971 when the last Monday in May was adopted as the official day to celebrate Memorial Day.

Today we honor all those brave Americans who have made the ultimate sacrifice to defend our freedoms, as well as those who today serve at home and abroad.

In keeping with Memorial Day, and remembering all those who have given their lives for our freedoms; I thought about the need for memorials in all of our lives. Memorials serve as reminders of what God has done for us. Throughout the Old Testament God instructed His people to build memorials to remind the nation of His faithfulness, and to inform new generations about the sacrifices and victories of the past. Memorials are appropriate. They challenge us to stop, to remember, and to give thanks. As Christians we need to erect memorials as a reminder that while life isn't always easy, God has brought us through thus far and will continue to do so.

I. The Need For Memorials

Deuteronomy 6:12-15—“Beware, LEST YOU FORGET the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. 13 You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. 14 You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around

you 15 for the LORD your God is a jealous God among you, lest the anger of the LORD your God be aroused against you and He destroy you from the face of the earth.”

God knows that as human beings, we are a forgetful people. This is why He warned the children of Israel here in Deuteronomy 6 that He was a jealous God. If the people chose to forsake Him and go after the gods of Canaan, God would come against them and destroy them from off the face of the earth. This is of course exactly what Israel chose to do.

As Christians we must choose to obey and follow God, or to continue in the path of sin and worldliness. Obedience results in blessing, whereas sin always results in discipline, disaster, and unhappiness. The Lord Jesus Christ has equipped us to love and to serve Him. May God help us to surrender to the Holy Spirit’s indwelling control.

II. The Use Of Memorials (Deut. 6; Josh 4; Matt. 28:19-20)

A. To teach our children about God’s power and mercy

1. Deuteronomy 6:6-7, 20-25

6 “And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; **7** and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.”

20 “When your son asks you in years to come, saying, ‘What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the LORD our God commanded you?’ **21** then you shall say to your son, ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out from Egypt with a mighty hand. **22** ‘Moreover, the LORD showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household; **23** and He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.’”

Memorials are to serve as teaching tools. Every Israelite was responsible to love and cherish God’s Word, and to teach it to their children. Parents are responsible to “train up their children in God’s ways, and when they are old, they will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

Someone has well said: “Christianity is never more than one generation away from extinction.” Dear Christian, if you are not constantly instilling God’s Word into your children and grandchildren, they will be lost! It is up to you as parents to reach them for Christ.

We see a second example of this principle in Joshua chapter 4 verses 1-7 and verses 21-23,

2. Joshua 4:1-7, 21-23

Following their miraculous crossing of the Jordan River during flood-stage, God commanded Joshua to erect a pile of 12 stones at Gilgal (Josh. 4:1-5). This rock pile was to serve as a memorial, a reminder to the children of Israel forever, of how God had brought them safely into their Promised Land, Josh. 4:6-7,

4:6-7—Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’ **7** then you shall say to them, ‘Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.’ So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever.”

4:21-23—And those twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. **21** And he said to the sons of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, ‘What are these stones?’ **22** Then you shall inform your children, saying, ‘Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground.’ **23** “For the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the LORD your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed;

British poet Samuel Coleridge once had a discussion with a man who firmly believed that children should not be given formal religious instruction, but should be free to choose their own religious faith when they reached maturity. Coleridge did not disagree, but later invited the man into his somewhat neglected garden. “Do you call this a garden?” the visitor exclaimed. “There are nothing here but weeds!” “Well, you see,” Coleridge replied, “I did not wish to infringe upon the liberty of the garden in any way. I was just giving the garden a chance to express itself.”

B. To teach others about God's power and mercy (Josh. 4:24)

Another purpose of the 12 memorial stones being placed at Gilgal was that all the people of the earth would know that the LORD alone is God, Joshua 4:24,

Josh. 4:24—"That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the LORD that it is mighty: that ye might fear the LORD your God forever."

When future generations passed by this rock pile, they would be reminded of how God rolled the water from the flooded Jordan River 15 miles back up river to the tiny town of Adam.

One of our primary responsibilities as believers is to tell others about God.

Jesus' Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20)

The Lord Jesus' final command to His disciples before ascending back to His Father in heaven was **19** "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

III. The Christian's Memorials: *Baptism And The Lord's Supper*

A. Baptism (1 Cor. 12:13-14; Rom. 6:3-5)

As noted above, the Lord Jesus Himself commanded His disciples to baptize everyone who believed in Him as Savior. Water baptism serves as a beautiful picture of the Spirit's baptism, which places every born-again Christian into the body of Jesus Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit's baptizing or placing every believer into the corporate Body of Christ is recorded in 1 Corinthians 12:13-14 and Romans 6:3-5

1 Cor. 12:13-14—"For by One Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. **14** For the body is not one member, but many."

Rom. 6:3-5—Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? **4** Therefore we have

been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. **5** For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection,

Paul explains that the Spirit's baptizing believer's into Christ serves to unite us with His death, burial, and resurrection. Our former identity as children of Adam is put to death through our baptism into Christ. Our coming up out of the waters of Baptism, pictures our spiritual resurrection in Christ. The Holy Spirit enables us to experience victory over the indwelling power of sin. This is the theme of Romans chapter 8 that we studied last Sunday.

The second memorial believers are to celebrate regularly is the Lord's Supper.

B. The Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26)

On the night prior to His betrayal, crucifixion, and death the Lord Jesus met with His disciples in the upper room to celebrate the Passover meal together. Passover was to be an evening of remembering, as God had long ago commanded. But following the meal, Jesus gave them something new, something greater, to remember. The Lord Jesus instituted what has come to be known as the Lord's Supper or Communion.

While all four Gospel writers record the Lord's final meal with His disciples, the Apostle Paul provides us with the instruction for sharing the Lord's Memorial Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, which he says he received from the risen Lord.

1 Cor. 11:23-26—For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; **24** and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is [given] for you; do this in remembrance of Me." **25** In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

No longer were the elements of the Passover meal simply to be a reminder

of the Jews' release from Egyptian bondage. Now the bread and the cup were to be eternal reminders of Jesus' sacrifice as the Lamb of God. That's why Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

When you and I partake of the Lord's Supper, we're proclaiming to the world, "I believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I may not be an eloquent speaker. But I can proclaim my faith through these emblems of faith. So I willingly partake "in remembrance of Him."

IV. Christians Are Living Memorials (1 Pet. 2:9)

The Apostle Peter informs us in 1 Peter 2:9—that believers are "A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, that we may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light."

In other words, every believer is a *Living Memorial* assigned to the task of proclaiming the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Conclusion:

As Christians we have much to remember. Whatever you do, don't forget how we got here. Don't forget the price that has been, and is being paid, so that we can live in freedom and enjoy the blessings that God has given us. Please don't ever forget!

Applications:

1. As Christians we need to erect memorials to remind us that while life isn't always easy, God has brought us through thus far and will continue to do so.
2. As Christians we need to rejoice in Water Baptism as a memorial of our new identity as believers in Jesus Christ. While you don't have to be baptized to be saved, the New Testament record is: people believed and where baptized immediately. If you have never been baptized you might want to see me.
3. As Christians we need to rejoice in the Lord's Supper as a memorial of Christ's sacrifice for our sin. The Lord Jesus commands us to celebrate His Last Supper until He comes for us.

Set up your heaps of stones to the glory of the Lord, so that all will see that He is indeed a God of Deliverances, a splendid, loving, joy-giving God whom to serve is the greatest joy in all the world.