

What Heaven Celebrates, We Should Too!

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

For many years during this season we've displayed a sign in front of our house to encourage followers of Jesus to celebrate our Lord's death as our complete and absolute Atoning Sacrifice. But where we live now, our home is too far off the street for people to read the sign. So our friends Ron and Nicki from Pinelow Park and Conference Center, for whom we've previously asked you to pray, placed the sign in front of their coffee shop.



Besides putting up the sign during this period of Passover and the commemoration of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus, we annually write an email to encourage you to proclaim and celebrate His sacrifice (see 1Corinthians 5:7). He IS the final and ultimate Passover Lamb Whose irrefutable last words announced His victory over sin and death: *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). Here's some backdrop to why we send this yearly reminder.



Mike: My parents raised me to be a very devout Roman Catholic. Each Good Friday we would enter the front door of the church building and walk down the aisle on our knees to the front of the sanctuary where a crucifix was laid on the floor. We'd then kiss the feet of Jesus. The *solemnity* of this action made it seem like we were pleasing our Lord by doing it while also recognizing the depth of our sin as individuals.

What was so jarring about this practice, though, was that the priest would then read a curse *blaming the*

Jewish people for hanging Jesus on the cross rather than our sins putting Him there. So was His death for our sins, or because the Jewish people murdered Him? I wondered about that for years.

When we began to follow Jesus as our Lord and Savior in 1977, we discovered that most Protestants had the same somber ideas about Good Friday as Catholicism did. Both groups focused on what *humankind had done* to bring about the crucifixion of God's Son, rather than on the Perfect Plan of our Father being fulfilled through the love-driven sacrifice of Jesus. Through Scripture we realized we needed to cherish His once and for all sacrifice for our sins by grasping the celebration in heaven for that victory: that out of His great love Jesus had accomplished what no one else could do for themselves. •*“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world”* (1John 2:2). •*“This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins”* (1John 4:10).

We were all born predisposed to violate God through sin, and thus were already under condemnation. But our Lord Jesus did something so magnificent on behalf of every human being that when we obsess on our own personal sinfulness, our joy over His eternal victory is diminished. In contrast, when we consciously celebrate our Lord's payment for our sins on that amazing Day, it helps us to also truly appreciate His shed blood for us. That gift of His love then prompts us to grieve each time we sin throughout the year, and that sorrow then stirs us to repent and be restored.

Please understand. When we are convicted by the Holy Spirit that we've committed a sin and have hurt our intimacy with our heavenly Father, we also have the joy of knowing that He has already accepted the atonement of Jesus for the punishment we deserve. There's a very real emotional pain when you realize that you've violated a relationship when you sin:

*“Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that **your sorrow led to repentance**. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For **godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death**. For observe this very thing, that **you sorrowed in a godly manner**: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter”* (2Corinthians 7:9-11).

In your sin nature-dominated soul, temptations will plague you as long as your body lives. But don't get so fixated on your potential to sin that you lose your appreciation for what our Lord Jesus did to atone for your sins. Keep seeing His sacrifice from His victorious vantage point. *He's the One on Whom you should focus:*

*“**Fix your eyes on Jesus**, the Author and Perfecter of faith, Who **for the joy set before Him** endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Hebrews 12:2).

If you purpose to find your joy with our Lord and with the heavenly hosts that the penalty for your sins has been fully paid, you'll discover the wondrous joy which follows your sorrow when you're convicted that you've sinned and then repent of that violation.

Remember, repentance is transformational — you *turn from your sin* and become *more like Jesus* through His Spirit in you. This is why we wrote our series, *Repentance Leads To Christ-like Character* <<https://restorationministries.org/repentance.html>>.

Your joyful confidence that our Lord will even use your repentance to set you apart as holy for His use will bolster your confidence that you are progressing on the narrow path to your eternal home:

*“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us **new birth into a living hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who **through faith are shielded by God’s power** until the coming of **the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time**”* (1Peter 1:3-5).

With this assurance we want to encourage you on your spiritual journey to your salvation: *“If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin”* (1John 1:7).

Mike & Sue