

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

#239

Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the first meal on the moon. Believe it or not, it was the Lord's Supper! That's right! The blessed communion was the first meal on the moon! At 3:17 EST, Sunday, July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin touched down on the moon in the Apollo 11 moon lander. Aldrin had made preparations in advance and took unleavened bread and wine to commune with Christ on that historic occasion. Aldrin keyed the mike and said: "*Houston, this is Eagle. This is the LM pilot speaking. I would like to request a few moments of silence. I would like to invite each person listening in, whoever or where he may be, to contemplate for a moment the events of the last few hours, and to give thanks in his own individual way*". During the radio blackout he read from the Bible and then opened those special plastic packages. First he ate the bread in memory of the Body of Christ. Then he drank the cup and remembered His blood. Jesus had said: "**Do this, whenever you drink it in remembrance of me**" (1 Cor. 11:25). He did! The wine curled in the cup in a wonderful way as gravity on the moon is only one sixth of what it is on earth.

Perhaps you remember hearing about the Apollo 8 mission that circled the moon on Dec. 24, 1968. To the largest TV audience ever, the three astronauts on board took turns reading the first 10 verses of Genesis. They concluded by saying: "*And from the crew of Apollo 8, we close with good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas – and God bless all of you, all of you on the good Earth.*" The reading of the Bible, however, offended atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair. She had already filed law suits that banned the Bible and prayer from public schools, and now she sued NASA to prevent astronauts from reading the Bible in public. Fortunately, the case was dismissed by the Supreme Court in 1970. Unfortunately, it was done so on a technicality.

One reason why many claim not to believe in God involves suffering. Those who believe the Bible know that Satan causes suffering, not God. It is not easy, however, to explain why God "allows" Satan to afflict us with suffering. At the same time it needs to be emphasized that atheism is not the answer. While believers may not be able to explain suffering, we do at least have hope. The atheist, by contrast, suffers like everyone else, but has no hope at all. In the words of atheist Richard Dawkins they "believe": "*The universe we observe has ... no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. ... DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music*". In the midst of our suffering we at least have hope, but Atheists have no hope at all!

Communion, of course, helps us to create a mental image of Christ suffering on the cross. This communicates the love of God for man in a way too wonderful for words. It is comforting to know that Jesus loved us enough to die for us. John 3:16 expresses it like this: "**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life**". 1 John 3:16 explains: "**This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers**" (1 Jn. 3:16). Christ on the cross is an eloquent reminder that Jesus came to earth to share in our suffering. It is an unmistakable message proving how much God really loves us! The song writer reminds us that the cross is an emblem of suffering and shame and yet it is the most recognizable symbol of the Christian faith. How profound! The universe watched in amazement as it's Creator allowed His veins to be opened with the cruel instrument of the cross. Why? While we cannot completely understand everything about Calvary, remembering Christ on the cross somehow adds a therapeutic dimension to our suffering.

But the communion supper involves something much more significant than merely human suffering. The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin (Heb. 10:4), but the blood of Jesus does take away sin! So when Buzz Aldrin ate the bread and drank the cup he was memorializing the incredible fact that by means of one sacrifice Jesus paid the penalty for the sins of all mankind (Heb. 10:12). The magnitude of this message cannot be overemphasized. Nothing more significant has ever taken place in the history of the universe. That's why the primary reason the early believers gathered together was to "break bread" (Acts 20:7). The death of Christ on the cross is not a peripheral issue. It is the focal point around which Christian worship revolves.

There is an old joke about the woman from Kansas who saw the Pacific Ocean for the first time. When asked what she thought of it she said: "*I just thought it would be bigger than that*". In similar fashion, too many consider the cross in a shallow and superficial way! The death of Christ on the cross, like the ocean, is far wider and deeper than initially meets the eye. That's why to take communion without discerning the body and blood of Christ is to bring judgement upon yourself (1 Cor. 11:29).

Communing with Christ is a great privilege! If Buzz Aldrin could find time to commune with Christ on his mission to the moon, surely we can find time to commune with Christ on earth.

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce