

Have you ever wondered why things are the way they are? Looking at our months speeding by I had wondered where they got their names. Why do we call the months the names by which we call them? I've found that we have a Roman heritage in most of our Western culture and the names of the months come from ancient Rome. The Romans gave us the names we call the months though we have Anglicized them somewhat.

It may, or may not, surprise you to learn that for most of human history March was considered the first month of the year. It was named after the god of war, Mars. The month of Mars was considered the beginning of campaign season when armies could be marched while foraging for food. It was the beginning of political/social activities. The Ides of March was essentially New Years Day with a weeks long celebration.

April comes from the Latin word *Aperire* which means "to open" and we still use the word "aperture" to describe "an opening" in our language. It was when trees and flowers started their openings and all the countryside was open for renewed life.

May was named after the Roman god of fertility, Maia. May is when the sure evidence of fruit setting was observed.

June was named after the Roman's principle god Jupiter's wife, Juno. Juno was the patron of brides and marriage so weddings were planned for June to seek the blessings of June. The start of the more carefree days of summer were the domain of June.

The Romans just numbered the months that did not have a name already for its merits. Julius Caesar wanted a month named after him so the fifth month, Quintillis, became the month of July. Julius wanted a full month with as many days as possible so he grabbed a day from February, the then last month of the year, to make his month 31 days rather than the traditional 30.

Caesar Augustus wanted his own month also so the month after Julius' month was then named August. Augustus wanted 31 days also so another day was grabbed from February which now had 28 days rather than 30.

The next months just had their names of enumeration. September was the 7th month. October the 8th, November the 9th and December the 10th month. You'll notice that if March is month 1 then September is month 7 and so on.

That brings us to the next month of merit that is named after the Roman god Janus. Janus was two faced and looked forward and backward at the same time. The dead of winter reminded the Romans that the past was behind and the future to be looked forward to. No wonder that January was chosen as the New Year month when we went from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar. (As an aside it should be noted that those who still celebrated New Years in March from the middle to the end of the month were called April Fools to think the year had just began.)

And that brings us to the present month, February. Just as April was named for an object so is February. A Februa is a whip. February is literally the month of whips. It is a soft whip made from processed goat hide and it was used to half jokingly get someone's attention as an intended object of affection and to admonish them for any perceived failures in their relationship. The Ides of February were raucous and riotous with many barefoot, and often naked, people chasing the object of their desire and/or concern through the streets of Rome with a Februa in hand.

February was an institution that the population was used to and expected every year. This became problematic when Rome and its empire was declared Christian. The new Christian leadership had to take away the ingrown thoughts of appeasing the old gods with pagan rituals and substitute Christian ideals. A man who was martyred in February for his stand for Christ in Roman history was presented as the ideal to guide February activities. This, of course was Saint Valentine. So the Ides of February, the middle of the month which is the 14th day, was designated Saint Valentine's Day. It was not easy to change over an empire set in their ways but there was fast success in getting people to leave their whips at home and declare their love and affection in a Christian manner.

This is the problem all "New to Christ" people or peoples face. How to substitute old ways and thoughts for the new Christian ideals. Paul knew that the Romans were especially prone to the urges to do something even if it were wrong rather than be contemplative and deliberate in actions. Paul wrote to the Romans urging them to be secure in their new faith as their faith was their security. They were in danger of taking the Jewish observances and practices as something to do to show faith in Christ. He wrote a whole book to the Romans about faith being the goal and purpose of being in Christ but I want to concentrate on the wonderful 10th chapter. Please hear and contemplate each phrase and verse as Paul packs a lot of thought into a little space.

This is Romans 10: 1-17. Paul just wrote of the Jew's failure to recognize and grasp God's plan of salvation in Christ so the "them" and "their" at the first is referring to the Jews.

- 1) Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.
  - 2) For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.
  - 3) For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.
  - 4) For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
  - 5) For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness.
  - 6) But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' (that is, to bring Christ down),
  - 7) or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."
  - 8) But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" -- that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,
  - 9) that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved;
  - 10) for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.
  - 11) For the scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."
  - 12) For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him;
  - 13) for "whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."
  - 14) How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?
  - 15) How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!"
  - 16) However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?"
  - 17) So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.
- Amen. Amen.

That leads us to our moment where all converges in our faith, our salvation and our actions demonstrating it all, this time of communion. Listen to the words of Paul in his letter to the Corinthians the 11th chapter and verses 23 through 26:

23) 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 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.

"You proclaim." "You PROCLAIM the Lord's death until He comes!"  
So our salvation is in our mouths by way of proclamation of the faith in our hearts This is a double, no triple, no, a quadruple act of our faith and salvation! How beautiful our feet to bring us here! How great our faith to want to hear, be part of, this good news! How great our faith to observe the Lord's commands! How complete our salvation in the proclaiming of the Lord's sacrifice until He returns! This act hits all the points laid out for us. How happy we are. What a Happy Valentine! God is in love with us and we are in love with God! What a blessed occasion!