

The Cup (the Ultimate Cost of the Cross)

The Lord Jesus said, "...the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11b). These are the words our Lord spoke to Simon Peter after he tried to stop the approaching events that led to the cross. These are words spoken by our Lord in resignation to the Father's will. This announcement came after the ordeal of praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. There is mystery, awe and wonder in these words. What was He saying when He declared He would drink this cup? When our Lord prayed, "Let this cup pass from me," He was not trying to escape the death on the cross. I am amazed at how many places Christ, both directly and indirectly, prophesied of His own death. "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). The Bible says, "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matthew 16:21). Using the term of a cup, we find these words spoken by Christ to James and John when asked about sitting at His side with honor on the kingdom: "But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mark 10:38). Our Lord was showing no reservation whatsoever about going to the cross for He said, "But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (Luke 12:50). Christ prophetically said through Isaiah about His determination to go to the cross, "...therefore have I set my face like a flint..." (Isaiah 50:7). He severely scolded Simon Peter for daring to rebuke and dissuade Him from going to Jerusalem where He was going to die. "But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:23, 24). Our Lord went so far as to say that if we follow Him, we shall have to take up the cross - the very form of execution in which He knew He was to die!

What was the Lord saying when He said, "...the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it" (John 18:11b)? The best way to know is to see what was in the mind of the people in the Bible days when Jesus used this figure of speech. In Psalm 75:8 the Psalmist declares, "For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them." We observe a cup full of a mixture of wickedness poured out until the final dregs are consumed. The prophet says in Jeremiah 25:15, 16: "For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them." Here we see a cup that holds the fury of God. The word "fury" comes to us from the Hebrew word *chemah*, which means: anger, a poison which emanates from fever, hot displeasure, furious, indignation, rage, wrath. In Isaiah 51:22 we find, "Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God that pleadeth the cause of his

people, Behold, I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury; thou shalt no more drink it again.”

We are introduced to a cup of trembling. In Hebrew the word is *tarelah*, which means the object of terror. Imagine it - a cup of terror! Ezekiel tells us of “...the cup of astonishment and desolation...” (Ezekiel 23:33b). The Hebrew word for “astonishment” also can be translated “consternation” which is defined as feelings of anxiety or dismay, typically at something unexpected. “Desolation” means a state of complete destruction. It is spoken of people in a state of bleak and dismal emptiness. John wrote these horrific words on the isle of Patmos: “The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb” (Revelation 14:10). The vision before us of “the cup” has taken on horrendous ramifications. John says there is a cup of God’s indignation that holds fire and brimstone. This cup contains the very torments of Hell! With these sad truths in mind let us go to the very spot where the Lord prayed about this cup and discover it is first of all:

1. A Cup of Information

I bring to your attention Matthew 26:37-44. We see our Lord praying in the Garden and we are arrested by the fact the Christ “...began to be sorrowful and very heavy “ (Matthew 26:37b). Jesus learned the will of God like a man and could not resist it because He was God. He had all the attributes of God. He is wise and all-knowing in His omniscience. Christ is strong, all-powerful in His omnipotence. How then can the God-man receive information that He did not already know? I submit to you that He chose not to operate in His omniscience temporarily in some matters, so that He might learn the will of God like a man. For instance, the Bible says in Luke 2:52, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” The concept of the *kenosis*, which means the emptying of Himself, is explained in Philippians 2:7: “But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” As co-equal with the Father, Christ shared full knowledge of everything from before the foundation of the world. Any and all of that knowledge was available to Him, but He laid it aside, so that He might learn the will of God as a man. This is why the Bible says He “...began to be sorrowful and very heavy....” In astonishment our Lord goes on to say, “...My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death...” (Matthew 26:38). This leads us to realize it is:

2. A Cup of Desolation

In Mark 14:32-36 we see another revelation. Verse 33 reads that Christ “...began to be sore amazed and very heavy....” These words have been equated to our American phrase: “shock and awe.” Here is the definition: shock and awe (technically known as rapid dominance) is a military doctrine based on the use of overwhelming power, dominant battlefield awareness, dominant maneuvers, and spectacular displays of force to paralyze the enemy's perception of the battlefield and destroy its will to fight. This military doctrine was written by

Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade. Although our Lord was devastated by this particular information, thanks be to God, our Lord did not get paralyzed in the garden; He became even more prayerful. Let us see next it is:

3. A Cup of Devastation

We see through the eyes of Dr. Luke in Luke 22:41-44 a unique description of this event. Jesus is undergoing such agony that He sweats great drops of blood. The Lord is so close to death at this moment that the Bible records, "And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him" (Luke 22:43). This is also documented in Hebrews 5:7: "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared." Our Lord's Cup is:

4. A Cup of Damnation

What was so very terrible about this cup? The terror, the rage, the indignation of this furious cup that held the dregs of fire and brimstone has struck terror into the heart of our Lord so that He ultimately requires angelic resuscitation so that He might live to die the next day on the cross. This evening prayer time with the Father broke Christ's heart (Psalm 22:14; John 19:34). Why? I put forth, it was the knowledge that He was going to have to be separated from the Father and Holy Spirit as He became sin for us (II Corinthians 5:21). He knew He was to die, but now He knew that He must become exactly what we are, so that we, by grace through faith, might become everything He is in righteousness. Just before Jesus said, "...The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11b), the Bible informs us, "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him..." (John 18:4). With determination, Christ arises from the ground muddied with His precious blood, ready to do the full will of the Father. In Christ's death we see John 19:28 says, "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." When He said, "I thirst," He was crying out for the Father to unloose Hell on Him and, worst of all, become separated from God, as He became sin for you and me. The Lord was more than resigned to do this; He was determined to do this, because it is the only way we could have ever be saved!

Because Christ took our cup of damnation for us, we may take:

5. The Cup of Salvation

"I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD" (Psalm 116:13). You may claim this verse as your own.

-Pastor Pope-