

The Cup - Luke 22:39-46

Introduction: In a Museum in Istanbul, there is a very special cup with a carved the image of a serpent at the bottom. When the cup is filled with wine the serpent is not visible, but as the wine is drunk, suddenly the serpent is revealed.

Ever since Satan was kicked out of heaven and landed on earth, he's been trying to get back at God. At first, he disguised himself as a beautiful serpent who offered Adam and Eve the cup of pride in an effort to deceive them into believing they could be like God. If successful, he knew his plan would be much easier to carry out. But after Adam and Eve fell for Satan's deception, God crushed Satan's pride with a curse which banished the serpent to crawling on his belly and eating dust.

Years later Satan offered the cup of earthly power and control to the Pharaoh in Egypt who took it and used it to enslave God's people. But when they cried out for help, God heard them and sent them a deliverer. Moses reasoned with Pharaoh to let God's people go, but Satan had hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he refused to let them go. But God showed Satan His ultimate power when He sent a series of horrible plagues upon Egypt and Pharaoh relented.

Centuries later, Satan offered the cup of jealousy to a cruel puppet King Herod of Judea. Satan's plan was to destroy God's only Son who had been delivered to the world as a human baby. Herod took that cup and used it to carry out Satan's plan by having every male child under the age of 2 destroyed. But God intervened through an unlikely group of wise men from the east who divinely understood what was happening and refused to be used as pawns in Herod's paranoid-driven plot. Once again Satan's attempt to thwart God's plan of redemption had been derailed.

Then later, as "*Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.*" Luke 2:52 (NIV), a frustrated and desperate devil launched a devious attack on the Son of God Himself. After Jesus was baptized at the beginning of His ministry, Satan met him in the wilderness to offer him the cup of pride, and selfishness. Satan's plan was to tempt the Son of God through lies and lust and deception to get off track and reject God's plan and will for His life. But Jesus resisted Satan's temptation by quoting His father's own Words of truth and wisdom. Jesus finally had to tell the devil to, "*Get behind me Satan!*"

It reminds me of the preacher and his wife who were having a discussion about how much money she was spending on clothes. She had brought home a new dress and he said, *“How could you buy that expensive dress? You know we can’t afford it”*

She said, *“Well, I saw it and before I knew it, I tried it on. It was like the devil saying to me, ‘You look great in that dress.’”*

Her husband said, *“Why didn’t you just tell the devil to get behind you.”* She said, *“I did. But he said, ‘It looks good from back here, too.’ So I bought it!”*

Now, as Jesus comes to this point in His ministry, Satan once again launches a diabolical plot to try to destroy the Son of God. This time, it’s through one of Jesus’ own disciples as Satan offers Simon Peter the cup of fear and disappointment. Jesus knows this and says to him, *“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”* **Luke 22:31-32 (NIV)**

Well, ole Simon Peter didn’t tell Satan to get behind him. Instead, he listened to Satan and he took that cup and he used it to deny three times even knowing Jesus on the night before Jesus’ crucifixion. But later, ole Simon was sorry for what he had done. He repented, and as Jesus prayed, he did turn back to Jesus. And eventually became an influential *“pillar”* of the early church.

But still Satan didn’t give up on his plan. He had another disciple to use as his patsy. Judas Iscariot was a man who had ambitious dreams of power and glory. Perhaps that is why he accepted Jesus’ invitation to join Him in the first place. But Jesus never fulfilled Judas’ fairy-tale idea of a Messiah. He never became the political leader who would overthrow the Romans.

And all the while, Satan was waiting until the time was right. And in a cunning and crafty move that would rival any James Bond spy thriller, Satan offered Judas the cup of betrayal. And Judas took that cup and struck a deal with the Jewish religious leaders to betray Jesus into the hands of the Romans.

And as it had been all throughout human history and all during Jesus’ life, the battle was on. Only now, it was in the final stages. For Satan, it was do or die. Now was the time and this was the place to focus all his demonic energy on Jesus. And as we read in our text, the real battle was being fought in the Garden of

Gethsemane. Satan was offering Jesus another cup of deception and lies; another cup of selfishness; and another cup of pride. And he was making it look so inviting; so easy, and so simple.

Satan was saying, *“Just walk away Jesus. Don’t go the way of the cross. You don’t have to go through with this to accomplish your goals. Just walk away and people will still love you.”*

Jesus could have responded, *“You know Father, He’s right. I don’t want this cross. It’s too painful. It’s too agonizing. It’s too cruel. And you know what? Those sinful people you sent me to – they’re just not worth the pain. They’re not worth dying for. They don’t deserve to be saved.”*

But instead, as Jesus looked into that cup of temptation, He saw through the lies and deception and He saw the serpent underneath. And once again, Jesus pushed back Satan’s cup.

But there was another cup that was offered that day. It was the cup His Father had spoken of eons earlier, as He sent His only Son down to the earth to live among a sinful people in need of a Savior. In His divinity, Jesus knew about this cup but in His humanity, Jesus dreaded this cup and became *“in anguish”* over it until *“his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.”* That is why He said, *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”* **(Luke 22:42 NIV).**

Jesus had spoken of this cup earlier when He asked His disciples, *“Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”* **Mark 10:38 (NIV).** He was speaking of the cup of God’s judgment.

Although Jesus was sinless, He chose to drink this cup of judgment for us. What did Jesus see in this cup of judgment that caused Him such agony? Let’s look with our eyes of imagination and see what Jesus saw. First, He saw:

1. Emotional Pain - Jesus looked into the cup and saw He was going to be forsaken by everyone. Jesus enjoyed being around people. He loved to eat with sinners, and was constantly surrounded by crowds of people. He loved to hug and bless children as they sat on His lap. He loved to relate to people, so it’s no surprise that Jesus wants to have a relationship with even us.

But the closer Jesus got to the cross, the more He was rejected. Early on many people followed Him. But most of them were just after a free meal or a side show. When Jesus started talking about denying self and

carrying crosses, the crowds left.

Not only did people forsake Him, but many despised Him. Isaiah wrote about Jesus years earlier: *“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not.”* **Isaiah 53:3 (NIV).**

Have you ever been rejected? It’s no fun. Philip Yancey writes in *The Jesus I Never Knew*: *“By instinct, we humans want someone by our side in any great moment of crisis. We need the reassuring touch of human presence—solitary confinement is the worst punishment our species has devised. I detect in the Gospels’ account of Gethsemane a profound depth of loneliness that Jesus had never before encountered.”*

Jesus saw loneliness in that cup. He would be arrested, tried, tortured, and crucified all alone. After hanging on the cross He would look into heaven and say, *“My God, my God why have YOU forsaken me?”* When Jesus saw the isolation and loneliness in the cup, no wonder He cried, *“Father take this cup from me!”*

To anyone who feels the pain of loneliness, listen: Jesus knows how you feel. There’s a lot of loneliness in this world. Many people leave work and come home to an empty home. Widows and widowers wake up alone every morning, and they may go through a whole day without speaking to anyone. If you’re lonely today, Jesus understands how you feel. But you don’t have to be alone, because God’s presence is there for you. But as we look into this cup we find something else that caused Jesus to be in agony:

2. Physical Pain - Jesus looked into the cup of judgment and He saw the physical suffering He would experience. Now, I don’t know many people who enjoy pain. I don’t. I’m a big baby when it comes to being sick. I think everyone ought to know about it.

One year at Super WOW, we had a *“King of Pain”* contest, where kids would take turns doing belly busters off the high dive. One of our youth won it. By the end of the day, his belly was blistered up. He was in agony the rest of the week, and had to take pain killers just to be able to function.

But remember, Jesus was facing severe torture and execution without pain killers. He was fully God, but He was also fully man. He felt pain exactly the same way we feel pain.

Isaiah had talked about the pain He would face when He wrote: *“He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we*

are healed.” Isaiah 53:5 (NIV)

I don't believe that Jesus was afraid to die. I believe it was the idea of experiencing the physical pain that would lead to His death that caused Him to be in agony. He knew about the crown of thorns. He knew about the whipping post where His flesh would be laid open. He knew His beard would be plucked out, and His eyes would be swollen shut by the constant beating He would endure. Jesus was aware of the spikes that would be driven into His hands and feet. He knew He would hang on a cross for six long hours while His literally suffocated. He could almost feel the spear that would be thrust into His side.

This is what He saw in the cup. No wonder He sweat drops of blood. By virtue of being the sinless Son of God, He had a choice. He didn't have to go through the torture or the cross. The Bible says He could have called ten legions of angels to rescue Him. But He didn't. He chose to drink the cup of physical suffering.

Let's look again into the cup. He was in agony when He saw the emotional and physical suffering in the cup. But that was nothing compared to the:

3. Spiritual Pain - Jesus was the only sinless one who ever lived. He was tempted in every way we are tempted, yet He never sinned. He never spoke a bad word; never thought a bad thought; never let His eyes wander in a lustful manner; never made a wrong move. He was totally pure and clean.

But inside that cup, Jesus saw the billions who would live on earth. He saw the zillions of sins we would commit, and He knew He would bear every one of them. **1 Peter 2:24 (NIV)** says, *“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live to righteousness....”*

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, *“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”* I don't understand how He did it, but when He died on the cross, He bore MY sin, and in doing so, He took the punishment for MY sin upon Himself.

In Gethsemane, Jesus looked into that cup and saw all our sins. And it made Him sick. You see, even though He knew no sin in Himself, but He knew about sin. He had seen the effects of sin. He saw sin turn angels into demons and humans into animals. He saw it turn paradise into a pig's sty, and had seen it destroy lives and families. He was in agony over the prospect of taking on all that sin. He didn't just drink the cup; He had it all poured upon Him.

Imagine standing in front of a vat of foul smelling liquid. That liquid is made up of a mixture of all kinds of viruses, and diseases, cancer cells and other bacteria. Then imagine yourself being submerged into that liquid until it fills every pore in your body. It's repulsive. Now multiply what you feel by several billion and you still won't even come close to understanding what it was like for the Jesus to be submerged into the filth of our sin. But you'll begin to see why Jesus was in such agony when He looked into that cup. But still He chose to go to the cross for us.

Maybe you're going through your own Gethsemane. You might be facing an emotional pain such as loneliness or fear, and it's so painful, you'd love to say, *"God, I tired of feeling lonely! I don't want to be afraid. Please, let this cup pass from me!"*

Perhaps you have to endure some sort of physical pain so intense, you're begging God to take it away. Maybe you're here this morning, and for the first time, you've realized how much pain and suffering your sin caused Jesus. Do you know what Jesus did to pass from agony to victory? Two things:

First, He **Prayed** in the right way. He prayed that He'd surrender to God's will. Then, Jesus **Trusted in God's Plan**. After He surrendered to God's will, He went on to the cross. He understood that in spite of going alone; in spite of the pain; and in spite of bearing the sin, God's Will was the best.

Conclusion: Can you say that today? Can you say, *"Not MY will, but yours be done? I will trust your plan. I take my hands off my life. I'll do what you want me to do"*

In the first century, when a young Jewish man reached marrying age and his family selected an appropriate wife for him, the young man and his father would meet the young woman and her father to negotiate the *"bride price."*

With negotiations complete, the young man's father would pour a cup of wine and hand it to his son. His son would turn to the young woman, and hold it out to her, saying, *"This cup is a new covenant in my blood, which I offer to you."* In other words, *"I love you, and I give you my life. Will you marry me?"*

The young woman had a choice. She could take the cup and return it and say no. Or she could answer by drinking the cup, and say, *"I accept your offer, and I give you my life in response."*

Jesus took the cup God offered Him. And when He did, He said, “*Father, I love you and I love them more than my life. I do this for you. I do it for them because I love them.*”

Will you accept God’s offer of the cup of salvation today?