

“SHALL I NOT DRINK THE CUP...”

John 18:1-27

Key Verse: 18:11

“Jesus commanded Peter, ‘Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?’”

The last chapters of all four gospels tell us about Jesus’ arrest, trials, suffering and death. This was the most painful time in Jesus’ life on earth. In these darkest of times, Jesus revealed himself to be the Son of God. Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection are the main point of the gospel: “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...he was buried...he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1Co 15:3-4). This is not a theory, or just a doctrine. It is not a myth or a fairy tale. It is historical fact, which is undeniable. It is the culmination of God’s salvation plan, which was long prepared, and carried out step by step for generations. This is a unique event; it happened once and will not be repeated throughout history. So it is very important to see how Jesus fulfilled God’s salvation plan. We hear this story again and again. Sometimes we feel that we know it already and stop listening to it. But the gospel is not something that we simply know in our mind. It must be deeply planted in our hearts until it shapes our value system and lifestyle so that we live a gospel-centered life. In that respect, we all need to grow in knowing the meaning of Jesus’ suffering and death and applying it to our lives. Apostle Paul said from a Roman prison, “I want to know Christ--yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death (Php 3:10). As we see in today’s passage, in the midst of trials, Jesus revealed his shepherd’s heart for his disciples and his willing obedience to the Father God.

First, Jesus revealed his shepherd’s heart (1-9). Verse 1 begins, “When he had finished praying....” After his high priestly prayer to God, Jesus left Jerusalem with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it (1). The garden refers to Gethsemane. Jesus had often gone there for fellowship with his disciples. He was aware that Judas knew the place and could find him there

(2). Nevertheless, Jesus went there because he was ready to obey God's will. The synoptic gospels record Jesus' Gethsemane prayer in detail. John did not. Still, he records Jesus' prayer in 12:27-28: "Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" Jesus was prepared for his upcoming ordeal through prayer.

As Jesus and his disciples arrived, Judas came to the garden. The author describes Judas as a betrayer and traitor (2,5; 6:71). Judas was one of the privileged twelve disciples. But he had not accepted Jesus as the Son of God and his Savior. Though Jesus trusted him as the treasurer, he embezzled money (12:6). In a critical moment, Satan entered him and he became Satan's agent (13:27). He was no longer himself, but was controlled by Satan. Judas' problem is that even though he followed Jesus outwardly, he did not commit himself to Jesus. He always left a back door open so that he could escape. Satan exploited this vulnerability and made Judas his agent. In following Jesus, there is no middle ground. Anyone who does not commit to Jesus can become the victim of Satan. Committing to Jesus is like a plant taking root in the ground. It is the way to grow in Jesus and be stable. Lack of commitment cannot be hidden long. Sooner or later it will be exposed. We need to examine ourselves. Lord, help us not to be like Judas.

Judas guided a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees (3a). The word "detachment" comes from "cohort," a Roman army unit made up of 600 soldiers. Usually the Romans were in conflict with the Jewish religious leaders. However, when it was time to arrest Jesus they collaborated. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons (3b). Now it was the dark of night. Jesus' opponents were numerous and well armed. As they approached Jesus and his disciples, the atmosphere was extremely tense.

Jesus knew all that was going to happen to him (4a). But he did not shrink back. He stepped forward, took the initiative, and asked, "Who is it you want?" (4b). They replied, "Jesus of Nazareth." They tried to intimidate Jesus. However, he boldly declared, "I am he." When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground (6). Jesus' spiritual authority

overpowered them all. As they laid on the ground, it was clear that Jesus was in control of the situation. This shows us that Jesus was arrested voluntarily to fulfill God's will. Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?" In a subdued voice they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." Then Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go" (8). Jesus' point was, "Let these men go." In the time of crisis, people usually save themselves. On the contrary, Jesus was deeply concerned about his disciples. John commented: "This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: 'I have not lost one of those you gave me'" (9). In this way, Jesus protected his disciples.

In John 10:11, Jesus declared, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." As our good Shepherd, Jesus sacrifices himself in order to save us. He even laid down his life for us. Thank you, Jesus, our good Shepherd! As Jesus has loved us, so we should love others with a shepherd's heart. Without growing in a shepherd's heart, we cannot really know Jesus deeply. To help us know him better, Jesus entrusts people to us, be they Bible students, family members or others. Many are vulnerable to Satan's attack. But when we love them sacrificially, pray for them and share God's word with them, God delivers them. Apostle Paul told the mature believers in Ephesus: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood" (Ac 20:28). Apostle Peter said to the elders, "Be shepherds of God's flock" (1Pe 5:2). Though we know and practice this, our hearts become a little cool at times. God can renew our hearts and he wants to do so. Let's pray to share Jesus' shepherd's heart for God's flock. Then we will be happy and God will revive our ministry.

Second, Jesus willingly obeyed the Father and took the cup (10-27). As Jesus indicated that he was going to surrender to his arrestors, Simon Peter sprang into action. He drew his sword, stuck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear (10). Peter seemed to be very loyal and courageous. But he was acting in ignorance. In fact, his rash action was against God's will. Jesus commanded Peter, "Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup my Father has given me?" (11) Here we find two different ways of approaching

the attack of the evil one. One is using the sword. This is the way of flesh and blood. The other is to drink the cup. This is to submit to God's way by the Spirit. The sword seems to bring an immediate solution. In contrast, drinking the cup seems weak, slow and ineffective. However, the sword cannot solve mankind's root problem. It only leads to an endless cycle of violence and mutual destruction. History proves that those who draw the sword will die by the sword (Mt 26:52). Even so, when we experience injustice, we are tempted to use our sword, like Peter. Let's listen to Jesus' word: "Put your sword away!"

Then Jesus said, "Shall I not drink the cup?" In spite of Peter's immaturity, Jesus shared his heart with Peter. It was a heart of surrender to take the cup the Father had given. Here, "the cup" refers to Jesus' upcoming suffering and death--through which he would experience God's wrath against the sin of the world. It was what God wanted him to do to carry out his salvation plan. Why did the Father want him to take this cup? It was the only way to solve the sin problem of humankind. God revealed this mystery progressively throughout history. When his chosen people were in bondage in Egypt, he redeemed them with his almighty power and led them to Mt. Sinai to make a covenant with them. This covenant was sealed with animal blood and was conditional. It would be in effect only if they obeyed God fully. Then they would be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. The problem was they could not keep this covenant due to their weakness.

In his great mercy God established a new covenant. It is a covenant of grace, which is activated by faith, not by keeping the law. At the heart of this covenant is the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness could not be granted arbitrarily; it had to be based on justice. The wages of sin is death. So we must die due to our sins. But God provided a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. He began to reveal this through animal sacrifice. However, animal blood is not sufficient to remove human sin. A perfect human sacrifice should be offered, and even that would not be enough. Only the sinless Son of God could be a perfect sacrifice for our sins. Jesus knew God's heart. So he said, "Here I am--it is written about me in the scroll--I have come to do your will my God" (Heb 10:7). Jesus willingly offered himself as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. God sent Jesus in this way because he loves

us. "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" (Jn 3:16). Let's accept the great love of God and Jesus' saving grace by faith!

Not only are we saved by Jesus, but we are also called to follow Jesus. In this respect, Jesus sets an example for us. Jesus was about to undergo a great injustice to obey God's will. Yet he had no trace of a "victim mentality." He offered himself willingly and took the cup with confidence in God, his love and his triumph. We should take the cup the Father gives like Jesus did. Our cup may include suffering for: 1) overcoming our sinful desires, 2) the sanctification of a loved one, 3) bearing a public witness at home, school or work, or 4) to be faithful to God's calling, among other things. We should not avoid suffering for Christ, but embrace it. And we should do so willingly. Let's ask ourselves: "Shall I not take the cup?"

Once it was clear that Jesus was going to surrender, the soldiers and the Jewish officials immediately arrested him and bound him (12). They brought him to Annas, the father-in-law of Caiphas, the high priest that year (13). Caiphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people (14).

In verses 15-27, there is a great contrast between Jesus and Peter. Jesus boldly testified to the truth, while Peter denied Jesus three times. Jesus stood alone before Annas, the high priest, and his religious establishment. Annas questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching (19). He wanted to eliminate not only Jesus, but his disciples and his teachings as well. Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said" (20-21). Then one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face, "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded (22). Striking a person on trial was illegal. It was the kind of act we can expect from the mafia or a street gang. Many people are intimidated by such opposition and give in. But Jesus said: "If I said something wrong, testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" (23) Jesus spoke the truth even when it offended people in power. Jesus' word is truth. In fact, Jesus himself

is the truth. As his followers, we should also speak the truth in any situation. These days history professors can say publicly, "God is a liar and the serpent told the truth." This scares young Christian students very much. Yet, in this kind of environment we should speak the truth, like Jesus did. The church is the pillar and foundation of the truth. We must hold to the truth no matter how deceptive and ungodly the world becomes. When we do so we become the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Jesus' words of truth were powerful. Thought Jesus was tried by Annas, actually Annas was tried by Jesus. Annas became helpless. So he sent Jesus still bound to Caiaphas the high priest (24).

After Jesus' arrest, Simon Peter and another disciple followed him to Annas' house. This other disciple was the author John. He was known to the high priest and went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard (15). But Peter could not get in and was waiting outside. John went out and spoke to the servant girl on duty and brought Peter in (16). Then the girl recognized Peter and said, "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" Peter was surprised and said, "I am not" (17). It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter stood there with them, warming himself (18). He should not have been there. But he was there out of his strong human loyalty to Jesus. As time passed, people began to look around and noticed a strange person there. It was Peter. So they asked, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not" (25). Then one of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" (26) Peter was caught red-handed. Yet, again, he denied it. And at that moment a rooster began to crow (27). Perhaps the rooster could not bear Peter's failure. Actually, it fulfilled Jesus' prophecy (13:38). Peter's "I am not" makes a great contrast with Jesus' "I am." Why did Peter fail? It was because he trusted his own strength, had his own idea, did not listen to Jesus, and did not pray. In a word, he was totally unprepared for spiritual battle. This is a warning to us. Even Peter failed! How vulnerable we are!

In contrast, Jesus was prepared through prayer, understood the will and heart of God, and clearly knew what he must do. Jesus knew that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the devil. Though he knew

Judas would betray him, he did not take action against him. Rather, Jesus prayed for him and taught him and even washed his dirty feet so that he may repent. In the midst of the devil's attack, Jesus trusted God fully.

We can learn from Jesus how to fight the spiritual battle. A good example of this can be found in a recent event. Last year, a female police officer in Dallas, Amber Guygal, entered the wrong apartment after work, found a young African American man there, and shot him to death, thinking it was self-defense. She was found guilty of murder. A few days ago, at her sentencing trial, the victim's brother, Brandt Jean, said, "I forgive you, and I know if you go to God and ask him, he will forgive you." Then with the judge's permission the two of them hugged each other warmly. Brandt said that he wanted her to commit the rest of her life to Jesus and to find his forgiveness. In this way, he fought the good fight against the real enemy Satan and turned a painful tragedy into an opportunity to glorify God. We face many big and small problems that provoke us to pull out our sword and fight a bloody human battle. But when we realize that our real enemy is not other people, but the devil, we can fight the good fight, by overcoming our natural sinful desire and surrendering to the will of God. Then we can experience true victory and render glory to God. Let's put away the swords hidden in our hearts and take the cup the Father is giving us.

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