

His Cross is Sufficient

By Eddie Spencer

When Jesus was enduring the agony of the cross, He was offered gall to drink. Gall was a pain killer that would lessen Jesus' awareness of the physical suffering of the cross. Jesus refused to drink it. *"They offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it"* (Matt. 27:34).

What does this refusal of anesthesia mean? It meant that when Jesus said to the Father, *"If it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will"* (Matt. 26:39), Jesus was committed to take the cup of our sin and salvation and drink every last drop of it. Below, I consider a few meditative thoughts on the cup of our salvation.

Jesus took the cup of failure and drank every last drop of it. *"When some of those standing there heard this, they said, 'He's calling Elijah.' Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, 'Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him'"* (Matt. 27:47-49). I believe if you read the text closely, you will note a slight difference between the mood of the mockery earlier in the text and these words. There is a note of hope in their words. These folks at the cross seem to be hoping that something extraordinary would occur. Maybe Elijah will come. Possibly something supernatural will break into their ordinary and mundane lives.

If you were Jesus, wouldn't you want to have come through to spite the mockers and in light of people's hope? Jesus could have intervened. He could have snapped His fingers and Elijah, Moses, or David would have appeared. And yet, He did not act on Friday. He failed to respond to the people on Friday. He seemingly failed.

What the people did not understand is that it was "Friday but Sunday was coming!" What the onlookers did not grasp is that the One who refused the power accessible to Him on Friday would rise again on Sunday. Friday was God's plan for the salvation of people.

Many of us know the painful feelings of dark Fridays. We may feel as if we have failed or as if God has failed us. We do not understand why God does not answer our prayers immediately when we cry out to Him on the dark Fridays of our lives. Sometimes, God does answer the prayer for instant relief. We pray, *"Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; and hear my prayer"* (Psalm 4:1). God answers. He heals. He works a miracle. He manifests the light of His power to redeem the darkness of our Fridays. Yet, sometimes, He teaches us to wait. He calls us to endure the sufferings of our Fridays. He reminds us, *"If I fixed it so easily on Friday, we would not know the hope and joy of Sunday."*

Jesus took the cup of our lostness. One of the great mysteries of the Cross is that Christ has identified with the sins of His people. *"About the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?'—which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'"* (Matt. 27:46). Jesus Christ, the eternal Son who had known perfect communion with His Father from all eternity was separated from His Father. The reason Jesus was plunged into a God-forsakenness was anticipated by the prophet Isaiah. *"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But 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"* (Is. 53:4-5).

Granted, there is mystery to this. Yet, I believe it is theologically right to declare that Christ understands the spiritual lostness of people. He has been there. For the greatest agony of the Cross, greater than the physical pain, political injustice, and relational abandonment was the horror of our sin and the justice of His

Father. For the gospel of Christ declares, *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"* (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ took the cup of our sin and lostness and drank every last drop of it so that we who were dead in our sins might be made alive in Christ.

Jesus took the cup of our death and drank every last drop of it. *"And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, He gave up His spirit"* (Matt. 27:50). Do you believe this? The One who had the power to calm the waves, feed the thousands, give sight to the blind, make the lame to dance, and raise the dead, died.

Woody Allen once quipped, "I'm not afraid to die. I just don't want to be there when it happens." Death is fearful. It is dreadful. The Bible declares, death is the inevitable result of sin. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23). Death is the great enemy of life. It is the human trauma we all share and will face.

I have been with many people when they were dying. What does someone say to the dying? Not much. But, if we are Christians, we can say with assurance, "I'm here for you now, but you have a Friend who will stick closer to you than a brother." "I love you, but you are soon to enter the eternal presence of the Great Lover." I'm cheering for you now, but soon you will know the glory of the Victor who has taken on the enemy of death and won the war of the grave." You are dying now, but soon you will say, *"Oh death where is your Sting? Oh grave where is your victory? Thanks be to God who has given us victory through Jesus Christ"* (1 Cor. 15:55, 57).

Jesus took the cup of our sin and salvation and drank every last drop of it. His Cross is sufficient. To Him be all praise!