

## The Cup

"Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them. . ." <sup>1</sup>

The Cup.

Handed to them as a symbol of his blood, of his love, of His New Covenant. In the middle ages *The Cup* was the source of legends and quests: the search for the "Holy Grail". The drinker supposedly offered immortal life.

But *The Cup* represents more: It represents sacrifice. It represents pain. It represents the cross. It was to *The Cup* that Jesus referred in his prayer in Gethsemane, "Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." <sup>2</sup>

The cup of accepted sacrifice. The Cup of blood. The Cup of pain. The Cup of love.

Then he "offered it to them . . ." <sup>3</sup> Some dimly understood what they were partaking of. James and John had briefly glimpsed what lie ahead, when their mother petitioned on their behalf for seats of power. Jesus had said, "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" <sup>4</sup>

Yes, they assured him, they could. To which Jesus replied, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with . . ." <sup>5</sup>

Indeed they would. James was the first of the apostles martyred. John's

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<sup>1</sup> Mt. 26:27.

<sup>2</sup> Mt. 26:39.

<sup>3</sup> Mt. 26:27.

<sup>4</sup> Mk. 10:39.

<sup>5</sup> Mk. 10:39.

life was one of hardship and persecution.

They drank from The Cup of suffering. They drank from The Cup of sacrifice.

Drank from The Cup of putting God first. Before pleasure, before safety, before comfort, before a nice home, or relaxation, or family, or a secure retirement, or any of a thousand other "good" things that distract so many of us from the race we are called to run.

The Cup represents our opportunity to recommit and accept our sacrifice to God. For *The Cup* -- the Holy Grail of Sacrifice -- is offered to each of us.

To drink from *The Cup* and accept the benefits -- eternal life with Christ -- without accepting the pain and sacrifice, without accepting that Christianity has a cost -- is to put the fruit of the vine to your lips without really drinking. It's tasting the fruit without really savoring the fullness of God's glory and pain and plan for your life. Without really maturing in him.

It's cheap Christianity. Fast food religion. Religion that can get you to heaven; but without nourishing anyone else.

To really drink from *The Cup* means to not just preach love, but to live it. It means being kind when you don't want to be, to give rather than receive, to forgive when every fiber of your being screams out for vengeance, to return insult for insult.

To really drink from *The Cup* involves discipline. It means study over leisure. Preaching and teaching and praying, rather than dying rich.

To really drink from *The Cup* means that you accept that God will allow Satan and his minions to abuse you. You will feel pain, unjustly; you will be verbally spat upon; you will be taken advantage of. And you will be expected --

as a servant of God -- to cry out, "Father forgive them." Ugh.

Why? Because the devil attacks. The Bible shows that every great saint was persecuted. Joseph. James. John. Peter. Paul. Steven.

Why does God allow it? Because God uses the abuse of his saints to prick the conscience of the abusers in order that they will turn from wickedness to Him.

To really drink from The Cup is to accept the maturity that comes from living for Jesus and living as he lived. A life of sacrifice, discipline, hardship, persecution, insults, and pain.

A life that led to Glory.

A life that changed the world. By the blood -- and the love -- the sacrifice -- of the Lamb of God. Who accepted, "Yet, not as I will, but what you will."<sup>6</sup>

"Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them. . ."<sup>7</sup>

Will you accept it?

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<sup>6</sup> Mk. 14:36.

<sup>7</sup> Mt. 26:27.