

“The Cup”

By Pastor Greg
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Isaiah 53:1-9

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A pastor was giving the children's message during church. On this particular Sunday, he was using squirrels for an object lesson on industry and preparation. He started out by saying, "I'm going to describe something, and I want you to raise your hand when you know what it is." The children nodded eagerly. "This thing lives in trees (pause) and eats nuts (pause)..." No hands went up. "And it is grey (pause) and has a long bushy tail (pause)..." The children were looking at each other, but still no hands were raised. "And it jumps from branch to branch (pause) and chatters and flips its tail when it's excited (pause)..." Finally one little boy tentatively raised his hand. The pastor breathed a sigh of relief and called on him. "Well...", said the boy, "I *know* the answer is Jesus...but is sure sounds like a squirrel to me!"

Peppered throughout the Old Testament are promises of a coming King that will set things right between people and God; a leader who will be unlike the world has ever seen. *“Rejoice, O people of Zion! Shout in triumph, O people of Jerusalem! Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey - riding on a donkey’s colt.”*¹ (Zechariah 9:9). *“Out of the stump of David’s family will grow a shoot - yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root. And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him - the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.”*² (Isaiah 11:1-2). *“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed.”*³ (Isaiah 61:1) Most of us today realize that the Bible is talking about Jesus. And I’m sure prophecies like these warmed the hearts of any Jew living in captivity. There would be One to come that would make them free at last. But I wonder what they must have thought when God spoke of His Servant suffering? How did they

¹Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

²Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

³Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

react to the words found in **Isaiah 53:1-9**? Did they know that this Suffering Servant would be the One to pay the penalty for their sin? Do we know this?

We are creatures of sin. And we all bear that stain because it has been passed down from generation to generation. And if you have been born of earthly parents, you too bear the same hideous mark of sin that the rest of humanity bears. It is the black, vile, and repulsive presence of sin that is an offence to God. And because of His righteousness, that sin is the object of His wrath.

At some point in your journey to find God, there will come a point when you see the stain of this sin in your own life. You look at yourself and are ashamed. You realize that God's wrath mentioned in the Old Testament has not changed. His anger still burns against sin (boy, there's an image of God many in America don't like to hear!). And the sad part is that no matter how hard you try to be good or do good, you still cannot remove that stain from your life. You're a sinner, and you know it, and you know God knows it. And the closer you get to God, the worse you feel. You expect that bolt of lightning. You expect the roof to collapse when you go to church.

God's wrath against sin and unrighteousness still exists, I mean, it's not like He has gone soft on sin. But may I share a passage of scripture with you that might just ease your mind? *"This is what the Sovereign Lord, your God and Defender, says: 'See, I have taken the terrible cup from your hands. You will drink no more of my fury.'"*⁴ (Isaiah 51:22). Okay, if not these Jews nor you and I, then Who? Who will drink of His wrath and fury? God promised that a day was coming when this "Cup of His fury" or the "Chalice of His wrath" would be passed on to His chosen suffering servant. The cup of God's fury will be taken from us and given to the One of God's own choosing. This is the meaning behind God's words in Isaiah 53.

I think we need to realize that God's wrath against our disobedience and our sin has not disappeared. He is just as angry today when we turn our backs to Him as He was back then. But His wrath has been taken away from us and given to another, and I just can't stop thinking about this.

⁴Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

God has taken this cup from my hands and passed it to His Son. And what has really impacted me is that He did not deserve it. He did nothing to deserve the cup of God's wrath. But I did. I keep expecting to drink from this cup that I know I deserve, but it never seems to happen. I go searching for the chalice of God's wrath and find that it has already been given to another; one who has done no wrong. I didn't ask Him to take it. I didn't freely pass it into the hands of Jesus; God took it from me and gave it to Him. It wasn't that I was a real good person or had enough stars on the Perfect Attendance chart in Sunday School. I did nothing to earn this. I was a miserable, despicable, sinful person. And yet God snatched this cup from my hands and passed it on to the Messiah; our "Suffering Servant"; He drank from the cup I should have been holding in the first place.

This is the story behind the cross. This is the debt that Christ paid on Calvary. He spoke of this promise when *"He took a cup of wine and gave thanks to God for it. He gave it to them and said, "Each of you drink from it, for this is my blood, which confirms the covenant between God and his people. It is poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many."*⁵ (Matthew 26:27-28). Is this true? Is the sacrifice of Jesus enough to wash away that stain of sin? Jesus says it is so. Even Paul makes this claim. *"For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood"*.⁶ (Romans 3:25). This is grace; where God has taken the wrath we deserve and passed it along to our Lord Jesus.

Okay, so the Bible says that Christ paid the penalty for your sin. It's all in here, black and white. God said His wrath would be poured out upon His Servant. Jesus said He is that Servant. Those who walked with Him said that He was that Servant. You can't argue with that. But is there a way you can be sure? Is there some proof that says this whole grace thing works? Somehow I believe God knew you were going to ask this. That's why He did something extraordinary so that you might know and believe that Jesus was the Son of God.

Break

⁵Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

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The world has heard countless stories of people sacrificing their life so that someone else may live.. A good person would do these things; lay down their life so others may be saved. Jesus even said that this is what He intended to do. *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.”*⁷ (John 10:11). But what makes the death of Jesus different than all else is that He didn’t stay dead, and He knew that He wouldn’t stay dead either. *“No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.”*⁸ (John 10:18).

Jesus spoke often of His death. And this news concerned the Apostles. But for some reason they missed His words about rising again. It wasn’t until they peered into the empty tomb that they believed. *“Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn’t go in. Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus’ head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed - for until then they still hadn’t understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead.”*⁹ (John 20:3-9).

Only God could accomplish something like this. Only God has this kind of power over death. And it is this same God that has promised us that we will find eternal life in Christ alone; that the wrath we deserve has been paid by Jesus. He took the cup of suffering that we deserved. But even though the sacrificial death of Jesus is significant, it is His triumph over the grave that causes us to celebrate like this. Sure, Jesus died for our sins. But death merely paid the penalty. It is in the resurrection that we find new life. *“So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man*

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*Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life.”*¹⁰ (1 Corinthians 15:21-22)

It was the resurrected Jesus that transformed Paul from a murderer to an Apostle. Knowing of Jesus’ death did not change his life. But meeting the risen Christ certainly did. To the Corinthian church, Paul writes *“I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him.”*¹¹ (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

So I pass along to you today what has been passed along for nearly 2000 years. Christ took the cup of suffering and paid the penalty for your sin. But He didn’t stop there. To break the chains of death, He rose from the grave three days later so that by Him you might have eternal life. This is not mere speculation because history testifies that the tomb was empty. Both Jewish and Roman historians agree. It is the resurrected Jesus that has been changing lives for nearly two millennia. And what I’m wondering today is whether the resurrected Jesus will change your life as well?

¹⁰Tyndale House Publishers. (2004). *Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

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