

TFTD L22 The cup of blessing

Tuesday, 5 April 2022



THE CUP OF BLESSING

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ?

(1 Corinthians 10.16)

Although we haven't been drinking from the common cup for rather a long time now, we are familiar with the idea that "through faith in Christ's blood, we ... obtain remission of our sins and all other benefits of his passion" (Book of Common Prayer). The cup in which we share in Christ's lifeblood is for the faithful Christian a cup of blessing.

The Old Testament contains hints of this cup of blessing:

In Psalm 23.5

**You have anointed my head with oil
and my cup shall be full.**

Or Psalm 116.11

**I will lift up the cup of salvation
And call upon the name of the Lord.**

But I'm always fascinated by the fact that the biblical metaphor of drinking the cup is not always a positive one. The cup is sometimes a very mixed blessing. Often, it is the cup of God's wrath against sinners!

Think of Isaiah 51.17:

Stand up, O Jerusalem,
you who have drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath,
who have drunk to the dregs the bowl of staggering.

Or Psalm 75.8:

For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup,
well mixed and full of foaming wine.
He pours it out for all the wicked of the earth;
they shall drink it and drain the dregs.

Here the cup is a bitter potion, a poisoned chalice (more like the cup of hemlock drunk by Socrates).

Moving on to the New Testament, Jesus speaks of his passion and death as "this cup". It's a cup he does not want to drink; in fact, he would love to avoid it: My Father; if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. But it was necessary for him to drink it in order for his cup of suffering to become the cup of blessing for his followers.

And when James and John, egged on by their Mum, ask Jesus for the places of honour in the kingdom of heaven, he tells them to be careful what they ask for: are you able to drink the cup that I drink? Yes, we can, they confidently reply – without really understanding what they are getting themselves into. Well, yes indeed, you will have to drink my cup, Jesus responds.

And that is why, when I receive the chalice, I sometimes think to myself: can I drink this cup? Because, although it is indeed the cup of blessing,

and in drinking from it I am uniting myself with Christ, with his mission and with the salvation he has won for me, I am at the same time uniting myself with his suffering and committing myself to the way of the cross. The cup of blessing is life and health for us all; but it can at times be a very mixed blessing.

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