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The Cup Question

By Harold Turner

This article is written in answer to a request made by one of our readers. We appreciate requests for articles, and hope that we can provide Bible answers that will make them easier to understand.

For many years there has been a controversy over the meaning of the cup, which Jesus referred to in instituting the Lord's Supper. This issue has created sharp contention, and has divided brethren in both worship and fellowship. The issue basically involves whether all members of a congregation must drink the fruit of the vine from one container, and whether or not it is scriptural to use individual containers for each member of a congregation.

The first reference to this subject is found in Mat. 26:27-28. Jesus "took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Also from Luke 22:17,20, "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

From these two references we find several clear points to consider. (1). Jesus took the cup, (2). He gave the cup to his disciples, (3). He instructed them to divide the cup among themselves, (4). Each disciple was to drink of the cup, (5). Jesus defined the cup as being "my blood of the new testament", (6). He further refers to the cup as being "this fruit of the vine."

What is the cup in the above Scriptures? Is it the container, the contents, or the contents and the container?

It is sometimes contended that to get a clear picture of these Scriptures, we must consider the Greek words from which they are translated, especially the word 'cup' and the word 'of'. Cup is translated from the Greek word 'poterion' which is defined as a vessel from which one drinks. The word 'of' is translated from the Greek word 'ek' which is translated in other places as 'out of' and 'from'.

Looking at these Greek words in no way improves or changes the clear and simple way that they are stated in our Bibles. For example, If one drinks 'of' a river, or 'out of' a river, or 'from' a river, we would understand each of these statements to mean the same. He might drink from or out of the river either directly, or by the use of some drinking vessel, but he still drinks from the river.

The Greek word 'poterion' may literally mean a vessel from which one drinks, however, it is not always used in the literal sense. In Mat. 26:39, 42 its use is obviously symbolic. "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup (poterion) pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt . . . O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." Surely no person would understand Jesus to be speaking of a literal drinking vessel, yet he uses a word meaning a literal drinking vessel. It might be observed from this that Jesus was to drink 'it' - the cup. It is not drink (ek) it, but drink it, the cup. What ever the cup was, it was to be drunk, not drunk from. If the cup here is a literal container, the literal container was to be drunk.

It may be possible for one to become so absorbed in his attention on the Greek words 'poterion' and 'ek', that he miss the clear statement of Jesus in telling us what the cup is. Jesus said, "this cup is the new testament in my blood." "For this (cup) is my blood of the new testament." The cup is clearly stated to symbolize or represent the blood Jesus shed for us.

How many cups are to be used in the Lord's Supper? Only One! This question is like asking how many bloods did Jesus shed for us. He shed His blood, and the cup is a symbol of that blood.

Jesus said the cup was his blood of the new testament. How many new testaments does He have? Only One! When we assemble to study this new testament, we all study from, or out of, the same new testament. However, we use a different container or volumn of this testament, but it is the same new testament. And people all over the world can read from the same new testament. In

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The Future

By Ted Knight

What is it that causes you the most worry in your life? Is it not the future? What is it that you spend most of your time talking about and planning for? Is it not the future? Do we not rush about in this life worrying about what will happen to the economy, what will happen to our children, what is going to happen in our nation, in the future? Is it not true that the reason some of us are working so diligently, even to the point of leaving the Lord out of our lives, is that we are concerned about the future?

Did you know that the word "future" is not even mentioned in the Bible? You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and never come across that word. In fact you will read where Solomon said, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring." (Prov. 27:1). You will read where James said, "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4:13-14).

It is good to make plans for our life. It is good to think of the children, and what they may face in the years to come. But, I am afraid that much of the time we are so concerned with tomorrow and the future, that we miss the great blessings of today. Sometimes we put off doing something that needs to be done because we are confident of tomorrow. Thousands will be lost eternally because they thought there was a future for them in this life, and they put off their obedience to the Lord until it was too late. Death came and they were unprepared. How sad!

What about your future? Are you making plans for your future with God in the right order in your life? My friend, if God is not the central figure in your life, then you have no future to look forward to. If you feel that tomorrow you will make things right with God, then listen to the apostle Paul, who says, "Today is the day of salvation: Now is the acceptable time." (2Cor. 6:2). If you want the future to be bright for you and your family, then get right with God today.

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and Harrold Turner.

Somebody Else

There's a clever young fellow
named Somebody Else
There's nothing that fellow
can't do.
He's busy from morning till late
at night,
Just substituting for you!

You're asked to do this, or
asked to do that,
And what is your reply?
"Oh, why pick on me . . . Get
Somebody Else
He'll do it much better than I."

You've a worn out excuse on the
tip of your tongue;
"Too busy, to . . ." something
or other.
When the honest truth of the
matter is,
You simply don't want to bother.

So much to do in this dreary
old world;
So much, and the workers so few,
And Somebody Else is still all
Tired and worn
Just substituting for your.

"Tis time that this faithful old
Somebody Else
Gets a much-needed vacation
Suppose you start substituting
for him,
And build up your own reputation!

Tom Anderson

"No man needs sympathy because he has to work, because he has a burden to carry. Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing."

Watch For Their Souls III

By W. R. Smith

The church is on the march where all the members are cooperating with the leaders to the extent of their ability to seek and save the lost. If there should be just one out of step or lagging behind, his influence could well stand in the way of many who otherwise would be saved. This one and other weak members must receive aid for their own sake as well as for the welfare of others who are jeopardized by their negative influence.

The task for every set of bishops is indoctrinating all of the members of the church. And what is indoctrination? It is a thorough understanding of "What doth the Lord require of thee," and a life which conforms to these requirements. How great is the task to bring every member of the congregation to this high standard of fitness? Much more time, concern, diligence, and talent are required than it usually gets. What are the symptoms of sickness among those who are in need of encouragement, sympathy, love, guidance, and nurturing? A few examples are:

First, moral laxities of many sorts could be mentioned. A few of the most serious are malice, evil speaking, adultery, hatred, strife, covetousness, extortion, drunkenness, lies, etc. If one member of the congregation, for example, is afflicted with covetousness it will take him to torment unless he can snap out of it, (Eph. 5:5). This is serious in the extreme, but it takes the form of even greater tragedy when we ponder Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 5:6, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump!" A corresponding statement is found in 1 Cor 12:26. If the entire congregation becomes infected by this loathsome leaven, as this teaching plainly implies it will, how can brethren be so complacent and sometimes even boast that "We are prosperous and gaining altitude." The lesson isn't that other members will become covetous because of this one person but that failure to help a lost brother who serves mammon involves all the rest in guilt. Are there those among us who want to stand up and ask, "Well, what can be done about it"?

Secondly, spiritual stupor---inertia---lukewarmness---is another infectious influence that must be rooted out. Is it enough to preach to and warn these lost souls (Rev. 3:16) of the certainty of their eternal death? This teaching or warning must be supplemented by personal contacts. We, too, must be warned that our salvation is at stake if we content ourselves to live peaceably with "the accursed thing among us." (Joshua 7).

Third, failure to develop and put to use God-given talents in righteous works is a serious offense (Matt. 25:26). The talented cannot possibly escape the judgment of God except by channeling a goodly portion of their superior abilities into the vineyard of the Lord. Many who are neglecting this development could be stimulated and led into greater avenues of fruitfulness by diligent leaders. If potentially good servants are lost by default, how can those who are responsible escape condemnation?

Fourth, trouble makers have threatened the peace and effectiveness of churches from the beginning of this age (Acts 20:29-30). How to deal with delinquent elements of this sort is very plainly set forth in the Bible, Romans 16:17-18. No faithful church will allow "damnable heresies" (II Pet. 2:1) of which there are many to hamper its work of saving the lost. Something can and must be done about it.

Indoctrination, then, is the eternal process of watching for and building up every member who shows signs of faltering in some way. It is a work that is never completed. There are no rest periods. Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom and glory. Truly then, the success of leaders is determined by the success of the followers. Also it is proven that competent leaders know where they are going and how to get there.

It makes us shudder to meditate upon the statement contained in a recent church bulletin where it was stated, "As the usual thing, the church is an easy-going organization. Spiritually speaking, it carries more church babies around on pillows and keeps more invalids in wheel chairs than any hospital in the country."

There is no challenge which faces the church that is more serious than that of watching for the souls of church members (Heb. 13:17).

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Opportunity To Do Good

Live Today... Reach For Tomorrow

By Clovis Ragsdale

In his letter to the churches in Galatia, Paul stated, "And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (Gal. 6:9-10).

Opportunities to do good often present themselves daily. Paul admonished that we not grow weary in well doing. This suggests the frequency of doing good. Yet, this is not to suggest that benevolence is without limitations. Opportunity not only means to come into contact with a need, but also the ability to meet that need when contacted.

Many congregations find that opportunities to do good are far more numerous than the ability to supply the needs. Sometimes the case may be that of a stranger passing through our community, who has need of car and food expense for his continued journey. The fact that some people drive from town to town contacting every religious group in each town, and in fact make their living in such a manner, makes it necessary for us to use care in ministering, without question, to all such cases. Some such individuals have been questioned and found to be lying about their past and present relationship to the church. This is not to imply that we are not to aid people in their problems who are not members of the church. However, since the ability to meet the many needs that are presented to us is limited, we must give priority to the needs of our brethren - "Do good to all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." This does not rule out our helping a person of the world, but it does lessen our obligation toward the non-Christian people.

A growing problem in the allocation of funds for good works is facing the leaders in the church today. Inflation and recession are putting a heavy drain on the church treasury. Care and priority must be given to aid the work which is believed to accomplish the most good.

The preaching of the gospel to all the world must not be overlooked in the growing demands made on the home-front. Our efforts to assist in the mission fields are being strained by economic conditions, both in our own country and abroad. Support for homeless children is an increasing problem. Since we are only able to meet a limited portion of these problems, the exercise of judgment to wisely choose the

work that can be properly dealt with is most demanding.

The membership of the Lord's people should be prepared to make greater sacrifices in the days ahead. Most of us are probably "in debt" to the Lord for what we have not given in the prosperous times of recent years. Now would be a good time to repay by giving "till it hurts", which few have really ever done.

The statement of Jesus, "the harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few" (Luke 10:2) is still true in our time. As opportunities to do good multiply, the ability to assist faces a greater challenge. The challenge to meet these conditions may well be the greatest test the church will face in this century. May God grant us the faith, the love, and the courage to rise up and fulfill this ever increasing challenge.

It is said that a soldier who enlisted in the Civil War took along his kit of watchmaker's tools. While in camp, he did a considerable business. One day the order came for battle. He looked around his tent in dismay, and exclaimed: "Why, I can't possibly go for I have twelve watches to repair and I have promised them by Saturday."

This man had forgotten why he enlisted. But, many a present day Christian soldier is like that. He has obligated himself to so many organizations and causes that he has precious little time to do battle for the Lord. Is that what is happening to many of our members on Sunday morning? Are we too busy and too occupied to have time for the Bible study? Think it over!

He who leaves God out of his plan will see his plan fail.

The more you wait for something to turn up, the more liable you are to get turned down.

A Chinese proverb says: "Free sitters grumble most at the play."

The more sluggish the stream, the more crooked it runs. So, with a man's life.

The man who rides a hobby generally wants the whole road to himself."

Hope for the best, prepare for the worst, and take what the Lord sends.

By Don Smith

Paul's life was a great one. The motivating philosophy of his life is set forth graphically in Phil. 3:13-14, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." These are the same forces that ought to inspire each Christian and each congregation to greater service for the Lord.

A sense of personal weakness underlies much of Paul's writing. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended;" Recognizing one's own failings and unworthiness, gives him a greater reliance on the Lord and His strength.

Paul was also motivated by a singleness in purpose, "This ONE thing I do." Most of us dilute ourselves too much. Steam, when allowed to spread itself into the air, is soon gone, But when confined to a single purpose, it can power a locomotive. If we spend all of our energy blowing our whistle, the wheels will never turn. Let us never forget that going to heaven and helping someone else get there is the most important work in the world. Beside this all else fades into insignificance.

Another important factor in Paul's great accomplishments was, "Forgetting those things which are behind." This is one of the hardest things we will ever do. We tend to hand on to, and glory in the "good ole days, especially when it relates to our achievements. It is easy to spend so much time talking about what we "use to do" that we don't have time to do any thing now. Paul had a noble ancestry and great accomplishments as a young Jew, but he did not hesitate a minute to turn from these things to follow Christ. His efforts in preaching the gospel were crowned with success: - souls were saved - congregations were established - and the church grew, yet he never sat down and said, "I have done my part, let someone else suffer now." Not only did he forget his achievements, he forgot his injuries. He refused to allow another's treatment of him to poison his mind with hate and rot his soul with envy. When we brood on such things we nurture an attitude that can destroy our soul to eternal destruction. We need an oblivion of the

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Salvation Is Free, But Not Cheap

By Glynn V. Purdy

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

We live in the age of the cheap and inferior. Consider the things we buy. One would think, judging by the advertisements, that our products would be the best ever produced. But if you have ever stocked up on modern machines, gadgets, and appliances you know better. They are not made of stuff that will stand wear and tear, they are made to wear out quickly so that we will buy the next one.

When one looks at the original copies of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, he is convinced that those historic documents were put together well. Those men took time to write a masterpiece. We haven't turned anything out like that in a long time.

We live in a day when we must realize that we have a "cheap christianity" that does not cost us much. The shame and reproach of the old rugged cross means little more than a line in the songbook. We sing "Am I a Soldier of the Cross" but if Uncle Sam's soldiers went about their business as some church members do, they would end up in the guard house. Paul used athletic terms to describe Christian experiences; how the athletes of the world disciplined themselves to win corruptible crowns. When one considers the sloppy living of so many professing Christians, who claim to be running the greatest of races, fighting the greatest of battles, working for the eternal prize, he can only hang his head in shame.

Christianity is not a glorified picnic, a sanctified hayride! We are afflicted nowadays with a cheap Christianity, a kind of religious popcorn diet -- no cross, no discipline! We receive the word of joy, but we have no root nor depth and are soon offended. There are too many religious hoboes trying to go to heaven as cheaply as possible, with just enough prayer and service to get by.

Jesus taught us to anticipate his "Well done good and faithful servant." Today the big idea is just to get the job done and collect the pay with no thought of a job well done. This land is enjoying the great era of the goof-off, the age of the half done job. This generation wants the crown without the cross, the sweet without the bitter, the delights without the duties. We want the advantages of America with no responsibilities. Young people want the benefit of home without

obeying parents. The church rolls carry hundreds of names but a small percent does the work and pays the bills. If churches had to depend on one half to three fourths of the membership, they could not operate.

Anything that is worthwhile costs something. The cost of salvation was Jesus - "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Gal. 1:4). We need more of the attitude which the apostle Paul expressed, when he said, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Cor. 12:15). Let us read anew the words of Jesus that heads this article. To be His disciple, we must be willing to pay the price. There can be no cheap Christianity if we be followers of Christ. Salvation is free, but it is not cheap!

LIVE TODAY (Continued)

past that will let us profit from past experiences without clinging to it and letting it ruin the future.

Another important factor for Paul was that he was "Reaching forth unto those things that are before" him. This causes one to set goals, make plans, and work to achieve them. Long range goals help us to plan better, but the achieving of them is done one step at a time. A "four-minute-mile" is run one step at a time; an eighty year life is lived one day at a time. The Christian has his eyes fixed firmly on Christ and he lives each day for Him. We begin each day with a prayer, "Lord help me to live this day as you want me to." We work, achieve, and sometimes fail, but as God's child, we can say at the day's end, "Lord, I fell short, I'm sorry, forgive me, and help me to do better tomorrow." The days lengthen into years, and we grow stronger as we move steadily toward that crown of victory at the end.

"No use sitting and fretting, you cannot change your fate; God provides the fishing, but you have to dig the bait."

"If Christ stays, sin goes; if sin stays, Christ goes."

"One of the hardest things in the world to open is a closed mind."

THE CUP QUESTION (Continued)

like manner there is only one cup, we all drink from, or out of, the same cup. All people all over the world can drink from the same cup, for there is but one. That cup is the blood of the new testament which Jesus shed, and symbolized by the fruit of the vine.

In 1 Cor. 10:16, Paul wrote, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" The individual Christian has communion with Christ in the cup and the bread. It is not a communion between Christians, but the Christian and Christ. This communion is not the container of either the bread or the cup, but upon the bread itself, and the cup itself. The bread representing the body, the cup representing the blood.

Jesus placed no stress upon the container of that which represented His blood. It is when we fail to remember Him, properly discerning His body, that we eat and drink damnation to ourselves, not when we drink the cup from individual containers.

To make the law that all members of the congregation must drink from the same container, is to make a law that is without Scriptural support. Yet this law has been made by some, and enforced to the point of dividing the church. To support this law a congregation must not grow beyond the number that can all drink from the same container. As one advocate of this doctrine wrote, when the congregation reaches about 70 members, they need to start another congregation, for about 70 is all that can drink from one container. I wonder what Scripture this teaching is based upon. The first church mentioned in the Bible began with over 3,000 members.

Great care must be taken to follow our Lord's admonition from 2 John 9, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." To go beyond or to fall short of the doctrine of Christ is to sever ourselves from God.

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