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Sermon preached at "Ebenezer" Clapham by Mr. J. Delves on Wednesday evening 24th. November, 1948

Text: "And He saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of My cup"  
Matthew 20.23

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How very sacred are the things of God! Nothing can have the same concern for us, as eternal things. If we could realise what eternity means and what lies before us, in relation to our tremendous destiny, we should have no rest until we could feel some gracious ground to hope that the Lord has a favour toward us. It is an amazing mercy to have any experience of the blessed Gospel. There is a great difference between a mere theory or idea of theology, and a gracious experience of the truth. It is obvious that this can only be known by walking things out in our experience under the light of a measure of divine revelation by the Holy Spirit convincing of sin and opening before the conscience of a convinced sinner the way from hell to heaven.

O what an amazing mercy it is to know Christ, and to have Him 'formed in our hearts the hope of glory', but if that be so, there will be in some degree, more or less, as the Lord may dispose, a partaking of, and drinking of, His cup. This is a very striking word that the Lord said to these two sons of Zebedee. When the mother of Zebedee's children came "worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him" He saith unto her, "What wilt thou? She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left in Thy kingdom". O poor nature ever would seek for honours. Nature would have the crown without the cross. There was a willingness in these two disciples. When the Lord said to them "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto Him, We are able". But they had very little understanding of what was involved in that; there appears to have been a degree of self-confidence, which later was removed from them. Although in the case of each of these two disciples, James and John, we have to see they did indeed drink of the Saviour's cup - they

gave their lives unto death; James was killed with the sword, and John, after suffering long banishment was ultimately, we believe, put to death. Both of these disciples did drink of the Saviour's cup.

It is rather noticeable that the Lord said to them here, "Ye shall drink indeed of My cup". He did not say, A few of My followers will; but whether you will or not remains to be proved - you may drink of it, or you may not. No, "Ye shall drink indeed of My cup". This seems to set forth the way of true believers, the path in which they must walk if they are following their suffering Lord. There seems to be some measure of sacred fellowship with Him in suffering; it comes in different ways, but the Lord has a cup to give to His people, and we shall have a cup to drink if we are really joined to Him. "Ye shall indeed drink of My cup". Not of a cup, but of My cup. This expresses the fellowship the Lord's people have with Christ in His sufferings. But O, beloved hearers, it is such a little we know of these sacred mysteries! But still, you and I, if we are His, will have a few ingredients in our cup, that may be a sharp medicine for us; and yet at the same time, when the Lord sanctifies it, we know that the bitter is sweet and the medicine is food. All follows well with the Lord's appointments! a dispenser could possibly make a mistake in mixing a medicine, and put a wrong ingredient in it, which could be at the cost of one's life; but the Lord never makes a mistake in mixing the cup for His people to drink, never!

"My Father's hand prepares the cup  
And what He wills is best."

And when we can feel that in a right way, it brings a sacred quietness, produces a holy submission, which helps us to say, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done".

But I have to bring this before you and myself, "He saith unto them, ye shall drink indeed of My cup". First of all, then, what do we see in this cup of suffering that the Saviour drank? What does faith see involved in that cup? Well, I know there is far more than we can conceive, but still there are a few things that appear

before our view, in relation to this cup of suffering. There is first the sovereign, immutable love of God. It seems all, as it were, to have its rise here. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." The Father's gift of the Saviour unto this end, is surely the highest emanation of divine love that could possibly be, and the same thing applies to the blessed Redeemer; love moved His heart to come to bear the awful load of imputed guilt, and thus to open the channel of mercy to a rebel. Love moved Him unto this.

As you know, I have often been struck with that Scripture in Isaiah's prophecy, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him." It is just the way it is expressed. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. It is not as though it was after bitter, painful regrets that He thus suffered, but it was in His heart to do this, It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. I have sometimes had some sweet meditation there. "He hath put Him to grief". But O what distinguishing love! "Greater love hath no man than this, that a Man lay down His life for His friends." There could be no greater love than this! Hart expressed it very beautifully,

What mighty motive could Thee move?  
The motive's plain; 'twas all for love.  
For love of whom? Of sinners base,  
A hardened herd, a rebel race;  
That mocked and trampled on Thy blood,  
And wantoned with the wounds of God."

O amazing love of God! Not only so, but in this we see covenant agreement. O, what a sweet contemplation is this - the Saviour was as willing to come, as His Father to send Him, and the Holy Ghost in perfect agreement with the Father and the Son, in relation to all who should be brought to a blessed, saving knowledge of this Gospel. "There are Three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these Three are One", - united in perfect harmony in relation to all that was involved in the

redemption of the church of God, and every individual believer embraced in it.

Again, in this cup of suffering, we see the ransom price paid, the debt cancelled. He paid the debt His brethren owed by suffering the hell they deserved. So we believe it to be, although it is to us a profound mystery. Yet we do well to -

"Behold a scene of matchless grace,  
'Tis Jesus in the sinners' place."

He bore away the mighty debt, He cancelled the mighty sum, He satisfied justice. All this was involved in the cup of suffering and it is so seen by precious faith, when a suffering Redeemer is revealed to the soul.

We see too the law honoured in all its parts. By His obedience and death He fulfilled the law and made it honourable. Yes, although He did not violate any precept of it, yet He suffered the penalty of a broken law substitutionally for His people. O what an amazing thing is this! And this is where justification comes in-

"My breaches of the law are His  
And His obedience mine."

What do we see in this cup of suffering? We see a vile transgressor made a justified person. Justice can never pass the cross and strike a coming sinner; it found full satisfaction there. There was no answer to the words, "It is finished!" They were the final words of the Redeemer before He expired. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished; and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." O beloved hearers, here is the ground of our hope, we have none beside. I had a night in my life once, when I felt I could pass into eternity resting on the atonement; but how little I understand.

"Much we talk of Jesus' blood;  
But how little's understood!"

And yet here it is, a full, free atonement. Atonement for lepers. Although He is our great High Priest, separate from sinners, yet a leper can touch Him, and the touch of a leper will not defile Him - but it will cleanse the leper. We read that on one occasion, He put forth His hand and touched a leper and cleansed his leprosy. There

is no other healing but the balm of Jesus' blood. Nothing can heal the sores of our sin but "the fountain open for sin and uncleanness." This is what I desire to bring before you as my people; it is the foundation on which we must stand.

"Just as I am, without one plea  
But that Thy blood was shed for me"

But what does faith see in this cup of suffering? It sees an open way from hell to heaven.

"A bleeding Jesus is the Way  
And blood tracks all the path."

That will do for us; we need nothing more, we can do with nothing less! It is true we can do without much of what the world calls religion; we can do without all that, but we cannot do without Christ. We must have Him or perish, and some here know that. They have been brought to that blessed point "Give me Christ, or else I die." In this cup of suffering faith sees the hand of infinite wisdom, mercy, justice, goodness, love, power and faithfulness; all these attributes of Deity blending together, harmonising, as it were, in the complete redemption of the ransomed church of God.

O but are we following Him? What did the Saviour say here? Perhaps it may make us tremble a little. He said, "Ye shall drink indeed of My cup." That seems to have been sounding in my ears. That one word "indeed" makes it so certain. "Ye shall drink indeed of My cup", and so it falls out with us, and so is the promise, is it not? He says, "I will bring the third part through fire" - not/through the round it, I will bring them through it. And this drinking of the cup implies some furnace work, some burning up of things, some hard things, some painful, bitter things. Yet here it is - Ye shall drink indeed of My cup. What was that cup that the Saviour drank? How can we speak of that? It involves so much more than we can begin to comprehend. To my view, He was drinking this cup all through His life. Even in infant days He was persecuted by Herod who sought His life, so that the word was given to Joseph to take Him and His mother into Egypt. They were compelled to flee into Egypt to escape the sword and all the male children were slain by Herod's edict; they were forced to remain there, until they were dead who

sought His life. Was there ever anyone subject to such envy, malice, and blasphemy, as the Saviour was? O what a cup He had to drink.

Think too, of those temptations in the wilderness which followed His baptism, when He was so signally honoured and His Sonship proved - when the heavens were opened and a voice was heard, "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased." "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness." Think of those temptations! Were they not an ingredient in the cup of suffering that the Saviour drank? He did not fall a prey to Satan's temptations. God forbid! but it is evident that He suffered pain of heart on account thereof, for the apostle referring to them said, "For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted." Yes, it was necessary for Him to drink the cup, in order that He might be a sympathising High Priest with His poor, afflicted followers. But O what a cup it was He drank, and how true, "At most we do but taste the cup  
For Thou alone hast drunk it up."

Think of those temptations. What a cup of suffering that was. Yet He drank it. He bore with holy fortitude the temptations in the wilderness - temptations to distrust the providence of God, temptations to presumption, temptations to idolatry. I believe that the very temptations that the Lord was tempted with in the wilderness, are the very temptations the devil tempts His followers with - he tempts them to distrust their God, he tempts them to presumption, he tempts them to idolatry, and who can say what some of these temptations are? But O think how the holy Sufferer stood in those temptations! There is a depth there we cannot follow, but it was His cup and it was His cup of suffering too.

Another ingredient in that cup consisted in the blasphemies and insults hurled against Him. O, how often He suffered these! Even His miracles were attributed to the agency of Satan and yet with wonderful meekness and patience, He endured those blasphemous insults. Many times they charged Him falsely yet "When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." This was a bitter ingredient in His cup.

The privations He suffered were an ingredient in His cup too. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." He had not the comforts we have, the daily comforts that we enjoy. No. His was a bitter cup indeed. It was a bitter cup - yet He drank it. He drank it freely and willingly. He drank it to the very dregs.

We follow Him to the garden, and contemplate the garden conflict; what He bore there when He struggled with the powers of hell, and when, as we were reading in the chapter (Luke 22.42) "He prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done." He had, as it were, the cup in His hand with the bitter ingredients before Him, in awful suffering; and yet "He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." He knew what it would mean, He knew what was before Him in the garden, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God believe also in Me". But think of the garden conflict - think what He bore there - when the intolerable load of imputed sin lay upon Him, the wrath of offended justice, when justice unsheathed its sword and smote Him as the guilty party. Although He was the innocent Person, He stood in the guilty sinners' place as though He had committed the sin. That is a striking word of Paul, "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." It was a bitter ingredient in His cup, in the garden, when He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"; when blood fell from His sacred brow. We cannot penetrate those depths.

"Mysterious conflict! dark disguise!  
Hid from all creatures' peering eyes;  
Angels, astonished, viewed the scene;  
And wondered yet what all could mean."

But He drank the cup! O, if He had faltered there! If He had failed there, all our hopes would have been dashed and the whole fabric of redemption would just have crumbled to pieces.

"Our Captain stood the fiery test  
And we shall stand through Him."

O but what a cup it was! We follow Him to the Judgment Hall, to the mockery there, the buffeting, the scourging, the false

accusations, and think of the quietness and patience with which He bore them. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." So He drank the cup! He did not go back, but went forward to a maze of agony. "For the LORD GOD will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed". He came to the place. "They led Him away" to be crucified. He came to the cross and was lifted up, and there, before the gaze of all, was crucified. "He poured out His soul unto death." A voluntary death; He laid down His life; it was a commandment. "This commandment have I received of My Father". "I lay down My life for the sheep."

O dear hearers, I know not how to speak of this. Words fail when we try to describe the Saviour's sufferings; they are heights we can never reach and depths we can never fathom.

"But this we hope - 'twas done for us"  
poor, unworthy sinners, pieces of sin, rebels, poor insignificant mortals and yet objects of eternal love.

But here He said, "Ye shall drink indeed of My cup." How can that be? Well, I believe it will be in the experience of the Lord's people, but, of course, not in the way the Saviour drank the cup. But still the wine is mingled, as we read in the Proverbs, "Drink of the wine which I have mingled". Ingredients have been put into my cup, and your cup, and bitter ingredients too. But it was said to be the cup His Father gave Him. To Peter He said "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" It was the cup His Father gave Him and He did drink it; and your heavenly Father will give you a cup to drink, and He will put the ingredients into it - whatever they may be. Therefore, as we may have grace, it is for us to walk in the path of His appointments to take up our cross and follow Him, in that way He has directed us. It will be well in the end, but there will be a cross to bear.

"Shall Simon bear the cross alone  
And all the rest go free?  
No, there's a cross for every one,  
And there's a cross for me."

Yes, there is a cross for us! It is a drinking of the cup and it

expresses some conformity to the Lord Jesus in suffering - but indeed there is not much drinking of this cup in these days. There is not that real, close separation from the world and its things, which marked the lives of our forefathers who followed more closely in the ways of truth.

"Ye shall drink indeed of My cup". And sometimes this drinking of the Saviour's cup is realised in a little sacred fellowship with Him, in repentance, a view of the cross, a broken spirit - not broken bones. There is a difference between broken bones and a broken heart. Broken bones, which David speaks of in Psalm 51, were a painful anguish under unforgiven sin, but a broken heart is a mingled grief and joy under a taste of forgiveness, at the cost of such ineffable suffering, a view of the cross which melts the heart and eyes, and brings a poor sinner to weep to the praise of the mercy he has found. And in your circumstances in life you must drink of His cup. "Through much tribulation" His people enter the kingdom of God. "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the Name of the Lord." And sometimes it is particularly felt in your life and experience, that it is a drinking of His cup. Some trials are shown to His people in this way; they are not ordinary troubles, as the world all have troubles, but they are sanctified trials - which bring/into closer conformity with a once-suffering Christ. They are so cleansing!

"Ye shall drink indeed of My cup", and of the ingredients in the cup. There they are, but with all the sorrow attending them, pain anguish and grief, yet every ingredient is mixed in covenant love. It is the Father's cup and it is indeed given us. "Ye shall drink indeed of My cup". Yes, whatever we have to pass through, losses, adversities, afflictions - there is no ingredient in our cup so bitter as the ingredients the Saviour had. Moreover, when you can feel it is a Father's cup given you, there is a wonderful support in that. You can receive it and drink it; receive its bitter ingredients and walk in the path of His appointments, take

up your cross and follow Him, scorn the world and all its things,  
scorn the cross and behold the crown.

May the Lord help us! When we think of what others suffered,  
the martyrs who gave their life unto death - how they did drink of  
the cup of suffering for Christ's sake - may we pray for grace to  
follow on and seek to bear the cross, till all shall be exchanged  
for eternal, unremitting joy - world without end. Amen.