

The Cup of Wrath!

Andrew Bonar (1810–1892)

“In the hand of the LORD is a cup full of red wine mixed with spices; he pours it out, and all the wicked of the earth drink it down to its very dregs!” Psalm 75:8

It will help greatly to the right apprehension of this solemn subject, to notice that *Christ* is the speaker of these sober truths. They cannot, then, have been spoken harshly; they must have been uttered in all *tenderness*.

This shall be in the day when He returns to judge the earth. It is He, meanwhile, who upholds all by the word of His power; He *keeps* the world from falling into ruin; He it is who *sustains* that blue firmament, as well as earths foundations, “I bear up the pillars thereof” — and were I to withhold my hand, all would tumble into ruin.

Oh that an unthinking world would consider! Oh that fools would learn wisdom, and the proud fall down before their Lord. For the Judge shall surely come, with the cup of red wine in His hand — a cup of wrath, of which every rebellious one must drink to the dregs! The horns of the wicked shall soon be laid low, and the righteous alone exalted (Psalm 75:9-10).

It is of this *cup*, that we this day wish to speak to you. It gives an alarming, awakening view of our God and Savior. It is not “God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,” but God the *Judge*, Christ the Judge. It is not the King with the golden scepter, inviting all to draw near — it is the King risen up in wrath, in the evening of the day of grace, to “judge all the wicked of the earth.”

Oh there is a Hell, an endless Hell, awaiting the ungodly! The Judge warns us of it — in order that none of us may be cast into that tremendous woe! Say not in your hearts, “God is too *loving* and *merciful* ever to condemn a soul to such woe.” If you continue in sin, you shall know too late that the Judge does condemn; not because He is not infinitely loving, but because your sin compels Him so to do. Listen to what is written, and you will every unbeliever shall drink of this wine of God’s indignation.

I. The Cup of Wrath

The general idea of the verse is, that there is wrath against sin to be manifested by God, terrible beyond conception. As it is written in Ezekiel 18:4, “The soul that sins, it shall die;” and Psalm 7:11-12, “God is *angry* with the wicked every day. If he turns not — He will whet His sword; He has bent His bow, and made it ready. He has prepared for him the instruments of death.” In Psalm 11:6-7, “Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: this is the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loves righteousness.” In Psalm 21:9, “You shall make them as a fiery oven in the time of Your anger.” In Job 36:18, “Because there is wrath, beware lest He take you away with His stroke; then a great ransom

cannot deliver you.” In Romans 2:5 we read, You “treasures up unto yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;” and in Revelation 14:9-10, “If any man worships the beast, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of His holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb!” Can words be found more emphatic to express *God’s indignation at man’s sin*?

“A CUP” is spoken of. *A measured out portion*. (Psalm 11:6 and Psalm 16:5, “The Lord is the portion of *my* cup”). It is frequently used to express a *full* amount; as when fulfillment of curse is called the “cup of trembling,” (Isaiah 51:22); and in Ezekiel 23:31-33, wrath upon Samaria is, “the cup of Samaria.”

God’s wrath shall be given forth in a *measured portion*, deliberately and fairly considered. There shall be nothing of caprice, nothing arbitrary, in God’s judgment on sin; all shall be fairly adjusted. Here are the *sins* — there is the *cup*, of a size proportioned to the sin, and *full*. God’s perfections direct and dictate the filling of it. It is “a cup of red wine.” He elsewhere calls it “The wine of my fury;” and Revelation 16:19, it is “Wine of the fierceness of His wrath.” In the East, red wine was usually the strongest; but besides, the fiery nature of the contents is indicated by the color.

This “red wine” is pressed out of the grapes by the divine attributes. It must be the *concentrated essence of wrath*; no weak potion, but one like that in Jeremiah 25:16, where they “drink, and are moved, and are mad;” or that in Ezekiel 23:32, 33, “A cup deep and large; it contains much; a cup of astonishment and desolation, filled with drunkenness and sorrow.”

It is “mixed with spices.” This signifies that the wine’s natural quality has been strengthened; its force has been *intensified* by various ingredients cast into it. Such is the sense of “mingled wine” in Isaiah 5:22, and in Proverbs 9:5, “Come... drink of the wine which I have mingled.” We must distinguish this from the expression “without mixture,” in Revelation 14:10, where the speaker means to say, that there is no infusion of water to weaken the strength of the wine.

Here in Psalm 95, there is everything that may enhance the bitterness of the cup; and let us ask, What may be these various ingredients? From every side of the lost sinner’s nature, forms of misery shall arise. The *body*, as well as the *soul*, shall be steeped in never-ending anguish, amid the unceasing wretchedness of eternal exile and lonely imprisonment. Further, each attribute of Godhead casts something into the cup!

Righteousness is there, so that the rich man in Hell (Luke 16) dare not hint that his torment is too great. *Mercy* and *Love* stand by and cast on it their ingredients, testifying that the sinner was dealt with in longsuffering, and salvation placed within his reach. O the aggravation which this thought will lend to misery. *Omnipotence* contributes to it; the lost man in the hands of the *Almighty* is utterly helpless, as weak as a worm! *Eternity* is an ingredient, telling that this wrath endures as long as God lives. And *truth* is there, declaring that all this is what God spoke, and so cannot be altered without overturning His throne.

Yet more! While shame and contempt, and the consciousness of being disowned by every holy being, fiercely sting the soul — there are ingredients cast in by the *sinner himself*. His *conscience* asserts and attests that this woe is all *deserved*, and the man loathes himself. *Memory* recalls past opportunities and times of hope despised. *Sin* goes on increasing, and passions rage; cravings gnaw the unsatisfied soul with eternal hunger! It may be that *every particular sin* will contribute to the mixture — a woe for lusts gratified; a woe for every act of drunkenness, and every falsehood and dishonesty; a woe for every rejected invitation, and every threatening disregarded. Who can tell what more may be meant by the words: “mixed with spices?”

It has “dregs” in it. The dregs lie at the bottom, out of sight, but are the *bitterest*. Do these mean *hidden woes* not yet conceived of by any? Such as may be hinted at in the words, “Better he had never been born!” Such as Christ’s woes seem to speak of? These shall be the *reverse* of the saved man’s joys, “which never have entered the heart” to imagine!

Backsliders seem sometimes to have begun to taste these dregs. Apostates, like Spira, have shown a little of what they may be. But oh, the reality in the ages to come! For it shall be the wrath of Him whose breath makes the mountains smoke, and rocks earth to its center. O the staggering madness of *eternal despair*!

God “pours out of the same.” “The wicked shall *drink* it down to its very dregs!” They are not meant to be merely shown; this is not a cup whose contents shall only be *exhibited* and then withdrawn. No, the wicked *must* “drink it” and cannot refuse. When Socrates, the Athenian sage, was adjudged to drink the cup of poison, he was able to protest his innocence, and thus to abate the bitterness of the draught, though he took it as awarded by the laws of his country. Here, however, there shall be nothing like protest, nothing of and such alleviation of the awful draught which the sinner must drink! “God pours out,” and the guilty soul “shall drink it down to its very dregs!”

Job 27:22, says “They would gladly flee out of his hand,” but cannot, for it is written, “God shall cast upon him, and not spare.” In Jeremiah 25:15-16, we have the Lord most peremptorily commanding, “Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. When they drink it, they will stagger and go mad.” And further, He insists, verse 28, “But if they refuse to take the cup from your hand and drink, tell them, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty says: You *must* drink it!’” “They *shall* drink of the wrath of the Almighty” (Job 21:20).

And what do those words already quoted in Revelation 14:10 mean? “He, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb!”

It shall not, on God’s part, be a mere silent feeling of indignation at sin; there must be *infliction* of curse. There is no thunder while the electricity sleeps in the cloud. The seven seals showed no deliverance for earth, while unbroken; the seven trumpets summoned no avengers, till sounded; the seven vials brought down no judgment, while only held in the angels’ hands. Ah yes, the penalty must be *exact*ed, and it will require *eternity* to exact it all!

O fellow-sinner, we have tried to say something of this doom; but what are *words of man*? You have seen a porous vessel, in which was fine flavored liquor. Outside you tasted the moisture, and it gave a slight idea of what was within; but slight indeed. So our words today. And remember *each new sin* of yours will throw more ingredients into the mixture. It is the merciful One Himself, who speaks in Ezekiel 22:14: “Can your hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with you? I the Lord have *spoken* it — and will *do* it.” It is dreadful to read and hear this *proclamation* of wrath; but it is all given in order to compel us to flee from it. As one of our poets (Montgomery) sings:

“Mercy has writ the lines of judgment here;
None who from the earth can read them, need despair.”

II. The story of One who drank this *cup* to the dregs!

We would not leave you merely contemplating the terrors of that wrath. We go on, in connection with it, to speak of one whose history has a strange bearing on our case.

There has been only **One** who has ever “drunk this cup to its very dregs!”

Cain has been drinking it for 5,000 years and finds his punishment greater than he can bear, but has not come to the *dregs*.

Judas had been drinking it for some 2000 years, often crying out with a groan that shakes Hell, “Oh that I had never been born! Oh that I had never seen or heard of the Lord Jesus Christ!” But he has not reached the dregs.

The *fallen angels* have not come near the dregs: for they have not arrived at the judgment of the Great Day.

The only **One** who has taken, tasted, drunk, and wrung out the bitterest of the bitter dregs — has been the *Judge Himself*, the Lord Jesus!

You know how often, when on earth, He spoke of it. “Are you able to drink the *cup* that I shall drink of?” (Matthew 20:22). “The *cup* which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11). The universe saw Him with it at His lips. It was *our* cup of trembling; the cup in which the wrath due to the “multitude which no man can number” was *mixed*. What wrath, what woe! A *few drops* made Him cry, “Now is my soul deeply troubled!” In the garden, the *sight* of it wrung out the strange, mysterious words, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death!” though God-man, He *staggered* at what He saw, and went on trembling.

The next day, on *Calvary*, He drank it *all*! I suppose the three hours of darkness may have been the time when He “was drinking down the dregs”; for then arose from His broken heart the wail which so appealed to the heart of the Father, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!” As He ended the *last drop*, and cried out, “It is finished!” we may believe angels felt an

inconceivable relief — and even the Father Himself! So tremendous was the wrath and curse! — the wrath and curse due to *our sin!*

In all this, there was nothing *too much*. Love would protest against *one drop too much*; and never do you find God exceeding. Did He not hasten to stay Abraham's hand, when enough had been done on Moriah? and at that same spot again, David's day, when Justice had sufficiently declared the sharpness of its two-edged sword — did He not again hasten to deliver, crying, "It is enough!" How much more then, when it was His beloved Son!

He sought from Him, all that was needed by *justice*. And so we find in this *transaction*, what may well be good news to us. For Jesus drank that cup as the substitute for "the great multitude," His innumerable people, given Him of the Father; and thereby freed *them* from ever tasting even *one drop* of that fierce wrath, that "cup of red wine, mixed with spices," with its dregs — its unknown terrors.

Now, this **One**, this **One** alone, who so drank the whole — presents to the sinners of our world, the *emptied Cup* — His own Cup emptied! He sends it round the world, calling on mankind — sinners to take it and offer it to the Father as satisfaction for their sins. Come, O fellow-sinner, grasp it and hold it up to God! Plead it, and you are acquitted!

Yes, if you are anxious at all to be saved and blessed, take up this *emptied cup*. However cold your heart, however dull your feelings, however slight your sorrow for sin — take this *emptied cup*. Your appeal to this *emptied cup* arrests judgment at once. Do not think you need to endure some anguish of soul, some great sorrow — to take some *sips* of the red wine, far less to taste its *dregs* — before you can be accepted. What thoughtless presumption — imitating Christ in His atoning work! If Uzziah, the king, presenting incense when he ought to have let the priest do it for him, was smitten for his presumption — take care lest you be thrust away, if you presume to bring the imagined incense of your sorrow and bitter tears. It is the *emptied cup* which is offered us, not the cup wet with our *tears*, or its purity dimmed by the breath of our *prayers*. Feelings of ours, graces of ours, can do nothing but cast a veil over the *perfect merits* of Christ!

Children of God who have used this cup — keep pleading it always. Ever make it the ground of your assurance of acceptance. Examine it often and well — see how God was glorified here, and how plentifully it illustrates and honors the claims of God's righteousness. Full payment of every claim advanced by Justice is here; and so you, in using it, give good measure, pressed down and running over! What then remains but that you render thanks and take this salvation, often singing —

*"Once it was mine, that cup of wrath,
And Jesus drank it dry!"*

What should ever hinder your triumphant joy? Be full of gratitude; and let this gratitude appear in your letting others know what it has done for *you*, and may do for *them*.

For again we say to you, fellow-sinner, if you accept it not, soon you shall have no opportunity of choice. May I never see one of my people drinking this *dreadful cup!* May I never

see it put into *their* hands! The groaning of a soul, dying in sin, is at times heard on this side of the veil, and it is the saddest and most haunting of all solemn and awful scenes. But what is that, compared to the *actual drinking of the cup*, and wringing out the very *dregs*!

Never may Satan have it in his power to upbraid you with having once had the offer of salvation, an offer never made to him! It seems to me that every Sabbath, especially the Lord takes Gospel-hearers aside into a quiet secluded nook, and there sets down before them the “cup of red wine, mixed with spices,” and then the *emptied cup* of Jesus — earnestly, most earnestly, most sincerely, most compassionately — pressing them to decide and be blessed. Men and brethren, never rest till the Holy Spirit has in your eye so glorified Christ who drank the cup, that you see in Him your salvation and God’s glory secured beyond controversy, beyond even Satan’s power to question or assail!