

# ***SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THRIVING LIFE***

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## **STEEPING IN THE CUP**

Reflect on your relationship with the cup. Which cup do you deserve and why? Which cup do you choose given freedom of choice? Are you willing to pay the price of for that cup?

What does it mean to share Jesus' cup as you try to honor the Father amid depravity?

How do you sense the presence of Jesus sharing the cup of salvation and wrath as you struggle with the burden of that which dishonors God in your daily life?

**Mark 14:23-24** – <sup>23</sup>Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. <sup>24</sup>He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”

### **1) Emptied...**

A cup, something benign, insignificant, taken for granted. A cup is meaningless but for the few moments we seek that which cannot be held without it. That, the substance contained, that is the source of power held by the cup. Which means the cup cannot be dismissed. For all its independent impotence, when filled it brims with the elemental. It itself is essential, for it distributes the proper allotment. Elements of life that sustain, of death that destroy. In a museum, an empty royal chalice is worth perhaps a moment of observation. In a desert, a worn and dirty half-filled canteen is worth a kingdom to the one who empties it. On a cold morning, an indistinguishable ceramic cup containing steaming water becomes a precious companion as we steep our winter tea while preparing to steep our spirits in the Word of God. Let us steep in the cup.

**JUNE 2<sup>ND</sup>, 2024**

◆**Poured out:** During what was His last meal, Jesus “took a cup... (Mark 14:23).” This begins our steeping in worship. Meditate on the cup past the projection of the fulness of Jesus’ work. Not long before that, He had rhetorically asked two of His closest friends, “Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink (Matthew 20:22)?” We read into this that Jesus knew His friends could not drink His cup. Perhaps He meant something else, something mystical and mysterious, that He now pronounces as His own answer to that prior question. He shares His cup with His friends, knowing they would not and could not have drunk it without Him. Take this cup...

◆**Scoured:** Many would be disgusted if asked to literally share a cup. Oh, how we have confused the vital importance of the spiritual with the material. Jesus’ cup is one vessel containing that which cleanses, “poured out for many (Mark 14:24).” The cup needs no cleaning because the contents are pure. Jesus knew the cost to fill the cup, pleading, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me (Luke 22:42).” The pure contents were obtained from Him as He was scoured and drained. For Jesus to share the blessing of His cup was to receive the curse of ours, the wrath of His Father.

## II) Filled...

Once the contents of the cup are contaminated, it cannot be purified without being emptied. Its purpose is not to remain empty, but to be filled again with the pure substance of life. Jesus offers living water, that element both physical and spiritual without which we die. Jesus emptied Himself that He would be filled again with the purity of His life, this a more radiant glory. His willingness to be emptied for the sake of filling us with His cup is the purest expression of His Father’s love. Take this cup and drink...

◆**Cleaned:** Our meditation on Jesus’ cup provokes an awareness of our uncleanness. We see His perfect expression of God’s will in all His thoughts, words, and actions. He is the pure Image of God. Not one can inspect their own heart without finding the blemishes when the light of Jesus shines on it. Once, we would “slaughter the Passover lamb...take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in (Exodus 12:22-23)” the cup, and mark ourselves as God’s people. This cleaning of the outside lasted a moment. Created, mortal life begets temporary purity. Immortal life begotten from the Creator cleanses our immortal soul. “This is my blood of the covenant (Mark 14:24),” with which we are to wash our inner being as it fills us.

◆**Refilled:** Once God’s people were removed from the dominion of evil, they were instructed to maintain a ritual. Within the holy of holies, there were to be cups “with which to pour drink offerings...And you shall set the bread of the Presence on the table before me always (Exodus 25:29-30).” Our inconstancy exposed the ineffectiveness of mortal purity. Freed from and cleansed of sin, on our own we returned to it every time. We cried out wishing to be filled with eternal life, “I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord (Psalm 116:13).” Jesus responds, “and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it (Mark 14:23).” This is the “spring of water gushing up to eternal life (John 4:14).”

## III) Communion...

Many sharing from one. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sharing one divine essence. God’s people drinking from one cup. Jesus in each of us. Jesus in all of us. Each and all of us in Him. We cannot bear our cup, yet we could not drink His. He had no part in our cup, yet He drinks it for us and shares His with us instead. Fully God, fully human. Wrath and salvation. These unions are impossible, but with God all things are possible. Do this in remembrance of me...

◆**Two:** God bound Himself to us using mortal life in a covenant of wills. Moses filled cups with oxen blood, and “half of the blood he dashed against the altar,” and the other half he “dashed it on the people, and said, ‘See the blood of the covenant (Exodus 24:6-8).’” We broke the covenant in our weakness of spirit and became those “who have drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs the bowl of staggering (Isaiah 51:17).” There are two cups. We chose poorly.

◆**Become one:** Yet God is faithful to the covenant despite His right to abandon it. His glory is His unwavering love manifest in grace and mercy to save His chosen people. He foretold this, saying “I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; you shall drink no more from the bowl of my wrath (Isaiah 51:22).” He reunified us through Jesus, who said of Communion, “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them (John 6:56).” When we drink Communion, we are drinking His cup of salvation as one of the many. Abiding in Jesus, we too are poured out and we drink the cup of God’s wrath with Him as we anguish over everything unbecoming of His name. We are saved and yearn for the fulness of salvation. The two cups become one. Drink to salvation and live to His glory.