

## Jesus' Remarkable Conduct In Refusing To Drink Vinegar Mingled With Gall.

Text: Matt 27:34

1) Why Jesus Refused This Drink

Suggested Hymns:

2) What Lessons Are Suggested By His Refusal

170, 173, 54, 848, 70

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 27:34, <sup>34</sup> *they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

This incident occurred immediately before Jesus' crucifixion. Before the soldiers proceeded to nail Jesus to the cross, they put a vessel to His mouth containing vinegar mixed with gall. Jesus merely tasted this drink and then refused it.

But several hours after that, while hanging on the cross, when His lips were parched and His tongue was clinging to the roof of His mouth, He exclaimed: "*I thirst,*" and desired something to drink.

The Son of God had to suffer thirst on the cross. He had to make true the prophecy in the twenty-second Psalm where the Messiah is introduced, saying, *My strength is dried up like a [piece of broken pottery], And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.*<sup>1</sup>

But who could have known that He was suffering thirst, if He had not said it and exclaimed, "*I thirst*"? The soldiers quickly responded to Jesus' call.

John informs us, <sup>29</sup> *Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth.*<sup>2</sup>

A hyssop was a reed, a short cane pole, and the vinegar was not what we call vinegar in our days, but wine with a sharp vinegar taste to it. Most likely the

soldiers kept this vinegar or acid wine for their own use. When this beverage was offered to Jesus on the cross, He did not refuse, but drank freely.

Is it not strange that Jesus would not receive before His crucifixion the drink which afterwards He called for while hanging on the cross? Is it not strange that before His crucifixion He would not drink the vinegar mingled with gall and that afterwards He did drink the vinegar?

Let us consider *Jesus' Remarkable Conduct In Refusing To Drink Vinegar Mingled With Gall*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. Why Jesus Refused This Drink.

Our text says that *they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink.*" St. Mark has it, "*they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it.*"<sup>3</sup> This reminds us of one of the gifts from the Wise Men, myrrh.

So the beverage which they offered Jesus before His crucifixion was acid wine, vinegar, with a bitter ingredient mixed into it to numb the pain and to make Him feel dazed in His head.

It is said that the kind ladies in the city of Jerusalem prepared this stupefying drink for criminals about to undergo crucifixion in compliance with a saying in Proverbs 13:6-7, *Give strong drink to him who is perishing, And wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, And remember his misery no more.*

Perhaps the women who followed Jesus to Calvary and to whom He said on the way, as they bewailed and lamented Him, "*Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children*"<sup>4</sup> had brought this potion with them and kindly meant to alleviate His suffering by a strong drink.

But we are told in our text, *But when He had tasted it, He would not drink.* By tasting the offered drink the Lord acknowledged the kind intention of the women, but drink He would not. He would not go into suffering and death with a clouded and obscured mind, in a drowsy condition, in a state of partial unconsciousness.

How strange, if we contrast this scene with the scene in the garden of Gethsemane only a few hours earlier! There we see the Son of God pleading with His Father with tears that, if possible, the cup of this Passion might pass away

from Him, and now He will not even take the cup that brings alleviation to His suffering.

How shall we account for this seeming change in Jesus' mind? The answer is, that there was no change in Jesus' mind, but that He knew it was God's will that He should suffer.

Christ was human in shrinking from pain, insult, and death. But He was strong and absolutely brave in facing whatever He might have to encounter to do the Father's will. He was not a weak and effeminate Sufferer, as some pictures represent Him. His courage was perfect. Manly and strong. He faced death and its accompanying terrors and torments without flinching.

Jesus knew that now He must suffer, suffer for the sins of the whole world, and not a drop would He leave in that bitter cup. He emptied it to the dregs. Would Christ's work for us have been perfect, would He have borne all the wrath of God, if in a benumbed and dazed state He had suffered?

Would Christ have been able to speak those precious words on the cross which had to be spoken that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, if His mind had been clouded by strong drink, or if He had hung on the cross unconscious of what was going on around Him?

Behold, this is the reason why Jesus refused the deadening drink. To fulfil His sacred work it was necessary for Him to meet death with a clear head and with intelligence.

Often we find the Scriptures fulfilled in such occurrences of Jesus' holy Passion as seem to be of a minor importance or of no importance whatever. Likewise here. We may think that it was a chance happening when the soldiers gave Jesus vinegar mingled with gall to drink. But this did not happen by chance. It was done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.

In Psalm 69 the Messiah made the remarkable prediction in view of His suffering and death, <sup>20</sup> *Reproach has broken my heart, And I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none.* <sup>21</sup> *They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*<sup>5</sup> Who must not admit that these words were fulfilled in Christ when the soldiers gave Jesus vinegar mingled with gall to drink and He refused?

## 2. What Lessons Are Suggested By His Refusal.

In his First Epistle Peter says that Christ suffered for us leaving us an example that we should follow His steps.<sup>6</sup> From these words the conclusion has been drawn that in everything Christians should follow Christ's example and do exactly as Christ did in His suffering.

There is a book which bears the title, "*In His Steps: What would Jesus Do?*"<sup>7</sup> In this book little or nothing is said of the great work which Jesus performed for the salvation of the fallen human race. Jesus is not presented as the Saviour who through faith leads sinners to eternal life, but as the Model for all men, as if man was saved by following Jesus' example.

"*What would Jesus do?*" is the question which Christians are advised to put to themselves in everything they are about to do. But does Peter say that in everything we should do as Christ did?

Christ refused an opiate to dull His pain and to alleviate His suffering. Should we follow His steps therein, and is it a sin for a Christian to take pain relieving medication from the hands of his doctor when he suffers severe pain, or an anaesthetic when he must undergo an operation?

Is there any merit in the mere endurance of pain? Who would be so foolish as to make such an assertion? But if in such conditions you ask the question: "*What would Jesus do?*" you would have to say: "*Jesus would refuse anything to alleviate His suffering.*" The fact is, that Jesus is not man alone, but God at the same time, and that, therefore, He did many things which we poor mortals cannot and should not imitate.

Yet the Lord Jesus has left us an example also in this part of His suffering. How often do people who have been sober and industrious all their lifetime take to drinking when some great misfortune has come upon them, when they have failed in business, or when in some other way they have been greatly afflicted!

In strong drink they seek relief. In the cup they expect to drown their sorrow. Christians should never resort to such wickedness that they might get rid of their griefs!

When you are tempted, my dear Christian friend, to drown your sorrows in intoxicating drink, look at your Saviour. See Him refusing the stupefying drink which would have benumbed His pain and made Him forget His suffering.

Follow His steps. Take Him for an example. Submit to the will of God and bear with soberness the burden which is placed upon your shoulders, that all may redound to your own eternal good.

What do you gain, if you seek relief in strong drink? Your distress remains, your condition is made so much the worse, you ruin your health, you disgrace yourself, you augment the suffering of your family, you deliver yourself to the devil, and you run headlong into eternal destruction.

The Word of God stands, and there is no getting around it as written in 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, <sup>9</sup> ***Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, ... nor drunkards, ... will inherit the kingdom of God.***

But there is help even for the drunk. By His thirst, which the Son of God suffered on the cross, He has atoned for the sins of those who are given to strong drink and make a mess of themselves. Jesus will receive even the drunk, if he comes to Him in true repentance and despises and leaves his dreadful sin.

And if there is anything in the world to keep a person from seeking relief in alcoholic drink and from degrading himself below that of animals by intoxication, it is the sight of the suffering Saviour hanging on the cross with parched lips and with *His tongue clinging to His jaws*, as we read in Psalm 22:15.

O may His great work for us not have been performed in vain! Let us love Him; for He has first loved us.<sup>8</sup> Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 22:15

<sup>2</sup> John 19:29

<sup>3</sup> Mark 15:23

<sup>4</sup> Luke 23:28

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 69:20–21

<sup>6</sup> 1 Peter 2:21

<sup>7</sup> Charles M. Sheldon, Aug 2, 2023

<sup>8</sup> 1 John 4:19