

# THE CUP OF WRATH

*a sermon by*

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(1810 – 1892)

Author of “Memoir of Robert M. M’Cheyne”

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## **Psalm 75:8**

*“For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.”*

**I**t will help greatly to the right apprehension of this solemn subject to notice that Christ is the speaker of these awful truths. They cannot, then, have been spoken harshly; they must have been uttered in all tenderness. As the head of His Church, Christ says (**Psalm 75:1**), “Unto Thee, O God, do *we* give thanks;” and then (**Psalm 75:2**), looking on a world lying in wickedness, He anticipates a different state of things ere long: “I purpose when I shall receive the congregation that I shall judge uprightly.” 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 that 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 see that as sure as ever an unworthy communicant drank the wine out of the cup, so surely, if unpardoned, he 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 sinneth, it *shall die*,” and **Psalms 7:11-12**, “God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not He will whet His sword; He hath bent His bow, and made it ready. He hath prepared for him the instruments of death.” In **Psalms 11:6-7**, “Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this is the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness.” In **Psalms 21:9**, “Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of Thine anger.” In **Job 36:18**, “Because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with His stroke; then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.” In **Romans 2:5** we read, Thou “treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;” and in **Revelation 14:9-10**, “If any man worship 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. (**Psalms 11:6** and **Psalms 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 colour. 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 containeth much; a cup of astonishment and desolation, filled with drunkenness and sorrow."

It is "*full of mixture.*"—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 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 ray, 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, 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 broken Sabbaths; 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: “*Full of mixture?*”

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 Sipra, 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 despair!

“*He poureth out of the same.*” “*The wicked shall wring them out and drink them.*” 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 them*” 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 poureth out,” and the guilty soul “*shall wring out and drink*” the very dregs. **Job 27:22**, says “They would fain 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 preemtorily commanding, “Take the wine-

cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee to drink it. And they shall drink, and be moved and be mad.” And further, He insists, **verse 28**, “If they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Ye shall certainly drink.” “They shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty” (**Job 21:20**). And what mean those words already quoted in **Revelation 14:10-11**? 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 exacted, and it will require eternity to exact it all!

O fellow-sinner, we have tried to say somewhat 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 in more mixture. It is the merciful One Himself who speaks in **Ezekiel 22:13-14**: “Behold I have smitten mine hand at thy dishonest gain which thou hast made, and at thy blood which hath been in the midst of thee. Can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? *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 hath 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 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 nearly 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 ye able to drink the cup that I shall drink of?” (**Matthew 20:22**). “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?” (**John 18:11**). In **Psalm 88:15**, “I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: I suffer thy terrors: I am distracted.” 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 mingled. What wrath, what woe! A few drops made Him cry, “Now is my soul troubled!” In the garden, the sight of it wrung out the strange, mysterious words, “Sorrowful unto death!” though God-man, He staggered at what He saw, and went on trembling. Next day, on Calvary, He drank it all. I suppose the three hours of darkness may have been the time when He “was wringing out the dregs”; for then arose from His broken heart the wail that so appealed to the heart of the Father, “My God, my God, why hast thou 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 craved. 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, full of mixture,” with its dregs, its unknown terrors. Now, this One, this only One, 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 thou art acquitted.

*Yes, if you are anxious at all to be saved and blessed, take up this emptied cup. However cold thy heart, however dull thy feelings, however slight thy 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, ere 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 fancied incense of your sorrow and bitter tears. It is the emptied cup that 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.

*Man of God* who hast used this cup, keep pleading it always. Ever make it the ground of thine 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 thy triumphant joy? Be full of gratitude; and let this gratitude appear in thy 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 awful 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 to the actual drinking of the cup, and wringing out the very dregs, that God “poureth out of the same.” 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, full of mixture,” 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.*

## **A Brief Look at the Life of Andrew A. Bonar**

And a commentary upon his work “The Cup of Wrath”

*by Jon Cardwell*

The younger brother of Horatius Bonar, Andrew Alexander Bonar was born in Edinburgh, Scotland on May 29, 1810. He was the seventh son of James and Marjory Bonar. With the death of his father in 1821, his elder brother, James, helped Marjory Bonar to look after the family.

At Edinburgh High School he developed a love for the Greek and Hebrew languages, and the Rector of the school commented that Andrew was “the best Latin scholar” who had ever been there during the Rector’s time at the school.

Andrew began keeping a diary on August 21, 1828. His main complaint in the diary for the next two years was that he wasn't saved. "I am still without Christ and without hope," he wrote. "I have no hatred of sin; I seek Christ with little ardour, rather because not happy in the world than because of anything else."

Finally, after reading William Guthrie's *A Saving Interest*, he wrote to his brother, John, for counsel because Andrew came to the conclusion that he may now be redeemed, regenerated to have "believed on the Lord Jesus." After examination in the faith by the Rev. Dr. Jones, Andrew A. Bonar was admitted as a communicant of the Church of Scotland on December 26, 1830 and had taken his first communion on January 9, 1831. Reflecting upon his salvation in the weeks before his death in 1892, Bonar said, "It was in the year 1830 that I found the Saviour, or rather, that He found me and laid me on His shoulder rejoicing, and I have never parted company with Him all these sixty-two years."

Bonar began his studies at Divinity Hall in 1831 and started the "Exegetical Society" that same year with several others, including Robert Murray McCheyne. The group's purpose was basically to meet together in prayer and also for the study of Scripture.

In 1835 Bonar completed his education at Divinity Hall and begins his pastoral work in Jedburgh, delivering his first sermon from Isaiah 55:1-3 on July 5<sup>th</sup>.

Andrew Bonar was a man well acquainted with Christ; not merely filled with a knowledge of the doctrinal Christ of the Scriptures, but a man with an intimate relationship with the Savior because he was a man well acquainted with the Lord in the closet of prayer. Bonar wrote, "There is too much time taken up with active work for the Kingdom. Surely if God's servants are to speak and preach in the power of the Holy Spirit they must again give themselves continually to prayer..."

Andrew Bonar wrote many fine books and booklets, expounding Scripture, such as "Victory Over Sin." Among his most noted works were *Memoir of Robert M. M'Cheyne*, published in 1844. He also edited *Asahel Nettleton: Life and Labours*, a work originally written by Dr. Bennet Tyler in 1845 after

Nettleton's death. Another very noteworthy work was his *Commentary on Leviticus*, which was sent to the press in late 1845.

There are so many things that could be said of the life of Andrew Bonar; that to pick out just a few accomplishments would certainly belittle this servant of God, and even more so, belittle the God by whom he was empowered. I believe Bonar's life serves as an example of what the Lord Jesus Christ can do in a man that desires nothing more than to walk with His Savior. If one word can be used to describe the man, it would be "holiness;" and that, only because of the Holy One who dwelt in him.

On December 3, 1892, Andrew Bonar called his family to his bedside for prayer and quietly went to sleep, to wake up in the presence of his Lord, Master, and passionate Love, Jesus Christ.

At the end of this sermon, "The Cup of Wrath," Andrew Bonar pleads with the sinner to receive the emptied cup that the Lord Jesus has made available by drinking the wrath that was in it, given Him of the Father. With regard to wrath, we, who are in Christ, have certainly received an empty cup. This is why those in Christ are not under any condemnation whatsoever (Romans 8:1).

Yet, the cup that the believer drinks is not empty with regard to sanctification. Jesus asked James and John, "*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?*" (Matthew 20:22). When the two disciples said that they were able, Jesus said again to them, "*Ye shall drink indeed of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with*" (Matthew 20:23).

After Christ's death, burial, and resurrection, James and John were baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire on that Pentecostal Day (Acts 2). Yet, did they drink from an empty cup? No. They drank from a cup that was not filled with wrath, but from a cup filled with the "blood" of Jesus Christ; a cup filled with intimate communion with the risen and ascended Savior, remembering His "*death till He come*" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

The cup emptied of God's wrath, is now filled with God's mercy, love, power, and all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, for every believer unto sanctification, for God's glory.

I encourage you to read "The Cup of Wrath" prayerfully. You will want to read it several times.







