

Sovereignty, Submission, and the Savior's Cup (John 18:1-11)

Let's pray. Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that Your Son may glorify You, since You gave Him authority over all flesh. Christ's desire and prayer is that we would see His glory, the glory and love You shared with Him before the foundation of the world, share with us. Jesus has made known to us Your name, and we ask He continue to make it known, so the love with which You loved Him may be in us, we ask it for His glory, amen

Please turn to John 18, and after Jesus prayed those great truths in John 17, He went forth in fulfillment of what He had just prayed into the darkness of Gethsemane. Part of me doesn't want to move on from the upper room, but we can't stay in the upper room and we can't stay in a wonderful devotional time with Jesus and His friends. We also have to go out to face the difficult times with enemies. John 17 is one of the high points in all Scripture, but after the mountain top comes the valley of Kidron, a descent into darkness:

Jn 18:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. ² Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons. ⁴ Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, 'Whom do you seek?' ⁵ They answered him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus said to them, 'I am he.' Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. ⁶ When Jesus said to them, 'I am he,' they drew back and fell to the ground. ⁷ So he asked them again, 'Whom do you seek?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' ⁸ Jesus answered, 'I told you that I am he. So, if you seek me, let these men go.' ⁹ This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: 'Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one.' ¹⁰ Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) ¹¹ So Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?'

R.C. Sproul's kid's book *The Prince's Poison Cup* tells the story of a little girl who was sick and the medicine dad gave her to drink tasted awful. She asked "why is medicine so yucky if it's going to make me well?" Grandpa looked thoughtful. 'That's a very good question, Ella,' he said. 'Some things that look or taste or smell wonderful are really awful. But sometimes things that seem terrible are actually very good. I even remember a story in which both of these strange things are true. Would you like to hear it?'

‘Oh, yes!’ Ella said. She loved the stories Grandpa told to explain things. So Grandpa sat down and Ella snuggled up close beside him. Grandpa began... ‘Once upon a time there was a great King. He...made a beautiful park filled with trees, streams...In the center of the park [He] placed a fountain ... the King told His people: “You may drink from all the streams in the park, but you may not drink from the fountain. [It]...will harm you. Do not drink it.”

...One day a stranger in a long black cloak appeared in the park. The people didn’t know it, but the stranger was the King’s archenemy. He told the people that the water in the fountain wasn’t bad at all. He said if they’d try it, the water would do wonderful things for them. It would make them as great as the King Himself. By now the people were very curious about the water. It didn’t seem fair that the King wouldn’t let them drink from the fountain. So they decided to try it. The stranger filled a cup with the water from the fountain and gave it to the people, and they drank it.

But a terrible thing happened when the people drank the water--their hearts turned to stone. After that, they no longer felt any love for their King. They didn’t even want to be with Him anymore...they moved to a desert far away from the park and built themselves a city...the City of Man.

The King of Life was angry that the people had disobeyed...But the King still loved His people...He [had] known that the people would drink from the fountain, and He already had a plan to help them. He went to His Son, who was the Prince of the kingdom, and said to Him, “I want You to help heal Our subjects.” At that point in the story, Ella stopped Grandpa and asked, “What did the King want the Prince to do?”¹ [we’ll find out later]

That story is based on this true story in John 18. We can break it into 3 parts

1. The Setting (v. 1-3)
2. The Sovereign (v. 4-10)
3. The Submission (v. 11)

The Setting in v. 1 starts in a garden. Matthew, Mark, and Luke don’t call Gethsemane a garden, just ‘*a place called Gethsemane*’ (Matt 26:36, Mk 14:32). Only John tells us it was a ‘garden’ where Jesus went that night, it was in this garden where Judas met and betrayed Him. Only John mentions a ‘garden’ here and also near the place where He was crucified (19:41), it was also a nearby garden tomb He was buried in, and after Jesus rose, Mary originally thought He was the gardener (20:15). John has a special interest in the garden theme, it culminates in the end of his writings at the end of the Bible as his final chapters show heaven as a garden like the garden of Eden but better, its tree of life and streams of living water last forever, Rev 21-22.

John's gospel begins in the beginning, at creation, 1:1, and the saving work of Jesus draws from then; Jesus is Creator and the light of the world (1:3-5, 8:12), the living water (4:10-14, 7:37-38), a garden vine (Jn 15), and so on. John's last writing completes the image, in Jn 18 the Creator enters a garden to redeem what's lost in the first garden so we can be in His eternal garden. Hours later He tells a believing thief on a cross *'today you will be with me in paradise.'* Paradise lost in Eden is paradise regained in eternity for believers

In Jn 18:11 He mentions a cup to drink from the hand of His Father, that's language from Isa 51:17 *'you who have drunk from the hand of the LORD the cup of his wrath, you who have drained to its dregs the goblet that makes men stagger,'* and the same chapter says for future Israel, God *'will make ... like Eden...like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness...'* (v. 3 NIV). The OT prophets and the final NT prophecy picture heaven as an eternal garden.

In the first garden, Adam disobeyed the Father and brought death to all in Adam, but Jesus as another and better Adam obeyed in another garden, and He brings life to all in Christ. Paul also picks up the language of 'paradise' (2 Cor 12:3-4) and develops the Adam-Jesus type-fulfillment in Romans 5: *'just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men ... Adam...was a type of the one who was to come ... For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous'* (12-14, 19)

1 Cor 15:22 says all die in Adam, but all in Christ by faith are made alive. Adam failed in a garden bringing sin, Jesus prevailed in a garden bringing salvation from it. Adam fails to protect Eve, Jesus in v. 9 protects His bride. In Gen 3 it seems Satan entered a snake to betray man into sin by deceptive lips, Jn 13:27 says Satan entered Judas to betray the Son of Man by his lips. The first man was conquered by the devil, the God-man conquers the devil. In Gen 3, Adam is guilty before God, in Jn 18, Jesus is innocent before man

In the first garden all things were bright and beautiful in the cool of the day, in Gethsemane it was dark and terrible in the heat of the night as He sweats drops of blood. Adam gave in without much tempting in the first garden, the other gospel writers tell us this garden for Jesus was a place of His greatest testing but He didn't give in to the flesh, even as He prayed earnestly almost wavering in His humanity in His agony. In the garden He asks His disciples to pray not to *'enter in temptation, the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.'* Jesus as fully human in His weakness was fully tempted, but He prevailed.

In v. 1 Jesus crossed the brook, and v. 4 says He knew what would happen. The story of *The Prince's Poison Cup* pictures the scene where He walks with His faithful followers past the water, and He stopped and 'stared into the water... But as He continued to gaze into the water, something strange happened. In His mind, He saw a large cup filled with a dark murky liquid. He knew that it was the cup of poison ... The Prince closed His eyes and shook His head to get the picture of the awful cup out of His mind... The Prince trembled in fear and began to sweat... He couldn't help wondering if there was another way... the Prince struggled with His fear, He remembered the words of His Father... So right then and there He decided that He would not turn back... [His] friends became frightened at the angry mob of people around them... one by one they all ran away. Soon the Prince was all alone'

But Jesus prevailed in prayer in the garden. He's the victor, He's no victim. A.W. Pink wrote in the first garden 'Adam took the fruit from Eve's hand; [but in this garden Christ] received the cup from His Father's hand... In the one [garden] Adam fell before Satan; in the other, the soldiers fell before Christ. In Eden the race was lost; in Gethsemane Christ announced [in v. 9 of His saved humanity] "...I lost none." In Eden, Adam hid himself; in [v. 4] Christ boldly showed Himself. In Eden, God sought Adam; in Gethsemane, [Christ] the last Adam sought God! From Eden Adam was "driven"; from Gethsemane [Jesus in v. 4 came willingly. In Gen 3:24] a cherubim 'sword' was drawn; in Gethsemane the 'sword' was sheathed (John 18:11).¹²

Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote 'the sin of Adam was a stone cast into a pool which sent ripples to every inlet. The cross of Christ was the rock of ages cast into the ocean of the love of God, and it is the destiny of all who are in Christ to be carried on the swell of this majestic life and power... forever.'¹³

But there's more in v. 1. The setting includes Jesus and His faithful crossing '*the brook Kidron.*' It's no stretch to imagine Jesus right after He announced the new covenant being inaugurated only minutes earlier, His mind was on the one OT passage that uses that phrase *new covenant*, Jer 31:31, listen to part of its promises to the redeemed of future Israel: '*I will make them walk by brooks of water ... their life shall be like a watered garden ... the whole valley ... as far as the brook Kidron, to the corner of the ... Gate toward the east, shall be sacred to LORD*' (v. 7, 9, 40). In Jn 18:1 Jesus walks with His people out the East Gate by the Kidron brook across the valley to a garden, knowing the OT said He'd return to retrace these steps. In Zech 14 His 2nd coming is to Mt. of Olives across Kidron to E, He'll be King over all earth.

The Kidron valley has had cemeteries since OT times and to this day, some have looked to it for end time prophecy, a resurrection of the valley of dead bones in Ezekiel 37 or Ezekiel 43's vision of God's glory filling the earth as Messiah returns to the temple area from the East entering that East Gate, or Ezekiel 47's vision of a stream running out from it to this valley, giving life.

But as Jesus crossed over the Kidron it flowed with death, not life. Ezekiel 47 describes water flowing out from the temple altar area into this valley to the East, and history tells us during Passover the Kidron ran red with blood from all the lambs slain (Josephus estimated over 200,000 killed in a 24-hr period on one Passover). These men had just slaughtered and eaten a lamb together, and think of the symbolism now as Jesus the Lamb of God walks over the Kidron brook. Jn 1:29 *behold the Lamb of God who takes away sin*. That night hours before He called the cup '*the new covenant in my blood...*'

There's one more OT background to v. 1. King David crossed the Kidron as he left Jerusalem this same way when the people of Israel had rejected him, and Ahithophel, who had been close to David, betrayed David, and an army had formed against him (2 Sam 15). David wept and left without a fight but later Ahithophel hanged himself (17:23). David later wrote of his friend who shared bread before stabbing his back in Ps 55 and 41. In Jn 13:18 Jesus said He fulfilled that night. Jesus as the son of David crosses over the same spot, being betrayed by one who had also been close to him. The traitor Judas is going to go and hang himself. And in Jn 18 the people of Israel rejected Jesus as King formed an army, fulfilling OT types, prophecy. It's a reminder also you can be close to the things of the Lord and not saved.

v. 3 says Judas had a band of soldiers, the NASB has 'cohort,' which was a battalion of Roman soldiers in the hundreds. The 'officers from the chief priests' would have been the Jewish temple police. This is an army gathered around midnight along with the Pharisees, all led by Judas who v. 2 says knew the place Jesus would be as this was their special place. Hendriksen wrote: 'Judas selected the most sacred night (that of Passover), the most sacred place (the sanctuary of the Master's devotions) and the most sacred symbol, a kiss!...Torches and lanterns...to search for *the Light of the world!* And it was a full moon! Swords [and war weapons for] *the Prince of peace*'⁴

That's some of **The Setting** in v. 1-3, but notice secondly **The Sovereign:**

⁴ *Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward*
Jesus knows everything because He controls everything that ever happens.

Jesus isn't captured, He comes forward. He asks them *'Whom do you seek?'*

⁵ *They answered him, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' Jesus said to them, 'I am he.'*

In the Greek, there's no 'he,' it's literally just **'I Am!'** It's how the sovereign God revealed Himself in the OT, and He reveals His power as God in v. 6: *When Jesus said to them, 'I am he,' they drew back and fell to the ground.*

They all fall down like toy soldiers! This is a miracle. It shows the might of a sovereign Lord in control. He could literally say to those trying to capture Him, 'you and what army?' This army falls flat by the irresistible power of the great 'I Am.' The end of v. 5 said Judas was standing with them, but not one of them is left standing. Even Satan who had entered Judas can't stand, as Luther said in his hymn 'one little word shall fell him.' Jesus spoke 1 or 2 words to demons who fell before Him in fear, and He also spoke 2 words to a storm on the sea (*be still*) and the wind obeyed, the waves fell flat before the sovereign Christ. The treachery of Judas is no match for the majesty of Jesus. Amazed, they couldn't stand in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene.

[equally amazing is their hearts stayed hard as stone after the miracle]

These officers came to arrest Jesus, first He arrests their attention. It wasn't the first time. In 7 says *'they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come ... the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him* [and when they came back without Jesus, the soldiers were asked 'why didn't you bring him in?'] *The officers answered, "No one ever spoke like this man!"* (v. 30, 32, 45-56). Now He speaks and officers fall, by the end of the next day some of the soldiers will be saying at the cross in awe *'surely this was the Son of God!'* (Matt 27:54). This is a little preview of the future, when the word of His mouth will make the wicked fall, by His mere breath. This sovereign who revealed His name as the Lord of the OT and all fall here, will reveal it again to all humanity, and *'at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...'* Better to bow now and confess Jesus is Lord today!

[when He comes again all armies will fall by the Word of His mouth]

A 2nd way Jesus reveals His sovereign control is in v. 8. He speaks again to the soldiers telling them to let His disciples go. ⁹ *This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken: 'Of those whom you gave me I have lost not one.'* [That was what He said in 17:12] ¹⁰ *Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant and cut off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.) So Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword into its sheath ...* As the army stands back up, Peter is ready to fight to the death, Mt 26:35. Jesus takes control of the situation that could have easily turned ugly. Luke the physician says He also took hold of the guys ear and put it back on him!

Even in His betrayal, He's caring for others first, the disciples in v. 9 and an enemy slave in v. 11. Malchus was usually an Arab name in the writings of Josephus, and also in *I Maccabeus* and in *Antiquities*, we read of the name "Malchus the Arab."⁵ Even in His arrest, the Jewish Jesus shows love for an Arab (?), another preview of His care for all peoples in His sovereign grace. The Roman commanding officer had to realize who's really in command of the whole situation. Matthew adds that Jesus said at this point He could call down 12 legions from His heavenly armies (72,000 angel warriors). But this is to fulfill what He said earlier in Jn 10: *'I lay down my life...No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord [or myself/my own initiative]. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again'* v. 18.

Jesus doesn't need Peter to be Zorro against soldiers. He didn't need Peter to save Him or die for Him. One writer says: What could Peter's puny sword do against the force of a Roman "detachment" (18:3) led by a chiliarch (the usual commander of a thousand soldiers, 18:12)? But [John] was making an important point that should be recognized by well-meaning Christians who often think that everything depends on them and their own actions.⁶

There's an application for us here when we try to take matters into our own hands, we need to look to Christ and His hands that are in control. When we try to take charge like Peter, we can make things worse, and can hurt others, but we need to trust Christ who is in charge and can heal damage we did. In His common grace, He cares for unbelievers and enemies. He can show His sovereign power to them. He doesn't need us to help Him out. For Peter life seemed out of control, and for us, life seems out of control at times, but let this passage hit you. Let the force of the Word of Christ knock you over and humbly recognize He is God and you are not! He is sovereign, you are not! He is in control, you are not! He says *'I Am,'* we must say *'I can't, help me'*

We can't control our kids as they grow, but we can entrust them to the Lord of v. 9 who keeps them. Even at this darkest time through this valley, Jesus knows all and controls all, and we can know He knows all and controls all in our dark valleys, too! Eph 1 says *'he works all things according to the counsel of his will'* and *'all things [are] under his feet...as head over all things'* (v. 11, 22). Col 1 says Christ *'is before all things, and in him all things hold together... so that in everything he might have the supremacy'* (v. 17-18 NIV). Trust the sovereignty and supremacy of Christ over all. He doesn't need you to run out in front of Him or fight a battle for Him. Trust Him, sheathe fleshly weapons. *Whom do you seek*, He asks. Whom do you?

Now notice in closing not only **The Sovereign** but **The Submission in v. 11**

'...shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me?'

The other gospels say in the garden He prayed 3x asking the Father if it was possible to let the cup pass, but *nevertheless not my will but Yours be done*. His human will submitted to God's will as we're to pray 'Your will be done.' By way of application, we must submit to the Father's will in whatever He gives us. Yours may seem a bitter cup nothing like what Jesus drank for you

Peter got what the Lord told Him here, at least later as he wrote in 1 Peter of Christ submitting to suffering that night '*entrusting himself* to' the Father to death, '*leaving you an example, so...you might follow in his steps*' (2:24, 21).

-therefore, he says '*wives, be subject to your own husbands ...submitting*' (3:1, 5). The key is the context before that, Christ submitted for our sake - Peter also says '*be subject to your elders*' (5:5) and the context before is Jesus as Chief Shepherd calling under-shepherds to 'exercise oversight' of people 'allotted to their charge' (v. 1-4 NAS). Your elders here desire believers to desire that oversight as members, and as you join a church you're saying this is the flock I'm a part of and the shepherds I'm subject to, it's not just sheep I graze with. You come under specific elders who take specific oversight for you and you are part of their charge. Not all want to be subject to that, but the elders here want you to be and it really helps us exercise oversight and shepherd when people ask us in that way. A key in context is Jesus as Shepherd and Overseer, 2:25, His care for us - Peter also says '*Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men*' and he includes governing authority (2:13 NIV). It isn't just spiritual authority, its civil authority, and that includes whoever is president in November. Peter also calls servants to submit to masters if they are good or bad (2:18) and 1st century slave-masters could be worse than any employer we have today. The key in context to submitting is the Lord submitted Himself as a slave to sinful authorities, suffering unjustly and dying for us then rising with all authority now subject to Him (3:22)

We can't leave hanging with Grandpa's answer to what the King had asked. 'It was an awful task' Grandpa said. 'The King gave the Prince a golden cup and told Him to go to the City of Man...another fountain...filled with terrible poison. The poison was made up of the King's anger over the people's disobedience. One drop of the poison would kill a strong man. But the King told the Prince to use the golden cup to drink a whole cupful of the poison...He said if the Prince would do that His subjects would be healed...

The Prince approached...He took out the golden cup His Father had given and held it out...The Prince looked at the poison that filled His cup. It was dark, murky, and smelly. He was horrified and disgusted...He knew it would kill Him. But as He looked around at the faces of the angry people, He remembered that their stony hearts would be healed if He drank it ...

The poison tasted bitter. He wanted to spit it out. But He'd promised His Father He would drink it all. [It] burned His throat, but He continued to swallow. He finished it all, right down to the last sip...and died...the man in the dark cloak laughed with glee...and all the people gave a great shout of triumph...then...the ground trembled...the man in the dark cloak stopped laughing. In dismay, he tried to shield his eyes from the brightness of the newcomer's cloak...The King of life brought the Prince back from death...

At that point, an amazing thing began to happen. The hearts of ... people began to change, growing soft and warm once more. Some people's hearts remained hard and cold, but all around the plaza the hearts of men and women, boys and girls, old people and young children, rich merchants and poor workers were transformed. Slowly, fearfully, those whose hearts were changed began to approach...the Prince and [what] He offered looked so glorious, they could not hold back...They saw the terrible poison the Prince drunk was wonderful medicine for them. Although it tasted awful to the Prince and caused Him to die, it had healed their stony hearts. After that the people joyfully began to visit the park...walking with the King of Life'

Ezekiel 36 to believers '*I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh...and cause you to walk in...they will say, 'This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden'* (v. 26-27, 35). But Jeremiah tells unbelievers a bitter taste and poison to drink is theirs, the the cup God gives is the cup of wrath and judgment, for all nations to drink (Jer 25:15, 13:15). It's the bitter cup that should be reserved for me for sin. Scripture says a sinners' wine is like poison from bitter grapes, Dt 32:32-33.

It's as if we're standing in a row with our cups filled to drink what will kill us, but then Jesus comes down the line and 'tasted death for every man' who believes, taking our cup we deserved and drinking it all for us! And then He gives us '*the cup of salvation*' (Ps 116:13)! He drank the cup of wrath that I earned so I can drink the cup of the water of life without cost! He took a full cup of judgment from me to give a full cup of joy instead, and my cup overflows! He drank it to the last drop, leaving nothing in the cup for us, so we have nothing left of God's wrath for us. Our part: praise. 'He drank the bitter cup reserved for me...The Father's completely satisfied, Jesus thank you!'⁷

¹ R.C. Sproul, *The Prince's Poison Cup*.

² A. W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, chapter 61.

³ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Tragedy or Triumph* (Philadelphia: The Bible Study Hour, 1967), p. 8-10.

⁴ William Hendriksen, *John*, p. 378-79

⁵ Andreas Kostenberger, *John*, p. 508-9.

⁶ Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, The New American Commentary, vol. 25b, p. 221.

⁷ "Jesus, Thank You," Sovereign Grace Music.