

Philippians 2:14-30

The Christian as a Drink Offering

Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. – v. 17

As believers in Covenant theology we confess the truth of one way of salvation throughout history. Salvation has always been by grace through faith in Christ. It was by grace through faith throughout the Old Testament and it's by grace through faith in the New Testament.

We also recognize that this one singular covenant of grace has been administered differently over the course of history. Things are different now than they were in Old Testament times. We don't have to travel to Jerusalem for various feast days the way the Israelites had to. There is no central temple in this New Testament period the way there was formerly a temple at Jerusalem and there are no more animal sacrifices for sin – no burnt offerings or sin offerings or peace offerings etc. These sacrifices all pointed to Christ and they all find their fulfillment in Christ.

One of the things that provoked the Jews hatred of Paul was the way he taught the Gentiles that those Old Testament sacrifices were no longer required. If you take Paul to be the author of Hebrews then you can understand why the Jews hated Paul. That epistle, more than any other, explains how the church has entered into a new dispensation in which the old order was replaced by a better one.

This is not to say, however, that spiritual truths from the Old Testament era couldn't be utilized to teach Christians important lessons about how to live. *Now these things were our examples*, Paul writes in 1Cor. 10:6 *to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted*. The Old Testament is rich in Christology. We sometimes forget that during the period of the early church the apostles used the Old Testament to preach Christ. And Christ himself showed those Emmaus road disciples how the entire Old Testament bore witness to Christ even to his death and resurrection.

I'm saying all this in order to lay the groundwork for the statement that Paul makes in Phil. 2:17. *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all*. This statement is a very definite reference to one of those Old Testament offerings. It's the kind of offering that you may not think about all that often. Paul is making reference to the Drink Offering.

This reference to the Drink Offering is plain enough that other English versions translate the verse to reflect the reference. So the ESV and NIV both read like this: *Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all*.

The Drink Offering in Old Testament times was not an offering in and of itself. It was something that accompanied all the other offerings. We're given a clear description of it in

Numbers 28. Listen to the first 8 verses of Numbers 28 and see how the Drink Offering went along with the daily burnt offerings:

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering, and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season. 3 And thou shalt say unto them, This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the LORD; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering. 4 The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even; 5 And a tenth part of an ephah of flour for a meat offering, mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil. 6 It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in mount Sinai for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD. 7 And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the LORD for a drink offering. 8 And the other lamb shalt thou offer at even: as the meat offering of the morning, and as the drink offering thereof, thou shalt offer it, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD.

One of the best resources you can consult to explain the meanings of the various offerings in the Old Testament is Andrew Bonar's commentary on Leviticus. Listen to what Bonar says about the Drink Offering:

It was "strong wine poured unto the Lord." {#Nu 28:7} Wine is the representation of joy, and hence it was an expression on the offerer's part of his cheerful and hearty acquiescence in all that was done at the altar. He saw the lamb slain, a type of atoning blood for his guilty soul; he saw the meat-offering presented, a type of entire dedication to the Lord; and, therefore, when he lifted up the cup of wine, and poured it forth before the Lord at the altar over the ashes of the sacrifice, and the memorial of the meat-offering; his so doing was equivalent to his saying, "In all this I do heartily acquiesce. I welcome atoning blood to my guilty soul, and I give up my redeemed soul to him that has atoned for me. Amen, Amen!"

Bonar also remarks on the context of joy in which the Drink Offering took place. *It is to this drink-offering that reference is made in #Jud 9:13, where wine is said to "cheer God and man." It is not to wine used at table for convivial purposes that allusion is there made, but to wine used at the altar. There it did truly gladden God and man. Like the water of the well of Bethlehem poured out by David, it expressed the heart poured out. The Lord rejoiceth to see a sinner accept the offered atonement. Is not the shepherd's heart glad when he finds the lost sheep? Does not the father weep for very joy as he sees his prodigal return, and falls upon his neck? And likewise the Lord rejoiced to see a ransomed sinner giving himself up to his God, as he rejoiced over Abraham when he did not withhold even Isaac. "He taketh pleasure in them that fear him." On the other hand, the sinner himself was glad as he poured out the wine; for there is "joy and peace in believing," in accepting the offered Saviour. Nor less so in giving up all to the Lord; for he that giveth up "houses and lands," for Christ's sake, receives a hundred-fold more in this present life. Is it not, then, true that "wine made glad the heart of God and man?"*

When you remember the emphasis in Philippians on the Christian's joy then it certainly makes this reference by Paul to the Drink Offering meaningful. Listen again to vv. 17,18 now with the joy of the Drink Offering in mind: *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.*

How appropriate, then, for Paul to make reference not simply to the Drink Offering and the joy of faith that accompanied the Drink Offering but to apply the Drink Offering to himself. He is referring to himself as being the Drink Offering poured out when he says *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.*

We are given, then, yet another picture of the Christian that works out his own salvation. Notice also that the picture is completed as Paul makes the application also to the Philippians when he writes in v. 18 *For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.* Do you see how Paul envisions mutual service and mutual joy? He offers himself to be poured out for the Philippians and he expects that the Philippians would be poured out for him and poured out for each other.

I'd like to look at these verses this morning and would invite you to contemplate with me:

The Christian as a Drink Offering

Consider with me first of all:

I. What the Christian Does as a Drink Offering

Paul writes in v. 17 *If I be offered.* The word *offered* means literally *to be poured out.* This is where the idea of the Drink Offering enters the picture and becomes the way the word is translated in some other English versions. It's through this idea of being poured out. The wine was poured out upon the ashes of the sacrifice.

Naturally the first thing that comes to mind is how Christ-like this action is on Paul's part. The words of Isa 53:12 come readily to mind where the prophet says: *Therefore will I divide him [a portion] with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* We need to remember as we consider our text the rich Christological context of these verses in Phil. 2.

Christ has certainly poured out himself by leaving heaven's glory to come into this world as a man and as a servant. He has poured out his life in the obedience he rendered to his Father. And he has poured out his life in his atoning death. There's a couple of cross references to our text that make the meaning of our text even more vivid.

The first one is found in 1Th 2:8 *So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.* The second cross reference is found in 2Co 12:15 where Paul writes: *And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.*

I find it interesting that the Greek word for *spend* that is found in our text is translated by the English word *spend* just two other times. We read in Mk. 5:26 of a certain woman who had suffered many things of many physicians and had spent all that she had. And we read again in Lk. 15:14 of the prodigal son who spent all that he had and then began to be in want. In both cases there is an emphasis not only on spending but in spending everything. Paul was willing to spend everything. This is the idea of imparting his own soul or of pouring out himself.

Christ in fact spent everything. No higher price could be conceived by God than the pouring out of Christ's life through His blood. What more could he spend? He could create worlds of silver and gold by the power of His word but these could not avail for our redemption – they are but corruptible things. No, nothing short of the spending or the pouring out of His precious blood could avail to redeem us. Do you see the Christ-likeness, then, behind this notion of pouring out?

But we can go a step further and say that not only has Christ spent Himself for His people but He Continues to Spend for His People Today .

He spends His prayers on you — interceding on your behalf that your salvation will be wrought to the uttermost, pleading the merits of His blood for you that all that has been purchased by His blood will be applied to you. That's a good argument you know to use in prayer — *Lord we seek thee for the blessings that have been purchased by the blood of thy Son.*

He spends His power on you — ordering all things providentially for the sake of His elect. He works all things for your good. He spends tireless energy watching over you at all times all the while protecting you from yours and His enemies, subduing you more and more to Himself.

The thing that I like about the cross reference to 2Cor. 12:15 is that it brings out both the active and passive perspectives in this imparting of Paul's soul. In our text back in Phil. 2:17 there is a passive aspect as well to Paul's offering himself. Notice how it says *If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith.* Do you see how Paul is not just the one offering but he's the one being offered.

The cross reference in 2Cor. 12:15 captures the active and passive aspect of the offering when Paul writes *I will very gladly spend* – there's the active part of the text, Paul gladly spending but it goes on to say *I will very gladly spend and be spent for you.* There's the active and passive aspects to Paul's life or Paul's offering of himself.

Some years ago I preached from 2Cor. 12:15 and pointed out at the time that it's one thing when parents visit the shopping mall for the sake of their children. You shop for them. You enter the stores and study the merchandise with your children in mind and choose for them such things as you think will contribute to their happiness and well-being. This is what it means to spend for them. But if you were to hand your children the checkbook or the credit card or all the cash you had on hand and were to say to them *now you go and pick out for yourself such things as you need and want and use this cash or this credit card to buy them* — now you are being spent for them. You are placing all that you have at their disposal. In this manner Paul opened himself to his converts. He not only served them but he placed himself at their service.

And here again we can't help but notice the Christ-likeness of Paul in his willingness to spend and be spent. Christ, you see, places himself at your service. He makes himself readily available to you. You have access at any time and at all times to the very throne room of heaven. *And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son*, Jn. 14:13. There's the example of Christ's willingness to be spent. *Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full* Jn. 16:24.

Do you see how Christ sets the standard and Paul strives to meet that standard by the offering of himself? Obviously Paul faces limitations that Christ does not face. There's only so much Paul can do, but there's no limit to what Christ can do. And Paul can only be at one place at one time but Christ can be everywhere at all times. So we recognize our limitations but we should also recognize that Christ is our standard.

And listen to how far the Apostle John would apply the standard of Christ. He writes in 1Jn. 3:16 *Hereby perceive we the love [of God], because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down [our] lives for the brethren*. You begin to see, then, what it means to be that Drink Offering. Like Christ you are devoted to the service of others. Like Christ you are willing to impart your life toward the service of others. Like Christ you are willing to be at the service of others.

The degree of success that you'll experience when it comes to your pouring out yourself will depend on how taken up you are with Christ and how appreciative you are of all that he has done and does do for you. The thing that keeps the Christian from rising to such a standard is given to us a few verses later in Phil. 2 where Paul writes in v. 21 *For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's*.

You remember how this 2nd chapter of Philippians began? Back in vv. 3,4 we're admonished to *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*.

In that connection we're to let the mind of Christ be in us and in that connection we're to work out our own salvation in fear and trembling. To become a Drink Offering, therefore, we must be taken up with Christ in order that we may become like Christ. Apart from

being taken up with Christ such a standard will seem too high and your efforts will become forced at best. You'll be going against the grain of seeking your own things and that will make your service to Christ hard. Notice, however, from the text that Paul's offering of himself as that Drink Offering takes place in the context of joy, rather than forced effort. *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all* – v. 17.

We see, then, how the Christian becomes that Drink Offering. There is an imparting of his soul, a pouring out of his life into the lives of others that are of like precious faith. Would you consider with me next:

II. The Christian's Aim in being that Drink Offering

Notice the words of our text *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all*. Here again, in order to capture the meaning of Paul's words we have to envision the scene at the altar. The ESV translates the verse this way: *Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all*.

The picture that's presented by the text is the picture of the Philippians themselves at the altar. They're offering the sacrifice, so to speak. They are not, of course, literally offering animal sacrifices, the time for those kinds of sacrifices had passed but they are offering themselves in sacrificial service to Christ because of their faith in Christ.

It is upon this sacrifice – their sacrifice of themselves that Paul then pours himself. Just as the Drink Offering was poured upon the sacrifice Paul pours himself on their sacrifice – which is tantamount to saying that his aim was to encourage their faith and his aim was to advance their faith.

There's a verse in John's 3rd epistle which captures this idea vividly. In 3Jo vv. 5,6 *Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; Which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well:*

Underscore the phrase *bring forward on their journey*. That should be your aim in Christian ministry. You want to encourage others in the faith in such a way that you help them go forward in their journey. Doesn't that text bring to mind John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress? In that allegory Bunyan presents Christian on a journey to the Celestial City. And in the course of that journey there are battles to fight there are temptations to overcome and there are characters that hinder as well as characters that encourage and help Christian in his journey.

I can't help but wonder if we would do well as Christians to remind ourselves of such an aim when it comes to our dealings with each other. How much more effective we could become in our service to each other by asking ourselves whether or not a particular course of action or a word spoken will bring someone forward on their journey or hinder them in their journey?

And the same thing could apply to the things that we post on Facebook. Will this post serve to bring forward other Christians on their journey or will it hinder them in their journey. I can't help but think that in many cases the things that are posted on social media sites really serve, at the end of the day, to demonstrate that *all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's* (v. 21).

I know, of course, that if our aim is to bring people forward on their journey then there must be an acknowledgement at times – an acknowledgement that I can't deny that I find myself reluctant to admit which is the acknowledgement that not every Christian is going forward in his journey with Christ.

There are those that yield to carelessness and indifference. There are those that are trapped in the devil's snare. There are those who are wayward because of a love for the vain things of this world. There are still others that find themselves imprisoned in Doubting Castle and are being held captive by the Giant Despair.

The point to be considered, then, is that different Christians in different conditions require different treatment. Bringing others forward on their journey is not simply a matter of sharing warm and fuzzy devotional thoughts. In some cases there is need for stern warnings; in other cases there is need for rebuke and correction. *Reprove, rebuke and exhort* is the formula Paul assigns to Timothy as he charges him to preach the word.

And the same thing applies on a personal level in our dealings with each other. Not that we become hyper critical of each other and seek to tear down each other. That was what Job's friends ended up doing. They became more taken up with their own personal vindication more than they were taken up with bringing Job forward.

Our aim must be to encourage others in the faith and to seek to advance their faith. *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.* Could I bring this meeting to a close by stressing the need for Christians to serve each other the way our text describes that service.

I don't think I need to convince anybody here that we're living in discouraging times. On a national or cultural level these are discouraging times. The forces of ungodliness have never been stronger and the assault upon Christians seems to be gaining momentum as the forces of darkness gain confidence that they have the leverage to advance their agendas.

And on a personal level the times are challenging. These are not prosperous times. These are times of uncertainty and never has there been a growing need to see the petition of the Lord's prayer answered *Give us this day our daily bread.* We have reached the point when many cannot see more than a day ahead if they can even see that far.

There are Christians, therefore, that are discouraged – there are Christians that are lacking in assurance – there are Christians facing uncertain circumstances – there are Christians facing health challenges – there are Christians gripped with fear, fear over the uncertainty of the times, fear for their children, fear for their jobs, fear for their nation etc.

I would remind you this morning that the things we face are really no different from what other Christians have faced in previous generations. It underscores the need for the body of Christ to tend to itself. Things were not easy in Paul's day either. Paul himself was paying a price for his service to Christ. He was in prison. And everywhere that Paul established churches, the people in those churches bore the antagonism of a world that has always been and will continue to be hostile to Christ.

And yet Paul was not simply a survivor. The saints at Philippi were not simply striving to survive. I've heard of ministries that bear that kind of title – Surviving in the midst of an ungodly World etc. Paul and the saints at Philippi would not merely survive, they would thrive. They would live their lives in the power of joy and rejoicing.

Again the words of vv. 17,18 *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.* Do you see how mutual sacrifice and service leads to mutual joy and rejoicing. And they were not rejoicing because life was easy. They were not rejoicing because they had found the way to more of the world's goods. They were rejoicing, rather, because they had been enabled by the grace of God to set out for a different country, a better one whose builder and maker is God.

They were rejoicing because their sins were forgiven and they had gained a confident hope that on the day of judgment they would be found not with their own righteousness but with the righteousness of Christ. They were rejoicing because they were convinced that they believed in and served the true and living God and a risen and exalted Savior.

This the picture, then, of the Christian with the mind of Christ who works out his salvation with fear and trembling. He becomes that Drink Offering by pouring out himself upon the service and sacrifice of the faith of others. I wonder this morning – are you that Drink Offering? Do you pour out your life to the encouragement and advancement of the faith of others. I hope you do. But if you are to truly resemble that Drink Offering then you must not only impart your life to the service of others but you must be able to do it in a setting of joy and rejoicing.

If you can't do it in that setting then you're not really much different from the cults or the false religions that also call for sacrificial service from the ones they've snared into their false gospels. May the Lord enable you to catch the view of Christ that Paul had. If your view of him is full and clear and your faith in him is real then like Paul you'll be able to say *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.*