

SHARED EXPERIENCE WITH JESUS

By Paul Penno Jr.

January 9, 2016

The Scriptures which Christ and His apostles used were full of references against the use of alcoholic wine.¹ In the face of so many clear references to the negative effects of alcoholic drinks, how could Christ have set a contrary example by serving them?

The Lord had strictly forbidden Aaron and his sons to drink any alcoholic wine or “strong drink” in their service as priests (see Lev. 10:9, 10). Would Christ have served it to His guests or disciples? To those who were to become the new “holy priesthood” (1 Peter 2:5, 9)?

The Lord’s Supper was instituted at Passover time. The Lord had strictly forbidden the use of any leaven in the homes of His people during the entire Passover week (Ex. 12:15, 19, 20). Since leaven causes fermentation, alcoholic drinks were included in what was forbidden during Passover week. Therefore the wine served at the Lord’s Supper had to be unfermented.

Jesus said of the wine He used in the Last Supper, “This is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28).

¹ See Genesis 9:21; 19:31-36; 1 Samuel 25:36, 37; 2 Samuel 13:28; 1 Kings 20:12-21; Daniel 5:1-4, 23-30; Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 31:4, 5; 1 Samuel 1:14; Joel 3:3; Amos 6:6; etc.

Since fermentation is the result of decay, how could He use it as an emblem of His life-giving sacrifice? His blood represented His pure and holy life. It would be blasphemous to assume that it could be symbolized by something that causes so much distress and shame.

The name He gave to this emblem of His blood was not “wine”: “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this *fruit of the vine*, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:29).

Such a name could only be given to *unfermented* grape juice. From that day to this, Jesus has not tasted it. He is fasting, as it were, until the long-awaited time when He can drink it “new” with His people in His kingdom. We know that there will be no intoxicating drink there because “there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination.” “And there shall be no more curse” (Rev. 21:27; 22:3).

It is possible to “defile” one’s body and soul by drinking alcoholic drinks (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 10:31). Jesus served His disciples the same drink that He will serve them in His kingdom, something that does not “defile,” and brings no “curse.”

That last meal that Jesus ate with His disciples (“the Lord’s Supper,” to many) illustrates the idea of “substitution” that the New Testament teaches (yes, and the Old Testament, too), a shared experience with Him.

Jesus did not say to His disciples, I am eating this Bread instead of you, nor did He say, I am drinking from this cup instead of you. He ate with them, He

drank with them; they ate and drank with Him. Using the clearest illustration possible of intimate oneness He represented His believers as “drinking My blood, eating My body.” “Abide in Me, and I in you,” He pleads. You are branches and I am the Vine (John 15:4, 5). “Ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.” In sending the Holy Spirit to dwell with those who believe in Him, Jesus represents Himself as not leaving them orphans, “I will come to you” (John 14:20, 18). Open your heart, receive His Spirit; you receive Him.

“Take, eat,” He says in that last supper; “this is My body which is broken for you.” And then in the same way, “He took the cup, when He had supped,” and said, “Drink ye all, of it, for this is the blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:26-28, 1 Cor. 11:23-26). The idea again is intimate one-ness. Jesus does not want us to think of Him as separate from us, doing everything “instead of us,” while we look on in childish wonder, uncomprehending.

He did indeed die instead of us, He died our second death so we don’t have to die our own second death—that is all true; but it is only part of the truth He obviously wants us to understand and experience. He wants intimate oneness with us where we enter into His feelings and His experience as a branch enters into the life processes of the Vine.

And then coming down to the last days of history just before Christ’s return, Revelation introduces us to a oneness with Him even more intimate, even

closer to our human understanding. We see how He wants us to sense an even deeper identification with Himself—a Bride’s nearness to her Husband. Here is a shared experience with Him, one in which human pride can have no place. When “I am crucified with Christ” all my “glory” (yes, even pastoral!) is laid in the dust forever.

What Jesus said about the Lord’s Supper impressed me: “My blood . . . is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28). Who are the “many”? Since everybody has sinned (Rom. 3:23) it must mean that Christ shed His blood for the same “everybody.” He said, “Everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life. . . . The bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of *the world*. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you” (John 6:40, 51, 53). What He gives is universal.

Jesus shed His blood for every human being, including you. “He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them [His disciples, including Judas Iscariot who betrayed Him], saying, ‘Drink from it, *all of you*. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:27, 28). “All of you” included His betrayer, making clear to us that the blood of Christ was shed for “all” who will eventually be lost as much as for those who will eventually be saved. Astounding as it may seem to grasp this stupendous truth, His death was a universal sacrifice. Let the truth roll over your soul like ocean waves: *you have been redeemed*.

Believe it with all your heart, and then you will act like it. Such faith is bound to transform you.

From what Jesus said, a sympathetic appreciation of Mary's mysterious deed is necessary if we would understand the gospel itself. Jesus bespoke for her act the high regard of His followers in all ages: "Wherever this gospel is preached throughout the whole world, what this woman did will also be spoken of as a memorial to her" (Matt. 26:13). Infinitely better than any marble inscription for a Roman emperor!

Here is reason enough for giving Mary our attention.

WHY DID JESUS PRAISE HER SO EXTRAVAGANTLY?

Not for her sake, but for the sake of "this gospel" the fragrance of her deed is to be published abroad like this. Here is the key to all that is perplexing in this strange event. *Mary was preaching a sermon.*

Her act illuminates the gospel and casts into sharp and grand relief its principles of love, sacrifice, and magnificence.

Likewise the faultfinding of the disciples exposes our natural human reaction to the tender love revealed at the cross.

Had we been present on the occasion, we would have found it difficult not to take our stand with Judas and the other disciples. Mary had done something that was to all human appearance irrational and wasteful. "Three hundred denarii" the value of the ointment, represented the wages of a laboring man for a full year, "a denarius a day" being the usual pay (Matt. 20:2). Such a sum would

probably have been sufficient to provide a small meal for five thousand men "besides women and children," according to Philip's cautious estimate. John 6:7; Matthew 14:21.

If we did not know the outcome of this drama of Bethany, what would we have thought of this apparently senseless extravagance? How many church managers and committee members would approve of such an expenditure? Who among us would not have sympathized decidedly with the disciples in their feelings of outrage? This emotionally disturbed woman deserves rebuke!

We would find our hearts ready to second Judas's motion of censure: "Why was not this fragrant oil sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"

But Jesus Himself steps in to defend Mary. According to our natural judgment, we would be ready to agree with Judas. Would it not be a more sober, practical act of devotion for Mary to use a few drops of the precious ointment to anoint His head, and then sell the balance for the benefit of the poor? We might feel a vague sense of thankfulness that such zealots as Mary are only a small minority in the church today.

But even more perplexing is the apparently reckless extravagance with which Jesus defended her. We are inclined to think He might have said something nice to her, tenderly commending the warmth of her affection while gently deploring this wild extravagance of its expression. He could have kindly encouraged her and at the same time placated the indignation of the Twelve.

Not so! While the hapless penitent tries to escape unnoticed, overwhelmed with confusion and embarrassment, fearing that her sister Martha and possibly even Jesus will think her foolish and improvident.

Jesus lifts His voice above the murmuring of the disciples: “Let her alone, Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me.” Far from approving the disciples’ apparent regard for the poor, He places an entirely different interpretation on Mary’s motive. It was a far truer charity. Her deed was a parable of divine love, a vehicle for proclaiming the gospel. Jesus was forced to defend her, for in so doing He was defending Himself and His cross. He was, in fact, imparting to her deed a symbolic meaning of which she herself was ignorant.

In the alabaster bottle, broken at His feet, He discerned His body, broken and bruised for us.

In the precious ointment running to waste on the floor, He saw His blood “shed for many for the remission of sins;” yet rejected and despised by most of them.

In the motive that prompted Mary’s act—her heartbroken, repentant love for Him—Jesus saw the true reflection of His love for us. In her sacrifice to purchase the ointment with the sum total of her hard-earned savings, He saw the utter emptying of Himself in the role of the divine Lover of our souls.

In her apparent extravagance He saw the magnificence of Heaven’s offering poured out sufficient to save a world, yet accepted by only a handful of its inhabitants.

Thus was Jesus obliged to defend His wondrous cross before those who should have had hearts to appreciate its unutterable worth.

There is special good news included in forgiveness. We gain very little self-respect in being merely pardoned at no expense to God. If all God does for us is to pardon or excuse our sins, we still carry the pollution deep within our souls.

But the “blood of the new covenant. . . is shed for many for the remission of sins,” taking them away. Sins are to be “blotted out.” True forgiveness will do more than pardon us, because we at last realize what it cost Him. It will “cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”² Says the 1888 idea:

“When Christ covers us with the robe of His own righteousness, He does not furnish a cloak for sin, but takes the sin away. And this shows that the forgiveness of sins is something more than a mere form, something more than a mere entry in the books of record in heaven, to the effect that the sin has been canceled. The forgiveness of sins is a reality, . . . something that vitally affects the individual. It actually clears him from guilt; and if he is cleared from guilt, is justified, made righteous, he has certainly undergone a radical change.”³

Ellen White agrees: “God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin.”⁴

² Matt. 26:28; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 1 John 1:9, 2:1, 2.

³ E. J. Waggoner, *Christ and His Righteousness*, p. 66.

⁴ *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

There is a true aspect of Adventism which has been widely opposed in recent years. The very possibility of a people overcoming so that they might be ready for Christ's coming has been muted, denied, and even ridiculed. It has often been denounced as the heresy of "perfectionism."

But the Bible is clear: "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good." Revelation complements this "blessed hope" by describing a people who "follow the Lamb wherever He goes. . . . They are blameless."⁵

Scripture teaches that those who look "for that blessed hope" will truly, not supposedly, "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."⁶ The 1888 message does not deserve ridicule. This glorious result will be accomplished through righteousness by faith, not through an *ego*-centered works program:

"God manifest in the flesh, God manifest in sinful flesh, is the mystery of God—not God manifested in sinless flesh, but in *sinful* flesh. That is to say, . . . God will so dwell yet in sinful flesh today that in spite of all the sinfulness of sinful flesh, His

⁵ Titus 2:11-14; Rev. 14:4, 5, NIV.

⁶ Rev. 14:12.

influence, His glory, His righteousness, His character, shall be manifested wherever that person goes. . . . In Christ is shown the Father's purpose concerning us. All that was done in Christ was to show what will be done in us. . . . Is it too much, then, for us to think that sinful flesh, such as we; worthless dust and ashes, as are we—is it too much for us to think that such as we can manifest the glory of the Lord, which is refracted through Jesus Christ,—the glory of the Lord shining from the face of Jesus Christ? . . . It is our part to furnish a place for the glory to fall, that it may shine in the beautiful reflected rays of the glory of God."⁷

Tucked away in an obscure text of the Bible is a Good News promise that cannot fail to be fulfilled: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."⁸ Amplified and complemented by the message of Hebrews in the New Testament, this prophecy describes the special work of the heavenly High Priest on this cosmic Day of Atonement. Today we are living "in the days of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound."⁹ This is the work which began in 1844.

Our friends in other churches are sincere, warm-hearted Christians living up to all the light they have. Lutheran, Calvinist, Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal, or whatever, their "Righteousness by faith" sincerely knows nothing of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, nothing of an antitypical

⁷ A. T. Jones, *General Conference Bulletin*, 1893, pp. 377-380.

⁸ Daniel 8:14, KJV.

⁹ Rev. 10:7, KJV; see Heb. 8, 9, 10.

Day of Atonement. The idea of a special heart-preparation for the return of Christ is dimly, if at all, comprehended.

The Seventh-day Adventist 1888 message sees a successful resolving of the “great controversy between Christ and Satan.” The Lord finds a people willing to cooperate fully with Him in the last days. Christ as heavenly High Priest cleanses His sanctuary. It’s not our job to do it.

Our part is to cooperate with Him, to *let Him do it*, to stop hindering Him.

COMMUNION EXTRACTS

“You may say that you believe in Jesus when you have an appreciation of the cost of salvation. You may make this claim, when you feel that Jesus died for you on the cruel cross of Calvary; when you have an intelligent, understanding faith that His death makes it possible for you to cease from sin, and to perfect a righteous character through the grace of God, bestowed upon you as the purchase of Christ’s blood.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 24, 1888.

“It is not the fear of punishment, or the hope of everlasting reward, that leads the disciples of Christ to follow Him. They behold the Saviour’s matchless love, revealed throughout His pilgrimage on earth, from the manger of Bethlehem to Calvary’s cross, and the sight of Him attracts, it softens and subdues the soul. Love awakens in the heart of the beholders. They hear His voice, and they follow Him.” *The Desire of Ages*, p. 480.

“Everyone who will break from the slavery and service of Satan, and will stand under the blood-

stained banner of Prince Immanuel, will be kept by Christ’s intercessions. Christ, as our Mediator, at the right hand of the Father, ever keeps us in view, for it is as necessary that He should keep us by His intercessions as that He should redeem us with His blood. If He lets go His hold of us for one moment, Satan stands ready to destroy. Those purchased by His blood, He now keeps by His intercession. He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”—(Ms. Releases, Vol. 15, p. 104).

“Christ declares, ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.’ If the cross does not find an influence in its favor, it creates an influence. Through generation succeeding generation, the truth for this time is revealed as present truth. Christ on the cross was the medium whereby mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other. This is the means that is to move the world” (Ms. 56, 1899). {6BC 1113.5}

“All heaven suffered in Christ’s agony; but that suffering did not begin or end with His manifestation in humanity. The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God.” *Education*, p. 263.

“The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God’s dear Son.” *Steps to Christ*, p. 68.