



Weekly Newsletter: 15th May 2024

Reflection: What Does It Mean to Drink of Jesus?

By Joe Barnard

Christians are often so accustomed to Biblical language that the strangeness of its metaphors is lost on us. A classic example of this is John 7:37 where Jesus says, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink”. Many of us take the figurative speech here for granted. We’ve heard the metaphors of “thirst” and “drinking” so often that they fly by us unnoticed like birds in the air. They feel like they “make sense” to us without us every pausing to consider what “sense” they make.

Such obtuseness is easily shaken by a simple question. All it takes is a new believer asking, “How does someone drink from Jesus?” and suddenly we find ourselves tongue-tied. What felt obvious before turns out to be a riddle. And why is this? The answer is because we’ve repeatedly walked right past images that were meant to be noticed.

So, what does Jesus mean by drinking of him? How is this metaphor a fertile way of thinking about the connection between belief and eternal life? Here are some ideas to ponder

1 – Drinking Reminds Us that Belief Is an Individual Act

Here is a point that requires very little proof or explanation: I can’t drink for you, and you can’t drink for me. For thirst to be satisfied, each person must drink for himself.

The lesson from this is straightforward. Each one of us must individually trust in Jesus. Without personal faith, there is no personal salvation. For spiritual thirst to be quenched, a person must leave the crowd and come to Jesus. There is no “group pass” when it comes to salvation.

2 – Drinking Reminds Us that Faith Is Not a Heroic or Meritorious Act

If salvation was based on a system of works-based merit, Jesus would have used very different metaphors. He might have said, “If anyone is able to scale the highest cedars of Lebanon”, or “If anyone is able to lift the mammoth boulders on the hillside of Jerusalem”, or “If anyone is able to transcribe Moses and the Prophets onto the tablets of his heart,” or “If anyone is able to swim across the sea of Galilee”. Each of these images would have communicated some illustrious deed whereby a person earned the right to a grand reward.

But this was not Jesus’ message. The truth Jesus sought to communicate was not eternal life based on merit, but eternal life based on undeserved grace. And this is why Jesus took up the metaphor of drinking. No one – not even babies – get applause for being able to drink. Swallowing is as close to a passive-action as human

behaviour can get. In fact, drinking is all but involuntary. It requires the bare minimum of effort and ability, making it one of the few actions that both the newly born and the dying are both able to perform.

We need to see the importance of this. God does not grant salvation through faith because faith is some impressive deed. There is nothing notable about faith in itself. It's an act as simple as taking a drink of water. What is amazing and truly worthy of praise is the grace that God freely offers.

3 – Drinking Reminds Us that Grace Does the Work of Salvation

Without drinking, water does not enter the body. A person cannot swim in the lake and stay hydrated by means of water seeping through his pores. For thirst to be quenched, we must open our mouths and allow water to pour into our throats. Thus, there is a sense in which drinking is a necessary means. Without drinking, we cannot benefit from water.

Yet, the mechanics of drinking does not in itself do anything to nourish and sustain the body. It's not the act of "gulping" or "sipping" that provides hydration. All such actions do is allow water to flow into the interior systems of the body. It's the water itself – not the act of drinking – that meets our need.

Here we land upon an important principle. Belief itself is not what saves and transforms a human being. We are not saved and nourished by faith; we are saved and nourished by Christ and the grace that he alone supplies. Jesus is the water; faith is nothing more than the act of swallowing.

It's important to keep this distinction clear. If we make the mistake of thinking that faith itself is what strengthens and nourishes the soul, then we often land in the introspective position of constantly trying to measure whether or not we have sufficient faith. Such thinking is back-to-front. A thirsty person does not waste time worrying about how big his mouth is. He simply fills his mouth with water and trusts that the water itself will be sufficient to satisfy his need.

We need to learn from this. It's not the greatness of faith that sustains us. All faith does is receive the greatness of Christ. This is why Jesus is so clear that we do not need a lot of faith to see the power of God operating in our souls. Faith the size of a mustard seed is all that is needed to create a lifeline between heaven and earth. Simply look to Jesus and the rains of grace begin to fall and the aridness of a dry soul begins to soften into a fertile and well irrigated garden.

Annual General Meeting

The church AGM will take place in person **tonight at 7pm** and refreshments will be served from 6.45pm. The meeting will be livestreamed [here](#) for those who can't make it into the building.

The church accounts have been emailed out to all church members, please speak to Liz if you would like a hard copy of the accounts or haven't received them. There will be no prayer bulletin this week because of the AGM. Thank you!

Church Picnic Postponed

For planning reasons, the church picnic has been postponed to **Saturday 7th September**. The location will still be the church building and Montgomery St. park. Please save the date on your calendars.

We're still hoping to do something on **Saturday 22nd June** as a church family; therefore, please keep the date free if you are able and look out in the newsletter for more information soon.

Book Group

This month's book group meeting will be on **Saturday 25th May at 3.30pm** at Alison Nelson's home. This month we are reading Jerry Sittser's book *A Grace Disguised* as recommended by Lorna Ferguson, one of our missionaries. For further information please speak to Anncris Roberts.

Praying for Tranent



Tim Rawlinson is planning an evening to update people and pray for the work in Tranent on **Thursday 30th May** at 7.30pm on Zoom. This will be an opportunity to meet some of the team and hear first hand about some of the things we've been praying for.

If you would like to join, please contact Tim (tim-rawlinson@gmail.com) and he will send you the details.

Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Tuesday: Pickleball and Table Tennis from 7pm
- Wednesday: AGM at 7pm in person (6.45pm for refreshments) and livestreamed
- Thursday: Women's Bible Studies at 11am (in person)
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and livestreamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
 - Equip at 6pm
- Monday: Baby and Toddlers from 10 – 11.30am



www.holyroodevangelical.org

Incorporated as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Scottish Charity Number SCO44820