

The Baptism of Christ

By Ginny Larsen

"But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"
(Luke 12:50)

Straitened: "what a pressure of spirit is upon Me."

– Jamieson, Faucett, & Brown Commentary

"These words express both the trouble and distress Christ was in, at the apprehension of His sufferings as man; which were like to the distress of persons, closely besieged by an enemy; or rather of a woman, whose time of travail draws nigh, when she dreads it, and yet longs to have it over: and likewise they signify, His restless desire to have them accomplished"

– John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible

"God reaches the soul: man can only touch the body."

– John Darby's Synopsis

"But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto Him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized."

(Mark 10:38-39)

"Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me. Yet the LORD will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life."

(Psalm 42:7-8)

"The psalmist seems to represent himself as cast away at sea; and by wave impelling wave, is carried to a rock, around which the surges dash in all directions, forming hollow sounds in the creeks and caverns. At last, several waves breaking over him, tear him away from that rock to which he clung, and where he had a little before found a resting-place, and, apparently, an escape from danger. "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me;" he is then whelmed in the deep, and God alone can save him."

– Adam Clarke's Commentary

To share in our Lord's baptism, to drink the cup He drank, means to take on His sorrows as well. For the love of His Father towards the world, Jesus walked in a sinful world that He knew was going to reject Him, in order that those who would come to Him should be saved. As His Body here on earth, we walk in a godless world that is increasingly embracing evil and rejecting His love and His salvation, turning more and more hateful and vindictive toward us day by day. They are "gnashing their teeth" at us, if you will. Jesus was pressed in spirit, full of sorrow and grief (Isaiah 53:3), and yet, He would endure it and drink the cup His Father gave Him (John 18:11). He completely gave Himself to the baptism that the Father sent Him to accomplish. He sends us to the same baptism. Can we accept it?

In our flesh we cannot. Even though the two disciples quickly said, "Yes, we are able" in response to the Lord's question, **they had no idea (Mark 10:38-39)**. We can be so quick to say yes to the Lord, but have we weighed the cost? James and John did eventually accept and endure that same baptism, but only after they were baptized with the Holy Spirit and empowered by Him to do so. We've been baptized by that same Spirit into His death when we came to Him by faith and were born again. We were also baptized into His resurrection and His baptism became ours. We were crucified with Him, dead to sin and this world, raised up together with Him to newness of life. As Paul states: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20).

If we are not feeling constrained, pressed, or greatly distressed by life in this world which closes in on us as the Body of Christ, perhaps we have not accepted His baptism as our own. Perhaps we have not identified with Him, if we are not feeling the tremendous grief that He Himself felt as the world was closing in on Him to reject and crucify Him, as they are again today, seeking to crucify and rid themselves of Him. Perhaps we have taken the side of the world. Even many who call themselves His, professing to follow Him, are those who are at the forefront of taking sides against those who love Him – those who cherish His Word and will not compromise it. They behave just as did the religious leaders of Jesus' day, who were the ones to crucify Him.

The effect of being hard-pressed on every side (as Paul stated it in Philippians 1:23) is a more focused desire to finish the work God has called us to, a greater love for what He loves, a desire to see His glory in our lives whether we live or die, and a greater love for those we are sent to minister to. Each one of us in Christ have been sent to minister. We are called to testify to family, friends, co-workers, acquaintances, and people we meet every day. In all of these situations, we are called to be His representatives in the way we live, talk, and act, so that Christ is seen in us and will minister through us. Again, Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians chapter four of this calling:

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you. We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you" (2 Corinthians 4:6-14).

Our human nature desires to escape this baptism. We want to share in the joys of Christ but also find acceptance and love from this world. We want to be seen as "good" and "fun" in the world's eyes, because we want to please people and be liked. Who doesn't? The more we find ourselves pressed, the clearer the choice is. Will we take the side of Christ, standing with Him, and the cup He drank? Will we be baptized with the baptism He was baptized with? Or will we think to skip that and join the world's baptism. The world will also have a baptism they don't know about. It will be a baptism of wrath, eventually, when God's patience with evil has come to an end (2 Peter 3:9-10). Now is their time of jubilation as they revel in their power over all

that is good, progressing in all their plans, yet the Bible says even as they dig their pit for the godly, they will eventually fall into it themselves (Proverbs 26:27; 28:10). Wrath is not the baptism for God's children. There's no middle ground. Our path as Believers is becoming more and more clear in this world, and contrary to what the world says, there is only one path to Life, a straight and narrow one, which God alone has made, for all who would come to Him. That path is Jesus Christ alone, Who is the truth, the life, and the way.

All who He has called out are to be at last conquerors in all (Romans 8:28-39). Just as we are baptized in the likeness of His death, so are we in the likeness of His resurrection. He promises that He will give us all things, nothing will separate us from Him, no one can snatch us out of His hands, and we are more than conquerors in Him. What blessed promise we have in Him! As we share in His sufferings, we will also share in His glory (Romans 8:17-18). Even now, His glory fills our hearts as we walk by faith in Him. His joy of anticipation fills our hearts, knowing He is soon coming for us, even while the sorrowful anticipation of evil in this world fills our hearts as well. We are not without hope, as the world is, and we are not without purpose, even while waiting. We are not without His sustaining presence and grace continually. For the child of God, *"to live is Christ, to die is gain"* (Philippians 1:20). It is far better to be with the Lord, yet to live on here means much fruit for His glory (Philippians 1:23).

Abba, enable us to have courage in our hearts, to accept the cup You have given us, to accept the baptism You have been baptized with, and to walk in faith sustained by Your grace more and more each day, always looking toward that blessed hope which You have promised those who love You! Amen.