

HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD!

STUDY SIX

The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

Remarkable things occur when you stop fighting God's will. A surprise plan unfolds when you accept His purpose. When you don't resist it. One of the benefits of being crushed, of surrendering to God, is that you learn slowly but surely that there's a better plan and that resisting it is not a good thing.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WRITERS have models like William Shakespeare, Jane Austen, or Fyodor Dostoevsky. Golfers have Jack Nicklaus or Tiger Woods. Leaders, Abraham Lincoln or Florence Nightingale. We see what greatness looks like in a particular domain, and it draws our interest. It attracts us like a lightbulb attracts a moth. Then, we determine to pattern our lives after such models in hopes of achieving similar success—whether in business or politics, painting or cooking, acting or parenting.

This is similar for Christians in the spiritual domain. Jesus' suffering and death, caused by the Sanhedrin's condemnation and performed by Rome's brutality, not only paid the price God required for human sin but set the pattern of devotion for Christians to emulate. We follow God no matter the cost because a greater victory always lies at the end of obedience's road.

Jesus defined His suffering as *the cup* the Father gave Him, the focus of this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Read how Jesus prayed the night He was betrayed:

“Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.” (Luke 22:42)



INSIGHT FOR LIVING



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SEARCHING
THE
SCRIPTURES
BIBLE STUDIES

The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

Jesus knew the pain that awaited Him, but He obeyed the Father rather than reject the suffering. Why? “For the joy set before Him [He] endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2 NASB). Take time now to record a prayer to God, asking Him to teach you His good purposes through personal suffering and to embrace His will even if it causes personal suffering. As we’ll see, with every cup to drink, a triumph awaits.

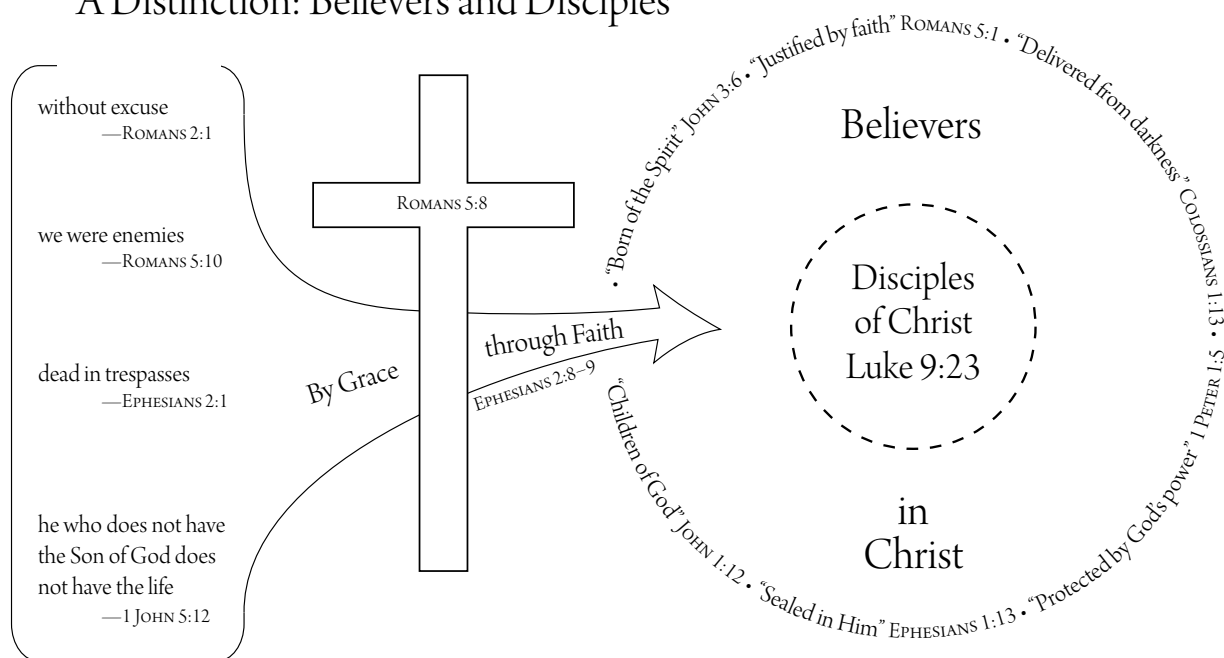


TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

When the Spirit moves a person’s heart, opens eyes that have been blind, and enlightens a mind formerly darkened to spiritual truth, the miracle of faith occurs. In a supernatural moment, a believer is born. Immediately, the new Christian inherits the benefits Christ purchased by His suffering and death on the cross.

Yet, Christians do not *fully* conform to His image in that single moment. That process occurs slowly, throughout a lifetime. During this lifelong transformation, a Christian steps into discipleship and, as inconvenient or uncomfortable or painful as it may be, into the will of the Father. Pastor Chuck’s chart below illustrates this process.

A Distinction: Believers and Disciples



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The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

Have you ever considered the process illustrated in the chart on the previous page? Do you find any of it surprising, comforting, or illuminating? If so, why? Also, consider why it is important to understand our spiritual growth in this way. Record your answer below.



Observation: The Ideal Example

Whenever we study a passage of Scripture, we always begin with observation.¹ Observation requires no source other than your Bible. Observation simply entails reading the passage. Slowly. Attentively. Repetitively. We want to see what it says. Practice that now with *John 18:1–11*.

Where did this scene in the Gospel of John take place (John 18:1)?

What role did Judas play in this scene, what intention drove him, and who accompanied him?

What did Judas' cohort carry with them (18:3)?

They expected a fight. What they didn't realize was that the fight was over. Jesus accepted the cup, but they didn't know that. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

What name did Judas' cohort use to describe Jesus? _____

What happened to Judas' cohort when Jesus responded to their first question?

Compare and contrast Jesus' and Peter's responses to Judas' accomplices.

“Let these others go”—both Jesus' love and authority shone through as the disciples left the scene scot-free while the Great I Am let His hands be bound, His body arrested, and actions judged by the authorities of this world.

The garden of Gethsemane was where the battle took place. At Gethsemane, Jesus prays, “Let this cup pass from Me.” Listen to His words that disciples also say: “Not My will but Yours be done. Not My way but Your way, Lord. Not My plan but Your plan.” —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: A Surprising Question

After applying our reasoning and imagination to the world of the passage, we determine the passage's significance, focusing on why the author wrote the text the way it's written and what the passage teaches us about God. During interpretation, we consult our resources to help us dig deeper into the text.

Take a moment to reread John 18:4. The apostle commented on Jesus' thoughts to illuminate His intentions. Describe what this verse teaches us about these intentions.

The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

In John's first seventeen chapters, Jesus called Himself the:

- Bread of Life (John 6:35)
- Light of the World (8:12)
- The Gate (10:9)
- The Good Shepherd (10:11)
- The Resurrection (11:25)
- The Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
- The True Vine (15:1)

In chapter 18, Judas' cohort referred to Jesus as the "Nazarene." Why did John include their description of Jesus? What truth or truths did the apostle enhance by contrasting their description with Jesus' self-descriptions? Also, cross-reference their description with [John 1:9–12 and 1:43–46](#).

Next, explain the significance of Jesus' question to Peter in 18:11. Look up [cup](#) in a Bible dictionary or reference a [commentary](#) on John if you need to. If you do not already own Pastor Chuck Swindoll's [commentary on John](#), we recommend you add it to your Bible-study library.

Peter, out of control, fought back by using his sword as the Roman soldiers and temple guards expected. But Jesus, in control, commanded Peter to sheath his sword after Peter slashed Malchus' ear. Luke wrote that Jesus healed Malchus' ear with a touch (Luke 22:51). Even to the end, Jesus expressed complete submission to and confidence in the Father's will.



Correlation: Jesus' Call to Discipleship

Jesus' perfect obedience to the Father has become our model for all Christians to follow. Jesus Himself called His followers to such obedience. A short passage in Luke teaches this. You'll miss the point if you're in a hurry. Take time now to observe it: [Luke 9:22–23](#).

The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

How does Luke 9:22 correlate with John 18:1–11?

How does Luke 9:23 logically follow 9:22?

Delineate and define the three marks of discipleship according to Jesus in 9:23.

Now, what does it mean to become a disciple? It means becoming a close follower of Jesus Christ. It's a process: I denounce all lesser loyalties. I become a disciple of Christ when my love for Christ is greater than my love for my wife and for my children. I become a disciple of Christ when my goal is to please Him more than to please my parents or my parents' best wishes or someone else who has high expectations of me. It's the transfer of that drive. It includes the submission of my will to His will. It involves self-denial and unwillingness to pursue my own way, and to go God's way, to please Him. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Embracing the Cup

To help us apply God's Word, Pastor Chuck provides four principles. These principles help us walk the path of obedience to God's will and look to the rewards that accompany it.

The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

For every disciple, there is a purpose to fulfill. God has a *specific* plan for *your* life. For some, He reveals a clear plan early in their journey. For others, the plan unfolds gradually. Consider your life. Record the purpose to which He has called you. That plan could be lifelong or tailored to your current season of life.

With every purpose, there is a cup to drink. We cannot complete His purpose on our schedule. We must fulfill God's purpose according to His way in His timing. That's the cup to drink. In what way must you embrace God's cup?

In every cup, there is a pain to accept and endure. Settle it now in your heart, that the cup will not necessarily be joyful or convenient. Though we'd rather avoid the pain, it is best to endure. What pain comes with your cup? Plan now how you intend to persevere through it.

Through every pain, there's a victory to claim. Now look ahead. See the golden tape flapping at the finish line. Consider the rewards and let them empower you through the pain to the end. What reward awaits you? Even if you can't visualize it now, trust our Father who delights in giving good gifts to His children.

The Cup That He Drank

John 18:1–11

Ultimately, the joy that awaited Jesus, which led Him to endure the cross, will be our joy—eternity in the exhilarating presence of our loving Savior with bodies as new as His: incorruptible and immortal.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You for that divine love that pervades, encompasses, and envelopes me, for the love that invaded this earth in the person of Your Son, perfectly personifying love before us all. Thank You for the cup that He drank, leading to my deliverance and connecting me with You. Please create in me the same heart of surrender to Your will, so that whatever the cup, I may drink it, whatever the cross, I may bear it, enjoying the sweetness of Your presence and fullness of Your provision. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, "[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)"

For the 2026 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Aaron Massey, senior vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, and Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages. Copyright © 2008, 2019, 2026 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

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