

What am I worth? (3)

The cost of true worth: what it involves



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We are considering, in the series on True Worth, the subject of "What am I worth?" the third message. We have looked at a passage in **Mark 10: 35-45** to consider an example in the lives of two disciples of the Lord Jesus, and from there issues arising from this and associated with this, that can be helpful for us to ponder over, and also to apply in our lives. There are various questions that we can ponder over arising from the record of this passage.

Seeking for enduring worth

Today we look at another question: Why did the Lord Jesus ask them whether they were able to drink the cup that He drank and be baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized? **Mark 10: 38** reads:

But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

In the previous message, we looked at some of the areas of deficiencies or wrong understanding that could be associated with the request of these two disciples.

Today, let us look at the more positive aspect with regard to their request. Although there were areas that were not correct in their understanding as well as in their attitudes, underlying this there were positive aspirations in their heart, something meaningful that they were pursuing, and when the Lord Jesus responded to them, He understood what they longed for, and He was seeking to help them. So He asked the question, "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

Why did He ask such a question?

We know that the cup of the Lord Jesus and the baptism with which He was baptized refer to very deep issues in His life. If the disciples were pursuing something very superficial and worthless, the Lord Jesus would not be very likely to respond to them in this form. But because He understood that they longed for something meaningful, He wanted to help them to appreciate how they could attain their desire.

But at this stage, they did not quite understand what it meant. So He said, "You do not know what you are asking for. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

The disciples made the request. They said, "Grant that we may sit in Your glory, one on Your right, and one on *Your* left." The disciples were not asking for riches, for authority over other people in this world, but they were asking for something valuable in eternity. They wanted to sit on the right and on the left of the Lord Jesus in His glory.

Perhaps the disciples remembered the words of the Lord Jesus in the “Sermon on the Mount”, when He said, in **Matthew 6: 19-20**,

- 19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.
20 “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal...”

It could be the disciples were conscious that they should lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, not on earth. So they asked to sit on the right and on the left of the Lord Jesus in His glory, in the future, in heaven. So, that was a positive direction, as they desired treasures in heaven.

Perhaps they were also conscious of the words of the Lord Jesus in **John 6: 26-27**

- 26 Jesus answered them and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled.
27 “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, *even* God, has set His seal.”

The Lord Jesus spoke to the Jews who followed Him and He told them: “You are seeking Me because you ate of the loaves, and were filled. Do not work for the food which perishes... Do not strive after the things of this world but for the food which endures to eternal life...”

So the disciples were seeking for something that would endure to eternal life, something in eternity. It would likely be related to their understanding of what would be of greatest value in their lives: something important... valuable... of true worth... that will apply to their lives... their being.

So the Lord Jesus asked them, “Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”

Understanding the cost

This implies that the Lord Jesus was telling them: "If you want that kind of position, you need to recognize that there is a cost to it. If you want to be close to Me in eternity, you must understand that there is a path to take."

It is not something which God can just bestow upon us, to make us sit on the right or on the left of the Lord Jesus; it was not something the Lord Jesus would just confer on people. There was a cost involved for such a situation.

Being close to the Lord Jesus involves moral and spiritual quality of true worth in our being. Without that, we cannot be close to the Lord Jesus in a meaningful sense.

So, to drink of the cup that He drank and to be baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized is a description of something very important, which the disciples had to learn if they were to aspire for such a relationship with Him. The Lord Jesus wanted to help the disciples to understand that if they wanted to be close to Him in eternity, they must know that this would be possible only if they followed Him closely.

If they did not follow Him closely now, they would not be close to Him in eternity.

This principle applies to all Christians, and there are different degrees of closeness, related to the degree of following Him. How closely we follow the Lord Jesus will have a direct bearing on how close we will be with Him in eternity. In **John 12: 26**, the Lord Jesus said these words:

"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him..."

The disciples wanted a position of honour. They wanted to be where the Lord Jesus would be. They wanted to be very close to Him. The Lord Jesus said: "It is possible for you to be close to Me, but you must understand: you must follow Me." "Where I am, there shall My servant also be..." applies to those who would follow Him, and if we truly follow Him and serve Him, He says, then the Father will honor him.

There will be true honour and glory that God will bestow upon those who truly follow the Lord Jesus, but we need to understand what is the meaning of following Him, what is the meaning of serving Him. In what kind of situation, state of development would there be true honour and glory that comes from God?

Different levels of following the Lord

From the Scriptures, from our experience in life, from the way that God deals with us, we can come to appreciate that there are different levels of following the Lord Jesus.

All Christians basically want to follow the Lord Jesus because they recognize Him to be good, and what He can bring to our lives is very meaningful. We want to follow Him.

However, in reality, we are following the Lord at different levels. In our own personal development we often begin at the lower level, and when we understand more, when we realize what it involves to walk with Him, we recognize that there are higher levels that we need to strive towards.

It is a difficult path but a very meaningful one.

The basic level

At the basic level, we can say, there must be the preparedness to leave earthly comforts, possessions and relationships, to follow the Lord Jesus. At the basic level of following the Lord Jesus, there must be the preparedness to leave earthly comforts, possessions and relationships, to follow the Lord Jesus.

If we are not prepared to do that, if we are not willing to take this course of action, if we want to hold on to the things of this world, we cannot truly follow Him.

This is one level of following Him, but it is a lower level, and yet at this level many find it very difficult.

Luke 9: 57-62

- 57 And as they were going along the road, someone said to Him, "I will follow You wherever You go."
58 And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."
59 And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Permit me first to go and bury my father."
60 But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."
61 And another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home."
62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

This passage describes various situations where disciples may want to follow the Lord Jesus but it seems rather difficult to various ones to follow Him.

Earthly comforts

One said, "I will follow You wherever You go" and the Lord Jesus replied, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

The Lord Jesus wanted this person to know: "If you want to follow Me, then it can, it does, involve physical hardships: various situations of life that may be rather unpleasant in your experience. You have to be prepared to leave your earthly comforts and possessions to follow Me."

Are we willing to do that? Many people still cling on to the things of this world. They are too precious for us. We find it difficult to bear with some discomfort even though we long to be close to the Lord Jesus; we are not prepared to be uncomfortable, we are not prepared to part with our possessions.

It does not mean that if we follow the Lord Jesus, we will always live in great physical discomfort and pain. There are times when God may provide for us physical, material things in abundance, but within our hearts we must be prepared to leave all this whenever and wherever the Lord may call us. If this is not present, then we will not be able to hear His voice, to walk with Him, to go where He goes.

Earthly responsibilities

Then we see in the second situation, when the Lord Jesus said to another, "Follow Me", he said, "Permit me first to go and bury my father."

This may seem quite in order: it is a responsibility to bury his father. So too, we have many responsibilities in this world and it seems rather reasonable for us to make sure that we fulfil these responsibilities.

God wants us to fulfil our responsibilities on earth. The issue here is not fulfilling of responsibilities alone. It is a question of what is of greater priority in our lives. Do our responsibilities on earth hinder us from truly obeying the Lord when He calls us?

Is there this question of “me first”: “Permit me first to go and do this or that”? When the Lord calls, we have other things to do first. We are not prepared to listen to Him, to walk with Him immediately.

It would be a different thing if we say, “Yes, Lord, I will follow You, but there are these things which seem to me that need to be attended to. What do You say?”

If the Lord says, “Yes, fulfil them”, that would be in order. But there are times when the Lord will say, “No, I have greater things, more important things, for you to attend to now.” Will we follow Him or will we say, “No, I must do these things first.”

Our priorities

This is very common in Christian experience. We need to eat sufficiently before we can spend time to read the Scriptures. We need to make sure that we have adequate rest before we spend time to pray. We must fulfil various obligations in society before we can properly ponder over what the Lord has to say to us.

God is not first priority in our lives. Other things come first.

When we have done other things, and we have some time and energy, we say, “Lord, what do You have to say to me now? I have done all the things that I need to do, that I wanted to do, now I am ready to listen to You.”

The Lord may say, “You are ready to listen but I have nothing to say to you now. The time has passed. When I wanted to speak to you, you were not ready to listen. When you want to listen, I have other things to do.”

We need to bear in mind that God is sovereign; God is a God of perfect wisdom and a God of moral and spiritual excellence. If He wants to speak to us, we must take care that we listen. If He wants us to do something, we must recognize it is the best. If we think we know better, if we have other preferences, God may not wait for us.

So we need to have our priorities right. God does want us to fulfil our responsibilities, but only in the context of first submitting to Him, of absolute obedience to Him, and willingness to obey Him and follow Him whatever it may be. In that context, we fulfil our responsibilities.

Earthly relationships

Likewise, another person said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." "First, let me do this, then I will follow You": earthly relationships are more important, they take greater priority.

Again, God does want us to fulfil our responsibilities in relating with others, and He does want us to bear in mind family relationships. But ultimately, He says, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me..." While He wants us to honour our father and mother, it is only in the context of absolute allegiance to Him.

If we do not do that, then earthly relationships can become a distraction to us from following the Lord. We cannot properly focus on what the Lord is saying and what He wants us to do, because we are so concerned about so many aspects of earthly relationships and responsibilities.

And so the Lord Jesus said, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." If we want to follow Him, then following Him must be our top priority, and it must affect every area of our lives.

It is in the context of following Him that we are meant to relate with others, we are meant to take care of our responsibilities, we are meant to do the things that we ought to do in this world. Without that, whatever we do in this world will have no value.

Many people find this level of following the Lord Jesus very difficult, and it is quite easy for us to mistakenly think that this is the most important aspect of following Him: to give up our possessions, to go through hardships, to suffer physical discomfort, to be prepared to leave earthly ties - this may seem the most important thing in following the Lord.

Deeper roots of self-seeking

However, in the Scriptures, the Lord tells us that this is not the most difficult. This is only the basic level in following Him. Self-seeking can continue in the midst of following the Lord in relation to the physical and temporal realm.

Even if we are prepared to leave the physical and temporal concerns of life and their attractions, and to follow the Lord, we may still harbour various aspects of self-seeking within our heart that will hinder us from truly following the Lord. And this is the area that ultimately the Lord has to deal with us if we want to follow Him fully.

Matthew 19: 23-27

- 23 And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.
- 24 "And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."
- 25 And when the disciples heard *this*, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?"
- 26 And looking upon *them* Jesus said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."
- 27 Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?"

In this incident, we know that a rich man wanted to follow the Lord Jesus – he wanted to have eternal life. But, when the Lord Jesus told him to sell all his possessions and to give to the poor and to then follow Him, so that he would have treasure in heaven, the man was unwilling to do so, and he went away grieved. The Lord Jesus then spoke to His disciples and said, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven...”

Parting with the possessions in this world is something that many do find very difficult. But in this context, we see that Peter responded and said to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You...”

So in this area, Peter and the other apostles had succeeded to a reasonable degree. They were prepared to leave everything and to follow the Lord Jesus. He said, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You...”

So in the physical, temporal realm, they were prepared to give up these things in order to walk with the Lord Jesus to follow Him. But, in the midst of that, Peter said, “...what then will there be for us?” We find that in the midst of following the Lord Jesus, the longing within the heart, the attitude, the direction, was still very much in terms of: “what...will there be for us?”

Self-seeking aspects continue within the heart even in the midst of seeking to follow the Lord Jesus. Even when we may be willing to part with physical, temporal things, we may still be longing for something for ourselves that is not pure.

We see in the lives of the apostles at this stage various desires that were not yet purified. They were not yet deeply identified with the Lord Jesus. We know that subsequently, when confronted with dangers and difficulties, they were not able to watch with Him in prayer... they deserted Him... they fled.

They were not deeply identified with the Lord Jesus. If they were, then it would be more likely for Peter to say, “Behold we have left everything and followed You. This is so meaningful – just to be able to follow You.” Following the Lord Jesus should bring such satisfaction and meaning to us. And they might also say, “Lord, is it meaningful to You? If there is anything that is not yet meaningful to You, teach us and we will correct it.” Should not that be the focus and concentration, rather than “...what then will there be for us?”?

Higher levels of following the Lord

So, there are higher levels to reach... deeper things to learn... to deal with... in our lives.

A higher level of following the Lord Jesus involves partaking of the cup and going through the baptism in the same direction of heart as He manifested in His life. If we want to rise to a higher level of following the Lord Jesus, we must learn to partake of the cup and go through the baptism in the same direction of heart as He manifested in His life. The Lord Jesus tells us if we want to develop true worth in our being, we must learn this. We must be willing to go through it; we must work at it; we must develop in this direction.

This path requires a very deep dealing of the self-life, and deep identification with the Lord Jesus in what is most important and meaningful in His heart, which centres on the cup and the baptism. The cup and the baptism were central aspects in the life of the Lord Jesus. They were very important to Him. But the disciples at that stage knew very little of what that meant. The Lord Jesus had to teach them, show to them, and in showing to them, teach us that we too may benefit.

Learning to drink “the cup”

Learning to drink the cup... to go through the baptism with the Lord Jesus... will lead to a life of self-giving for what is good and for the welfare of others and for the glory of God. This is the character of the Lord Jesus. He did not need to deal with self-life to live that way.

But, sinful people must first deal thoroughly with self-life to become like Him. If we do not deal with our self-life, we cannot become like Him.

We must change our ways: from self-seeking to self-giving. And this process is very difficult. Unless we are determined and perseverant, and unless we depend on Him fully, we will not develop the quality of this kind of identification with the Lord Jesus and produce true worth in our being.

The disciples longed for true worth in their being: they wanted something valuable... important... in eternity. The Lord Jesus asked them, “Are you able to drink the cup, go through the baptism, be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?”

What then is the cup? What is the baptism?

Matthew 26: 26-28

- 26 And while they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."
- 27 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you;
- 28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

The Lord Jesus took a cup and He gave thanks, then gave to the disciples and said, “Drink from it, all of you...” This cup was to represent, to symbolize, to portray, to speak of, His covenant – His blood of the covenant.

He said, "...for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." So we need to recognize that first the cup refers to the blood of the covenant – the new covenant – and in this aspect of the event of the cross, it is applicable only to the Lord Jesus. No one else can drink of that cup.

The Lord Jesus, as the one who was sinless, drank of that cup in order to establish the new covenant. It was His blood poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. In this regard, none of us can drink of that cup: only the Lord Jesus could.

However, when the Lord Jesus asked that question, "Are you able to drink the cup..." and when subsequently He said, "You will drink the cup", He is telling the disciples and telling us that there is an aspect of the cup that we are meant to partake. We are also called upon to drink of that cup.

For us, that cup cannot be the event of the cross, but it involves the spiritual principles of the direction and the heart attitude that are involved in that event, and these are applicable to us. When the Lord Jesus drank that cup, there are moral and spiritual principles involved: There is a heart attitude... a direction... within Him that led to Him drinking that cup. These principles are applicable to us: We must follow Him in this direction.

Spiritual principles of "the cup"

Let us consider some of the principles that are involved in this: drinking of the cup. Notice it is for the sake of others. The Lord Jesus said, "...this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." It is for the sake of others. It was not for Himself. He was not drinking the cup because He had to do it for Himself. He did it for others.

If we want to follow the Lord Jesus, we must also drink the cup, learn to live with concern for the welfare of others.

We are often preoccupied with ourselves. Our whole lives centre on ourselves: what we want, what we like, what we dislike, what is important to us, what affects us, how other people think of us, what will they do to us... We are preoccupied with this.

People ill-treated the Lord Jesus... misunderstood Him... maligned Him... put Him to death... In the midst of all that, He loved them... He cared for them... He sought to help them. He drank the cup for their sake. So, it is for the sake of others. We must learn to drink of that cup.

Then, it involves suffering of an intense nature.

Drinking of that cup in the event of the cross involved very, very intense suffering in the being of the Lord Jesus. If we want to follow Him, we must be willing also to drink of that cup, to be prepared to go through intense suffering where the Lord sees fit to lead us.

We must be prepared to identify with Him in areas that He is deeply concerned about, which if we do, we will also experience intense suffering.

We know that it is very easy for us to seek to run away from suffering of any kind. We do not like suffering. We do not enjoy suffering, and so it is easy for us to want to run away from suffering of any kind.

But if we want to follow the Lord Jesus, there are aspects of suffering that are meaningful to go through. They are not pleasant... they are difficult... they are painful... but they are meaningful.

Are we willing to go through that... to drink that cup with Him?

The cup is associated with suffering for the sake of the sins and associated burdens of others.

Not only is it an aspect of concern for the well-being of others, but it has to do with helping other people in the midst of their sins and their associated burdens, to find freedom... to find life... to find meaning... to find forgiveness... reconciliation with God... transformation of their being.

Drinking of the cup involves that kind of spirit.

This again is very difficult for us. We are often suffering for our own failures and sins rather than for that of others.

We must first purify our lives so that when we suffer, increasingly we will be suffering because of our love for others, and not because of our self-centredness.

But in our stages of development, there often would be a mixture. There are times when we suffer for our own sins. There may be other occasions we suffer because we love others and we care for them.

Drinking the cup is the result of a heart of self-giving because of love and holiness of character.

We are often motivated by what the world can offer us and what we like rather than striving for what is of ultimate value and what is truly pleasing to God.

So we will find it very difficult to live like that: a life of self-giving and holiness of character, motivated by that which is of ultimate value, that which is truly pleasing to God.

But this is a path that we are to take if we want to follow the Lord Jesus.

Matthew 26: 36-42 (NASB Updated Edition)

- 36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."
37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed.
38 Then He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me."
39 And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."
40 And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you *men* could not keep watch with Me for one hour?
41 "Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."
42 He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done."

This shows to us the intense suffering associated with the cup. He said, "My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death..." He was going through the process of preparing Himself for the event of the cross, in the process of drinking the cup of suffering.

He found His disciples sleeping – they could not keep watch with Him for one hour. Their identification with Him was not deep enough.

In the midst of this, we see the Lord Jesus praying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done." The Lord Jesus was willing to drink the cup, even though He knew that it was very, very painful and difficult.

As a result of the Lord Jesus' suffering in drinking the cup, He established the new covenant, and in **Luke 22: 20**, He says, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood." The new covenant arose from the drinking of the cup, and it brings benefits to us today because He suffered for our sake.

If we learn to drink of the cup, we too will bring benefits to the lives of other people – help them to appreciate God's grace and to benefit.

A voluntary choice

It is important for us to recognize that drinking of this cup is a voluntary choice. It is not something under compulsion, but it arises from love for God, for people and for what is good and meaningful.

God will not compel you to drink of that cup. He cannot, because the cup arises from true love and self-giving, and that cannot be compelled. It must be something that you want to do, something you do gladly, something that you find meaningful: you want to live like that.

It is not because you have no choice but to go through that situation. You gladly, willingly go through it even though you know it is very painful and very difficult.

Very often, we are unwilling to go through suffering even when we know it is meaningful.

At times, we may be willing to do so, and also seek the Lord's help when we find no way of getting out of it. When suffering comes upon us and we cannot escape it, we may then pray to God to help us go through it, and seek to depend on Him.

But God wants us to voluntarily choose to walk with Him – through difficult times as well as pleasant times... whatever it may involve.

Matthew 26: 51-54

- 51 And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest, and cut off his ear.
- 52 Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.
- 53 "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?
- 54 "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen this way?"

The Lord Jesus knew He need not drink of that cup. He need not go to the cross. It was voluntary. He chose it. He need not be put to death.

He could appeal to the Father, and the Father would at once put at His disposal more than twelve legions of angels. The Lord Jesus went through the cross not because He had no choice. He chose that path.

He said, "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen this way?" This is a reference to God's perfect will.

In the wisdom of God, He saw that the path of the cross is very meaningful... important... necessary... critical... for the well-being of mankind.

The Lord Jesus chose that path because He agreed this is the most meaningful path. Voluntarily, He laid down His life. He chose that path because of love. That is why the apostle Paul could express deep appreciation for the Lord Jesus who loved him and gave Himself for him. So too can all of us.

"The baptism" and "the cup"

The baptism that the Lord Jesus referred to is associated with the cup. He spoke about these two aspects together: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

The baptism is therefore very closely associated with the cup, and from what I can appreciate from the Scriptures, it very likely refers to the climax of suffering in the context of drinking the cup.

There are various aspects that we can ponder about to appreciate what the Lord Jesus went through in the event of the cross.

The cup speaks of the event of the cross. So too does the baptism.

Why then did the Lord Jesus refer to both?

In **Luke 12: 49-50**, the Lord Jesus said:

49 "I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!
50 "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!"

The Lord Jesus said, in this passage, "...I have a baptism to undergo..." He was not referring to water baptism because that had already taken place. He was referring to something very important... something very serious... something that brought great distress to Him: "...how distressed I am until it is accomplished!"

The greatest distress that the Lord Jesus experienced in His life was the event of the cross. So we can see therefore that the baptism here likely refers to the event of the cross, likely the climax and culmination of the suffering from the cup: the baptism of death... suffering of the most intense kind for the sake of others in dealing with the problem of sin and self-life.

One way that we could perhaps consider the baptism in relation to the cup is that the drinking of the cup begins the process of suffering, and as the suffering reaches its climax, it brings about death, and that event can be described as the baptism of death.

In the process of suffering for the sins of the world, the Lord Jesus suffered intensely. As He partook of the cup, He began to identify with the sins of mankind. He experienced the horror... the pain... the anguish... associated with the corruption... the defilement of sin.

As He entered more and more fully in identification with the sins of men, He reached the climax of the full wrath of God expressed on Him because of our sins. He took our place, and this led to the event of the climax of His suffering the baptism of death.

Baptism as portrayed in water baptism speaks of death, being buried and rising again. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, it was not only a physical death, but there was a spiritual principle involved – the wrath of God expended on sin. He took our place, our suffering because of sin. He who knew no sin bore our iniquities on the cross.

The Lord willing, we will consider further the meaning of the baptism and the cup as related to us in the process of seeking to identify with the Lord Jesus.

Are we willing to learn?

It is good for us to long to be close to the Lord. He encourages us to do that. Even though He knows we may not quite know what we are asking for, He does not despise us for our lack of understanding. He is willing to teach us.

The important question is: Are we willing to learn?

Will we listen to what He has to say to us? Will we seek to understand what it means to drink of the cup and to be baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized? Do we want to walk in this path? We know it is a very difficult path... represented by the event of the cross... the spiritual meaning and attitudes associated with that.

The apostle Paul was willing to go through it. As a result, he could say: "...that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death..." He was prepared, in coming to God, to be empowered by God... to know the power of the Holy Spirit... to drink of the cup of suffering to the point of death... to be conformed to His death. The apostle Paul knew that it required that he give up everything in order that he might gain Christ.

There is a path that is meaningful but difficult. There is a cost to true worth.

True worth is not what people think of us. True worth is not positions of honour that people may bestow upon us. True worth is not capabilities and what you can achieve and do in this world.

True worth ultimately has to do with the development of our hearts – the quality of our being, the depth of our oneness with God, how much we love Him, to what extent we are identified with Him and live for Him, the quality of our love for other people.

So, as we consider the question, “What am I worth?” it is important for us to concentrate on the right areas, to pursue that which has true and ultimate value and not to be distracted by the many things in this world... what people may say... what they may think... what they may do... the attractions of this world... what seems to be so important and meaningful... enjoyable...

Let us ask Him to help us to evaluate our lives. Let us ask Him to teach us what it means to follow Him, not just in the realm of the temporal, the physical, but more importantly, in the spiritual, moral and eternal. Let us ask Him to help us understand what it means to drink the cup that He has drunk and to be baptized with the baptism with which He was baptized.