

Christ spoke in Jn 18.11 of his forthcoming death as a 'cup of suffering', when he said, 'shall I not drink of the cup which the Father has given me?' This analogy of the cup can be applied in an interesting way, I think, to a statement made by Paul in Col 1.24. Reading from the NIV, 'Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, which is the church.' Paul seems to be comparing his life to a cup, which is to be placed under a faucet from which flows the continuing stream of those things to be suffered by the body of Christ. Christ, on earth, had already filled his cup there. Paul is then saying that he is more than happy to fill his cup to the brim there, too.

Another place that the 'cup' and suffering are thought of together is in the memorial of the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper. Here we rejoice in Christ's suffering for us, having a very blessed fellowship and communion with him. We usually think only of the blessings relating to this act. But the Greek word for fellowship, *Koinoneo*, also implies a sharing, as we read in 1 Pet 4.13, 'But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ', the word participate is this very Greek word '*koinoneo*'. As we have fellowship with him in our communion, to what extent are we willing to have fellowship with his suffering? Are we just fair-weather friends? We need to realize that we must take the responsibility with the blessing. In a sense, Christ asks us, as he does James and John in Mt 20.22, 'Are you able to drink the cup that I am to drink?' Can we answer from our hearts as they did, 'We are able!'?