

GNITN

#1370

The Cup Of Iniquity: How Full Is America's?

Part 5 of 5

The Cup Refills: Who Will Stand In The Gap?

When The Cup Comes Creeping Back

Anyone who's ever bailed out a leaky boat knows the problem. You can scoop out every drop and feel great about it, but if nobody fixes the leak, the water comes right back. Last time we watched a city empty its cup. This time we ask what happens when nobody fixes the leak. The answer is the hardest part of this series, and also the most hopeful. Repentance can empty a cup, but it can't keep it empty on its own. Each generation has to choose again. And while a nation's cup is filling, God is looking for something. This final lesson is about the refill, the remnant, and the people God goes searching for.

Second Chances Squandered

Nineveh is the perfect example. The city that sat in sackcloth under Jonah was a different place a century and a half later. The prophet Nahum opens his charge with ["Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery" \(Nahum 3:1\)](#). The same city that once turned from violence was back to blood and plunder, and this time there was no turning. Nahum doesn't say God had grown impatient, either. He says ["The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked" \(Nahum 1:3\)](#). Slow, but not never.

What changed? Pride. [Zephaniah 2:15](#) describes Nineveh as ["the rejoicing city that dwelt securely, that said in her heart, 'I am it, and there is none besides me'" \(Zephaniah 2:15\)](#).

That's a city that had forgotten it ever needed mercy. As I [noted](#) in lesson eight of *"How America Dies,"* the city fell because the second time around it was *"too prideful to repent."* The [fall](#) came in 612 BC, when the Medes and Babylonians sacked the capital of the empire that had once been the terror of the world.

This is the pattern in Israel's own story, too. ["another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel" \(Judges 2:10\)](#). Repentance isn't inherited. A grandfather's sackcloth doesn't cover a grandson's pride.

Josiah's Revival, Judah's Reckoning

If Nineveh shows what happens when a revival fades, Josiah shows what happens when a revival is real and the cup is still too full. [2 Kings 23:25](#) gives the highest praise any king receives: ["Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might" \(2 Kings 23:25\)](#). The verb is [shuv](#) again, the same word Israel refused in [Amos 4](#). Josiah tore down the idols, cleansed the temple, and brought back the Law. I [traced](#) his reforms in week two of *"The Revival Code."*

And yet the very next verses are sobering. ["Nevertheless the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath" \(2 Kings 23:26\)](#). The reason was the innocent blood from Manasseh's reign, the ingredient we met in lesson two. Josiah was personally spared. [2 Kings 22:20](#) says he'd be gathered to his grave in peace and wouldn't see the calamity. But the cup was already past the brim.

There was also a gap between the throne and the people. In the days of that revival, God said through Jeremiah, ["Judah did not return to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense" \(Jeremiah 3:10\)](#). The king turned with his whole heart. Too many of the people turned for show. That's the difference between a revival that spreads to a nation and one that stops at the palace gate.

This is an honest limit on what we've been teaching. Repentance can delay judgment, as it did for Ahab and Hezekiah. It can spare individuals. But when a cup is truly over the brim, even the best king may only buy time for himself.

Rahab, Lot, And The Remnant's Rescue

Yet notice what never stops, even when judgment arrives. God keeps rescuing individuals. Go back to Canaan, the land of the Amorites whose cup was full. In the middle of Jericho lived a woman named Rahab, who told the Hebrew spies, *"the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath"* (Joshua 2:11). Joshua 6:25 says Joshua spared her and her household, and Hebrews 11:31 says she *"did not perish with those who did not believe"* (Hebrews 11:31). The nation's cup was full, but the door of mercy stayed open for anyone who believed.

Lot is the same story. As Sodom's cup ran over, Genesis 19:16 says the angels took him by the hand, *"the LORD being merciful to him"* (Genesis 19:16). 2 Peter 2:9 gives the principle: *"the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations"* (2 Peter 2:9). And in Elijah's dark days, when the prophet thought he was the only faithful man left, God answered, *"I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal"* (1 Kings 19:18). In lesson eight I said that God knows where every one of those people lives and that they can help hold off a nation's destruction *"just by being believers."* That's the idea behind 2 Chronicles 16:9, where the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are loyal to Him. He's not just counting sin. He's counting the faithful.

Abraham's Audacious Appeal

The best picture of this is the first one. Before Sodom fell, God told Abraham what He was about to do, and Genesis 18:23 says Abraham *came near*. The Hebrew verb is *nagash*, the word for approaching a judge or an altar. He didn't stay at a safe distance. He asked, *"Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"* (Genesis 18:23). Then he started lowering the number. Fifty. Forty-five. Forty. Thirty. Twenty. And finally, *"I will not destroy it for the sake of ten"* (Genesis 18:32).

Ten righteous couldn't be found, and Sodom fell. But look at how the story ends. *"God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow"* (Genesis 19:29).

Abraham's prayer didn't save the city, but it saved a man and his family. Intercession doesn't always rescue the nation. It always matters to the people inside it.

Wanted: One Wall-Builder In The Gap

Now we come to the heart of God. Ezekiel 22:23-29 lists the failures of every class in the land - prophets, priests, princes, and common people alike. Then comes one of the saddest verses in the Bible: *"So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one"* (Ezekiel 22:30).

The Hebrew word for gap is *perets*, a breach in a wall, the spot where the enemy pours through. God wasn't looking for a hero or a politician. He was looking for someone who would stand in that broken place and plead for the land. The verse shows the heart of a God who was searching for a reason to hold back judgment. I closed lesson eight on that very point: *"Will we be the person God is looking for to build the wall and stand in the breach?"*

The Bible shows us people who answered. Psalms 106:23 says God would have destroyed Israel *"had not Moses His chosen one stood before Him in the breach"* (Psalms 106:23). Nehemiah confessed his people's sin as his own: *"Both my father's house and I have sinned"* (Nehemiah

1:6). Daniel prayed in the first person plural, *“we have sinned and committed iniquity” (Daniel 9:5)*, even though he was one of the few faithful men in Babylon. I traced how Moses, Nehemiah, and Daniel interceded in Episode 1333, and in *“What If Your Prayers Could Prophecy?”* I showed how Daniel prayed a prophecy into motion.

Standing in the gap isn’t a title. It’s four jobs. Pray, the way Moses did. Confess, the way Nehemiah and Daniel did, saying “we” instead of “they.” Warn, the way the watchman does. And live, so that the wall has a faithful stone in it.

The Cup Jesus Drank

There’s one more cup in the Bible, and it’s the one that matters most. *“In the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red” (Psalm 75:8)*. The cup of judgment belongs to God. And in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus faced that cup: *“O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39)*. The Greek word is *potērion*, and He meant it literally. It was the cup of wrath, and He chose to drink it. *“Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?” (John 18:11)*

That means something for individuals that nations can’t claim. *“I have taken out of your hand the cup of trembling” (Isaiah 51:22)*, God says, and *“God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:9)*. A nation’s cup is emptied by repentance, one turn at a time, and it can refill. But a believer’s cup was drunk at the cross, once and for all. That’s the one deliverance that doesn’t depend on whether our country turns.

The Brim, The Gap, Or The Cross

So let’s pull the whole series together. God waited four hundred years for the Amorites because He doesn’t judge by ambush. Scripture shows us what fills a cup: violence and innocent blood, pride and plenty with a closed hand, sexual corruption, idolatry, covetousness, calling evil good, and above all warnings that were mocked and ignored. A nation with America’s light is held to the highest standard. A cup can be emptied by a Nineveh moment, and it can creep back. And through all of it, God goes looking for people who will stand in the breach.

Which leaves one question for each of us. Where do you stand? You might be at the brim, adding to the cup without realizing it, laughing along, looking away, calling something good that God calls evil. You might be in the gap, praying and confessing and speaking truth when it costs you. Or you might be at the cross, trusting the One who drank the cup so that you’d never have to. The beautiful thing is that you can be all three at once, and that the cross is where the other two begin.

I said it at the end of lesson eight, and I’ll say it again here: *“Will America die on our watch?”* And my answer is the same: *“That, my friends, is up to us.”* Not up to the government. Not up to the media. Up to the people called by His name.

Here’s the challenge, and it’s three parts. First, pray for this nation by name every day this week, using the pattern of *2 Chronicles 7:14*: humble yourself, seek His face, and turn. Say “we” when you confess. Second, speak one honest word of warning or encouragement, in love, to someone near you who’s drifting. Third, if you’ve never trusted the One who drank the cup for you, start there today. Don’t wait for the nation, and don’t wait for a sign.

God waited four hundred years for the Amorites, and He’s waiting now. The question isn’t whether the cup is full. The question is whether He finds someone standing in the gap. Let’s be the ones He finds.

All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV).