

## **When Your Cup Runs Over, What Spills Out?**

*Presented by Mary Lowman*

Air Dates: February 26 – March 1, 2024

### **Day One**

It's not difficult to look good when everything's going okay. But it's at those times when we have to endure some unfavorable circumstances or some unpleasant treatment that we find out what we're like on the inside. Ask yourself: When your cup runs over, what spills out?

As long as you never move a full cup, nothing will spill out of it. But if you hit it accidentally and move it in some way, you're likely to have what's on the inside come spilling over the sides. The same is true of us: When we're jostled and shoved, pushed and bumped, whatever is inside of us comes spilling over the edge. And then we learn things about ourselves we might never have known otherwise.

If we lined a number of cups up on a table in front of you and asked you to tell us what was inside them from just looking at the outside of the cup, you could only guess. A china cup looks as though it should have tea inside. A larger cup might appear to be a soup cup. A smaller cup is often used for espresso. On down the row, we could all guess from looking at the outside what was inside that cup.

But as long as the cups sit very still, undisturbed, and we're looking only at the outside from a distance, we can't really know what's inside of them. However, if I shake the table on which they're sitting, or tip one of them over, you will immediately know what's inside, because it will spill out. That lovely tea cup, all polished and clean on the outside, could have tea—or it could have muddy water. That nice soup cup might indeed have hot soup—or it could have old coffee grounds and dirt.

What happens when you get bumped? How do you react when your table is tilted, and you go toppling over? You may look really all-together on the outside, very polished and pretty. But how do you look when your insides show?

It doesn't take a major earthquake to cause a cup to spill its contents. Quite often the smallest little tremor can tip our cups dramatically. In fact, for me, it's the little things that tip my cup most often. It seems like I can handle big situations better than I can the little irritations, the unkind word, the sarcastic remark, the unfair treatment. But whether the bumps are large or small, the unpleasant situations in our lives will reveal the ingredients inside of us.

When your cup runs over, what spills out?

### **Day Two**

Have you had your cup jostled lately? I learn a lot about myself when things go wrong and my cup gets bumped, because what's inside comes spilling out, and sometimes it's not that pleasant.

Often, it's true our job and the people we work with are great places to get bumped and jostled. I well remember a job situation that caused my cup to spill over. I was dealing with a very difficult boss, who managed through humiliation and intimidation. At first, I had great difficulty with this person, and when God challenged me to take a serious look at what came spilling out of my cup because of this difficult relationship, I wasn't too pleased.

Selfishness was the first thing I saw come running over the sides. I realized my thought patterns had been centered on such sentiments as "I can't take this anymore," or "This is not fair to me," and "I've worked too hard to get where I am to have to put up with this kind of treatment."

Unfair and unkind treatment will come our way from time to time, and that kind of treatment really reveals the self-centeredness that's inside of us.

This unpleasant job environment caused another thing to come spilling out of my jostled cup: I had to admit a severe lack of patience. Patience is not one of my strong points, but it is one of the fruits of the Spirit that I should exhibit. So here again, I had to confess that a whole lot of impatience was spilling out of my cup.

In Psalm 103:8 we read *the Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love*. When I began to compare my behavior with God's behavior toward me, I had no choice but to repent of my own lack of tolerance, and ask God to give me his graciousness and kindness.

Another thing this stressful situation caused to spill out of my cup was malice. Isn't that an awful word? Malice is the desire to see others suffer. And I saw I had a heart full of malice toward the person causing me the difficulty. And along with malice, we usually have slander, because as soon as we express those malicious thoughts, we have become guilty of slander.

It wasn't pleasant to see what came running over the sides of my cup in that situation. But it caused me to get serious about cleaning up my cup. And with prayer and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, changes started to take place.

Watch yourself today. If your cup is jostled, take note of what spills out.

### Day Three

I'm examining cups—in particular, your cup. What comes spilling out of your cup when it runs over, when something causes it to be jostled or upset? We learn a great deal about ourselves as we take a look at what comes out of our cups in those stressful moments.

Do you remember what Jesus said to the Scribes and Pharisees about cups? It's found in Matthew 23:25-26:

*Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.*

Can you imagine how those Scribes and Pharisees felt, being accused of robbery and self-indulgence? They saw themselves as the epitome of uprightness; after all they were meticulous about keeping the law. They were so very careful about outward appearances, and they did the right thing at the right time and followed all the traditions. They were the ultimate in political correctness! And Jesus shows them that all that exterior stuff is no good if on the inside they are harboring bad attitudes and motives.

We all are guilty at times of cleaning up the outside of our cups and allowing things to remain on the inside that need to come out. And Jesus made the point very clear: it's what is on the inside of the cups that matters to him.

Let me take the illustration a step further. If I had a perfectly clean cup filled with fresh milk and offered it to you, you'd have no difficulty drinking it. But if I took that same fresh cup of milk and put one small

teaspoon of vinegar in it, I doubt you'd be willing to drink it. Though it contained mostly good healthy milk, that one teaspoon of vinegar would ruin the contents of the entire cup.

I hardly have to apply this illustration for you, I'm sure. It doesn't take very much bitterness to ruin what is in your cup. Or malice, or envy or pride or unkindness or unthankfulness or . . . the list could go on and on. That's why it is so important to see what is in your cup that needs to be cleaned out.

Check it out today. When your cup runs over, what spills out?

## Day Four

Is there some adversity in your life at present? Do you have a situation that is getting to you? Maybe it's a person you work with, or your boss, or the whole job itself. Perhaps it's financial difficulties or a health problem. It could be almost anything. If your cup is being jostled right now, what is spilling out?

If you're not happy with what you see spilling out of your cup from time to time, then you need to get the inside clean, really clean. Turn those adversities into positive movement in your spiritual life. The earlier you begin, the better and the easier it is to face yourself and make changes.

Remember, if you keep going through life, refusing to look at what is spilling out of your cup and get that cup cleaned up, as you grow older those irritating, unpleasant, un-Christlike traits will become more and more entrenched and more and more difficult to clean out.

Let me remind you of Romans 5:3-5:

*Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*

Our cups are jostled to show us what's inside, so that we can develop a mature Christian character. It's rather painful sometimes to have to face up to the mess that's spilling out of our cups, but the sooner we face it, confess it, and ask God to change us, the better equipped we'll be to let God fill our cups with himself, so that when we spill over, people see the likeness of Christ in us.

Often, we use the expression "my cup overflows" when we feel particularly blessed and happy. Well, that's the way it should be—our cup should overflow with good things but not just when the circumstances are good. Even in the tough times, even when we don't feel like it, even when we can't see what God is doing, even when we are plagued with discouragement or doubts—even then in the midst of the trouble, our cups should overflow with God's goodness.

Today check it out: Does your cup overflow with good things only when things are going your way? Or does it overflow with God's goodness to you even in the midst of trouble?

## Day Five

My question is: When your cup runs over, what spills out? During the times when we are jostled on life's roller-coaster seas, what's inside of us will come spilling out. If it's thankfulness and trust and joy in the Lord, that will come out. If it's bitterness or worry or self-centeredness, that will come spilling out.

The secret is to make sure you're filled up on the inside with the right stuff. Then you don't have to worry about what comes out. We need cups filled with Jesus. Friends, I am more and more convinced that the focus of my life has to be simply and only Jesus. There's an old hymn that I love which says: Only Jesus, only Jesus, only he can satisfy.

It reminds me that regardless of the circumstances, if I'm filled with Jesus, I will be satisfied, I will be joyful, I will be spilling over with the beauty of Jesus.

Oh, that doesn't mean I have to be happy about negative situations, about difficult things. But what is so great about being a Christian is that with Jesus, we can know his peace and contentment and joy in the midst of all those troublesome situations.

How do we get our cups filled up with Jesus? Through the Word—the bread of heaven. If the time you spend in the Bible is not very much and not consistent, your cup won't be full of Jesus, and when it spills over, you won't like what you see. But if you pour the Word of God and prayer into your cup regularly, then your cup will spill over with the peace and compassion of Jesus Christ.

You fill your cup up with Jesus by thinking about him all through the day. Do you practice his presence regularly? Do you communicate with him all through the day, and seek his guidance in all things? That will fill your cup up with Jesus.

So, I encourage you to use every jostle, every bump in the road as an opportunity to check up on yourself. When the boss upsets you and causes you to complain, you know you need to clean out the inside of that cup. When someone does you wrong, and you respond with patience and tolerance, you know Jesus is spilling out of your cup. When the money is low and you spill over with worry and fear, you need to work on the inside of the cup. When your health is not good, but you praise God anyway, you are spilling over the beauty of Jesus.

When your cup runs over, what spills out? A good question to ask ourselves every day.