

What is *Gall* in the Bible?

<https://www.gotquestions.org/gall-in-the-Bible.html>

In the Bible, the word *gall* most often refers to a ***bitter-tasting substance made of a plant such as wormwood or myrrh***. The most famous biblical use of the word *gall* is in reference to a drink given to Jesus on the cross. [Matthew 27:34](#) says that, as Jesus was being crucified, the Roman soldiers offered “*wine to drink, mixed with gall*.” [Mark 15:23](#) specifies that the bitterness in the wine was due to the presence of myrrh. Wine mixed with bitter herbs or myrrh created a potion that dulled the sense of pain. The mixture of sour wine and gall was often given to the suffering to ease their pain in death.

Jesus refused this gall-laced concoction after He tasted it and realized what it was ([Mark 15:23](#); [John 19:29](#)). In a supernatural display of courage, the Son of Man rejected anything that would numb the suffering He endured for our salvation. Sin against a holy God required extreme punishment, and, in order to completely fulfill His position as our substitute, Jesus wanted nothing that took away from that punishment. On the cross, [Jesus became sin](#) for us ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#)). To accept wine with gall would lessen sin’s punishment, and Jesus had come to bear the full brunt of God’s wrath against sin, not to take an easier way out ([Isaiah 53:10](#)).

The fact that Jesus was offered gall was prophesied thousands of years before Jesus was born. [Psalm 69:21](#) records these prophetic words: “*They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst*.” This prophetic mention of gall is only one of the dozens of [messianic prophecies](#) in the Old Testament that were fulfilled in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

Peter uses the term *gall* in rebuking [Simon the sorcerer](#) in [Acts 8:23](#). This sorcerer had witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit and saw it as a means to financial gain. Simon viewed God’s Spirit as a super power he could use for his own purposes. In response to Simon’s request for the Holy Spirit, Peter told him to repent before God’s judgment came upon him and concluded with these words: “*I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity*” (ESV). Here, *gall* is used figuratively to denote a severe moral defect in Simon that was producing bitterness in his heart.

The Law of the Old Testament also mentions gall, associating it with idolatry. As Moses confirms the covenant with the new generation of Israelites about to enter the Promised Land, he reminds them that they had seen the [abominations](#) of the surrounding nations—their idols of wood and stone and silver and gold. Then he warns the people to guard against idolatry, “*lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood*” ([Deuteronomy 29:18, KJV](#)). In other words, whatever attraction idolatry may hold, it will have bitter, unsavory consequences.

Jeremiah used the term *gall* in describing his life as a persecuted prophet and someone who had witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem. In [Lamentations 3:15](#) he writes,

"He has filled me with bitter herbs and given me gall to drink." Many chapters in the Bible demonstrate that God's people often questioned His goodness when they were suffering. Life tasted bitter, and they cried out to God about it. Jeremiah continues in verses 19–20,

*"I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.
I well remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me."*

However, Jeremiah does not end there. Through the rest of chapter 3, the author reminds us that, even in times when we feel we've been given gall to drink, there is reason for hope in God:

*"Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:
Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed,
for his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.
I say to myself, 'The Lord is my portion;
therefore I will wait for him'"*

[\(Lamentations 3:21–24\).](#)