

The Cross of Christ – Part 13

We went on the journey to the cross; at the cross, we prepared to land, looked at the God-man in the Garden, the “sweet suffering” of Christ, that done to the glory of God. “Don’t weep for Me, weep for yourselves and your children”, “Forgive them for they know not what they do”, “Today you shall be with Me in paradise”, “And darkness fell”, “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” as He came out of the darkness. Then last week we went into “Woman behold your son” to give us a revelation of how our conditional love, often limited to performance and limited by Earthly relationships is to be blown away by the unconditional love of God—to break us out of our preconceived limits of Earthly relationship type love. Then, into “I thirst”; remember, He thirsted so that we don’t have to thirst, spiritually. And then we began, last week with “It is finished” and we looked at many of the things that are finished.

Now today, we’re going to begin with a summary of “It is finished” and move into what is unfinished. Basically, everything is finished in the heart of God. There is no human performance that’s left to achieve salvation. We’ve come out of the darkness. The forsakenness is now past; the Father and Son relationship is re-established; God the Father at this point has said ‘Stop, no more of this; the debt is paid, that is finished.’ That’s why we can’t complete in the flesh that which was begun in the spirit. The Holy Spirit has been sent; the Holy Spirit now indwells believers in Jesus Christ and what is finished in Christ. All of that is finished. So the only unfinished thing is in the heart of man. The basic summary thought on that is, we simply have not finished walking in the light of what has been finished in the spirit realm. We tend to remain in prisons of our own thought life and our own mind, not believing that the door is truly unlocked to walk in the power of God as God-men. But our freedom has been purchased—that is finished. The unfinished part is simply for us to walk in *faith* about what has been finished. Doubt needs to be finished about what has been finished. Fear needs to be finished of anything except God, that being the only legitimate fear and that meaning awe and reverence of God. Our efforts to be justified by our own righteousness need to be finished. Stating our unworthiness needs to be finished; because we are not now as children of God standing in our own worthiness before the Holy God, but we’re cloaked in the righteousness of Jesus Christ so when God looks at us, that’s how He’s looking at us.

Comparing our righteousness to others needs to be finished. Wallowing in self-condemnation needs to be finished. Setting the mind on the flesh; and thus, cheapening what has been finished in the spirit needs to be finished. Accepting the grace of God, while voluntarily clutching to residual sin is simply like wanting the *result* of the cross, while cherishing the nails that put Him on the cross. We need to be awakened to that because that double-mindedness needs to be finished. Walking by sight instead of by faith about what has been finished needs to be finished. Ideally, of course, in our minds every unbeliever needs to simply quit saying ‘no’ to Jesus Christ. That needs to be finished. Every lukewarm believer needs to say ‘stop, no more of this lukewarmness, that part of my life is finished.’ Our attitude that we’ve *earned* any part of this, needs to be finished. We deserve Hell, we’re getting Heaven, yet we grumble constantly that we deserve better than we’re getting in life. That needs to be finished. Our saying that ‘this

is true', while living in large part as if it is not true, needs to be finished. Our walking as mere men instead of the God-men that we are needs to be finished. Our prolonged drinking of milk of the Word and not moving on to the meat of the Word, needs to be finished. The positioning of our own hearts to ever judge God needs to be finished. Thinking that we know needs to be finished. Our wanting peace on Earth, without peace within, needs to be finished. Thinking that Christ is our payment, but not our model needs to be finished. Thinking that Christ as our model is a *suggestion* and not a *commandment*, needs to be finished; because we're to walk as He walked. Thinking that since it is of grace, no effort is ever expected from us, needs to be finished. Thinking that our efforts are ever sufficient and that grace is not needed, needs to be finished. Our pursuit of feelings and not holiness, needs to be finished. Our pursuit of experiences (the goose bumps) and not holiness, needs to be finished. Our pursuit of gifts and not holiness needs to be finished.

Now feelings, experiences, and gifts are all legitimate; but when they are our focus to the exclusion of character transformation, they need to be finished. Because we can take the gifts, and the experiences, and the feelings and remain fundamentally in self-worship living in self-centeredness if that's the end of what we are seeking. So seeking the gifts of the Spirit is entirely legitimate, but without sacrificing the fruit of the Spirit. So seeking the gifts without the fruit needs to be finished. Living in the past in unforgiveness needs to be finished. Because we can only be effective at one thing. We can be effective at unforgiveness; and thus, preclude effective witness. Unforgiveness, remember, bears witness of ourselves. Forgiveness bears witness of God and what He's given us in Jesus Christ. Deriving our value from others and how others think of us needs to be finished. Because our value comes from the only self-determined thing in all of existence; our value is what He says it is, not what other people say that it is. Deriving our satisfaction in life from sources other than Jesus Christ needs to be finished. All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. Our telling the world that we are becoming like Jesus while they observe that we remain like them needs to be finished. That's called hypocrisy. Our walking in conditional love needs to be finished.

Well, why do all these need to be finished? Because we have a mission. It begins with walking in the freedom of what has been finished. And we are free from all of those things; we in large part simply behave as if we *don't know* that we're free from those things. And when we continue in them, they keep us from fulfilling our oneness with our God that has already been bought and paid for. Our destiny in Heaven is settled, but our oneness with God, in fullness, is brought about by transformation by the renewing of our minds. So all these thoughts that I'm give you are simply ingredients of being transformed by the renewing of our minds. If we persist in them, they simply keep us from fulfilling our purpose for being allowed more time here on planet Earth. They keep us from becoming a testimony of Jesus Christ to the world. Thus, we become living epistles who do not tell a true story. We become Earthen vessels that are only partially full and often what we pour out of the Earthen vessel is not the right part. Remember when we give someone a piece of our mind, as Christians? We're to make sure it's part of the renewed mind and not the unrenewed mind when we're giving them a piece of our mind. We become ambassadors who do not represent Him fully.

So anything that hinders any of that needs to be finished. In a manner of speaking, that would be truly to lift Him up. John 12:32 says – “And I, if I be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all men to Myself.” So *His* being lifted up from the Earth on the cross to redeem mankind has been finished. His being lifted up out of the grave has been finished. His being lifted up by the ascension into Heaven has been finished. It is *our* lifting Him up that has not been finished. So our choice is to be upbeat, joyful, by living out of what has been finished; or to be beat up by the world and by self-condemnation by living as if it has not been finished. Deuteronomy 30:19 says – “Choose life that you may live.” So I’m simply encouraging us and exhorting us to choose *life* by living out of what has been finished, rather than choosing *death* by living as if it has not been finished. And by death in this sense, as Christians, what I’m talking about is the death that results from living as if it has not been finished. And that death means dead works, dead testimony, and dead abundant life.

So now we’ll move onto His last verbalization on the cross—“Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.” That’s spoken in Luke 23:46. Psalm 31:5 – “Into Thy hand, I commit My spirit.” Now once hung on the cross, the first sentence out of the mouth of Jesus began, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Now the last sentence out of His mouth begins, “Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.” But remember the intermediate verbalization on the cross, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Remember, in the forsakenness, the filial, familiar relationship of Father/Son was broken? So He retrogressed back through the sequence of ‘God, My God, Father, My Father, Abba Father; and went from the Abba Father all the way back to My God’, simply revealing to us that He indeed is forsaken. So to help you obey the commandment to ‘forgive them for they know not what they do’, you have to begin the next sentence with ‘Father’. To help you cope with life on Earth, to overcome life on Earth, begin each sentence with ‘Father’. Because He’s your Father - that’s part of praying without ceasing. And then we will end our lives on planet Earth, hopefully by saying as our last sentence, ‘Father, into Your hands, I commit my spirit.’ That’s part of drawing on the joy of the Lord. The joy of the Lord flows from knowing His love for you; and knowing His love for you is wrapped up in knowing that He is your Father and that you are the child of the Holy God of Genesis 1:1.

I John 3:1 says – “How great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God, and such we are.” I mean there is no sweeter phrase in the Bible than “we are called children of God, and such we are.” We’re not just called that because people can be called things that they are not really. But we are called that and “such we are.” That has been finished for us, as Christians. Now martyrs have sung praises at the stake as they said “Father, into Thy hands, I commit my spirit.” Stephen began that parade of martyrs as he was being stoned to death; and recall, his dying words, “Father into Thy hands, I commit my spirit.” So martyrs, including the first martyr, namely Stephen, are our models; but we don’t follow Stephen; we do as Paul said, “Be imitators of me as I am an imitator of Christ.” So we follow Stephen in saying that only because Stephen is following Jesus Christ, our Savior, in saying that. Recall Jesus said in John 10:17-18 – “No one takes My life, but I lay it down.” As He voluntarily laid His life

down in total obedience and total surrender. He commits, therefore, His spirit into His Father's hands at death because He committed His spirit into His Father's hands as a *lifestyle*, not an event. Then we can hear Jesus say, as He said in Matthew 16:24 – “Follow Me.” And we can, even now from the moment we walk out of this room, begin to follow Him as He lived and even eventually as He died by saying “Father, into Thy hands, I commit my spirit.” And the spirit is what I am; that is my identity. That's my core self; that's the eternal part; that's what is right now one with God.

Hear Jesus say in John 12:50 – “I speak only what I hear the Father speak” and then we surrender to Jesus as he surrendered to the Father being transformed by His likeness as we continuously say as a lifestyle, ‘Father, into Thy hands, I commit my spirit.’ Then we can say, as Paul said, “I know Whom I have believed; He is my Heavenly Father and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I've committed unto Him that day.” As we commit every thought, capturing every thought to the obedience of Christ and ‘Father, into Thy hands, I commit this thought.’ Hear the truth that Jesus is the truth. He is how God views reality. And thus, hear that we can only say that as children of God because we have a Savior who said it first. “Father, into Thy hands, I commit my spirit.” So that needs to be our prayer as part of praying without ceasing; not just at impending death, not just at good times when we feel blessed; not just in hard times when we feel desperate; but in *all* times. Because there is no moment of your existence that you can legitimately choose ‘ungod’ other than God as the core foundation of who you are and why you're here.

Also, hear Jesus pray Scripture right up to His last breath, as His words are a paraphrase of Psalm 31:5 (but with two changes). Psalm 31:5 says – “Into Thy hands, I commit My spirit; Thou has ransomed me, oh Lord, God of truth.” But Jesus inserted the salutation, “Father”. For Jesus is the Son of God in a way that David was not when he wrote the Psalm. Remember how upset the Pharisees became when Jesus spoke of God as His Father? Then Jesus deleted the following phrase: “Thou has ransomed me” because Jesus was not ransomed; He was the *ransomer*, or redeemer. So at death on the cross, Jesus could speak what the Father had said through the Spirit, as the Old Testament was written because Jesus had conditioned His spirit to hear what the Father said through the Spirit, through the Spirit inspired Word of God. So remember, Jesus began His ministry with the test in the wilderness by refuting all the temptations of Satan by speaking, what? “The Word of God, it is written.” He's not changed methodology. He now faces His last temptation—namely death on the cross and has no better answer than to quote Scripture as His last verbalization. That is to tremble at the Word of God, holding God and His revelation to us through His Word with such awe and reverence that we face every temptation by saying ‘it is written’. And we face our last breath on planet Earth as carnal creatures by saying, ‘it is written’; and that's the meaning of trembling at the Word of God that we're told in Isaiah 66:2 – “To this one I will look, to the one who is humble contrite and who trembles at My Word.” Because humility and trembling at the Word of God are two sides of the same coin. If you are trembling at the Word of God, you will be humble; and you *cannot* be humble except you tremble at the Word of God. Because if you're not trembling at the Word of God, you will be functioning in self-determination. Because those are the only things that you can quote—how *you* view things or how God

views things, you see. So they're not independent variables, they're forever yoked. So as we face life and then face death, may we realize (as our Savior did), there is no better way than to say 'it is written', and then to quote scripture as we say, 'Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.'

Now one more additive word about God as our Father. Don't be led astray by the semantics of our modern day culture that God is the Father of all human beings. We are children of God by adoption, by regeneration, by faith, by receiving Jesus Christ as our Savior. We are not children of God by some theology of universalism. There is a world of difference between being *created by* and being *the child of*. Romans 10:13 says – "Whosoever will may come." Well, come what? Well, come and become children. "Whoever will may come and become children"; but only the children can say, legitimately, 'Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.' So there was a cross, Jesus did die on it; He did pay for our sins on it; but sometimes an often spoken phrase can be dulled by its frequency of usage because familiarity can breed contempt. Such a phrase could be, 'My grandfather died in WWII.' Well that could be a true statement, but it's commonly spoken without ownership of his death, without passionate involvement in what he did and without any revelation of the ferocity of the battle in which he died and the values that he died to fulfill. Sometimes, likewise, we can damn Jesus with faint praise as we trivialize His cross experience by the frequency and ease with which we can habitually say, 'Jesus died for my sins on the cross.' That true sentence can become such a well worn groove that it can become a *rut* in our Christian life; and thus, roll off our tongues without ownership, without passion, and without recognition of the ferocity of the battle in which He died for our sins. It is true, He went to the cross as a lamb. John 1:29 – John the Baptist says – "Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world." And Revelation 5:6 John says – "And I saw a lamb standing as if slain." It's also true that He was a lion. Revelation 5:5 – "Stop weeping. Behold the lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the root of David has overcome." So in this Scriptural sense, the lion did lay down with the lamb. For it took the heart of a lion to lie down as a lamb, and not even defend yourself as you're about to be crucified. That's how a God-man walks. He has the strength of a lion; not to claw and bite, but to lay His life down as a lamb, without complaint, for others. That's the strength of meekness. That's truly the power of love; because you see, no one takes love, love lays itself down. Love has the strength to lay its life down and sacrifice for the spiritual wellbeing of others.

So love is the lion and the lamb that lie down together. It's the lion of strength. We're told in I Corinthians 13:8 – "Love never fails." Well, what else can you say will never fail? Is that not strength itself? We think of power as being creating the Heavens and the Earth; but think of the strength of the love that could go to the cross without complaint; go to the cross for the joy before Him to redeem you. The lamb dies the sacrificial death. That's what love does; but love is not weak; love is meek in the sense it doesn't call attention to itself, but love is strength that never fails to lay your life down as a lamb for the spiritual wellbeing of others. That's what Jesus did. And that's what we're to do; but we can't do it without love. Crucifixion was the ultimate in ridicule, in scorn, humiliation, degradation, and suffering. The hatred of depraved fallen human nature toward that which is holy is in full evidence for us at the cross of Jesus Christ. 'Free

Him' was not allowed. 'Away with Him' was not sufficient. 'Crucify Him' was demanded. Then they continued to heap ridicule on Him as He hung on the cross in His crucifixion. Now do we recoil in horror at that? Are we angry in some way at the Jews and the Romans for bringing that to pass? Then we need to ask ourselves a question. There was an old hymn made famous in my time by Johnny Cash. "Were you there when they crucified our Lord?" Just as with the story of Adam and Eve, our usual reaction is to say, 'I was not there, I cannot be blamed for eating the apple.' But we only need to look at our behaviors because by the fruits you know them. We only need to look at our own depravity. Had we been in the Garden of Eden, we would have not only eaten the apples, we would have gobbled the apples! Had we been told by Satan that by doing so we could become like God, apart from God, in disobedience to God; and thus, be our own god. Because that's been the pathway of every human being ever since Adam.

Shamefully, had we been at the cross of Christ likewise, we would have crucified Him. Well, how do we know that? Because with each of our present sins, we are shouting nonverbally, 'Away with Him!' With each residual sin that we cling to, we're screaming 'Crucify Him!' And when we cheapen grace by lacking repentance for our residual sin that put Him there, in some way, we continue to mock Him as He hangs there. So we were there and in part, we still are; because *our* darkness, remember, is the only reason He was put in His darkness. His experience in the darkness led Him to cry out, My God, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But remember, thank God, that we have the revelation that He spoke those words in His forsakenness so that we never have to, even while we continue to drive nails into His hands by clinging to our residual sin which is what put Him there to begin with. Does that bring about condemnation? Maybe momentarily; but it should quicken the revelation of the *grace of God*. That is *amazing grace*.

Susan, read for us Ephesians 2:1-9 – "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which he loved us. Even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the Heavenly places in Christ Jesus, in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

Can you just imagine that?—that while you were dead in sin, children of wrath, "*but God*." And when I first read that, as a Christian, that little conjunction just circumcised my heart right there. To think that I was that; He was that in His Holiness; "*but God*", operating in His love which reveals itself in mercy, manifest as grace. Had it not been for that, His grace would have been largely unknown for all the ages to come. But when we look at His "other-thanness" and we look at our children of wrath state, God did not leave

it there. God said 'you cannot pay that price, I will pay that price. Because the only sacrifice that can pay it is a perfect sacrifice and I'm the only perfection in all of existence. I will pay your price for you.' You see, there can be no greater revelation of the grace of God than that. And that's part of God fulfilling Romans 8:28 by using even my deadness in sin, even my childhood of wrath and making it work together for good by giving us a deeper revelation of Himself, not just to me, not just to you, but to all people who will incline that ear, for all ages to come, things into which angels long to look, that they couldn't fully understand, except they see what He is and see what you were, "but God." And out of that comes the explosive revelation, not just of grace, but of amazing grace, 'other than' grace, that grace that the human mind can't wrap itself around. And now in response to that grace, we can only follow Him, say 'no' to self, 'yes' to Him and accept any pain that occurs in the process. That's what deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me really means. As He said, "Weep not for Me, weep for yourselves and your children." We're to weep for the darkness in ourselves and our children that put Him on that cross, including what He endured, remember, in the period of darkness on the cross, ending in forsakenness. And then we begin to feel condemned that we put Him there. Oh, but then grace intervenes; and then we begin to live by the Word of God as we're reminded of Ephesians 2:1-9; particularly verse 4 where it makes the transition from what we were; "but God", and then what He did to reveal His grace for the ages to come. Then we're reminded to crawl back into that little pronoun, *them*, remember, "Father forgive *them* for they do not know what they are doing."

Was there a cross of Christ? Yes. Why? You've heard it before. Because God, the Father basically said, 'I want a relationship with you more than I want to hold your sins against you; therefore, I will make provision for your salvation by paying your debt. I love you that much.' And Jesus, the Son, did not come as a forced Son, He came voluntarily, leaving the glory of Heaven, coming to Earth as a man to live the perfect life, to go through the Hell of the cross, because Jesus was saying 'I would rather go through Hell for you than to spend eternity in Heaven without you. I love you that much.'

Every series of chemical reactions has a rate-limiting step. Incomplete revelation of the love of God, is most commonly the rate-limiting step in our series of spiritual reactions. 'If God would only do that, then I would know He loved me.' II Corinthians 5:14 says – "The love of Christ controls us." Well, does the love of Christ control us? If not, then we need to pray for a greater revelation of the love of Christ. Why? I John 4:19 – "We love because He first loved us." You see, we cannot love in a spiritual sense except we first know *His* love and His love is best known at the cross. I John 3:16 – "We know love by this. This is how we know His love, that He laid down His live for us." That is a true statement, but it's not the *sum* of the Word of God. It's not just knowing that He laid it down, it's by knowing what was involved *in* His laying it down. That includes leaving the glory of Heaven; that includes the resistance of all temptation; it includes doing only what He saw the Father doing; it includes what took place in the darkness on the cross; and it includes His forsakenness by the Father.

So, may we know the love of Christ until it controls us. Well, how will we know if it's controlling us? Well, one way is when we say, 'Father forgive them for they know not

what they do.’ Because as long as we’re dwelling in unforgiveness, we’re dwelling in self-determination and self-centeredness. It controls us when we tend to develop the habit of saying with every breath, ‘Father, into Thy hands, I commit my spirit; I commit my body, I commit my soul as a lifestyle and not just a one time event for salvation; and not just a one time expression as I’m about to draw my last breath.’ But as a *lifestyle*, not an event. And then we also will complete what is unfinished by walking constantly and fully in the light of what has *been* finished at the cross of Jesus Christ. That’s to walk as He walked and that’s not just our *suggestion...that is our calling*. That’s how we glorify God; that’s how we bring pleasure to God; that’s when we’re the aroma of Christ unto the nostrils of God, you see.

Well, I’m quite sure my time is up. Thank you for listening.