

The Cross of Christ – Part 4

You remember after coming on the journey to the foot of the cross, we prepared our hearts because this is holy ground. If this event is not regarded as holy, what event will we ever regard as holy? We spoke of how to miss it. The children of Israel remember, had a limitation of expectation. So they missed the Messiah even as He walked among them. We miss it by thinking that we know because the man who thinks he knows doesn't know as he ought to know. We looked at the power of Old Testament prophecy: foreknown, foretold, for faith as a mechanism to fan the flames of our faith as New Testament Christians. We looked at like Father, like Son so that we don't put any artificial cleavage or division between the essence and value and purposes and character of the Father and the Son. "The Father and I are One." We looked at Jesus as the Lamb of God. "Do not think that someone takes My life, I lay it down"; it was voluntary, perfect, though tempted in every way such as we are; and thus, acceptable to the Father to pay the price for our sins.

We looked at Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane; the God-man is a bit of a mystery. But we learned to rest in the mystery of God; because what we're really resting in, is the "other- thanness" of God; the Holiness of God. Because if God isn't "other than", then He is not God; so to think that omniscience and omnipotent and omnipresence could ever be fully understood by the mind of man is audacity to the extreme.

We looked at Jesus as man; He was born, He bled, He ate, He drank, He wept, and so on—things that men do. And then we looked at Jesus as God as we'll see on the next poster. We looked at His travail. "If it be Thy will, if it is possible, may this cup pass from Me; but nevertheless, not My will, but Your will be done." Then we looked at the revelation of that, how we are to regard ourselves as God-men. You're walking like mere men and no New Testament Christian is to walk like a mere man. Do you not know that you're the temple of God? Do you not know that the Spirit of Christ dwells in you? Do you not know that you have omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence all available to you in your spirit by the presence of the Holy Spirit? And then we are empowered to walk as He walked.

Who is this Jesus? These are aspects of the "God-ness" of this God man named Jesus. He is the image of God, the fullness of deity in bodily form, the glory of God, the nature of God, the God-man, the Son of God, the message of God, the Word of God, the likeness of God, the One God.

Last time we looked at what I call "sweet suffering". Suffering is painful; but there is such a thing as "sweet suffering". And "sweet suffering" is that which glorifies God to the maximum in the center of God's will. Remember, we contrasted masochism and self-crucifixion. Masochism, remember, being the willful seeking of pain because of feeling unworthy of pleasure; but that self-crucifixion—"no one takes my life as a New Testament Christian, but I lay it down is the willful acceptance of pain out of devotion to a greater pleasure—namely, the glory of God." He did it by suffering as a lifestyle, not on the cross, but beginning in the wilderness when he replied to every temptation right

out of the Word of God. So He had a lifestyle of dying to self; it wasn't an event at the cross where He died to self. The vision of doing the will of the Father, fulfilling the redemptive plan of the Father, single-mindedly so; "I do only that which pleases the Father. I speak only that which I hear the Father speak."

And the zeal that Jesus had, even at age 12. "Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" And zeal for Thy house consumes me; and the joy then that is manifested out of that for the joy that was before Him when He went to the cross. And we, as New Testament Christians, are to regard Jesus not only as our Savior, but also as our model. We too are to have a lifestyle of the glorification of God and doing the will of God. Our vision is to fulfill His plan on planet Earth during our allotted time here by walking in His plan which is to sum all things up in Jesus, to fulfill His purposes which are to seek and to save that which was lost, to usher in the abundant life and in the process of doing those two things, to destroy the works of the devil; and to do that single-mindedly so, with zeal. And then the joy is there in a "crescendo of delight"; because joy is your strength, but beyond that as you walk out what I'm describing, your joy is increased. So more in His plan, more joy. More joy, more strength to work in His plan. That is to say a "crescendo of delight" right up to the throne of grace.

Next poster. All that is review, Ya'll know. Then we looked a little deeper at joy. We began by looking at the cocoon of carnality where we tend to function in the flesh where everything is assessed by these four variables: Comfort, convenience, cost, and control. We looked at that because the cocoon of carnality is the basis of what we call happiness. Happiness is circumstance sensitive and time limited. We're only happy so long as favorable circumstances continue. Oh, but joy, has a different basis. Joy does not have the cocoon of carnality; it has communion with God as the basis of the joy. Our joy then becomes circumstance resistant and time sustained. And Jesus said, I came that you might have fullness of joy; and that, of course, is when we progress to greater degrees of oneness with God which becomes independent of circumstance and eternal. And that's how Jesus could go to the cross, the misery of the cross, for the joy that was before Him. Because the joy that was before Him was not dependent on the pain of the circumstance.

The sequence of lessons which you have on the first page of your handout, these are the first four. Just to summarize again, we did "preparing to land", we did the "God-man in the Garden", we, last time, did "sweet suffering"; we're going to pick it up here with what I call targeted tears.

Our goal as we begin to approach the cross is I Peter 4:11 – "Whoever speaks, let him speak as it were the utterances of God." Because we walk by every one of those utterances of God called the Word of God. And on the cross, what higher format can we use than to speak the utterances of Christ; because the utterances of Christ allow us to understand the heart of Christ and the work of Christ on the cross of Christ. Now His first utterance given on the way to the location of crucifixion is, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me." That's Luke 23:28. Now we're not given a full explanation for the tears. But the verse 27 (the verse before) tells us that they were mourning and lamenting Him without further explanation. Now if these were only sentimental tears at

seeing human suffering, then they could be void of any spiritual content at all - just as someone who is sensitive might cry at the sight of a dead animal. Emotion is necessary in the life of a Christian, for Romans 12:15 tells us to “weep with those who weep”. Emotion is necessary, but it is not sufficient. By the same token, thought alone is insufficient because it has no passion. We’re to be like Christ, and clearly Christ had passion and had thought, but not just thought. In other words, He cared, He just didn’t *only* think about caring. He actually cared. Jesus wept, remember, as He was coming to resurrect Lazarus? He did not let the joy that was soon to follow excuse Him from sharing the weeping of those who wept.

So women as a rule, are not wrong to cry unless they think that their sensitivity makes them spiritually superior. Men, are not wrong in their strength not to cry unless they think that their strength not to cry makes them spiritually superior. Softness and sensitivity does not equal holiness. Hardness, or strength not to cry, does not equal holiness. In regard to crying, sensitivity does not necessarily mean weakness; but it’s also not sufficient for holiness. In regard to not crying, the strength not to cry, does not necessarily mean uncaring, but it’s also not sufficient for holiness. Love itself, remember, is a passion for oneness. Now passion includes a feeling; but it’s not just a feeling; it’s hunger and thirst—not just haphazard hunger and thirst. A passion for oneness implies goal directed intensity to become one with something. It includes thought, but it’s more than just thought. It includes feeling, but it’s more than just feeling. It’s intensely directed toward the one that we have a passion to be one with. So, we don’t live by our feelings as Christians; but thank God that we can feel what we are living by as Christians. So we won’t live by emotion at the cross, but let us do pray that we have the sensitivity to feel emotion at the cross as we find what to live by.

Luke 23:28 continues – “Weep for yourselves.” Well, why so? Well, “weep that you do not know fully Who I am. Weep at the status of this fallen world. Weep that you must remain behind in this fallen world. Weep that you’re not assured yet of your final destiny. Weep that you have no revelation of the contribution of your sin to this situation that I’m in. So weep for yourselves, but don’t weep for Me; because your weeping for Me is for all the wrong reasons while you are the one potentially missing your destiny.”

Then it continues, “weep for your children.” Well, why so? Well, weep that they have the longest to remain behind in this veil of tears, where this sort of thing takes place. Weep that their spiritual fathers are the ones actually doing this. And weep that those malleable little hearts are being hardened by the witness of this brutality. Weep that they are being taught to be twice the sons of Hell that their fathers are. And weep that the sins of the fathers will be visited upon them to the third and fourth generation. And weep ultimately that God will give them the desire of their heart. The desire of the parent’s heart is given to us in Matthew 27:25 – “And all the people answered and said, His blood be on us and on our children.” So “weep for yourselves, weep for your children; but no, don’t weep for Me. I am the only One here in this scenario Who is completely and perfectly fulfilling His reason for being here. And I do it for the joy that is before Me that you have no awareness of”, as we’re told in Hebrews 12:2. So “don’t weep for me; because your tears for Me are flowing based on lies, not truth. Because I am the truth, I

am how God is viewing this reality, and your tears for Me are not flowing based on how God is viewing this reality. If they were, I would not tell you to stop; because I am love and love rejoices with the truth” as we’re told in I Corinthians 13:6. And love rejoicing with the truth rejoices with tears that are flowing based on truth. So “when I tell you to stop, I am telling you that the flow of your tears for Me are not based on how God is viewing this reality.”

Forgiving ignorance - the second utterance of Christ is the first one given on the cross. Luke 23:34 – “Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” So let’s notice certain things about this. Notice that His prayer is directed to “Father”. Jesus, at this stage, is praying as the Son of God, praying as family, praying as one in relationship with the Other with Whom He has always been One before the foundation of the world. And notice that He is not praying for Himself; He is not praying to be relieved of His suffering. He is praying that the redemptive plan be accomplished which obligatorily requires suffering; because He’s not asking for anything for Himself. He’s asking for forgiveness for them. So imagine that, as He’s hanging on the cross, His prayer is for the ones putting Him on the cross. Why is that important? Because if He prays for others under those conditions, can you ever doubt the truth of Hebrews 7:25 – “He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him since He always lives to make intercession for them.” Can you doubt for one moment that He makes intercession for you in the glory of Heaven now, if He made intercession for them while they hung Him on the cross?

Notice also, the pronoun, them. It’s not limiting, it’s inclusive. It’s not limited to those who mock. It’s not limited to those who whip. Not limited to those who put the crown of thorns on His head. Not limited to the nail drivers. Not limited to those who wrongly judge Him. No, He simply said “forgive them.” You need to feel the room made for you in that pronoun “them”. When you look at the sins that are being forgiven under those conditions, can you still believe that somehow your sins remain unforgivable? No, there is plenty of room for you in that little pronoun, “them”.

Now in view of our earlier comments about prophecy, it’s important to know that He is interceding for the transgressors; and He’s not just interceding in words to pray, He is interceding, in fact, to pay the price for what He is praying for. In other words, what He’s praying for, He’s paying for. And that’s in part to be our attitudes as Christians. Prayer is wonderful; but the next question is, “are we willing to pay the price to bring about the answer for what we are praying?” That fulfills the last portion of Isaiah 53:12 – “Yet He, Himself, bore the sins of many and interceded for the transgressors.” (“Buddy, would you say that last thing again?”) Prayer is wonderful and we’re to pray without ceasing, but we’re not to let that excuse us from being willing to pay the price to bring about whatever we are praying for. It’s fine that we pray for someone to have their financial needs met; but are we willing to pay the price to meet their financial needs? That was foreknown, foretold, for faith. As we see it fulfilled almost 800 years after it was spoken, He interceded for the transgressors. Does that not fan the flames of faith about a sovereign God and His interaction in the events of human history?

Now, notice too, “they did not know”. Well, what did they not know? Well, they did not know just as we did not know. So what did we not know and what in part do we still not know? Well, we did not know His holiness, His “other-thanness”. So we continued to assess Him based on our determination of what God should be and how God should behave. And since we did not know His holiness, we did not know the magnitude of our sin. We did not know that all of our sins were based on lies rather than on how God views reality. We didn’t know that our every sin was overt rebellion against God. We didn’t know that what is not of faith is sin; so each of our sins was not of faith. We didn’t know the extent of our depraved natures. We didn’t know the hopelessness of our self-righteousness. We didn’t know the audacity required for a created being to stand before a Holy God proclaiming his own righteousness. We didn’t know how we were constantly robbing God of His glory by our drive to be self-determined. We didn’t know that we were worshipping a “lesser” God as *we* wanted Him to be than the *greater* God which He in fact *is*. We didn’t know of our need for a Savior; and we didn’t know how big of a Savior we needed. We didn’t know of the horror of Hell, the reality of Hell, and our future in Hell apart from Christ. We didn’t know that we had a lifestyle of seeking to annul His judgments and of condemning Him so that we could be justified. We didn’t know that in that process that we were constantly judging God every day of our lives. We didn’t know that we were constantly grieving the Holy Spirit of God Who is the Spirit of Truth as we live lies rather than truth. We didn’t know that we were crucifying Jesus with our sins. We didn’t know that all the while He was interceding for us, and still is. We didn’t know the divine exchange of how He died to pay the price for our sins while His righteousness is imputed to us. So we didn’t know a lot!

Now some things, we did know. We knew that we were doing some wrong, but it never seemed fully wrong; and we didn’t know all of the wrong that we were doing. Now it’s at that point that our fallen natures seek to be excused. We seek to be excused for not knowing. And then we seek to limit further revelation; because “to he who much is given, much is required.” So we then function that, “if I can just avoid further revelation, I will now avoid further accountability.” So as we seek not to know, that should help us to see why we didn’t know to begin with, because every man is without excuse just by looking at creation. So, even as New Testament Christians, as we seek to limit our revelations so as to avoid accountability, then it explains to us why we didn’t know to begin with. But the critical thing to know is that our not knowing is not excusable. For if not knowing were excusable, then Jesus would not have said, forgive them; he would have said excuse them. For if not knowing were excusable, then no forgiveness would have been required and He wouldn’t have been hanging on the cross to say, “forgive them”, because no Savior would be needed.

So we now know that we did not know for one reason and one reason only. Because we *would* not know. Because not knowing, we thought, excused our self-determination. We now know that during that process we gave more thought to every other aspect of life than to our sin and accountability before a Holy God. We should now know that that spiritual laziness is not the cause; the laziness is the result of our love of self; and thus, the love of the world more than our love of seeking our Creator.

So we should now know the guilt of our ignorance; because our ignorance is criminal neglect. And even in our secular world, ignorance of the law is no excuse. For ignorance is a choice, not just a condition. We remain ignorant of what we ignore. And we ignore what we give a low priority; and we give a low priority to that which we do not esteem; and we do not esteem that which does not give us pleasure; and what gives us pleasure is the feeding of our flesh in our cocoon of carnality as we function in self determination as our own gods. So ignorance is a condition resulting from choice. That's why ignorance is not excusable; because we esteem the world because it gave us more pleasure than the pursuit of God. So we learned the ways of the world rather than the ways of God. So we fulfill James 4:4 – “you adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?” So our ignorance, by choice, was a reflection of our hostility toward our Creator. So we viewed God through the eyes of the world, rather than the world through the eyes of God. As we were more ignorant of God and His ways than we were of the world and its ways. So I was ignorant till age 50. I did not know. But now after eleven years as a Christian, I know that not knowing is not excusable. Because I now know that much of what I was ignorant of, I was guilty of by criminal neglect. I remained ignorant because I was hostile toward God, maintaining friendship with the world, functioning in self determination as my own god; but I now know from Romans 1 that none of that was excusable. Oh, and when it works into your heart, then you begin to see your need to crawl even a little deeper into that pronoun, them. As you fall on your face again, thanking God, that Your Savior, the Son of God, said “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.”

We're not ignorant about ignorance because now I think we understand ignorance. Ignorance is rebellion against the Holy God. If you just open your eyes and look at creation, as all men have, you are accountable before God; because His power and nature begin to be revealed to man even in that general revelation. So if man, being mindful of that, does not seek that, he is rebelling against that, and that is the root of all his ignorance about that. So can you doubt the love of God? Because in spite of the rebellion that we like to excuse as ignorance, “but God.” But God...because of His love, expressed His grace and mercy; gave up the glory of Heaven to come in the form of a man, to be tempted such as we are, yet without sin, in perfect single-minded allegiance to the Father, to accomplish what we had not and could not, to declare His grace for the ages to come. Can you doubt the love of God when you receive the revelation that every single act of ignorance that you had throughout your life is accountable and not excusable before that Holy God?

So we don't live in condemnation as a result as children of God. What I'm hoping to do, through the Word of God, is to open our eyes to the greater revelation of the grace of God, which is so much more abundant than you ever knew. So my time is up and I thank you for yours.