

## The Cross of Christ – Part 9

To set the stage as to recapture our attention; I realize that you all are fully cognizant of the first poster, we started with holiness. And that's a key revelation even to go into the darkness where we're going today at the cross; because the darkness that we're going to enter is to be viewed as an "other than" holy place. Holiness led us to understand sin; then to understand judgment, to the reality of Hell. And then we began to add the cross of Christ. We prepared to land. This is holy ground and we only wanted to approach it with that mentality. We looked at the God-man in the Garden of Gethsemane. And then the "sweet suffering", receiving the understanding that sweet suffering is that suffering which may be painful in the flesh, but is sweet because it's done to the glory of God. Targeted tears—"Don't weep for me; weep for yourselves and your children." The forgiving of ignorance—"Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do." Paradise promised to the thief on the cross—and looked at the testimony of that thief contained in a few sentences in a few moments, but 2000 years later, we still marvel at his transition. And then darkness fell. We entered the darkness last time; we looked at several possibilities about its meaning—a declaration from God that He's engaged in these present events. **This is no longer the unbothered caravan of human understanding taking place with these events. A form of mercy—because no man could see what was happening in the darkness. Limited the expression of evil—because can you imagine that those mocking had their mouths silenced at this sudden darkness arriving at midday. Symbolic of the wrath of God—and symbolic of the travail about to take place in Jesus as He pays the price for the sins of the world.**

Today, we'll move on to continue with that. Remember that Jesus and the Father were one. Love, remember, is a passion for oneness. So perfect love, when fulfilled, represents perfect unity which is oneness. Colossians 3:14 – "Love which is the perfect bond of unity." So this is what the Father and Son shared. They had always existed, always loved, always were one. So recall the Father's attitude toward His Son. Matthew 3:17 – "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." And Matthew 17:5 – (adds the phrase) – "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased; listen to Him." And our modern translations put an exclamation point in there. Listen to Jesus! So if we do nothing more to please the Father than listen to His Son, then we will serve Him well. We cannot understand in our natural minds what happened in the darkness unless we understand this pre-existent relationship of Father and Son right up to the point when darkness fell. So what transpired in the three hours of darkness? Now some things we can probably know from the sum of His Word. Some things we don't know, but we can ask to know. But we need to ask with pure motives—namely to know God and His ways as we seek His face. James 4:2-3 – **"You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives."** Remember, we looked at Moses last time, how he asked to see the glory of God and God did not criticize him, did not reprimand him and did not refuse him. But He allowed Moses only a limited revelation of Himself because no man can see My face and live. So He gave Moses a protected glimpse of Himself, sufficient to light the face of Moses up, but insufficient to kill him. So that's the heart we want to have as we go into this darkness, to let God Himself put the limit on how much we can bear to see without being consumed. So we need to know at least these five things as we go into the darkness.

**First**, we have to let go of our prior frames of reference about the physical world: mass, length and time and all those things that we use to understand the natural world. I used to argue with Susan over how much suffering could have taken place by a few nails and a few thorns and a few whips for a few hours. I'd known human examples who suffered more than that. But I was functioning in the natural mind with no revelation of the Holiness of God, no understanding that God is transcendent; He is simply not bound by space and time. Infinite events could have taken place in the spiritual realm with any finite period of

time. So I have to let go, get out of the box of using physical measurements to quantify any spiritual occurrence. **Secondly**, we need to know. Habakkuk 1:13 – “Thine eyes are too pure to approve evil and Thou cannot look on wickedness with favor.” God is so pure and so righteous (and thankfully so) that He cannot look on a single transgression of Himself with favor. **Thirdly**, Jesus had the sins of the world upon Him. II Corinthians 5:21 – “He made Him, Jesus, Who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf.” **Fourthly**, the wages of sin is death. Now, of course, that means physical death which He is about to endure. But it also means spiritual death, eternal separation from communion with God, in Hell, because that’s what spiritual death is. In the absence of communion with God and in the presence of the wrath of God, that is what Hell is and that’s where He’s going. **Fifthly**, somehow in this period of a few hours, on the cross, in this darkness, Jesus paid this price. Hebrews 10:12 – “But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.”

So how much did Jesus suffer? Now we can use our natural minds so long as we use them properly. Because remember, the mind is a trap to the spiritual fool; but to the man of God, the mind is a tool. So let’s use this tool, not to put a circle around the suffering of Christ, but to understand the minimum amount of the suffering of Christ. We can’t understand it. It was an “other than” kind of suffering. But if we look at it in this way, we’ll at least see how to regard it. So as I go through this little exercise of the logical mind, I have no fear that I will somehow exaggerate the suffering of Christ in the darkness. So let’s look at the price, step by step.

One sin by one sinner is punishable by the horror of Hell for eternity. Because remember Hell is the revelation of how God hates unrighteousness, because He is righteousness. So you can’t have a passion to remain one with righteousness without having a hatred for (that is a passion to be totally separate from) unrighteousness. Then there’s a magnifier of being accountable for the light that we have. Then the magnifier of our ignorance; because when we looked at sin, we learned that ignorance is inexcusable, because we are ignorant of what we ignore and we ignore what we give a low priority. So ignorance is criminal neglect, not excusable lack of knowledge. Then there are the countless sins of commission; and then the countless sins of omission. And then the every idle word sins that we pay no attention to. Then there are the secret sins that we don’t even fully recognize. Then understand, remember, when we looked at the four frames of reference for sin. Truth as opposed to a lie. So anytime we took any action, even the motive in our hearts that was separate from the truth of God was sin. Obedience versus rebellion. Judging God as opposed to letting God be judge and what is not of faith is sin. So anytime we operated in faith in anything other than God Himself, we were in sin.

So add up all of those examples. Then add up all of those sins over the duration of one’s lifetime. And then multiply by billions of sinners. Then recall that each individual sin stores up the wrath of God for the day of wrath and then contemplate how much suffering Jesus had to endure in order to pay the price for all of the above. And then maybe you can tell me how much Christ suffered in the darkness. Because we know that whatever the debt was, He paid. And if you aren’t at home and comfortable with the concept of the Holiness of God, the other thanness of God, you will never look at this suffering as other than and you will not have that explosive revelation of the price that He paid for you. You’ll continue to let your revelation of the price that He paid be limited to the understanding of this natural world, to a few thorns, and a few nails, and a few blows, and a few insults for a few hours. So we simply must regard the suffering of Christ in this darkness as infinite. Because we can’t put a top to it. Just like infinity, it’s a concept, but nobody’s ever been there. Nobody can see it, nobody can come to it, nobody can calculate it. To regard this suffering as finite, is to believe that you can calculate a limit to the suffering. That would be arrogant to the extreme. So the only possible reaction we can have in our hearts when operating in the awe and reverence of God regarding Him as Holy, is even when we use

our logical rational minds to look at the magnitude of the suffering required, we have to simply say, it's other than, it's out there, it is incomprehensible, it's beyond what my mind can process.

So Jesus somehow suffered physically and spiritually in an amount greater than all sinners had suffered, or would have suffered for all their sins for all of eternity in Hell. We don't understand it, but we know that He did. Because we know that the Word of God, which the sum of His Word is truth, and we know that Jesus is truth, and this is what Jesus and this is what the Word of God tells us. This transcendent God suffered transcendentally. So, again, don't ever let your faith be limited by your understanding. Don't let your concepts of time and space try to put a circle around and limit the suffering of Christ in this darkness. Our model is Ephesians 3:19 – “And to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.” So we're told to know that which surpasses knowing. So know the suffering of Christ that surpasses knowing. That's the Holiness of God. See, that's the other thanness of God. Because this is an other than kind of suffering and that's simply part of the transcendent majesty of God.

There's another magnifier about this suffering that we need to recall. And that's the magnifier of the starting point. Jesus, remember, started from a starting point of oneness with the Father, something that we have never been, at least not fully; because we always have thoughts and words and deeds and motives which are separate from the character of God. His spiritual suffering was magnified because of His prior situation which was total communion—namely oneness. He thus went from total communion which was oneness to total separation which is spiritual death. Well, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” With no crossing over during that time from one to the other, He went from infinite love, fulfilled in infinite communion, giving rise to infinite pleasure, in a relationship of oneness. And He went to forsakenness, infinite separation, with no communion, removal of all pleasure, and now giving infinite pain. He went into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Recall that Hell has two forms of wrath. The absence of God in His love essence and thus, the absence of His grace, His mercy, His tenderness, His forgiveness, His upholding, and other blessings. And the presence of God, the lake of fire, in His essence as the fierce but righteous judge, expressing His total hatred for every departure from His character. That's the lake of fire and that's the outer darkness and both symbolisms are true. And the reality of them has to at least be that or greater because if it were less than that, then God would be a liar for using metaphors and symbols which exaggerated the suffering which would take place in Hell. I'm not prepared to call God a liar; so I'm prepared to accept the description literally. Jesus Christ simply was under assault in this darkness.

Now recall all of us are always at three different points based on various frames of reference. Geographically, we're in Cedar Rapids. In the systems of men, I'm a retired physician. But in the spirit I'm a child of God, confessing Him before men while we jointly and collectively seek to see the face of God in closer fashion in this darkness. Jesus was at three places; geographically, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, according to the systems of men, on the cross as a condemned criminal, in the spirit, under an all out assault, paying the price for the sins of the world. Now who was the active agent in this assault? Well, there are two possibilities. God, the Father and Satan. Now I personally believe both were likely involved although I don't insist that that be doctrinal for anybody else. The key points are to know three things. He was under assault, paying the price for the sins of the world, while having lost in forsakenness His continual source of power and sustenance—namely His constant communion and oneness, the perfection of relationship with His Father.

So let's look at God the Father as the assaulter. Now earlier, we read Revelation 14:10 – “Recall that the lake of fire is in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the lamb.” That's Revelation 14:10. The Lamb of God, remember, is also the judge. That's Jesus. All judging has been given to

Him. He's the enforcer of the sentence because He is there, in Hell, carrying out the sentence. That is the presence of God in His essence as the fierce but righteous judge pouring out the full cup of wrath stored up for the day of wrath for all unbelievers. But right now, in this darkness that has not yet been fulfilled because the Lamb of God is on the cross, in the darkness, drinking the full cup of the wrath of God. So God the Father is doing the pouring because the Lamb is now the lamb. Isaiah 53:10 – "But the Lord was pleased to crush Him." Now, here you know that this Scripture is prophetically speaking of the Messiah, of Jesus. So the "Him," pleased to crush "Him", is Jesus. And the Lord Who was pleased to crush Him, the Lord is the Father. But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief if He would render Himself as a guilt offering. And so now, in this darkness, this has come to pass. Jesus, Him, is now offering Himself as a guilt offering and it is the Father's good pleasure to crush Him, to put Jesus to grief. Foreknown, foretold, for faith. The Father is clearly doing some crushing, some serious crushing, some crushing that surpasses understanding, transcendent crushing. Recall the relativity of suffering is dependent on the starting point. If a family has one car, what is their reaction to having one car? Well, it depends. If previously they had no car, then having one car produces euphoria. If previously they had two cars and now have one car, then having that one car is cause for depression. So it depends on the starting point. So what was His? Oneness with the Father in the glory of Heaven. Where is He now? Under assault from the Father, drinking the cup of the wrath of the Father. And that includes the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth with no communion as well as the lake of fire from our God Who is a consuming fire. Hebrews 10:31 – "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God as He pours out His wrath." And this is where Jesus, the Son of God, is right now, in this darkness.

Now what about Satan? Well, could this be considered speculative? I don't want to be guilty of subtraction by addition. But like Fox News, I'll report, then you decide. I Thessalonians 5:21 simply tells us, "Discern all things and hold onto what is good." So I trust the Spirit of Truth to help us discern all things and hold onto what is good more than I trust the father of lies to deceive us as we look at the subject. This isn't by any means critical doctrine; but is an attempt to continue this process to look at the sum of the Word of God so that we don't dismiss any of it. God is sovereign. He either causes or permits everything. Satan is opposed to God because he wants to be his own god. He wants to be god. But God takes that drive in the heart of Satan and uses it as an agent to accomplish the purposes of God. From the story of Joseph, Genesis 50:20 – Joseph says to his brothers, "And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." So we know that if Satan is present and participating in the assault on Jesus in this darkness, then we know certain things from the sum of the Word of God. Satan, if present, is present by permission of God. We know that from the book of Job. Satan can only afflict someone within the confines of what God permits. Satan means it for evil, to destroy Jesus and to circumvent the purposes of God. He means to have Jesus simply say, stop, no more of this. And therefore, to sabotage the redemptive process for the human race. But God means it for good, as with Joseph, to bring about this present result where we have a room full of people here, saved by the process of what took place in that darkness in order to preserve many people alive. Not just physically after the resurrection, but spiritually alive in communion with God for all of eternity. And whatever Satan may contribute to the process of what's going on in this darkness, it would be far less, incomprehensibly less than the direct assault of an omnipotent God pouring out His own wrath; because God is omnipotent, whereas Satan is finite.

Now we do know that Jesus said that Satan would revisit Him. The encounter in the wilderness is not to be the last encounter. John 14:30 – Jesus said, "I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming." And that's Satan; he's called the god of this world. And he has nothing in Me. That

was spoken shortly before the events of the cross. Now it could have referred only to the behaviors of those who betrayed, tortured, abused, and crucified Jesus while under the influence of Satan. It could also include foreknowledge that Satan himself, would participate with the permission of God in the assault on Jesus during the three hours of darkness. We do know that in spiritual matters there is no vacuum. Where God is not, then Satan is. We know that God allows Satan to sift people, but for a redeeming purpose. We do know that where sin is, Satan has access. We do know that Jesus had the sins of the world upon Him. We could reasonably infer that given all that, that the sins on Jesus gave Satan permission included within the permission of God, access to Jesus. We do know that Job was the most righteous man on Earth, called so by God; and yet God allowed Satan to do everything to him short of killing him. We do know that if Satan were included in the assault, can you imagine what he would have been cleared to do to the Son of God under the conditions and under the weight of what I'm describing to you? But enough of that. See, the point that I'm making is that when you add all these together, we're to know the suffering of Christ in this darkness which surpasses knowing.

Why must we know the suffering? Why must we look at it? Simply put, that's how we know His love. Recall, I've given you the example before: finite, physical, personal though, and makes the point. If Susan and I were kidnapped by terrorists and they began to torture her and I stepped in and said torture me instead. Then how would my beloved wife know the extent of my love for her? Only by watching me suffer for her, by looking at the torture that I'm enduring for her. Now she can turn her eyes away, refuse to look, and thus be less horrified and thus be more comfortable; but forever live without knowing the fullness of the revelation of my love for her. Because if she is to know the depth of my love, she can only know it by turning her eyes and requiring herself to look at the suffering so as to absorb it fully, so as to walk from that moment on with a fuller revelation of the depth of my love for her. That one decision is the regulator of our revelation of the love of God. I John 4:19 – "We love because He first loved us." And I John 3:16 – "We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us." So the more we look at what took place in the darkness, the more we see the revelation of His suffering for us, the more we see the revelation of His love for us and the more we love Him, and the more we can't wait for others to receive the revelation of the love of God. If we look only briefly to see Him as Savior and then turn our eyes away, we may love some; but if we use our night vision to look fully into the pit of the suffering of Christ, then we will love evermore.

So drink fully, my brothers and sisters. Drink fully of what happened in this darkness. Drink fully of the suffering of Christ. Look at the darkness. Take the sum of the Word and force yourself to gaze into the darkness; calculate what took place in the darkness rather than just knowing that there was darkness. That's to see in the dark, you see. And that's to see the love of God, to know the love of God that surpasses knowing; because that love is holy. That love is "other than." And I hope you can now see why we had to explore holiness before even presuming to approach the cross. Else we would forever see the nails, see the thorns, see the whips, see the curses, and see the time limitation and space limitation of the physical suffering and pronounce that we know what He endured. But we do not know until we are willing to put our night vision on from the sum of His Word, not just glance at the darkness, but walk in and peer and force ourselves to look at the darkness, to see His suffering, and thus, to know His love. So our faces shine with that love; because our covenant is better than the covenant of Moses. Our glory is more than the glory of Moses as his face shone. But it's only after we see that love revealed in that darkness by that suffering that our faces will shine with the abundant life and the fruit of the Spirit where others will say, surely you have seen God; because no man can live like that, except he has. So my time is up and I thank you for yours.