

## Your Cross – Part 1

Welcome to Your Cross. We're starting a new subtopic today, Part I, May 16, 2007. We're in the Kingdom of God, came through the doorway of salvation, explored the fuel of faith to come to the place of abiding in Him in order to now take our final exam in the Kingdom; and that is to embrace our cross. Your Cross, I've broken into six different lessons; each lesson takes us roughly two sessions. So today we're going to start laying the foundation of Your Cross and then follow through at later sessions with the *mechanism*, the *purposes*, the *choices*, the *questions*, and the *result*. And each of those headings will become clearer when we get to them.

Matthew 16:24 – Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Me. So we can't make a mistake about that. That's the clear implication of Scripture is what we are commanded to do. Matthew 22:14 – For many are called, but few are chosen. Now you can debate various meanings and interpretations of that particular verse; but one application that I think is true, is that many are called, but few chosen for the following reason. The call to those, of course, who come into the Kingdom through the doorway of salvation and then conclude at that point that they have escaped the wrath of God, escaped Hell; and thus, follow Jesus enough that He should be fully pleased. But they do not progress to abide in Him; they do not progress to deny themselves, to take up their cross and follow Him, even while they give themselves credit for following Him. They give themselves credit for following without following. Remember when we talked about the Scripture earlier where the people invited to the banquet all had excuses. They all wanted credit for wanting to come without coming. And some of us do this even in the Kingdom. And thus, if they do not come to abide in Him, do not deny self, do not take up the cross and do not follow Him, then they are not chosen for service. By doing such things, (still saved—still saved, absolutely); but all their works will be burned up like wood, hay and stubble. They shall be saved, yet so as by fire. By doing that, they position themselves above their master and above their teacher. Luke 6:40 – The pupil is not above his teacher. But everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher. Now, of course, our teacher is Jesus Christ through the revelations and power of the Holy Spirit. After we're fully trained, we can never exceed our teacher because we cannot exceed perfection which is Jesus Christ. So we tend to acknowledge Christlikeness as a goal in our Christian walk; we profess to desire it, but we really do like to bypass the method taught by our teacher. The Scripture tells us that the pupil will be like his teacher only after he has been fully trained.

So, how are we trained? Well, the same way our teacher was. Hebrews 2:10 – For it was fitting for Him (God) for Whom are all things and through Whom are all things in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings; and that's speaking of Jesus. Hebrews 5:8-9 – Although He (Jesus) was the Son, He learned obedience from the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation. So to reject suffering that comes our way in the Kingdom, is to place ourselves above our master and teacher. We tend to say, well it's fine that you did it that way but what I want from you is that I do it another way. The problem is there is no other way. John 14:6 – I am the way. He follows to say, of course as you know, I am the truth. What is truth? Truth is what God is and how God views everything else. In short form, how God views reality. This is simply the truth about how God views this reality. He's the way, the truth, and the life. But another way of phrasing that is He is the truth about the way to the life. And what life is that?

Well, the life of God. And what does that look like to us on planet Earth? John 10:10 (King James version) – I came that they might have life and might have it more abundantly. And to me that means the fruit of the Spirit. According to Galatians 5:22-23 –In full measure, without measure, without limitation. So the life is the life of God which is the more abundant life which is the fragrance of the fullness of the fruit of the Spirit released through us that represents our life in the Kingdom of God, even while still here on Earth after our salvation.

So Jesus is the truth about the way to that life. Well Jesus is the truth; therefore, He's how God views reality about the way to the life. And how did Jesus do it? Through suffering. So should we place ourselves above our master by refusing to do it that way—that way being His way, which according to His Word is the only way? When we do that, what we do is to reject the plan of God while remaining self determined. II Corinthians 3:18 – But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. So we're to be changed from glory to glory into the image of Jesus Christ. Well, why do we want to come into the image of Jesus Christ from glory to glory? Hebrews 1:3 – And He, Jesus, is the radiance of His glory—God's glory. So Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God. So when we are transformed from glory to glory into the image of Jesus Christ, what we're doing is coming into progressively fuller manifestations of the glory of God. Romans 12:2 (tells us how we do this; how are we transformed from glory to glory into the image of Christ?) – And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. So we're to be transformed from glory to glory into the image of Christ by renewing of our minds because Christ is the glory of God. Well what's to be the major work in renewing our minds? In my mind, it is to renew our minds which means changing our entire attitude, evaluation, assessment, and understanding about suffering, about your cross.

So recall we came into the Kingdom through the doorway of salvation; but remember the second topic under salvation: work out your salvation. Philippians 2:12 – We're told to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. So if we're going to deny self, take up our cross, and follow Jesus, we will not do it except we operate with fear and trembling—that is awe and reverence of our Holy God. Any attitude less than that, and we will run from obedience to that command. Remember salvation is not only so that we can go to Heaven to escape for eternity, that's good. But it's also so that Heaven can begin to come to Earth, even here, while we're yet here as earthen vessels. Matthew 6:10 – Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. That's the model prayer that our Lord offered up. Now we know there will be a millennial kingdom, a thousand year period when Jesus will reign with an iron rod on planet Earth after His second coming. But the Kingdom can begin to come in miniature form through us now as earthen vessels; because not only are we in the Kingdom through the doorway of salvation, the Kingdom is in us. Luke 17:21 (King James version) – The Kingdom of God is within you. Well how so? Because the King is within you. I Corinthians 3:16 – Do you not know that the Spirit of Christ is within you? Do you not know that—that the Spirit of the King of kings and Lord of lords is within you? II Corinthians 4:7 – We have this treasure in earthen vessels. Sometimes I think we tend to function as Christians as if we don't really know that we have this treasure in earthen vessels. The Spirit of Christ—the key; thus, the Kingdom within us, meaning accessible to us. Matthew 16:19 – I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and whatever you shall bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatever you shall loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven.

You see God is sovereign and God can accomplish anything at any instant with any person in any way that He chooses. But He also has a permissive will where He, in fact, requires us to engage in the process. That's so the relationship and the functioning can be of love, remember, and not simply mechanical robotic slavery. So we have the life of God, the Spirit of Christ, the King within us. We have the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven that we're given from the sum of the utterances of Jesus. His Kingdom is to come on Earth as it is in Heaven. We are the earthen vessels through whom it comes. It is in us and it is to be released through us onto planet Earth. Well has it come on planet Earth? How would we recognize it if it were here? Well I mentioned earlier the fruit of the Spirit would be in full bloom: love, joy, peace, goodness, kindness, gentleness, patience, faithfulness, and self control. So I ask again, has the Kingdom come on planet Earth? Well in large part, no. Well, why is that? Well, it's easy to blame circumstances. It's easy to blame Satan. It's easy to blame the world system. But the principle reason is because we as earthen vessels, who have that Kingdom within us, have thrown away the principle key. And what key is that? Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Me.

You see, the question is not: is the life of God within you; it is. The question is: has the outer shell been broken? John 12:24 – Truly, truly, I say to you unless a grain of wheat falls into the Earth and dies, it remains by itself alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. So when I assess why there may be relatively little fruit in my Christian experience, both the fruit of the Spirit within me and visible fruit in the Kingdom, the primary reason is simply the outer shell hasn't died. The fruit of the Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the King, the Kingdom of God are all within you. But your outer shell has to die for it to be released. When the outer shell dies, then the Kingdom of Heaven is loosed and it will simultaneously be loosed in Heaven to flow through you into the natural world. But there is only that one little catch. You have to die.

So what is the "you" that has to die? Well, the outer shell that has to die is your former self, your flesh self, the self that is focused on itself, the self that is driven by pride, self-centeredness, selfishness in all its forms (including self condemnation), or self pride in what a good Christian one is. The self that lives in fear of suffering and dying. The self that lives in the cocoon of carnality where every single event is interpreted through the four frames of reference of cost, comfort, convenience and control. That's the self that's to be denied. Your cross is simply the embracing of suffering as the mechanism of the breaking of the outer shell that pries your fingers from your tight grip on this world; and thus, releases the life within you onto planet Earth. And make no mistake; that life is in you. Remember Ephesians 4:24 – Put on the new creation which has been created (past tense), in righteousness, holiness, and truth according to the image of God. That's what's in you. Now if we're going to do this, I think we have to settle once and for all what this whole thing is about. If we don't, then I'm afraid we will not progress down the pathway of working out our salvation by denying self, taking up our cross, and following Jesus.

This poster shows the foundation of your cross and I'll go through each of these categories. So make no mistake about it; there is a battle. This is a spiritual battle; it's not a battle of the natural world. The natural world exists to express the battle that is in the spirit realm. In the spirit realm, there are two kingdoms. There is the Kingdom of Jesus Christ and the kingdom of Satan. Jesus, of course, is the Son of God, the second member of the Trinity; He's therefore omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, transcendent. Satan, of course, is not. Satan is a fallen angel created

by God. He fell from his high position because he did not consider his high position high enough; because he could see a Being above him. He saw God above him and responded by wanting to be out from under all things including his Creator. He wanted to be his own god. That's the rebellion and that's the rebellion that continues and that's the war that continues operating through us. That war is fought here on Earth; it's fought through earthen vessels, and we are those earthen vessels. It's revealed through the natural world; but it is a spiritual battle. That's why our weapons are not of this world. Of course I like a strong military defense. I have nothing against tanks, and planes, and bombs to accomplish that task. But that's not what the battle is really about. The battle is really in the spirit realm. II Corinthians 10:3-4 – For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh; but are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

So what are those fortresses that we have divine power to destroy? Well, the next verse tells us. II Corinthians 10:5 – We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. And we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. You see, we're taking these vain imaginations, these speculations that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God and we are destroying them brick by brick by capturing every thought. Well, that tells us where the battle is being fought. Well, it's the place that thoughts and speculations occur. Where do thoughts, speculations and vain imaginations that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God occur? Well, it's in our minds and every thought is a skirmish in the global battle. Matthew 12:36 (King James version) – We will be held accountable for every idle word because an idle word is simply the result of an uncaptured thought. Well, how is the battle fought? It's fought over the definition of what truth is. That's why the definition of truth, and why I keep going back to that is not just to a cute theologic mind satisfying game; it is, in fact, the determinant of how this battle is going to unfold in your life.

So what is truth? To the Christian, truth has to be defined as I defined it or something trying to approximate it, else you will go through life deriving your own version of what truth is. Truth is God and how God views everything else. It's what He is and what He thinks about everything else. It's how God views reality. If you define truth by any other means, you're going to simply be treading water in life and treading water in your Christian life, functioning in vain imaginations, speculations, and thoughts that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. Now what happens if you listen to me, assuming I speak the Word of God, but you don't hear with understanding about the things that I'm saying? Well look at the parable of the sower. Luke 8:11 tells us the seed is the Word of God. Matthew 13:19 – When anyone hears the Word of the Kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. Now see, that's part of the energy in my spiritual walk that led to this series because I didn't have understanding and I kept trying to understand how all these concepts fit together. And I just didn't have one source from which I was deriving it. I would read the Bible, the Word of God, try to plant the seeds; but I just didn't have it assimilated; I did not understand it. And out of that pursuit, when understanding began to come, then it was converted into a teaching series; because he who has freely received is to freely give. So the intent of the teaching series is to give such as I have unto you in regard to understanding. Why? Is it so that I appear like I'm a possessor of great spiritual insights? No, it's so that the evil one does not snatch away the seed that is heard but not understood. So whatever understanding I have received, I want to impart. Well, how does the evil one snatch it away? As he always does, by

telling a lie. John 8:44 – For he is a liar and the father of lies (speaking of Satan). Revelation 12:9 – And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who was called the devil and Satan who deceives the whole world. He was thrown down to the Earth and his angels were thrown down with him. Revelation 12:4 (speaking of Satan) – And his tail (the dragon) swept away a third of the stars of Heaven (meaning the angels) and threw them to the Earth.

So how is Satan the father of lies? Well, let's go back to where that comes from. Someone had to lie to get a third of the angels in Heaven to rebel against a God Who is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, transcendent, and Holy in every understanding of the Word. Well, that seems to likely have been Lucifer (as he was called at that time—the original heavenly name for the one later called Satan). Lucifer, remember, had an exalted position among the angels. It seems unlikely that the primary lie would have come from the subset of angels underneath his dominion in the angelic realm. It seems more likely that the lower angels believed the lie told by their angelic ruler. Thus his tail swept away a third of the stars in Heaven and threw them to Earth. Now this is a play on words, but it helps me remember it. The symbolism is this: The tail (t-a-i-l) of the dragon is symbolic of the tale (t-a-l-e) of Satan—namely his lie. That's why his tail swept away a third of the angels. That was apparently the original lie. It wasn't the lie told to Eve that if she ate of that, she'd be possessed of godly knowledge and so on. The original lie was this: That a creature could successfully rebel against his creator God, and would be better off for doing so. That is the original lie and the origin of all lies; and thus, Satan is the father of lies. And everything that plays out in the spiritual realm from that moment on is simply a reoccurrence, if you will, of that same primary question. Can a created being successfully rebel against his creator God, and be better off for doing so?

So how does Satan rule over the unsaved? Same method; with the atheist. By having them believe the lie that there is no God. And that the atheist has it within himself to self determine that there is no God. You can do this thing. With the agnostic, by having them believe the lie that if there is a God, that we cannot know it. And to believe the lie that a created being can successfully declare that if there is a God, that God is too impotent to reveal Himself. With the Universalist, by having them believe the lie that there is a God but that God is quite content with them as they are and that whatever they do, it doesn't really matter because the outcome is the same for everybody. The commonality of those lies, is that Satan has us operate under the lie that we're really fine, that we can successfully rule ourselves, and that we'll be better off for doing so, when in reality we're slaves to sin; and thus, to him. Whenever we think that we can rule anything (including ourselves), we are simultaneously overruling the creator God of the universe. That's to join in Satan's original lie: that a creature can successfully rebel against his creator and will be better off for doing so. The expression of that lie in one combined word is self-determination.

Now all of that relates to the unsaved. Now how does the father of lies relate to us as Christians after we have entered the Kingdom of God through the doorway of salvation? Well, one way is by having us believe the lie that we can follow Jesus without denying self and without taking up our cross. That becomes the foundational battle of the Christian life.

So let's review the series of thoughts. We are in a battle at every moment of your life including every thought that you have. It's a manifestation of skirmish in the battle. There is no neutral

ground. Every moment, it's either functioning in the Kingdom of God or the kingdom of Satan. The battle is a spiritual battle. The battle is between Jesus (the King of kings and Lord of lords as He's called in Revelation 19:16) and Satan (the prince of this world, as he's called in John 12:31; 14:30; and 16:11); prince of this world meaning ruler of this world; the god of this world, he's called in another place. The battle is fought through us as earthen vessels. The battle is fought in our minds and the battle is fought in our minds over every thought. And that foundational battle over every thought comes down to one question. What is truth? Now we tend to lose that battle in one of two ways as Christians. One way is through default. Through ignorance or laziness, we simply do not engage in the battle; and thus, uncaptured thoughts rule us. And that's the Christian who has his ten minute Bible study, maybe even prays several minutes a day, but 99% of his thought life throughout his day is uncaptured, unfiltered, unmeasured, unevaluated, and functioning in the unrenewed mind where the habit patterns, hot buttons, emotions and so on, from all our decades of human experience have been firmly laid down.

Another way is through overt rebellion. We simply agree with Satan as Adam and Eve did—namely that we can mentally determine truth better than God can declare truth. That's to remain in a position of judging God because it's to look at the thoughts of God as revealed in His Word, look at our own thoughts about the Word, and then declare that we can judge the Word of God rather than have the Word of God judge us. Imagine that! But that's the Christian who takes saved, for instance, the three critical essences of God: the sovereign majestic King, the passionate lover, and the fierce but righteous judge and diminishes one or two and tosses out the third. That they can declare what the image of God must be in His critical essences rather than looking at the sum of the Word of God and simply receiving the essences of God as declared in the Word of God. Overt rebellion, while still pronouncing that they're functioning as Christians ought to function according to how God views reality.

Well, I think that gets us started anyway, so I think my time is up for today and we'll pick it up there the next time.