

Your Cross – Part 10

In the Kingdom of God, remember, we began the sub-series on Your Cross. We explored the foundation; there is a battle. That battle is ongoing. It's constant. It's between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, the Kingdom of light versus the kingdom of darkness. There is no neutral ground in this battle. We then looked at the mechanism of what is to be fulfilled as we go through our cross and that mechanism is, using the marital model for explanation, to give up all choices other than summing everything up in Jesus Christ. And we do that by choice because we've come to the purpose of choice which is to become one with Jesus Christ. As in matrimony, I have given up any other relationship intimately and sexually with any other woman because I have fulfilled holy matrimony with my wife. So any departure from that will lead me from the intended goal of marriage which is holy matrimony. So why would I exercise any other choice when I've come to the purpose of choice which is to have two become one as a model of becoming one with my creator God.

Then we looked at the purposes of Your Cross. Tribulation/revelation, remember; it reveals me to me, Christ to me, Christ in me to me, and Christ in me to others. To fulfill the purposes of Jesus Christ which are succinctly stated, to seek and to save that which was lost (evangelism) and to usher in the abundant life, the fruit of the Spirit in full flower in the life of each Christian as part of the testimony of the glory of our God. And by doing those two things, to destroy the works of the devil; because the work of the devil is to oppose anything that God is trying to accomplish. And then we talked about the choices coming down to flesh versus spirit. Today we're going to phrase it in the terms of Your Cross as the questioner. In some ways this will be a bit of a review; but it's to cement these concepts home to each one of us. So rather than thinking about Your Cross as being all about suffering, it's helpful to view Your Cross as simply being in the role of your questioner. Your questioner will ask you questions that you need to know the answer to, to call to mind and to live in the light of, which is what Scripture means when it says put on the armor of God. Put on the new creation. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. If you don't know what it is, you can't put it on. So you need to know what it is, meditate on it, call it to mind, and make decisions in your walk through life based on that which is to live in the light of our God.

So the questions are the same for every Christian when they're in the midst of the cross—their cross; but it may take many forms, of course. It's only when you understand that your cross is simply the vehicle used to ask you questions that you can see it for what it is. The questions of Your Cross at any moment may be the same level of cross as you experienced before. Because you may have given the wrong answers when you had that same level of cross before. And thus, the questions need to be asked again. Your cross may ask them of you again and may continue asking them until you walk in the Spirit as opposed to in the flesh. Your questions asked by Your Cross may be even more difficult in a later session; because when asked by a lesser degree of cross, you gave the right answers. So think of the questioner as Satan, always operating within the confines of what's asked by God. Just like when Jesus spoke to Peter and said Satan has demanded to sift you. So permission was granted for the sifting. Satan's goal was one thing; but the goal of God, of course, was something else entirely although God allowed Satan to do his work. Satan's goal is to have you give the wrong answer – to walk in the flesh as opposed to the

Spirit; and thus, have something to accuse you of before your God. Remember, Satan's purpose is to steal, kill, and destroy. Remember the parable of the sower when the seed is sown, it's the Word of God. But the evil one comes to snatch it away before it can take root. So Satan's purpose in the midst of Your Cross in his role as questioner is to steal the seed of the Word of God that has been placed in you. Thereby to kill your faith; and without faith, it is impossible to please God; and thus, Satan's goal is to destroy your role in fulfilling the Kingdom of God, to seek and to save that which was lost and to usher in the abundant life. But God's purpose in allowing Satan to operate within certain confines in your life is to perfect you and to have you display His glory on planet Earth even in the midst of what the world would look at and call difficult circumstances. That's why even Your Cross is to work together for good.

Next poster. So let's remind ourselves of the origin of choice. God is. That's the most fundamental concept in all theology. God is. We know God is love. Love is relational. Relational is choice. If one choice is God then any other choice is ungodly. So we get to choose. God offers a choice so the relationship is based on love and not based on mechanical robotic slavery. So this poster actually gives us the answers to the first two questions that Your Cross asks. If you shift your eyes over to this poster, Your Cross as your questioner is starting off asking you this question. Do you know that you get to choose? That no matter how horrible the circumstances of Your Cross, you still get to choose. You never give that up. And do you know why you get to choose? You get to choose because God wants the relationship to be of love and not of mechanical robotic slavery. That's simply how our creator views reality. So Your Cross is simply presenting you with choices. Yet we tend to focus all our attention on the circumstance on the cross, while seeming to forget that we get to choose every moment of our cross. There's never a moment of Your Cross that you don't get to choose how to respond to it. Now in itself, that alone is a revelation of how you can never be separated from the love of God. Because you get to choose; and that itself is an expression of the love of God. God is glorified by your choices more than He is by the presence or absence of any specific set of circumstances.

The third question asked by Your Cross is, do you know that you do not get to choose not to choose? What happens if you don't choose? Every system has a default mechanism. You choose by not choosing. Well, why is that? Because when you do not choose, you default to the most well worn ruts in your thought life. And the well worn ruts that we call habits in the thought life have developed over years and probably decades and are left over in your unrenewed mind. That's why we have to be transformed by the renewing of the mind. That is not something that is finished by salvation; that is something that is initiated by salvation. Our eternal destiny is settled at salvation; we are justified, declared righteous in the eyes of God. But there's a process of transformation that we are to go through. Jesus always talks about that duality in any set of circumstances. Luke 11:23 – He who is not with Me is against Me. He who does not gather with Me, scattereth. So even as Christians at every moment, given our response to our present circumstances, we are either gathering for the Kingdom of God or we are scattering from the Kingdom of God, giving glory to Satan as opposed to giving glory to Jesus Christ. It is one or the other at every moment of our lives. Mark 9:40 – He who is not against us is for us. Luke 16:13 – No servant can serve two masters. Now that bipolar description is true of the Kingdom of God in a global sense; but it's also true in a focal sense in your thought life. You will choose even if you think you are not choosing. That's why we're told to call things to mind, to put them on, pay attention lest you drift, choose life, and so on; a constant stream of

admonitions to be sober, be attentive, be vigilant lest something be stolen from you that you have access to in the Kingdom of God. We know in the physical realm that nature abhors a vacuum. Nature will not tolerate a vacuum; something will rush in to fill the vacuum. And the same is true in the spirit realm. That's why we're told to contend for the faith. The Kingdom of God is taken by violent men. People who have an aggressive attitude about their thought life, you see. So in a global sense, we are combating Satan and his kingdom; but in a focal sense we're combating the next thought to look at it in the light of God and choose life that we may live. So we have a choice. That is to say we will choose even if we think we're not choosing.

The next question asked by Your Cross is, do you know that you do not get to choose what the choices are? The pride of man always thinks that he gets to do more than he really has leeway to do. God created the universe, created man and gave you the choices. You do not get to decide what the choices are. That should be evident to us as Christians; but sometimes I think we tend to not pay attention; and thus, drift from the revelation that we don't even get to choose what the choices are.

The next question is, do you know what the choices are? Now, of course, that goes back to our last session. Remember (I say again for emphasis), God always gives two choices. Two so the relationship may be of love because if you have only one option, there really is no choice at all. So He gives us two options in order to allow our wills to function to operate by choosing Him to express love, choosing Him to express faith and so on; so that it is relational and not a pet rock so to speak. But if God gives us more than two choices, it introduces a level of complexity above having only two choices and makes us more likely to miss the correct choice since we have so many choices. So the simple way that I look at it, God always gives us two options. He does that because that is the irreducible number that allows for love; but if He gives us more than the two, it adds complexity which may lead us astray. So to me that's testimony of the love of God. He structures it so our response can be of love but doesn't add complexity so as to make it likely for us to miss the correct choice.

Next poster. I've summarized that on this poster that you've see before. I won't go over it in detail, but just by snap, snap, snap review. In a theologic sense, there's only one choice that we ever operate in: God versus ungod. The first humans, it was eat or don't eat. The Old Testament, the Jews, related by the law, by obey the law or disobey the law. For a New Testament era unbeliever, it's accept Jesus or reject Jesus. And for us as New Testament saints, the choices are spirit and flesh.

Now the next question is, do you know and understand the choices available? Because it's not complicated what the choices are; but sometimes it's helpful to shine the light through a prism, break it up into its component colors and learn more about its basic behavior. When we put love through the prism, remember, we saw the fruit of the Spirit as the breakout of the component wave lengths of love itself. So using that same principle, I'm going to review in a moment the contrast of flesh versus spirit. John 4:24 tells us God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. So we are to worship God at every moment including during the circumstances of our cross. So in light of the above verse, we see that worship of God can only occur in spirit. So if we are functioning in the flesh at any moment including specifically during our cross, then at that moment we are not worshipping God. So how do we know?

Next poster. Remember these which I'll briefly run through by way of reminder. The basis of the flesh is self. Self on the throne is what's called flesh. Flesh on the throne is what's called the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of darkness is headed by Satan. But the basis in the spirit realm is God and we know that God has spoken to us in His Son: this is My beloved Son, listen to Him; all things are summed up in My Son; the Holy Spirit came to bear witness of the Son, and so on. So the basis for us as Christians is Jesus Christ Himself because that's how God wants us to function. Truth in the flesh with self as the basis is what I say it is; but truth in the spirit realm is what God says. In other words, what God is and how God views everything else. The input in the flesh is by the physical realm as we walk by sight, not by faith. But the input in the spirit realm is faith. We walk by faith, not by sight. Time in the flesh, we focus on our temporal considerations here in this space time created order. But time in the spirit realm is focused on the eternal; that which is timeless because its basis is God and God, Himself, is timeless. The standard in the flesh is always comparison with others; but the standard in the spirit is to compare ourselves with Jesus, recognize how woefully short we fall. Well, when you realize that, then you look at merit and you see in the flesh people always think they merit better than what they presently are getting. But the Christian knows left to his own devices, he merits eternal Hell, the lake of fire, separated from God, no communion with God while receiving the wrath of God for all eternity future. So how can a Christian ever do anything other than be thankful for the grace that he's operating under?

The self image of self in the flesh is pride; that's simply self looking at self and self looking at God and self saying to self, I can do this thing apart from God. I can even decide if God exists and if He exists, I can declare what He must be. I can declare what He must do and so on. But in the self image of self in the spirit realm is humility because you're constantly living in the awareness of the vileness of the sinful creature that you are and the grace of God lavished on you because that God came to Earth and paid the price for your sins. That can't help but produce humility in you when you look at the broad gap between the Holiness of God and the sin of man...but God. Look at what God did in view of that incredible gulf between his holiness and your sin; it is an humbling thought process. In regard to suffering, self always seeks to avoid suffering and thinks that whatever suffering comes would have been better spent on somebody else. But suffering in the spirit realm, we accept. We don't seek to suffer; but we accept the suffering because our greater purpose is to bring glory to God, not to avoid suffering.

In the flesh, self seeks to receive praise and always thinks the praise it receives is inadequate. But in the spirit realm, we are driven to give praise to the only thing worthy of praise which is God Himself and for us with our one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ. In the flesh, self always thanks less than it ought to and often to the point of being thankless. And in the spirit realm, we are thankful because there's never a moment in the spirit realm that we don't have an infinite amount to give thanks for. Thank God that God doesn't give me what I deserve. Judging in the flesh since self thinks truth is what it says it is, then self thinks it can judge all people, all things, all circumstances, and God Himself. But in the spirit realm, we judge not. Judging means, in this context, to condemn someone for their shortcomings or failure. But we exercise the judging in the context of discernment so if we see unrighteousness brewing in the life of another, we can address it according to how Scripture tells us to address it, but always with a goal of redeeming the situation as opposed to condemning someone in the situation.

In regard to sin, self as the basis seeks to justify its own sin, to take its own sin and declare it as not sin. That is to say, take sin and declare it as righteousness, or to excuse it if it acknowledges that sin exists. It would be sin except for these special circumstances in my life that make whatever this is fully excusable before God. But in the spirit realm, self seeks to repent of sin, to be fully aware of secret sins; because how else can purification occur, and every part of me that's functioning in an anti-Christ mode will prevent fullness of communion and prevent oneness with my God. So look what I found in your holy temple: this thing that is contrary to you and needs to go. I repent of it, receive Your forgiveness, grow in the knowledge of Your grace, have hypocrisy eliminated, validate my testimony to planet Earth as my character comes into oneness with the character of God Himself. So you delight in having your sins revealed.

When we feel violated or trespassed against, self in the flesh seeks revenge. It wants to see at a minimum justice done. Well, as you've heard me say that precludes worship because you're living in the past in unforgiveness and living in the future contemplating revenge or holding on till you see justice done. But we get to forgive in the spirit realm; because forgiveness is to live in the constant light of how much we have been forgiven and then simply be an earthen vessel to pass that forgiveness on. So we don't have to forgive; we get to forgive. We forgive and do it joyfully so because when I don't, it keeps me from worshipping my God.

Control—self in the flesh seeks to control basically everything but self. It seeks to control others and control circumstances. But the control sought by the person operating in the spirit realm with Jesus Christ as the basis is what's called the fruit of the Spirit, self control. You don't want to do anything that's selfish, self-centered, self-driven, where the cocoon of carnality analyzing everything in terms of cost, comfort, convenience, and control is the driving influence of your analysis and decision making. Be gone, you're exercising control over that self as you bring glory to God; because you can only bring glory to one of two things at any moment: to God or self.

The authority of self in the flesh is claimed and often to the point of being imposed or trying to impose on others. But authority in the spirit realm is received. As we walk in the godliness that we're called to walk in, glorifying Jesus every step of the way, those who are His children will be convicted by the Holy Spirit to submit themselves to that level of godliness just like the disciples did with Jesus.

In regard to position in the flesh, self seeks to be the master, but in the spirit, self is the servant. The servant is not above his master and the creator of the Heavens and the Earth, Who came to Earth to pay the price for all of our sins, just before the series of events, took off their shoes/sandals and washed their dirty feet of humanity if you can imagine that. Do we ever for one moment think we should seek to be above servant and somehow be in the position of master?

The battle in the flesh—we seek to battle others; but in the spirit we are battling self. In a global sense, we're battling Satan; but in a foundational, moment by moment sense, we're battling anything in our thought life that is exalting itself against the knowledge of Jesus Christ, capturing every thought in obedience to Jesus.

Victory in the flesh is sought; victory in the spirit is expressed. Because we're constantly living in the light of the victory of Jesus over Satan, the victory of Jesus over sin, the victory of Jesus on the cross, the victory of Jesus over death. So we're constantly expressing the victory of Jesus rather than seeking to overcome based on our own energies.

In the flesh, ownership is considered mine. But in the spirit, ownership is His. We're functioning in stewardship because the Earth is the Lord's including the fullness thereof and all that dwell therein. And, of course, we are special as Christians because we've been bought with a price. So we're His by creation and we're His by salvation. We belong to Him and that includes everything that would be under me including time, energy, natural gifts, spiritual gifts, and possessions.

In regard to fear, the flesh fears loss; but operating in the spirit, we consolidate our fears in to what the Bible calls the fear of the Lord. Because when you're operating in the awe and reverence of God, you fear nothing else. That's why we're told to fear not; because when you are fearing something else, you are not fearing God—meaning holding God in awe and reverence. That's why perfect love casts out fear.

In regard to giving, in the flesh, self gives to get; but in the spirit we give simply to give, as the flower gives of its fragrance, freely and unthinking, not looking for some secondary benefit as the result of our giving.

Beauty in the flesh is external; but we view beauty in the spirit as internal. I walk by faith as a Christian. Nothing is more beautiful than faith. And Heaven forbid if something happened to Susan, but if it did, I think my choices would be shaped by the internal spiritual condition of any other woman that I would find appealing. It wouldn't be based with the same thought process that it might have been based when I was 15. As a 62 year old Christian, hopefully I would be looking for a woman that is beautiful in the eyes of God and that's the woman who is a Christian. I wouldn't be yoked to an unbeliever and I wouldn't want to be with a nominal Christian who really wants to consider themselves saved; but have no pursuit of God, no pursuit of falling in love with the Son, no pursuit of operating in the freedom in Christ and so on. So my definition of beauty as a 62 year old Christian is entirely different from beauty as defined by the world. When you look at people or women who would match the definition of beauty that I'm giving, you will never see them on the evening news. You see all the other evidences of earthly beauty that the world calls beautiful.

In regard to pursuit, the world pursues happiness. We pursue joy. What's the distinction the way I use the words? Happiness is circumstance dependent and time limited. Joy is built on communion with God through His Word and His Spirit and flows regardless of circumstances. So the joy of the Lord is circumstance resistant and time prolonged. Fullness of joy which we'll experience in Heaven is circumstance immune and eternal. And that's what we're to press toward as we sum everything up in Jesus with Him as the basis of our entire lives.

Resting? In the flesh you can never rest because there is always someone that can steal from you that which you have—something that can prevent you from attaining that which you think you

should get. Oh, but in the spirit realm, we rest always. Why? Because we're resting in God. We've entered that Sabbath rest of God and God never changes. So if He never changes and I'm resting in Him, why should my rest in Him ever change because all my hope for the future is in Him and not in any set of circumstances here on Earth?

The next question asked by Your Cross is do you know that you do not get to choose the consequences of each choice? We get to choose, but that's all we get to choose. We don't get to choose what the choices are and we don't get to choose the consequences of the choices. That's part of the spiritual principle of sowing and reaping.

The next question is, do you even know what the consequences of the choices are? Since the choice is flesh or spirit, then we need to look in a brief reminder of the consequences of what it's like in one versus the other. And they're all reviewed in Galatians 5. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 is love, joy, peace, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, patience, and self control. Well, why that? Because that's what God looks like. That's what God looks like. Imagine that—that He's calling us to be progressively purified into the very reflection of what He looks like on planet Earth. You might say, but that's the fruit of the Spirit; what does that have to do with how we choose? Because the fruit of the Spirit can never be exhibited in someone who is living in the flesh. To have the fruit of the Spirit, wouldn't it make sense that you have to be in the spirit where Jesus is with Jesus as the basis? But to try to have the abundant life while living in the flesh contains a certain amount of nonsense in that approach to it.

So what are the consequences of being in the flesh? Well, we're told in Galatians 5:19-21; a partial list is given. Now actually, it's everything which is not like Jesus Christ is the easiest way to think about it. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. Now that's an incomplete list. But it's an impressive list nonetheless. It's impressive but it cannot be called good. Romans 7:18 – For I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh. So if the Word of God, how God views reality, tells us that there's nothing good in my flesh, why would I want as a child of God to live a single moment in the flesh? Romans 8:6 through 8:8 – For the mind set on the flesh is death; but the mind set on the spirit is life and peace. The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Imagine that—that as children of God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ having every spiritual blessing purchased by Jesus Christ on His cross, that we would want to live any moment in our lives in a thought pattern, a stronghold of thoughts that's exalting itself against the knowledge of God called the flesh. When it's hostile to God, it cannot please God, at war with God and in which nothing good dwells. What is our testimony to planet Earth going to be like when we by choice live in that sphere of influence, if you will? Now even during our cross, the mind is set constantly on the flesh or the spirit. We're given choice that we may reciprocate love. The will makes the choice and we will choose either flesh or spirit. Now if we sow flesh, by choosing flesh, we will reap the fruit of the flesh to greater or lesser dimension. If we sow spirit, by choosing spirit, we will reap the fruit of the Spirit. The principle of sowing and reaping functions even during Your Cross.

And I think our time is up for today, but I'll pick it up and we'll finish this session of Your Cross as your questioner the next time that we come together.