

Your Cross – Part 13

In the Kingdom of God, we've been in the section called Your Cross. We worked through the foundation of it, the mechanism of it, the purposes, the choices and the questions asked by Your Cross. Last week we began on the result. What is to be the outcome of Your Cross? Last week we used the example of Job and his cross in the Old Testament. Today we're going to move on to a New Testament example.

Now in a word, what does life look like or should look like as a result of Your Cross? Well, in a word, it looks like Jesus. The problem is when we, as children of God, look at Jesus, we tend to view that as an impossible goal; and therefore, we have a way of toning down the effort because our engagement in it seems to be impossible. Now of course, that's not entirely appropriate that we do so; but I think subconsciously that's what we have a tendency to do. It is true; Jesus is our model for all things. He is what we are to grow into, His very likeness. We are God-men also; not in the sense that we are gods, but in the sense that the Spirit of God dwells within us. The power of God is available to us. The truth of God, even the very omniscience of God is available to us in the sense that we have the mind of Christ within us; because we have the Spirit of Truth bearing witness of Jesus, Who is the truth, within us. But to make it digestible, we're going to use Paul as an example of an intermediate point; because Paul didn't say follow me; he said follow me as I follow Jesus. So to see an example intermediate between ourselves and Jesus, we'll look at Paul to make it digestible.

Jesus said a lot of things and I'm going to quote only a few. Abide in Me and I in you. Now, of course, when we got saved Jesus came to abide in us. And thereafter the whole Christian walk from that point on is to progressively grow into our position of abiding in Him. Well, what is abiding in Jesus? We covered that earlier. To abide in Jesus is to constantly dwell in full faith mindfulness of Who Jesus is, what He is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. And if we're doing those things at any moment, we are abiding in Him. He said John 15:5 – Apart from Me, you can do nothing. Because our choice then is to abide in Jesus with that definition I just gave; or accomplish nothing in the spirit realm. Because apart from Jesus, you're in the flesh; and Jesus told us in John 6:63 – the flesh profits you nothing. So you'll either be in the spirit with Jesus as the basis or you'll be in the flesh with yourself as the basis. And over here you can do all things. Over here you can accomplish nothing. So that's the broad division line between flesh and spirit. Matthew 16:26 – What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? In other words, the only thing of intrinsic value in all of existence is God Himself. And for us, it is God as revealed through His Son, Jesus. Matthew 10:28 – Do not fear the one who kills the body; but fear the one Who kills soul and body in Hell. So we're to consolidate our fears, remember? We're to hold God in awe and reverence which is what the fear of the Lord is and fear nothing else because everything else is trivialized by this omniscient, omnipotent God.

Well those are selected Scriptures about things that Jesus said. Well, how did Paul respond to statements like that? Well by the spiritual principle of agreement. Romans 13:14 – Make no provision for the lusts of the flesh. Philippians 3:3 – I put no confidence in the flesh. Well, why? Because Jesus said the flesh profits you nothing; in your flesh is no good thing. So why would you want to live your life as a Christian in the flesh with self as the basis when it provides,

has no good thing and profits nothing. II Corinthians 4:17, Paul writes to regard suffering as momentary light affliction. No matter how severe, no matter how prolonged, when viewed temporally, it is momentary light affliction when viewed eternally. II Corinthians 5:7 – We walk by faith, not by sight. And remember it's not by faith as faith; it's not by faith in me; it's not by my faith; it's by faith in Jesus Christ; because that's the only faith that has any eternal meaning. Galatians 2:20 – the life that I live, I Paul, live in the flesh; I live by the faith of Jesus. Now he wasn't talking about life in the flesh with self as the basis as we talk about flesh in the spirit realm. He's talking about flesh, the life that I live in the flesh, in my body here on planet Earth, I live by the faith of Jesus. Galatians 2:20 – Yet not I, but the spirit of Christ within me. Because you're either loosing self (flesh with self as the basis), or loosing spirit with Jesus as the basis. Those are the two choices, the two options that we have available as Christians. And remember, God gives us only two so that we're never confused by the matter. He gives us two so it may be of love and not robotic slavery. He gives us only two so that it never becomes complicated so that you lose sight of the basic two.

Acts 17:28, Paul writes – In Him I live and move and have my being. Acts 20:24 – These things do not move me. Remember when you are moving in Jesus, nothing else will move you. That's the point of those two verses. Philippians 4:13 – I can do all things through Christ Who strengthens me. Well that's not all things meaning all things; because Jesus is not going to strengthen you to become the world's greatest liar. It's all things that are consistent with the will of God, the purposes of God, the plan of God, and the character of God. If you are engaged in those things, Jesus will strengthen you to accomplish them. Philippians 4:7 – Paul speaks of the peace that surpasses understanding. Because in this physical realm there is nothing that gives true peace. Philippians 4:11 – I've learned the secret to be content in whatever state I am; not to bring my state into a certain situation to where peace will flow out of that state. But I have learned to be content regardless of the state that I'm in. Philippians 1:21 – To live is Christ, to die is gain.

So I ask you, had Paul responded appropriately to life in the spirit with Jesus as the basis as a result of the things that Jesus had said? I think he had. Well, how far is that line of thinking to be carried? Is it to be carried to a level of diminishing our anxiety about our future eternity and then living in lukewarmness from that point on? Well, I don't think so. Romans 6:11 – Paul writes, consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. See, Paul clearly understood the difference between flesh and spirit. He fulfilled II Corinthians 10:5 by determining to capture every thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. Is that a one time event? Did Paul make that decision one time and never else have to make that decision? No. I Corinthians 15:31 – I die daily. This is a daily death that we fulfill by considering ourselves, reckoning ourselves alive to God through Christ Jesus and dead to sin—sin being anything which is anti-Christ; because in the final analysis, that's how God views that reality. Now in our minds (our unrenewed minds), remember the old habits, the old thought patterns, the old memories, the old emotions, the old frames of reference, and the old hot buttons are all still there after we are saved. They still circulate through our minds in well worn patterns that we call habits. They're the ruts of the old man before we got saved. But we're to use our will to capture them and to crucify them for they are inner solicitations to do evil—to do things that are functioning in the kingdom of darkness contrary to the Kingdom of light which is life in Christ Jesus. So that's what we're to die to daily, is life lived according to those old frames of

reference. That's how to be transformed by the renewing of your mind, as we're told in Romans 12:2.

Now Paul knew a lot of things. He knew the foundation of Your Cross. I'm going to use posters that we've drawn from in prior sessions of Your Cross to give a little miniature review. Paul knew these things; he knew all of these elements. He engaged in the battle because we are in a battle and we don't battle flesh and blood. We battle principalities and powers and things in dark places. The battle is a spiritual battle, not a physical battle. The combatants at the root are Jesus and Satan. It's fought through us; the battle is in our minds. It's fought through every thought that you entertain. Each thought is a skirmish in this global spiritual battle. And the battle over each thought is over the question, what is truth? Is truth what God is and how God views everything else? Or is truth something else in contradiction to that definition of truth? Every thought is over that particular question. How far did Paul take this? II Corinthians 12:2 – I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago; whether in the body, I do not know; or out of the body, I do not know. God knows. Such a man was caught up to the third Heaven. Verse 4, he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words which a man is not even permitted to speak. Now it's clear from other elements of this that Paul is talking about his own visualization. He knows in his mind during that vision that he's still alive; but he's functioning in the spirit realm, seeing the glory of Heaven to such a degree that he loses all his frames of reference about whether he's even in the body or in the spirit. And in the final analysis, it doesn't matter because he's basically seeing the face of God (figuratively speaking) in a sense to where he is just overwhelmed to where any other thought, any other frame of reference becomes meaningless by comparison with the glory of what he's seeing. And he is from that moment a changed man. Paul is saying I knew a man once; his name was Paul. But that man is dead. The revelation of Jesus in the spirit realm so impacted Paul that it is as if Paul (meaning the old Paul) ceased to exist. That man was the old man who lived life in the flesh with self as the basis, producing his own righteousness as a Pharisee among Pharisees. That man is dead, praise God. And he's dead because he's now seeing what truth is. The truth is in Jesus and everything else pales by comparison with that.

And that's how we are to consistently function in the spirit realm. Paul did this so consistently that he would write in I Corinthians 4:3 – I do not even examine myself any longer. I do not even examine myself any longer. Why? Because he was too busy looking at Jesus to be looking at himself; because we will never be delivered from sin by looking at ourselves combating sin. We will only be delivered from sin and life in the flesh with self as the basis by looking at Jesus and seeing His glory. So as not to offend anyone, I'm going to ask a series of rhetorical questions in the first person so none of you will think that I am speaking of you. As we continue through the next series of posters, even as we look at this one, the foundation of Your Cross, ask yourself: apart from the experiences of my cross, what is the likelihood that I would live in the full light of these aspects of the Kingdom of God. What is the likelihood, apart from My Cross, that I would ever come to grips with an ever increasing awareness of the presence and constancy of the battle in the spirit realm? Because we can be so easily drifted into comfort in the physical realm that we lose sight that there's a constant battle in the spiritual realm. And the constancy of our pleasures in life will in some ways subjugate our drive to the spiritual reality of glorifying Jesus Christ. We will, in fact, view the pleasures of this physical realm as testimony of how

good Jesus is; all the while drifting into darkness thinking that somehow the love of God is determined by what state of blessedness I self determine that I'm in or not in.

Next poster. The cocoon of carnality—where we assess everything in the terms of these four frames of reference: comfort, convenience, cost, and control. So I ask the question. Apart from My Cross, what is the likelihood that I would live life apart from assessing it by this cocoon of carnality? Because it is Your Cross which reveals to you how much you are functioning in the cocoon of carnality. The pain of Your Cross is the revelation of the fact that you're in the flesh with self as the basis as opposed to in the spirit with Jesus as the basis. Because if you're increasing and decreasing in frustration, because of your interpretation of Your Cross, when God says I do not change. Well, if He isn't changing and you're in Him, then your level of frustration is not changing. So if your level of frustration is changing based on external circumstances, it's the revelation to you that you're functioning in the flesh with self as the basis as opposed to in the spirit with Jesus as the basis.

This is the stratification of four different aspects related to choice—choice viewed in regard to its origin, its purpose, its mechanism, and its destiny. Remember, choice flows out of the love of God. We're given choice. Remember, God is love; love is relational, relational is choice; because if there's no choice, there's only robotic mechanical slavery. He gives us choice that it may be of love and if one choice is Himself, God, then every other choice is by definition ungod. So the origin of choice is the love of God so that we can function in a reciprocal love relationship with our God. The purpose of choice, therefore, if you understand the origin, you'll understand the purpose. The purpose of being given choice is to choose Him; because our will is our worshipper. It is our chooser; but in its root sense, based on how God views reality, our will is nothing more than our worshipper. It declares with every choice what we're worshipping—usually God or ourselves.

Well, what's the mechanism of choice? The mechanism is to, by choice, give up every other choice because we've come to the purpose of choice which is to choose God and abide in Him through Jesus Christ. So when we are abiding in Him, any choice you exercise otherwise will draw you from the position of abiding in Him. So the mechanism is by choice, give up choice, because you're at the purpose of choice which is to choose God and abide in Him through His Son, Jesus Christ. You need no choice once you're in that position because any other choice will only draw you out of that position. Then the destiny of choice is oneness with your God, not as a theoretical concept, but as a spiritual reality worked out in the life of a Christian. So what's the likelihood apart from Your Cross that you would live in the reality of this understanding of even the role of choice in your own life? You say, well that sounds too theologic, too high minded, too intellectual; so we introduce this, the marriage model as an everyday example to make the same spiritual point. When we are unattached, theoretically, we have unlimited choice. When we begin dating, we have through various filters eliminated most choices. When we begin courting, that is serious dating with a consideration of marriage, we begin to filter down toward that one choice as our final choice. And then we take the marriage vow and now, at least in regard to the civil ceremony and the vow taken, we have eliminated all other choices. But at that stage is still dependent on your willpower to fulfill the marriage contract. Oh, but when you begin to view your marriage as holy matrimony, as the testimony of the oneness that we're to have with God, modeled by the oneness with which we have here on planet Earth in our marital

relationship, that's when you, by choice, die to all other choices because exercising any other choice can only lead you out of the position of holy matrimony, you see. So the marriage model is a practical example to let us see how we're to regard choice in the will of man. But what is the likelihood that I would function in that process of dying to all other choices other than Jesus Christ, apart from my cross? Because it's my cross which gives me the revelation of how much I am living life in the flesh with self as the basis as compared to life in the spirit with Jesus as the basis.

Tribulation/revelation – Remember, my tribulation (that is my cross) first of all reveals me to me, reveals Christ to me; because whatever suffering I endure in my cross is miniscule and trivial compared to the suffering that He endured on His cross. It reveals Christ in me to me, as I gaze at Jesus and focus on Jesus, fix my hope in Jesus, I endure more than I ever thought I could do in my human mind. And so it becomes the revelation of Christ in me, strengthening me, as I focus on Him instead of focusing on the suffering, I endure the suffering far beyond what I thought possible. So it reveals the spirit of Christ in me, strengthening me. It also reveals Christ in me to them as they are provoked to look at me and say, how can you endure such suffering and yet have such contentment and peace? I can't do that; how do you do that? It becomes the revelation that what you're doing is unnatural, that is supernatural, and becomes the revelation of God in you to them. Now what is the likelihood that I would live in an ever increasing revelation of me to me, Christ to me, Christ in me to me, and Christ in me to them apart from the circumstances of my cross?

When we looked at flesh versus spirit, we looked at three posters containing 24 frames of reference. Today I pick only the first poster simply to remind us of that. What is the likelihood that I would live in the constant light of flesh versus spirit apart from my cross? What is the likelihood that I would have my attachment to the flesh revealed in a glaring incontrovertible way? What is the likelihood that I would progressively live life in the spirit with Jesus as the basis while dying to the flesh with self as the basis, apart from my cross? So my frustration, when I'm in the midst of my cross, is the revelation that I'm walking by sight instead of by faith. It's the revelation that I am judging God because, spoken or unspoken, I'm judging that He's not here and He ought to be or He is here and He's misbehaving. Because if He really cared, really loved, really understood, He would relieve me of the pain and suffering of the circumstances of my cross. But we're looking at this God with our eyes fixed on Jesus, and He doesn't change, and we know the love revealed by what He did on the cross, we quit assessing His love by the circumstances of our cross and assess His love by the circumstances of His cross, which he did voluntarily for me; so that He would come to the point of saying My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me? And we're to see the revelation that He spoke those words so that we never have to. Because even in the midst of my cross, I am never forsaken by my God; although He was, so that I would never have to be in that situation. When you begin to look at Him and fix your hope on Him and fix your gaze upon Him, you quit assessing hope and assessing His love and so on, in your self determination of God based on the circumstances of Your Cross.

So if honest, I believe that we were quite likely to say the following: Apart from my cross, I would most likely continue to live life in the flesh in an aimless state of drifting, in double-mindedness, while being unstable in all my ways by the provocation of any suffering. I probably would not progress into a state of abiding in Him because I would be too easily satisfied with a

lesser level of abiding in Him apart from my cross. I would probably manifest more fruit of the flesh than I would fruit of the Spirit. Hebrews 2:1 tells us – Pay attention lest you drift. Cardinal revelation—no one drifts to the spirit with Jesus as the basis. No one drifts to the narrow way. All of the currents of this world function to have you drift to the flesh, not to the spirit. So if you're going to come into the spirit, it takes a certain attitude of aggression. The Kingdom of God is taken by violent men, not drifted into by apathetic men. Your Cross is not cruelty on the part of God; it actually is what your unrenewed mind requires for you to pay attention to all of the above lest you drift. It loosens your grip on the flesh by having you learn that the flesh profits you nothing and it's Your Cross that reveals to you that life in the flesh profits you nothing; because the more suffering you're enduring, the less value you attach to all the things which you previously held dear. And it turns you to the spirit realm because there is no hope in the flesh and Your Cross reveals that hopelessness of the flesh and turns you to behold the face of Jesus Christ. Now when we view it through these perspectives, we should now see that we're not to view our cross as a curse. It actually is simply part of all things working together for good as it functions to bring us to God to have Him reveal Himself to us as He reveals us to us; and then to have us reveal Him to the world. If we embrace our cross by taking it up, it will be the agent of our purification. It will transform us into His very likeness by chipping away everything on that stone that's not a lion. It will reveal Him to us, reveal us to us, and reveal Him to others. Thus, Your Cross fulfills its dual purposes of purification of the Christian, and evangelism of the non-Christian.

So what's the conclusion of Your Cross? Death to self. Matthew 16:25 – For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. Well, you know Christianity is full of paradoxes, apparent contradictions which may nevertheless be true. He who exalts himself will be humbled; he who humbles himself will be exalted. So we have to go down to go up. So if it's exaltation you are after, then humble yourself before this Holy God. Leave the exaltation to Him. So the Christian life is full of paradoxes and here's one. The ultimate self interest is to die to self interest. The life that people want to save is the flesh life, the life of self. But by saving this life, he loses it because he misses his destiny with his creator God and spends eternity in Hell apart from God if unsaved. He walks by faith in himself, not by faith in Jesus. The one who loses that life, loses the flesh life which would have resulted in Hell eventually; and now gains his life in God which fulfills his purpose for having been created as he spends eternity in oneness with his creator God. And in the meantime for us as Christians here on planet Earth, after we entered the Kingdom of God through salvation, the life that we lose is the flesh life; but the flesh life is what was keeping us from free flowing communion with our God unto oneness. By losing that life, we're now using the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven that we've been given to release the life of Christ that's within us onto planet Earth. Because in the flesh we view ourselves as the power; and circumstances as the resistance. But in the spirit, God views Himself as the power and our flesh as the resistance. So the way to come into oneness with our God is to have our resistance of the self life reduced to zero, so the power of God can flow through unhindered by the resistance of our flesh.

So to lose the flesh life is to gain the abundant life of oneness with your God. But if after salvation, we insist as Christians on living the life in the flesh while complaining and grumbling about the crosses that we're given to bear, then He will fulfill Psalms 37:4 and give us the desires of our heart. But if we choose that life as Christians to walk in the flesh, we will eat of the fruit

of our own way. We will have no abundant life. We will produce dead works. Our testimony to the world will be impotent. Although we will be saved, yet so as by fire, as every single thing we produce on planet Earth is consumed by the judgment of God because we produce nothing to lend validity to Who He is, what He is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. So we only give testimony to one of two things: Ourselves in our fleshly glory or Jesus in His Godly glory. Those are our only two choices. The fact is, I cannot live life in the flesh with self as the basis and abide in Jesus Christ, because He's not in our flesh, because in my flesh dwells no good thing. And Jesus is God and God is good. So if in my flesh dwells no good thing and God is good, ergo, God is not in my flesh. So I cannot abide in Jesus while abiding in life in the flesh with self as the basis. It's one or the other. And my purpose is to glorify Him; and by doing so to reveal Him to others. But I cannot do that while bringing glory to myself functioning in self determination which is the root of self, with self the root of the flesh, the flesh the root of the system of this world, and the system of this world the kingdom of Satan. That's why my ultimate self interest is to die to self interest and function in Jesus interest. Because it brings me into oneness with my God which in the final analysis is the only thing of intrinsic value in all of existence; the only source of true joy in all of existence; the only source of true peace in all of existence; the only source of true meaning in all of existence. Because of these truths, He is my desire, He is my pursuit, He is my source of fulfillment; and remember the old saying: the pros are cons—when it comes to life in the flesh with self as the basis, the pros are cons. That is to say any reason you can think to justify life in the flesh with self as the basis, is a con job. It is deception. The only thing that stands in the way of my total fulfillment in the abundant life and of the total glorification of God is me—not the circumstances in which I exist. The me referred to is life in the flesh with self as the basis. We can only find our true life, the life of God, and the life with God in the spirit realm where He dwells, not in the flesh realm where He doesn't dwell. And we can only do that by dying to life in the flesh with self as the basis. Our cross is the God permitted vehicle that provides the opportunity for me to deny self, take up my cross, and follow Him. So may our cross bring us to that result where we say as Paul said: I knew a man once. See, I knew a man once. His name was Buddy. I knew a man once but he's dead, praise God! Because now to live is Christ, because my only two choices are to reveal to the world Jesus Christ or reveal to the world Buddy. That's what it means to say to live is Christ and to die is gain. Well, how do we do that? With all things in the Christian life, it's always one word, isn't it? Grace. The omnipotent power of God operating on our behalf; but we access that grace by beholding Jesus. We don't access that grace by trying to overcome sin in our fleshly self power. And grace will be the subject we'll take up next time. So this is the end of your favorite subject called Your Cross. So thank you for listening.