

Your Cross – Part 3

Remember, we started in the Kingdom of God, the sub-series called Your Cross. The previous two sessions, we laid a foundation to come to grips it. During that time, just to mention briefly, we looked at the reminder to ourselves that we're engaged in a spiritual battle that is fought through us as earthen vessels. The combatants are Jesus and Satan because ultimately, for New Testament Christians, every single thing in existence is summed up in either Christ or antichrist. That the battleground is in our mind, the battle is over what is truth; and that each thought is a meaningful skirmish in the global battle. We then looked at Revelation 12:11, overcoming the evil one. To remind ourselves that they overcame the evil one, Satan, by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony and they did not love their own lives even unto death. To receive the revelation that as New Testament Christians, we function in the habit of wanting all the blood, some of the Word, and none of the cross, meaning our own cross. But there's probably no better sentence or phrase in Scripture about deny self and take up your cross than the last part of that three parts of overcoming—that is not loving your own life even unto death. Because when you love your own life above giving God the glory and giving God the pleasure, then you cannot access the things of God; that is to say the abundant life, and your testimony here about Him will be false because you'll continue to present yourself as a representative of Him, an epistle that does not tell a true story of Him.

So beginning today, we're going to begin to look at the mechanism of how the battle is played out in our minds according to how God views the reality. We need to be settled over these foundational things; because if you are not settled over these foundational truths, you will never regard the skirmish of your next thought as meaningful in the global battle. You simply need to be settled about how you define truth; because if you don't define truth as what God is and how God views something else, you will continue to search for truth using your own intellect, your own rationale, in order to discern what truth is on your own. So truth is not your opinion about what God says; truth is what God is and how He views reality which is expressed in His Word. It's what He says, not what you think about what He says. So we need to review certain principles that we covered long ago in order to begin to lay the foundation for understanding the mechanism of your cross.

We always have to begin everything with Genesis 1:1 because if you don't take your next thought and take it back to the root of Genesis 1:1, it will likely end up to be a misguided thought, word or deed. In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth. Remember, we received the summary revelation out of that one verse these two things about God that separate Him from everything else in all of existence. God is the only self determined thing and the only uncreated thing in all of existence. Self determined means that His meaning and value come intrinsically from within Himself. The meaning and value of God is not dependent on anything else and it's not set by anything else. But our meaning and our value are set by God, not set by ourselves. The meaning and value of everything other than God is set by God Himself. So these two truths that flow out of Genesis 1:1 are what began to awaken in us the revelation of the Holiness of God, how other than God is. To whom would you compare Me? And we learned just from Genesis 1:1 in these two corollary revelations that flow out of Genesis 1:1 that we don't compare this God with anything. This God is God all by Himself and not described or limited by some rational frame of reference by which we try to approach Him. That's why truth

is how God views reality and not how we view reality; because He is so other than, how can we presume to ever define or determine what truth is except it be revealed to us by this Holy God of Genesis 1:1?

Then we began to look at the origin of choice. God is. God is love. Love is relational. Relational is choice. If one choice is God, then every other choice is simply ungod or ungodly in our present Christian terminology. We view life as full of complicated choices. But every choice we face in life is simply the same choice over and over. We get to choose between God and ungod with every choice. If we understand that, then we will understand the origin of choice based on how God views reality. We are simply given choice that the relationship with Him may be of love and not of mechanical robotic slavery. So the fact that we are given choice flows out of the fact that God is love. That's to remind ourselves of what love is. Remember we went through the sequential revelations that beginning we think of love as more or less synonymous with caring and then caring that requires some effort on our part. And then service to others—sacrificial service, in fact, to others, service that costs us something; but finally receive what I still consider to be the best definition of love—that is love being a passion for oneness. God absolutely loves us. He has a passion to be one with us. He has a passion that no part of ourselves remain outside of Himself. That includes your next thought. He wants that thought to be consistent with Himself so He can be one with you rather than to have a wall between you related to your sequence of thoughts.

Properly understood then, we are given choice to express love, to reciprocate the love that God has lavished upon us. So every choice we face in life between God and ungod is simply one more God-given opportunity to say I love you too. So the sequence is, simply stated, God is love, God loves us, He loved to create us and created us to love us, He has a passion to be one with us. When we receive that revelation, we begin to then know the love that God has for us. We love, in fact, remember, because He first loved us. No human being can speak of love except he know the love that God has for him, else he's just operating out of his own definition and understanding of what love is. And we know love by this that He delivered Himself up for us. So then when we begin to reciprocate and respond to the love of God, we have a passion to be one with God; and when we have that passion that means that everything that is in us that is not consistent with God has got to go; because everything within us that is not consistent with God is what is precluding oneness with God and that frustrates, if you will, the desire of God to be one with us and frustrates our access to the abundant life and His Kingdom. That means that everything in us that is not consistent with the character, the nature, the will, the plan, and the purposes of God simply needs to go. That means that each thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of God simply needs to go. It needs to be captured and say, look Father what I've found in Your holy temple; because do you not know that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit? Do you think holy and unholy can fulfill their passion for oneness with each other? No! They're two different things. So if God is to stay to be one with Him, then that which is ungod has got to go.

Next poster. So we begin to look at Who God is to remind ourselves; so this poster is to bring us to come to grips once again with, what are you, really? So let's begin by looking at spirit. The Bible tells us that we are eternal immaterial beings. We are spirit—that's who you really are. The Bible tells us that God is Spirit and we're created in the image of God; so we are created as

eternal spirit creatures. Now the Bible tells us that God being Spirit means that no man has seen God. Spirit cannot be seen by the natural eyes, because God is omnipresent, if we could see Him with our natural eyes, we would always see God because He's everywhere. Spirit can do something in its sovereignty to project itself into the natural realm to give evidence that Spirit is in fact there. God, remember, in leading the children of Israel out of Egypt would commonly give a cloud of smoke. God wasn't the smoke; the smoke was evidence that the presence of God was there. God is Spirit and Spirit is invisible to the physical eye. So those who saw the smoke did not see God, but they saw the God-given evidence that God was expressing His presence there. So anytime Scripture says that people saw God, it is always a protected glimpse to give a manifestation of God projected into the physical realm. Moses, of course, is the best example of that where it says show me your Glory and God says no man can see My face and live; but I'll give you a protected glimpse, let you see in symbolic terms My hindquarters while I protect you from seeing Me in full because if you see Me in full, I'm a consuming fire, and you will die in My presence. And that's the way God always reveals Himself to human beings, with a protected glimpse.

Now the same thing in a way is true of our spirits. They are invisible in the physical realm. Our spirits dwell in these houses of flesh that we call bodies. So the body can be thought of as the cloud of smoke to give evidence that our spirit is here. This relates to what we call a living body, or a body that is not dead, or that someone is alive. Now we're told in James 2:26 that when the spirit departs the body dies. The body ceases to function in the physical realm and is then called dead; but it's dead in the physical because the bodily functions cease, but it really died because the spirit departed and that spirit won't depart one millisecond before God calls it home. That's why some people linger on at the edge of death and doctors can't understand, how are they still living? It's because God is not ready to call that spirit home and when He's ready to do so, and that spirit departs, then and not before then, that body will die. Now our bodies, of course, are visible to the eyes of other bodies; but as children of God we are taught that we don't recognize them after their bodies because they're not their bodies. They dwell inside their bodies; their bodies are simply what we see. That's why Paul, in part at least, would write in II Corinthians 5:16 – Therefore, from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh. We don't recognize men according to how they appear physically, according to their intellect, according to their station in the affairs of men here on planet Earth. We recognize them as eternal spirit creatures, created in the image of God with whom God has a passion to be one; and that's regardless of their station in life, regardless of their finances, regardless of their personality, and regardless of their physical appeal.

Now a body here on Earth, of course, is physical, visible in the physical and obeys physical laws, unless spirit intervenes in some way to override the usual functioning of physical laws. Now we call that a miracle. But when you're a sovereign God, you have no need of a word such as miracle. Remember miracle is a word useful only to humans beings, to physical creatures. God would say, no that's just My sovereignty hidden and now My sovereignty is manifest. But it's not a miracle because a miracle is something that occurs contrary to your understanding and expectations. So to God Who's sovereign, how can there ever be a miracle? Miracle is a word useful only to men. Recall that spirit created the natural; thus, the natural is subservient to that which created it—that is to say the spiritual. The natural did not create the spiritual. So spiritual is never subservient to the physical, to the natural. The body we understand, in a scientific sense,

is made up of subatomic material, atoms, and molecules; then that stuff on an atomic level is organized into various organs that function like heart, lung, liver, and kidneys, and brain. But that body, no matter how elaborate, is not us. The body, at least while alive, simply reveals in the natural realm, in a visible way that the eternal spirit is inside. That's all that a living body really means. We are inside what people see and call us—that is to say our bodies. That's why Scripture never uses the term body to equal you; Scripture calls our bodies our tents, our houses, and so on because they're simply a dwelling in which we live. Now that body that I've been describing, of course, is not to be confused with the glorified body that we will receive after our resurrection. That glorified body will not be bound by physical laws; it will not deteriorate, the second law of thermodynamics which calls for everything to undergo a grinding down or winding down, if you will, will be repealed in the context of our glorified bodies. That body will live forever and not degrade.

So we've spoken of God, we've spoken of spirit, we've spoken of body; now let's look at the term soul. The soul is eternal like the spirit. The soul is not visible in the physical just like the spirit is not. The soul is not who we are as New Testament Christians. We are spirit. The best way of summarizing that is by the common phrase, I am spirit, I have a soul, and I live in a body. You are spirit, your spirit has a soul, both your spirit and your soul live in your body. Your soul tends to be described in functional terms. It describes the functions of mind, emotion, and will. It is self evident that mind, emotion, and will cannot be seen in the natural realm. But they can be projected into the natural realm and they do so through the body. That's why the body is called the harp of the soul. The body is the tent in which you dwell and the body is the instrument on which you play your music. We can't see the emotion of sadness; but we see the droopy face of someone who is sad. We can hear with the physical ears when someone expresses by the vocal cords I feel sad. But we can't see the emotion of sadness; we see the physical expression as it's played out through the body which is the harp of the soul. Likewise we can't see mind. When the mind speaks, though, by writing its thoughts, we can then see. So when I have a thought in my mind, I can pick up the pen and express it, my body becomes the harp of the soul through the agency of the body. So we can hear when the mind speaks through the activation of the vocal cords. We can surmise to a degree what someone is thinking by observing their actions. Now all of that review is just to reestablish a somewhat common understanding as we come to the final component of that which is the will—one of the functions of the soul.

And the will can be thought of as simply our organ of choice, if you want to think of that. The function of the will is simply to choose. To understand what we choose from, need to make one more point. The soul receives input into its mind and its emotions from three different sources really: two external to itself. The five senses of the body feed sensory input that plays into the mind and thus, comes into the soul from the natural realm: sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch. So sensory input from the external natural realm comes through the body and into the soul. The soul in a New Testament Christian can also receive input from the spirit. And the will sits in between the two choosing at every moment what to focus its attention on—that is to say input from the natural realm or input from the spirit realm. The will is the mind-setter; it is the component of the soul which focuses attention and we're told in Hebrews 2:1 – pay attention lest you drift. Set your mind on the things of the Spirit. So the will is our chooser. It performs the

function of choosing at the interface between soul and spirit and chooses one or the other to function in every second of your wakeful life.

So your will is your chooser; but actually, I think we need to talk about it in other terms; because it is also your mind-setter, it is also your worshipper, and it's also the expresser of your love. It expresses what you have faith in. It reveals your priorities. It reveals your preferences. You shall know them by their fruits and the fruits flow out of what the will chooses. You will choose that which you fear, that which you hold in awe and reverence, that which you hallow. You will choose that which you love, that which you have a passion to be one with. You will choose that which you truly have faith in. So the will is the chooser; but it also is the revealer of yourself, not to God because God knows your heart before you choose. But it's the revealer of yourself to yourself and to others about what you truly have faith in, what you truly love, what you truly hold in awe and reverence, what you truly hold in the highest priority, and what you truly have as the highest preference. So the will is your chooser, but it's also all of those other things as expressions of being your chooser. So at this point, hopefully, we've dusted off our memories of the origin of choice, the makeup of body-soul-spirit, the function of the soul and the critical function of the soul called the will which relates to choosing.

So as we go forward, let's remind ourselves all along the way that choice is that the relationship may be of love and the choices are God and ungod with every choice—the same choice over and over. So don't be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Jesus; because every thought you have is either Christ or antichrist. It's the same choice, just expressed in different terms. Now we like to think in modern man that we get to do all the choosing. We think that because we do get to choose (but that's all that we get to choose), we get to choose. When you look at the other aspects of choice, we get to choose, but we don't get to not choose. Because when you don't choose, you choose; because you have a default position. And not choosing doesn't not choose; not choose, chooses and it chooses the default position and the default position is your flesh. It's that which is habituated to operate in certain ways over decades of human experience. There's none who does good, no not one. There's none who seeks God, no not one. So the default position of the human being is to choose ungod with every choice. So when you think you're not choosing, you are choosing ungod. We don't get to choose what the choices are. The choices are dictated by God Who is the only self determined thing in all of existence and the only uncreated thing in all of existence; and He so arranged it that the choices are always God and ungod. You do not get to choose the consequences of each choice. There is a law called sowing and reaping. You sow God, you'll reap more of God. You sow ungod, you'll reap more of ungod. You also don't get to choose both; because every thought that you have is choosing one or the other and you can't choose both simultaneously because God and ungod are exclusive. So it is true; you get to choose. But you do not get to not choose. You do not get to choose the choices. You do not get to choose the consequences of the choices. And you do not get to choose both.

So now let's look at the term flesh. Flesh can, of course, can be used in a physical sense to mean our bodies. Flesh can also be used to mean in a spiritual sense. It can be used to mean that in a spiritual sense which is ungod, anything that is not like Jesus for us as modern day Christians. The flesh in a spiritual sense in the unsaved, of course, can apply to both soul and spirit. In fact, that's why many people will use those terms synonymously; because the spirit is separated from

God, thus, dead to God, thus, to whatever degree your spirit functions in the unsaved condition, it will be anti-god. So it doesn't matter if you make a distinction really between soul and spirit in the unsaved person because it's all ungod, nothing of God. So the soul in the unsaved is flesh because none of the mind is renewed in the things of God. It is anti-God because there's nothing good in me that is in my flesh. It is hostile to God. Flesh in a spiritual sense in the saved person, I'm using today to mean the unrenewed portion of our minds. I do that because of Ephesians 4:24 where we're told to put on the new self; put on the new creation which has been created in righteousness, holiness, and truth in the image of God. But even though our new creation self has been created, our spirits, in the image of God, filled with the Holy Spirit, our minds are only renewed to the things of God to a slight degree when we first get saved. The portion of our minds, when we have been saved, but have not had time to renew the minds or have chosen through laziness not to renew our minds, that portion can be said to be flesh. Because it is ungod; it still thinks thoughts that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and thus, it is ungod. That is residual spiritual flesh and is made up of the thoughts that we have yet to capture in obedience to Christ by choosing Christ rather than antichrist.

Next poster. This is simply another diagrammatic way of representing some of these things. Here we see body, soul, spirit, and God all represented again. The body of course is feeding sensory input into the soul; but the body is also the harp of the soul. The body is the effector organ, if you want to call it that by which the soul, the will operating through the mind and so on uses the body to express its decisions. The body as we know it here on Earth, of course, is natural, temporal, time-limited, it is appointed to man once to die; the body is physical flesh. The soul is made up of the functions of mind, emotions, and will. It is eternal and immaterial. The spirit is who I am—at the core, that's who I am. I am spirit, I have a soul; I, my spirit and my soul live in a temporal body. Now notice in the natural, unsaved condition, body, soul and spirit are all represented as dark. The spirit is dark because in the unsaved condition it is dead to the things of God, separate from God, it doesn't contain God, and is not able to seek God and find God and become one with God on its own. So the spirit to whatever degree it functions, when it's separate from God, it will be ungod and thus, can be said to be spiritual flesh. The soul is dark because it receives nothing from the spirit and that which is not, since God is life, and God is light, if you're getting nothing from God, you're getting no life and no light; so the spirit is dead; thus it can feed only deadness, if it feeds at all, into the soul. Thus the soul in the unsaved condition is ungod, totally and can be said to be totally fleshly. The will of the unsaved soul gets to choose because God gave every man choice including the unsaved. But in reality, in the unsaved condition, every choice available is ungod.

So every choice available to the will at that point is death which in a spiritual sense means separation from God. A person cannot save himself, in other words. So the unsaved person has a will; but life is not one of the choices available to the will of the unsaved person. So because of common usage, I do use the term free will, but I use it to mean that God gave every man choice. But the term is not really adequate because the will cannot really be called free when every choice available is death—separate from God. So that will which is free to choose from an abundance of choices, but when every choice is death, it is not really free. Because every choice available is separate from the life of God, dead to the things of God, in bondage to self, thus in bondage to sin, thus in bondage to Satan, thus destined for Hell, unless by divine act the Father draws and the Spirit bears witness, and Jesus in no wise casts you out, you see. So the work of

God is required for a person to pass from unsaved into the saved condition. So today we've reminded ourselves of basic concepts. And where I'm heading next week when we come together is to really get into the mechanism of deny self, take up your cross and follow Me. But if we don't grasp these basic concepts of how God views reality, we will not walk in the power of the mechanism to implement it, to truly deny self, take up our cross and follow Jesus, which is how we access the abundant life. So when we look at ourselves and wonder why don't more Christians access the abundant life, simply put, it's because we do not deny self, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. That's what He said to do. When we don't do it, He says if you love Me, you will obey me. So when we don't do that, we don't obey, that means we don't love, that means we don't know His love, and that's why I keep hammering at the basics. That's why I keep laying the foundation; because when we know the love of God and we respond to the love of God, we will turn and He will become the object of our gaze. He will become the object of our pursuit. He will become the choice which we operate in. Everything else in life will look less attractive by comparison, momentary light affliction compared to the eternal weight of glory and so on. The reason we don't access isn't because we need to reach six more commentaries, it's because we aren't living in the life of these simple, basic truths that God has told us are keys to the Kingdom of Heaven and they are how He views the reality of New Testament Christian experience.

So my time is up and I thank you for yours.