

Your Cross – Part 4

Well we went through the Holiness of God to understand the Sin of Man, to understand the Judgment of God, to understand the Cross of Christ, to come into the kingdom through the doorway of salvation, to learn to walk by faith, to come to the position of Abiding in Him; and from that position of abiding in Him, we fulfill Our Cross. So we're in the segment now called Your Cross; the first part was the foundation of your cross and the second part we hope to finish today and that's the mechanism of your cross. We finished last time by looking at this particular poster in the unsaved condition—the natural unsaved condition whereby all of man is in darkness. Our body is corrupted, our soul, mind, emotion, and will is totally functioning in the things of Satan, not the things of God and my spirit is dead to God, separate from God having no relationship with God. So we'll pick it up on the next line today, the saved, but immature condition.

If you look at the second line, saved and immature, compared to the first line, natural and unsaved, you'll notice certain critical differences. The spirit is now light instead of dark. That's because I am now born of the spirit of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God and the light of my spirit is now representative of the truth of God and of the life of God—what's called in the Bible eternal life. This represents the stage of being saved, redeemed, born again, regenerated. The truth and life of God now fill my spirit and from that moment on my spirit will never improve. My spirit is filled with God; thus, it is a new creation. My identity is now who I am in the spirit realm. So I now have a new nature. My new nature has been created in the image of God and I now partake of the new nature. My spirit fulfills at that point, I Corinthians 2:16 where it says we have the mind of Christ. But the mind of Christ is in my spirit where the Spirit of Christ dwells. One way of using terminology about old nature, new nature is to now describe the old nature as dead. That's true if you define old nature as being your spirit self. At this stage it doesn't mean that your spirit self has ceased to exist; it means that the separation from God has disappeared. So my old nature, if called my spirit, dead to God, was existent and functional but dead to the things of God. But now when I'm born again, saved, my spirit has come alive to God. So one way of saying it is the deadness is now dead. Thus, the old creation in that sense could be called dead; because my old nature is dead since it is now filled with God. We are told by Scripture then consider it dead. Function as if it's dead; behave as if it's dead; live as if it's dead. Notice that only a portion of my soul, using soul to mean mind, emotion, and will is now depicted as white. That's because only a portion of my mind has now been renewed to the thoughts of God. Because when you're born again, saved, you know almost nothing about God, except that Jesus Christ paid the price for your sins. And from that point on to your faith add knowledge. The body I show also in this condition as part white. The body, itself, is still corrupted and still destined to die. But I show it as part white, because remember, the body is the harp of the soul. Since a part of the mind in the soul has now been renewed to the things of God, then it plays the harp to now have the body fulfill certain things that are godly such as reading the Bible, attending church, communion with other Christians and so on. But the residual darkness in the body represents the residual ungodly things that are commanded by the portion of my mind which in large part is still unrenewed.

But for the first time at that stage, my will now can be called free. That's because my will after salvation now has a choice between God and ungod rather than only choosing between various

aspects of ungod; because when the spirit was dead to God and the mind knew nothing of God, every choice available to man was all ungod. That is to say dark on my diagram. But the battle in the mind has now shifted. The prior battle in the unsaved condition was between various versions of ungod. Now the commonality of all the choices available to man at that point was to maintain the delusion that life apart from God has meaning and that I can self determine what I ought to be and how I ought to become it. It also worked to suppress the internal conviction of God in every man of the conscience, the external conviction of God to every man by the witness of the created order. It suppressed the Word of God however it was received and suppressed the witness of Christians as you continued as a lifestyle in the unsaved condition to suppress the truth in unrighteousness as we're told in Romans 1:18. But after salvation, the battle is now really engaged because it has shifted. After salvation, the battle is now between God and ungod in florid terms. The flow of the truth of God is now available in the spirit to flow into the mind. But to do that requires an act of the will. The will must set the mind on the things of the spirit to allow that to occur. If the will does not set the mind on the things of the spirit, then it will default to the flesh which is what you were living in before you got saved.

So in my choice of terminology, which is not the only choice of terminology, I say it the following way. In my mind, we're not at this stage after salvation battling the old nature; the old nature is dead. What we're battling is the residuals of the old nature left over in our minds and emotions. These are the ruts, the habits, the previous ways of thinking, the thoughts, the memories, the emotions, the experiences, the hot buttons, the frames of reference, and so on left over from decades potentially of functioning totally apart from God. The natural model I would use for that is an abusive father. An abusive father can die; but the children are still left to deal with all the scars left over from that abusive father. He's dead; but the memories and experiences and emotions are still left to be dealt with by the children. The abusive father of our old nature is dead. But we still battle the after affects of that old nature left behind in our minds and our emotions. We have some housecleaning to do—some serious housecleaning to do. And that's why we're told to be transformed by the renewing of our minds; because we now draw from the spirit realm from the truth revealed by the Word of God which is how God views reality and we now can choose to walk by how God views reality as opposed to all the scars and memories and experiences and hot buttons left over from my old experience. That's why Paul could write in Romans 7:17, 20 when he would say in his struggle, I still sin, yet not I. Paul has shifted now because his "I" is not sin; his "I" is the new creation which according to Ephesians 4:24 has been created in righteousness, holiness, and truth in the image of God. That's the "I" that Paul now identifies with; so I sin, yet not I, because I'm now a different "I;" because I am spirit and my spirit is perfectly pure, perfectly righteous, perfectly holy, perfectly truth, in the image of God, filled with the Holy Spirit of God. And what sins is the body of sin left within me, which in my frame of reference and terminology, is the unrenewed mind with all these scars left over.

Now look at the saved and mature condition. The spirit has not changed when you compare immature and mature Christian. That's because the spirit was perfected at the moment of salvation according to Ephesians 4:24. What has changed when the mature state is compared to the immature state is that more and more of the mind has been renewed; thus more of the soul on my diagram has been portrayed as white. Also more of the body on my diagram is portrayed as white. Not because the body is now incorruptible, the body will still decay and still destined for

the grave because it is appointed unto men once to die; but is now largely white because it's progressively doing more and more godly things under the control of the renewed mind in the soul as the soul plays its music and tells the body what to do rather than simply responding to the impulses coming in from the body. John 6:63 (Jesus says) – the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life; and we are renewing our minds with the Word of God. The Word of God is living and active and powerful. The Word of God is living, it is life, and it is spirit. So when we're renewing our minds according to the Word of God, we are progressively in that sense being filled with the spirit and worshipping God in spirit and in truth every time we capture an ungodly thought to the obedience of Christ and how He views reality as revealed in His Word.

So the saved, but immature state fulfills Luke 18:17 – Truly I say to you whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it all. So all of us, when we enter the kingdom, we enter like a child. A child has a great capacity for faith and for dependency. That's largely lost as adults get older and progressively more cynical. We are to remain child-like in our relationship with God based on faith and dependency. But we press on toward the mark in other arenas. The saved and mature state would fulfill I Corinthians 13:11 – When I became a man, I put away childish things. The childish things are all self centered. They are what is put away. Becoming a man, a mighty oak of righteousness in the Kingdom of God means deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me as Jesus told us in Matthew 16:24. Now remember, we began this series with Genesis 1:1: In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth. And remember all spiritual progress is rooted in living out of that verse. It can never be ignored; because even in this context when we ask out of Genesis 1:1, which is bigger? God or self? Well, the obvious answer is God. Self didn't create this universe; it's His. To serve God, to follow Jesus, is nothing more than to serve a purpose bigger than yourself; thus denying self is nothing more than serving the greater by letting go of the lesser. No right minded person would worship and serve the lesser rather than the greater, Who is the creator God of Genesis 1:1. Would he? Certainly no Christian, would they?

To summarize some of these points, we're going to come at it in a different way on a different poster. What I call the anatomy of a Christian on Earth, using again, spirit, soul, and body. I am spirit. I have a soul, I live in a body. My spirit is my nature. My soul is mind, emotion, and will and my body is the physical aspect of myself which not only brings input into the body, but is the harp on which the soul plays its music. According to time, my spirit is eternal, my soul is eternal, my body is temporal, destined to die and be put in the grave. The input into my spirit is from God based on how He views reality operating through faith. The input into my soul comes from both directions in my condition as a Christian. It comes through my body through the five senses, and it comes through my spirit into my soul. The destiny of my spirit is oneness with God which occurs when we are saved; because that spirit is now created in the image of God—that's a done deal. The destiny of my soul as a Christian on Earth is renewal by being transformed by the renewing of my mind according to the Word of God. And the destiny of my body is death, to go into the grave, to come out again, of course, at the Rapture. So why have I gone to some trouble in order to review some things that we covered earlier? It's because in discussing the mechanism of your cross, you need to dust off these truths as we press toward the mark of the mechanism of deny self, take up your cross, and follow Me.

Now on this next poster, I'm looking at choice and we're going to look at it in four categories: The origin, the purpose, the mechanism, and the destiny. The origin of choice, remember, is rooted in the love of God. God is love, love is relational, relational is choice. If one choice is God, every other choice is ungod or ungodly in our present terminology. The purpose of being given choice is to choose God, to express love to God, to reciprocate the love relationship with God, to express a passion to be one with God as He has expressed a passion to be one with us, to worship God. What's the mechanism? The mechanism is to choose God at every moment, capture every thought in obedience to Christ, to abide in Him by doing so; and when you abide in Him, you then begin to know the pleasures of God. Psalm 16:11 is a frequently quoted verse it says – Thou will make known to me the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand are pleasures forever. Now the first part of that verse seldom gets quoted – Thou will make known to me the path of life. The last part frequently gets quoted. But the path of life is to understand the following in the context of what I am saying. Having choice alone, even having it is evidence of God's love. Then to understand that after that, all that He wants you to do is to choose Him. Then you enter the second part when you develop a habit of choosing Him as opposed to choosing things opposed to Him, you come into the position of abiding in Him and that's when you experience the joy of communion with Him and that's when you experience in your presence is fullness of joy, at Your right hand are pleasures forever. Because the mechanism is to consistently choose God rather than ungod. That's nothing more than drawing near to God and according to James 4:8, when we draw near to Him, He draws near to us. That's to abide in Him and to experience His joy and pleasures. And then you learn that His joy and His pleasures exceed the joy and pleasures derived from anything in this natural world. And that's when you begin to progress to your calling of the abundant life as a New Testament Christian. But it will only occur, only be accessed, if you progress to the pattern of consistently choosing God rather than ungod.

That's why we have to view the battle as a lifestyle, not an event, not an occasional event separated by large periods of neutral times. The battle is a lifestyle in your thought life that never ceases. So the origin, in the love of God, the purpose, to choose God, the mechanism, to develop a habit of choosing God, and then the destiny. The destiny is the following. It's to die to choice which is to die to self. That's deny self to the extreme. We relinquish choice by choice. We exercise choice to quit choosing. Why? Because we have reached the purpose of choice which is God; we fulfill the purpose of God of choice which is to come to God. Since we've reached the goal of choice—namely God, then we have no need of further choice; because making any other choice will only take us from our goal since we're already at our goal. That's to die to self; because self is an ungodly choice that can only take you from God, never to God. That's what Paul meant in Galatians 6:14 – I have died to the world. Because when you give up choice, by choice, because you're at the purpose of choice which is to choose God, you've died to any other choice.

So here's the progression of dying to self. We're given choice that it may be of love and not mechanical robotic slavery. We are to use choice to choose God. We fulfill that by consistently choosing God; thus, coming to abide in Him. Then we reach our destiny which is God, oneness with God and that's perfected when we do the following. So listen to this sequence. It's perfected when, by choice, we die to choice by relinquishing choice; because we're at the purpose of choice; thus, we have no need of choice because we've come to God and exercising

any other choice of ungod will take us from God rather than to God. That's when you're abiding in Him fully. That's when you are into oneness with God insofar as it can be obtained in your state as a Christian on planet Earth. Once abiding in Jesus, any other choice can only take you from Him, not to Him. And when you fulfill that, then you begin to fulfill (at least in a preliminary state) I John 3:2 – We shall be like Him because we shall see Him as He is. Because you can never see Him as He is when you're living in self. Because He's not in self because self is hostile to God, anti-Christ, anti-God in every way and there's nothing good in me that is in my flesh and my flesh is rooted in self. So the more that we choose Him, we draw nearer to Him, He draws near to us, we begin to abide in Him, we begin to see Him as He is, in His presence is fullness of joy, we lose our appetite progressively for any other choice because the pleasure of any other choice is less than the pleasure that I'm experiencing in communion with my God. And then that experiencing the joy of the Lord in that position of abiding in Him becomes your strength. And that's when He empowers you to continue the process to deny self, take up your cross, and follow Him.

So when I talk about dying to choice, it's nothing more than the fulfillment of these Scriptures. It's to put our hands to the plow and quit looking back. You cannot follow Jesus while looking back at self and what you're giving up any more than you can drive a car while looking backwards. Your gaze is to be directed to where you're going and you're going to Jesus, into full communion with Jesus, into oneness with Jesus, and giving up anything that would preclude the effect of all those things. In other words, in simple terminology from the Old Testament, the Israelites could not go into the Promised Land until they quit looking back at Egypt. And that's the model. We can't go into the promised land of the abundant life as New Testament Christians exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit while we're looking back at Egypt which is the pleasures of the flesh. Living in self, operating in the flesh according to the system in this world, doing the work of Satan all the while claiming to want oneness with God, you see. So we need to take up the plow with both hands and quit looking back. As Paul would say, the things that I used to count as gain are now loss; not just loss, rubbish, not just rubbish, dung compared to the fulfillment of my destiny of coming into oneness with Christ.

Next poster. If all of that sounds too theologic, I'm going to introduce a natural model—what I call the marriage model to make the point in a concrete way. When we begin to relate to the opposite sex, and we're totally unattached at least in theory, we have unlimited choice. When we begin dating, we have eliminated most choices. When we begin courting which is the term we use in the South for serious dating with an eye toward marriage, we have tentatively eliminated all other choices. When we marry, we have now vowed to eliminate all other choices. But at that point, apart from God, we are dependent on the flesh's ability to keep the vow which is dependent on our will power. But when we get saved and when we begin to understand matrimony based on how God views reality, we begin to know the following. I'm told in Scripture to die for my wife. Husbands love your wives and die for her as Christ died for the church. And that I that dies is my self nature that would make any other choice other than my wife. I learned that loyalty to my spouse brings pleasure to God. I learned that my loyalty to God can never exceed my loyalty to my wife. How can you say you love God Whom you've not seen if you don't love your brother whom you have seen? How can you claim loyalty to God Whom you haven't seen when you don't have loyalty to your wife whom you have seen? Loyalty to my wife, in fact, is a major part of the revelation of the degree of my loyalty to God.

That begins to bring me pleasure as I understand these things and experience the pleasure of God in my marriage and in my loyalty. So my desire for any other choice withers and dies. So, by choice, I give up choice because I've reached the destiny of marital choice which is holy matrimony. Exercising continued choice can only take me from the destiny of choice which is holy matrimony. So at that point when I understand these things, I do not have affairs, not by my will power, but being in His will, accessing His power because I know His pleasure in my loyalty to my wife. I know His joy in me as a born again Christian, I know His joy in my marriage, and I know His joy in my loyalty in my marriage. That's the joy of the Lord which gives me strength to resist all temptation in my marriage.

So faithfulness in marriage is not dependent on me, it's not because of my marriage. It's because of knowing the pleasure of God in my marriage and in my loyalty in that marriage. And only then do you truly die to all other choices. So by choice, you give up choice because you've come to the purpose of choice which is holy matrimony. And any other choice will take you from that, you see. So that's a concrete model in earthly terms to help us understand what I'm describing about choice functioning in a New Testament Christian. Because now my pleasure in God exceeds any displeasure in my wife; and my pleasure in God exceeds any contemplated pleasure in relating to any woman other than my wife. Then I have died to choice.

Next Poster. So, is denying self to the point of dying to self masochistic? I used to argue with Susan before I got saved and tell her that Christians were the most masochistic people I've ever seen; they seem to enjoy inflicting pain on themselves. And then after getting saved, I got the simple revelation of the following. Masochism is the willful seeking of pain because of feeling unworthy of pleasure. Ah-hah! But taking up your cross, self crucifixion is quite different. It's the willful acceptance of pain because of devotion to a greater pleasure—namely glorifying your God. You glorify God by experiencing His pleasure in you; and thus, you have joy in Him. And you enter the crescendo of delight with your God. That's when the joy of the Lord becomes your strength. Any pain involved in the process is transcended by the joy of the Lord, the pleasure of God. That's why Paul could view the pain as momentary light affliction, as he stated in II Corinthians 4:17. It's momentary light affliction when compared with the eternal weight of glory which we gain. And that's when he could rejoice always; because that eternal weight of glory is Jesus Christ Himself, the Son of God.

In Hebrews 1:3 Jesus is described as the radiance of the glory of God. So the pleasure in Jesus Christ exceeds any pain involved in following Christ, you see. So long as we think that the pleasure in what we're relinquishing exceeds our pleasures in God, we will never deny self, take up our cross, and follow Jesus.

So Jesus Himself, remember is our creator, our Savior, and our model. He is the way, the truth, and the life. So does any of this pertain to Jesus? Well, Jesus did die on the cross. But in reality, Jesus did not wait until the cross to begin denying self, taking up His cross, and following the Father. Recall that He began His ministry with 40 days in the wilderness when He was in a famished condition. But even in that weakened state, He resisted all temptation to do anything contrary to the will, the purposes, and the plan of the Father. Jesus had already died to all other choices, even when He began His ministry, you see. He had taken up His cross and followed the Father. He only did what He saw the Father do. He didn't want any other choice other than

what the Father willed for Him. He had denied self to the point of dying to self, by crucifying self, by making no provision for the lusts of the flesh, even years before His physical crucifixion. His death to self was then revealed with finality to us by the test of the cross which is the test beyond which there is no test.

Next poster. So I ask you, was Jesus happy at the cross? No. Remember happiness and joy, as I use the terms, are two different things. The basis of happiness is the cocoon of carnality where we assess everything based on cost, comfort, convenience, and control. The basis of joy is communion with God. Fullness of joy is the basis of oneness with God and we will experience that in full in eternity; but we're to progressively move toward that while we're here on Earth as saved Christians. Happiness is sensitive to circumstances and the mood of happiness will last as long as the circumstances remain unchanged. Ah, but joy, since it's based on communion with God, is resistant to circumstances. And fullness of joy is circumstance independent; because when we're in Heaven experiencing the fullness of joy, of oneness with God, we are independent of circumstances. In regard to time, happiness is time limited because circumstances are time limited. Joy is sustained because it's circumstance resistant. And time in regard to fullness of joy, when we're in oneness with God is eternal in the sense of eternity future. So was Jesus happy at the cross? I say, no. Happiness is circumstance dependent and the circumstances were dreadful. So what was His emotion then? Hebrews 12:2 – For the joy which was before Him, He endured the cross. Because joy was independent of circumstances, joy was based on communion with God, and communion with the Father was unhindered right up to the point of being forsaken by the Father which was an obligatory progression to complete the cross. So what was the source of His joy? The same as ours is to be—communion with the Father; abiding in the Father; knowing the pleasures of God; fulfilling His purpose for being here. So what were the pleasures of the Father at the cross? Seeing His Son live out, having died to all other choices except to do the will of the Father, just as my wife takes pleasure in my dying to all other choices except my holy matrimony with her. That's the fulfillment of love. That's the fulfillment of the passion for oneness, in full display under hostile conditions and not just in theory. The pleasure of the Father seeing His Son love so much that the Son, remember, would say, I do this by choice. No one takes Me and makes Me go to the cross. I died to any other choice other than the will of the Father because I love My Father that much and I love you that much; because I'd rather endure the horror of the cross, go through Hell for you, than to spend eternity without you. That's the joy that was before Him, to know that each one of us would spend eternity with Him based on what He was accomplishing on that cross. Happy? No. Joy? That was before Him and He pressed on toward it. You see, that's love. That's personal. That's our destiny. And when you see those things played out in the life of Jesus in the heart of the Father, is when you begin to see the truth of dying to self.

So we do not die to self just to feel pain. We die to self to continue redeeming the world; and thus, bringing pleasure to the heart of God. We do not redeem the world by our death. We are granted the privilege of participating in their redemption by being earthen vessels and living epistles as we become living sacrifices and joyfully so in order to bring the Redeemer to others by displaying His love, His passion for oneness with him, His character to them, regardless of any pain involved in the process, and denying self because self is hostile to all the will, the plan, and the purposes of God. We do that by ceasing grumbling, by accepting suffering, by counting it as joy as we joyfully point to the source of our joy which is Jesus regardless of circumstances.

Acts 17:28 – For in Him we live and move and have our being. You see when you're abiding in Christ, moving in Jesus, nothing else moves you. That's why Paul could say in Acts 20:24 – These things do not move me because I move in Christ. I've died to any other choice. So nothing else can move me because I am in my destiny, in my purpose, glorifying God, giving pleasure to God, experiencing His pleasure in me and participating in redeeming the world in the process. What calling is there that could bring more pleasure than that to a human being? So we deny self, take up our cross, and follow Him for the joy that is before us just like Jesus, for the servant is not above his master. You see all Heaven rejoices when each of us was saved. All Heaven also rejoices as we deny self, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. They rejoice as they see the Kingdom of God played out on planet Earth. As we release the Spirit of Christ within us onto our fellow human beings rather than releasing our self nature onto other human beings. Knowing all these things based on how God views reality is the mechanism of your cross; because the joy of the Lord is your strength to do so and except you know joy in fulfilling the purposes and plan of God, you will not do so; because you too are given the privilege of saying, I would rather go through whatever hell is involved in the process rather than spend eternity without you, just like Jesus. For the servant is not above his master. And I do so only when I have entered the joy of my master, as we're told in Matthew 25:21 and we only do that when we know that we're given choice that it may be of love. The purpose of being given choice is to choose Him, to come into oneness with Him. The mechanism is to develop a lifestyle of choosing Him rather than defaulting to the flesh and the destiny of that is to by choice, give up choice; because we have no need of choice; because we're at the purpose of choice which is to come into oneness with Jesus. And therein is the mechanism of denying self, taking up your cross, and following Him.

So the next time that we come together, we'll go to the next step which is the purposes of your cross and we'll explore those in greater detail. So thank you for listening.