

## Your Cross – Part 5

Welcome to Your Cross, Part V, June 13, 2007. After coming into the kingdom we began to address the subtopic of Your Cross. Remember, we looked at the foundation of Your Cross to remind ourselves that we're engaged in a spiritual battle. There is a battle in the unseen world. That battle is between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. That battle is an ongoing one; it involves us as earthen vessels. The battle is fought in us as earthen vessels in the mind. Each thought that we have is a skirmish in the universal battle; and the battle is fought over what is truth. Then we moved on to look at the mechanism of Your Cross where we looked at choice, why God gave us will to make a choice and gave us the two options of being God determined or self determined—God and ungod as I phrase it. And the mechanism of your cross is to end up dying to choice. So we're given choice that the relationship may be of love. All that God asks us to do from that point on is to choose Him. And we're to choose Him over any other option, but every other option ends up being self determination. And over paying attention to that process, we grow, mature in making more and more choices to be God determined as opposed to self determined. To bring us to the destiny of choice which is to, by choice, give up choice; because we've come to the purpose of choice which is to choose God and for us as Christians to abide in Jesus. Remember, we used holy matrimony as the model, that when we come into holy matrimony we die to any other choice by choice; because we've come to the purpose of choice which is to bring God maximum glory and pleasure by the state that He has brought about called holy matrimony.

Today we're going to move on into the different subtopic called "the purposes of your cross." We ended last time with this poster. Recall that I used to (in my unsaved condition until age 50) argue with Susan as she would try to witness to me and I'd tell her that Christians were the most masochistic people I had ever seen or known. Then after getting saved in short order, I received this intuitive revelation that brought me to a keener understanding of the difference between how the world views suffering as opposed to how the Christians view suffering. Masochism is the willful seeking of pain because of feeling unworthy of pleasure. But self crucifixion (denying self and taking up your cross) is the willful acceptance of pain because of devotion to a greater pleasure—namely glorifying God.

So we'll pick it up today with this poster and spend the rest of the time today, addressing it. There are four levels to this, what I call tribulation revelation, and we'll look at them one-by-one. First of all, suffering reveals me to me. We seldom have an accurate image of ourselves. Commonly we regard ourselves as better than we really are in an untested condition. We have secret sins that need to be exposed. They need to be exposed to us. There are, in fact, two types of secret sins. The first is the sins within me that I am aware of, but which I purposely camouflage from others. These sins also need to be exposed. Every relationship that is based on false premises and false pretext cannot be of love. When information is intentionally concealed, then the relationship cannot be of love because we're told in I Corinthians 13:6 that love rejoices with the truth. We're also told in that same chapter that whatever—whatever does not include love and conclude with love amounts to nothing. Now it will amount to nothing because it is not based on God, for God is love. That's why transparency becomes an important issue in the Kingdom of God. Because where sins are kept consciously hidden, love is by definition limited because the person camouflaging is not rejoicing with the truth which is what love calls for.

Also, the person who keeps sin secret will live in a certain constant subliminal fear of exposure. I John 4:18 tells us that the one who fears is not perfected in love. So this is one dimension of understanding that. The person who has sins purposely hidden will live in constant fear of exposure, cannot be functioning in love because love casts out fear. And one way of casting out fear is to have secret sins revealed. You may remember the story of Crocodile Dundee in the movie when his girlfriend was telling him about all her friends needed shrinks (psychiatric help). And he listened to her but then turned and said well in Walk-about Creek, we don't have such things. She said, what do you mean? He said, well, when we have a problem in Walk-about Creek, we tell Wally; Wally tells everybody else and then there's no problem. So the problem with secret sin is keeping it hidden; because fulfillment in the Kingdom of God and growing into the image of Christ can only come about by growing in love and love only occurs when you have no secret sins—at least the fullness of love.

The second type of secret sin is that which is hidden even from the person who has it. That's what we call in modern day terminology our blind spot. Now the blind spot can usually be seen by others; so the only person that it's hidden from is the person who has it. That explains why accountability can be an important issue in the Kingdom of God. But we, as a general rule, are not good at being accountable. The way that we tend to view it is even revealed somewhat by our terminology. The terminology we use is holding someone accountable. The term holding implies an external constraint on someone. But accountability, in truth, never requires holding. True accountability is a condition of the inner man that by willful choice positions himself in the company and counsel of others and requests them to speak into his life about his ignorance and about his blind spot. True accountability that I'm describing here is a rare phenomenon. The reason is that when someone tends to speak into our blind spots, we tend to view it through our prism of pride and the usual response is to view it as an effort to control or simply an exhibition of self righteousness on the part of the person expressing knowledge of our blind spot; and thus, they are rejecting it. But true accountability is self imposed and is simply one aspect of humility. True accountability also obviously requires a passion for the truth. No one can have a passion for the truth while clinging voluntarily to blind spots and asking or seeking no one to speak truth into the blind spot. But wherever there is true humility and wherever there is a passion for the truth, there will be self imposed true accountability; but viewed in the reverse where there is no true accountability, there is not humility and there is not a fully developed passion for the truth. Wherever someone has to be held to accountability, there is not true accountability.

So if we generally conceal secret sins and generally avoid true accountability, well what happens next? Well one possibility, at least in the rational analysis, is that God will wash His hands of you. But we know that's not true because God is love, love is a passion for oneness; God has an absolute passion to be one with us and will never leave us nor forsake us. So the second possibility is our sovereign God, in love, will either cause or allow circumstances to unfold that deal with whatever issues are precluding oneness. Now one good example in the Bible of God causing circumstances to unfold in order to deal with someone's pride and resistance is the story of Jonah. Jonah 1:17 – And the Lord appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah 2:10 – Then the Lord commanded the fish and it vomited Jonah up onto dry land. Peter is a good example of God allowing circumstances to unfold that reveal his secret sins. The first episode, we know well and that is the walking on water. Peter got out of the boat, which did take faith. He did so because Jesus said it is I and then said, come. But Peter gave himself more credit for

more faith in his untested condition while he was in the boat than he truly had. Matthew 14:30 describing Peter – But seeing the wind he became afraid and began to sink. He did have faith in Jesus or he wouldn't have gotten out of the boat. But he also had faith in a lot of other things. He had faith in the wind, faith in the waves, faith in the water, faith in gravity to sink, and faith in his need for oxygen above water. Now his faith ultimately, in all those things, were greater than his faith in Jesus. But except for the wind and except for the waves, Peter would have wrongly concluded that his walk in faith in Jesus was perfect. That, in fact, his faith in Jesus was much greater than it actually was. But it turns out his faith in Jesus was less than his faith in natural laws. Thus Peter was revealed to himself only by the circumstances which God allowed. So it revealed Peter to himself.

A similar example was permitted later. Peter had not yet learned the lesson of the wind and the waves; and you may have heard it said that God will keep giving us the same test until we end up passing the test. This relates to his denial of Jesus. Matthew 26:31 – Then Jesus basically said to the disciples you will all fall away because of Me tonight. And remember this is the same Jesus that Peter earlier described in Matthew 16:16 – Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. So the Christ, the anointed One, the Messiah said you will all fall away tonight. So what did Peter say? Matthew 26:33 – Even though all may fall away because of you, I will never fall away. So Peter's confidence, you can see, was in himself, not in Jesus. Well, how do we know? Because he contradicted Jesus. If his faith was in Jesus as the Son of God, he would never have contradicted Him. So Peter's secret sin was pride. He gave himself too much credit for his ability to remain strong no matter what. In pride he considered himself to be stronger than all others. And he considered his strength to be unbreakable—that is to be stronger than all possible adversarial circumstances. So what happened? Well circumstances were allowed for Peter to see himself. It didn't take suffering, only the hint of potential suffering was sufficient. Matthew 26:70-74 – surely you are one of them, the disciples of Jesus. And Peter's reply: I do not know the man and then cursed in order to reinforce the point that he didn't know the man. So Peter had an image of himself that he would never deny Jesus even though all others did. But look at the minute test that it took to reveal that his faith was in himself not in Jesus. Only the hint that he might have known Jesus, called up in him fear of the possible negative outcome and he immediately denied—denied to the fullest and denied to the degree of profanity to make the point. So I dare say suffering (even the hint of suffering) revealed Peter to himself.

So suffering (or even the threat of suffering) will, in fact, reveal me to me. Recall the story of the dirty sponge because it makes a beautiful spiritual point. The dirty sponge contains much filth within it. But the filth cannot be seen from the outside. So how is it revealed? By squeezing; and we are like the dirty sponges. God does love us and we're fond of recalling that and it is true and bless the Lord that it's true. But He doesn't love only us; He also loves righteousness. He loves righteousness as much as He loves us. That's why Jesus never sinned; He had such a passion to remain one with righteousness doing only the will of the Father that He never did anything contrary to that. So when we are squeezed by circumstances, and filth is expressed, it's so that we can see it. It's to reveal the filth to us. God is omniscient and knows the degree of filth that's there before the squeezing takes place. Like when Peter gave his statement that I will never deny You, Jesus' reply was that you'll deny Me three times before the cock crows. So He knew. We're the ones who do not know the residual uncleanliness within us.

And we would never know except for being squeezed; because no sponge has ever sought to squeeze itself and no sponge has ever sought to be squeezed.

Now when we're squeezed, we can have several possible interpretations and I'll go through these. And just before the Lord, see if you might have any of these possible responses. We can take the squeezing as clear cut evidence that God does not love us. We can take the squeezing as clear cut evidence that God has forsaken us. But when we think that way, what we're doing is saying that my thoughts are higher than the thoughts of God because He said He is love, He does love us, sent His Son to die for us and will never leave us nor forsake us; so when we take adversarial circumstances and conclude that God does not love me, what we're saying is my thoughts are higher than the thoughts of God. When we say that He has deserted us, we're saying that our thoughts are higher than the thoughts of God. We can blame the existence of the filth on the squeezing as if the squeezing caused the filth, created it, as opposed to revealing it. If it hadn't been for those circumstances, I wouldn't have demonstrated that ungodly thing; in fact, I wouldn't have had that ungodly thing. We can compare the degree of the filth with others and take some comfort that our filth seems less than their filth. We can complain that we know many others who need the squeezing more than we need it and take offense at God for selecting the wrong person to squeeze. We can hope that others get squeezed so as to take the heat off others observing our filth from being squeezed. Like the politician who has his moral failure in the headlines, he's almost grateful when an earthquake occurs; because the earthquake takes the public eye off of exposure of his immoral sin. We can take pride in how we endure the squeezing and ignore the filth that was revealed. We can try to tell others that what looks like filth to them is not really filth. Somehow they're misinterpreting it and if they got squeezed they would understand. We can blame the filth on past experiences. If that just hadn't happened to me in my past, this filth would not be here to be expressed and visualized. Thus, we excuse ourselves from dealing with it. We can see the filth, receive the conviction, and run from God in condemnation. But to do that we continue to position ourselves as the judge of God; because we say that the weight of my sin, which has now been exposed, exceeds the weight of the blood of Christ on the cross. That is to say when I run in self condemnation, I'm insisting on calling unclean what God has called clean by the blood of Jesus. That is to say I can judge the value of my sin compared to the value of the blood of Jesus better than God can.

Or, we can take up our cross and that means accept the pain, count it as joy, see the filth, receive the conviction, confess our sins, and run to the throne of grace in repentance, receive the forgiveness which has already been purchased, grow in the knowledge of the grace of God which is much bigger than we ever knew because we were thinking we had X amount of sin and it took X + 1 amount of grace. But now we see that we had 10 X amount of sin, so it takes at least 10 X + 1 amount of grace; because where sin abounds, grace even more abounds. So when you receive the increasing revelation of the secret sin that has now been exposed, your revelation of the grace of God and the value of the blood of Jesus grows, then your understanding of the heart of God toward you grows, and then you grow in the joy of the Lord. The outcome of accepting it in that light is you will end up growing in the revelation of the love of God, the grace of God, the power of the blood of Jesus, and, in fact, the joy of the Lord.

So we're to pray as David prayed in Psalms 19:12 – Reveal to me my secret sins. A simple anecdote to make the point: Years ago I bought an acreage; I knew nothing of country life and

when I started trying to walk the acreage, it turns out it was almost impassible because of these wild rose bushes that were growing called multiflora rose bushes. They had been brought in, I'm told, in the 1940's in WWII to serve as fence rows to keep the cattle in and not require metal because all the metal was needed for the war effort. But what people didn't know is they spread like crazy. So instead of a fence row, you end up with a field of multiflora rose bushes. And oh, I hoofed it with a backpack spraying those rose bushes. And my spirits were down, my head was down, and my shoulders were down. But every time I would turn a corner, there'd be another field of green looking at me. And finally I received the spiritual lesson and the spiritual lesson is this. Huh...I'm not glad that you're there; but you are there. And now that I know you're there I can begin to deal with you. And that's how we are to view our secret sins when they are revealed. We don't rejoice that they're there, but they are there and we rejoice with the truth because that's what love does. We rejoice that since they are there, we now know that they're there and now we can deal with them. Doing so brings us closer into oneness with God. That brings pleasure to God and pleasure to us. And as we enter that crescendo of delight with God as we receive the increasing ever-expanding revelation of His grace, so much bigger than we ever knew, then we grow in the joy of the Lord. And understanding that is in part why James would write in James 1:2 – consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter different trials. James is simply doing what God does calling the things which are not, but which will be as we're told in Romans 4:17. What James is doing is calling the things which are not yet, but which will be, as though they already were. Because when you encounter trials, even when you receive the revelation of secret sins, you take it to the throne of grace, receive the forgiveness, grow in the knowledge of the grace of God and it ends up increasing your joy in the Lord.

So how is this process of perfection accomplished? We always look at Jesus anytime we want to know something. Matthew 10:24 – the servant is not above his master. John 14:6 – I am the way. So what was His way? Hebrews 2:10 – For it was fitting for God to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. So what do we do? Well, what our master said for us to do. Matthew 16:24 – Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. So this is the first component of tribulation revelation—revealing ourselves to ourselves. So part of becoming like Jesus is to see what part of you is not like Jesus. You may have heard the story that I first heard of in the Max Lacado book years ago of the sculptor who had many sculptures, but one was a massive lion. So the little boy viewed it and was just amazed at it, so he said tell me how you do that. And the sculptor said son, there's nothing to it. You just take a big block of stone and chip away everything that's not a lion. And in a way that's what suffering can do for us. It can expose everything that is not a lion. Because Ephesians 4:24 – our new creation has been made in the image of God. And suffering will expose everything in us that is not the lion of our new creation self.

Secondly, it reveals Christ to me; because whatever suffering that we're called to bear in this life, it pales in comparison to the suffering of Jesus Christ. We reviewed that in great depth and great detail when we were at the cross of Christ. We can never reach the level or even approximate His suffering because we are not paying the price for sins in our suffering. Yet each level, however small it may be (level of suffering that we endure), will take us to a slightly deeper revelation of His suffering that He endured. Philippians 3:10 – that I may know the fellowship of His sufferings. Because one way of growing in the knowledge of the suffering of Christ, however small the growth in revelation is, you will receive a greater revelation of the suffering

that He endured. A life based on tranquil, external circumstances will bring a type of comfort. But it will bring little knowledge of God as comforter and little knowledge of the suffering of Jesus. When squeezed, we recall that He endured our Hell for us voluntarily; because no one took His life; He laid it down. Why? Out of love for us. That deepens our revelation of His love and love produces the fruit of joy; thus, even in suffering we can grow in the joy of the Lord. We do so because our joy is proportional to our revelation of Jesus.

And the second stage of tribulation revelation reveals Christ to us, increases our revelation of Him; thus, increases our joy. So our revelation of His suffering voluntarily for us increases our revelation of His love which increases our joy. Now fullness of joy comes when we understand His suffering, not only in the physical realm, but in the spiritual realm and that comes when we understand the cry of Jesus on the cross: My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? We covered that at the cross of Christ. Then we must understand why he said it. The One Who had always been one with the Father now is forsaken by the Father and why did He say it? Remember? So that we never have to say it. We never have to be forsaken by God because He said it first. He endured the outer darkness of no communion with the Father in His state of forsakenness while enduring the full wrath of the Father as He paid the price for all sins of the whole world for all time. That's Hell. And our suffering can never compare to that. But if you don't have some suffering in your life, you will have a diminished revelation of the suffering that He endured for you voluntarily.

So why do we suffer? What are the purposes? Today, we covered the revelation that comes out of suffering. It reveals me to me in a way that I could not know otherwise and it reveals Christ to me in regard to a slightly greater understanding of His suffering. And both of those can result in a greater joy in the Lord which becomes your strength as you go forward even into these next two stages. And we'll cover the next two next time. It will reveal, not only Christ to me, but it will reveal Christ in me, to me, and it will reveal Christ in me to them. And we'll pick that up next time. And time is up for today.