

Your Cross – Part 7

Welcome to Your Cross, part VII, July 11, 2007. Remember we came into the Kingdom of God through the doorway of salvation. We looked at faith, the fuel of the spirit realm because without faith, it is impossible to please God. We used our faith to come into a position of abiding in Him; at least enough that it allows us to begin to address, accept, understand and in some ways revel in our cross. We looked at the foundation of our cross that there is a battle; there is no neutral moment in that battle. We looked at the mechanism of Your Cross, which is by choice, to give up choice because you've come to the purpose of choice which is to choose Jesus to come to Him and abide in Him from that moment on. We looked at the purposes of Your Cross. We used two key posters to begin to address that—that is to say tribulation/revelation. The revelation which comes to us through our cross which likely would not come without our cross—that is it reveals me to me in a clearer sense, reveals what Christ did for me on the cross in a clearer sense, reveals Christ in me to me as I endure far more of a cross than I ever thought I humanly could by looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. And it reveals Christ in me to them as others around us see us, not just tolerate our cross, but walk in our cross, exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit bringing glory to Jesus Christ and are provoked then to say, would you explain to me the reason for the hope that is within you? And we, in a simple way, looked at the purposes of Jesus Christ to understand at least in some fashion the purposes of our cross. Luke 19:10 – I came to seek and to save that which was lost. I John 3:8 – He came to destroy the works of the devil. John 10:10 – I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly to usher in the abundant life.

So now we're going to begin to transition by following through with this poster and move into the real topic for today which is begin to look at Your Cross choices. So let's begin by looking at how these purposes relate to each other. The first purpose to seek and to save that which was lost obviously refers to the unbeliever. The work of the devil in that regard, of course, is to prevent the unbeliever from believing. Thus when Jesus seeks and saves that which was lost to fulfill purpose number one on the chart, He simultaneously destroys the work of the devil in that arena which is to keep the unbeliever from believing. Thus He fulfills in some part, purpose number two as He fulfills purpose number one. The third purpose to usher in the abundant life, of course, refers to the person who is already a believer. So as believers, we are now in the Kingdom of God positionally; but in the Kingdom, we may or may not function in the abundant life. So the work of the devil in that regard is to prevent us from accessing the abundant life. Now when the purpose of Jesus to usher in the abundant life is fulfilled in a believer to fulfill purpose number three, then He simultaneously destroys the work of the devil in that regard which is to prevent the believer from accessing the abundant life. Thus when Jesus fulfills purpose number three, He's simultaneously fulfilling purpose number two. Also when the abundant life is ushered in to the believer to fulfill purpose number three, it becomes our strongest testimony to the unbeliever to fulfill purpose number one. Thus, these three purposes of Jesus are wonderful examples of all things in the spirit realm of how we can distinguish, but not separate these various fundamental spiritual principles.

So how does Satan work to prohibit the fulfillment of the purposes of Jesus? John 10:10 says it all – The thief comes only to steal and kill and to destroy. I came that they might have life and they might have it abundantly. So the part of that sentence, I came that they might have life,

refers to the unbeliever becoming a believer—that is to say, to seek and to save that which was lost...and that they might have it more abundantly. That, of course, refers to the believer accessing the abundant life, to usher in the abundant life to the believer. The purposes of Satan are to steal, kill, and destroy anything that would lead the unbeliever to believe and the believer to access the abundant life. So all three of these purposes are succinctly summarized in that one verse, John 10:10.

Well, how does this relate to Your Cross? Well, in one aspect (remember God either permits or causes all things); so in one aspect, Your Cross is simply Satan at work trying to steal, kill and destroy anything that would cause an unbeliever to see you and thus believe. And to destroy anything that would cause a believer to actually live the abundant life. Now this epic battle, remember, is fought in your mind. Remember the battle—there is a battle. The battle is in the spirit realm. The battle is between the kingdom of darkness and the Kingdom of light—the kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God. The battle is fought through you as an earthen vessel. The battle is fought in your mind. The battle in your mind is fought over your next thought and the battle over your next thought is over the question what is truth? There is never one single neutral millisecond in this battle and there is not one millimeter of neutral ground in this battle. Remember the analogy of the football field. There is an imaginary line of scrimmage separating the two teams. There is no vast neutral ground in between. So whatever ground on the football field is not defended by the one team is immediately occupied by the other team. So the line of scrimmage may shift; but the two teams are in adjacent proximity to each other with no neutral ground. We prefer to think of the battle as an occasional event with vast amounts of neutral ground in between. We prefer to think of our thought life as occasional godly thoughts and a vast number of fleshly thoughts that we regard as neutral ground. But this epic battle over what is truth is fought over each thought in your mind with no neutral ground. And whatever ground you're not occupying, and aggressively so, capturing every thought to the obedience of Christ, is ground that is forfeited to the function of the enemy in the kingdom of darkness.

So what is truth as you're in the midst of Your Cross? Your Cross is always requiring your answer to questions in regard to John 10:10. Which is greater and which will you place more faith in? The power of God to give life, the power of God to resurrect that which was dead unto life, or the power of Satan to kill? Which is greater? The power of God to create or the power of Satan to destroy? Which is greater? The power of God to give or the power of Satan to steal? So John 10:10 is a reflection of this constant spiritual battle between the two kingdoms with no neutral ground and no neutral time. So God's power, of course, for those who understand the Biblical revelation of God is always greater. But remember we have a role to play in the process. That concept as we go forward in the Kingdom of God is what I'm going to begin to address today and will continue over the next session or two after this. The body of Christ most commonly fails to walk in the revelation about Your Cross choices; and thus, fulfills II Timothy 3:5. That's why we have a form of godliness while denying its power. The concept of the choices offered on Your Cross is well known to every Christian, but undervalued and underappreciated. It's the key to your Christian walk after salvation. It's the key to Philippians 2:12 – working out your salvation. It's the key to fulfill II Corinthians 5:7 – And walk by faith, not by sight. It's the key to abiding in Him as we're told in John 15:4. It's the key to understanding Your Cross that we're told to take up in Matthew 16:24. That's why the title that I'm moving into now is “Your Cross Choices.”

Let's begin with the next poster by looking at how choice relates in a global sense. Remember when I spoke on the mechanism of Your Cross, at that point I focused on an understanding of the role of your will in making choices. At that point I began with the more general theologic terms of God or ungod. Because if God is going to give us choice that it may be of love and one choice is Him, every other choice has to be un-Him or ungod, something other than Him—that is to say ungodly. And that flows out of the fact that God is love and He wants the relationship with us to function in love and He gives us, therefore, choice that we may reject Him so the relationship can be of love reciprocated and not of mechanical robotic slavery. Thus in a simple, basic understanding of the origin of choice in the Kingdom of God, it relates to the fact that it's either God or ungod that it may be of love. Now it was important to understand that foundational theologic principle because from that moment on, once you grasp that, every single choice that is faced by human beings thereafter is simply addressed in more specific terms, focusing on certain groups of people at certain times in God's dispensations. If you move on to look at the first human beings, Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:16-17 – For in the day that you eat this forbidden fruit, you shall surely die. In other words, the choice of God is don't eat. If you don't eat—that is if you choose God rather than ungod, you'll continue to live in paradise; you'll remain innocent before Me, your Holy God; there'll be no sin in your life; there will be no conscience that will convict you and bring shame; and your physical body will not die. So you have clearly chosen life by choosing God as depicted. But if you choose to eat, that is violate the command of God—that is be self determined rather than God determined, you have chosen ungod and you have therefore chosen death. You will eventually physically die; but soon thereafter, you make this choice, you will be cast out of the paradise that I've provided for you; you will have guilt in your life and shame in your life; and from that moment on the rest of the human beings' existence will be to try to invent their own coverings to prevent their shame before a Holy God. So, it's God or ungod; but with Adam and Eve it was phrased as eat or don't eat.

Now after that we move on into the old covenant of law and here God was predominantly relating to the Jews and relating by the law. Deuteronomy 28:1-2 – Now it shall be if you will diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the Earth; and all of these blessing shall come upon you and overtake you if you will obey the Lord your God. Deuteronomy 28:15 – But it shall come about if you will not obey the Lord your God to observe all the commandments and statutes with which I charge you today that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. So here we see the choices of God. God and ungod labeled more specifically as obey the law or disobey at least some part of the law. Then God goes further in His Word to tell them the consequences of the choice. Because, remember we get to choose. But we don't get to choose not to choose and we don't get to choose what the choices are and we don't get to choose the consequences of the choices. God lays all that out before us. The only thing we get to do is choose. But other than that, it is God ordained. Deuteronomy 30:15 – See (in other words He wants to call attention to this), see I have set before you today life and prosperity and death and adversity. He's phrased the choices of God and ungod more specifically as obey or disobey. Now the result of choosing God, namely obeying, is life and prosperity. The result of choosing ungod, namely disobeying God, will be death and curses. Deuteronomy 30:19 (He emphasizes in that sense again about life and death) – I call Heaven and

Earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; so choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendents. Thus choosing God meant obeying God which meant you access life. And life, of course, there means life with God, in communion with God, accessing God; and secondarily, the blessings that flow out of such an unfettered relationship with your God. Choosing ungod meant disobeying God to obtain death. Death here means life apart from God with diminished communion with God, rejecting God, walking in self determination rather than being God determined and obtaining the curses which are the consequences of rejecting such a relationship with your Holy God, including storing up wrath from the judgment of God.

Well now let's go on to the next phase. Remember, there's always two choices: God and ungod; it's just they're defined more specifically to different groups at different times. So in regard to the unbeliever in the New Testament (and here we're reliving at least part of our history because there was a time we were all children of wrath); so with the New Testament unbeliever, the choice of God or ungod is rephrased specifically as addressing the person of Jesus Christ—different dispensation. Hebrews 1:1-2 – God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers and the prophets and in many portions in many ways; in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, Whom He appointed heir of all things and through Whom He also made the world. We all know John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should have eternal life. So to the New Testament unbeliever, choosing God means choosing Jesus. It's to accept the salvation offered by Jesus Christ and thus obtaining eternal life. In eternal life, remember, it doesn't just relate to time and doesn't just mean eternal existence, even unbelievers are eternal spirits who live for all time in the future. Eternal life also means a life of eternal communion with God in Heaven. It means the life of God, with God, and eternally so. But to the New Testament unbeliever, who insists in remaining in that status, choosing ungod means rejecting Christ. By doing so, eternal death is the consequence. Death does not mean ceasing to exist. It means living eternally while separated from communion with God and enduring the wrath of God. That is eternal death in the spirit realm; that is what we call Hell. So the life and death consequences of accepting or rejecting Jesus is summarized very simply by the Word of God in I John 5:12. And I say simply because the choice of accept or reject Jesus is stated in only monosyllables. And how can God make it clearer to us than stating the two choices in simple terms and doing it with monosyllables? So when we complain about the complexity of the Bible, read I John 5:12 – He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

So heretofore, we've discussed the theologic origin of choice; we've discussed the historical to bring us to this point as believers. But before we go into what that choice is, I want to make one more point. We tend to regard the things of God as complex. Well God is complex. He's transcendent; He's Holy. But He takes His complexity and presents it to man in the simplest possible terms. He presents it to man in the simplest possible terms so that man can't miss Him based on the issue of complexity. So how simply does God present Himself to man? He does so at the simplest level, that still allows love. Having only one option or one choice is an oxymoron. An oxymoron, remember, is a self contradictory idea. So if you have only one choice, you don't have choice, that's an oxymoron—it's self contradictory. Because having only one option, one choice, is never choice; to have a true choice, you have to have at least the two options so you can reject the one and choose the other. So the phrase or concept: one choice is

really self contradictory; it is not choice at all. So what does God do? He wants the relationship to be of love. So He always gives us at least two options—two choices and only two. Now He does that in order that we may have true choice so the relationship can be of love and not of slavery. The irreducible number of available choices in order to have true choice is always two. Giving us one choice is not choice; giving us at least two allows it to be of love; giving us more than two choices adds complexity. And when more complexity occurs, the point may be missed because of the added complexity. So God is love. So God always gives man two choices that it may be of love and never more than two choices so that we don't miss it based on unnecessary complexity. That's a reflection of how much God loves you. So when people say the Bible is too complicated, we need to understand that God has taken the complex and made it simple. And part of our walk as Christians is to follow the pathway of God in making the complex simple and then apply the simple to have it become transforming, you see.

So now let's move on to the choice of God or ungod as it relates to us as believers. The New Testament saint believer is always given (surprise!) two choices. The two choices are labeled as flesh and spirit. If we choose spirit, the life that we access by that is the abundant life. The abundant life is the one where the fruit of the Holy Spirit is flowing in unhindered fashion. But if we choose flesh, we have chosen death. Now that doesn't mean you lose your salvation. You are saved; you have the indwelling Holy Spirit given as a seal of promise for the all eternity future; and so on. We are justified, declared righteous before God; we will spend eternity beginning in Heaven with God and then in the New Heaven and New Earth after the millennial kingdom. So we're not talking about choices made in our spirit; our spirit is one with God. Ephesians 4:24 – Put on the new creation which has been created in righteousness and true holiness in the image of God. That's who we are. Our spirit has the mind of Christ. Do you not know that the mind of Christ is within you? We have the omniscient Holy Spirit: The Spirit of truth. We have access to omniscience within our spirits and through our spirits. But what I'm talking about is the choice made in our mind.

Next poster. I will just speak to the term flesh. Remember, we do have physical flesh; that's what we can pinch and feel and so on, governed by the laws of physics. But in the spirit we still have flesh. Flesh is simply stated, whatever is ungod. So some think in the terms of the ungod part being the sin nature as distinct from the mind; some think in terms of that residual flesh being the unrenewed mind that resists in the Christian even after salvation. And we're to be transformed by the process of renewing the mind. So one way of saying it, when we're unsaved, all of ourselves in the spirit is flesh that is hostile to God; be it soul, meaning mind, emotion, and will and eternal spirit which we're created. Whereas that which is saved would include our spirit and that part of our mind which has been renewed. But that part, which remains unrenewed, will function in that which is hostile to God. And that is what is called flesh. In the saint, there are two choices, therefore. There is the unrenewed mind which is called flesh and the things of the spirit which come from God through the Holy Spirit which are called spirit. Now as saints, we tend to make common errors. The first is not to realize that this battle is ongoing over every thought—that is to say at every moment in our Christian walk; we are choosing flesh or spirit. The second is not to understand what is under the domain of flesh and spirit even when we choose it. We tend sometimes in a certain issue at a certain time to understand the contrast; but we tend to miss the global concept of flesh versus spirit.

So one thing we're going to do beginning today but certainly carry forward next time is to take a global view and then a microscopic view of the contrast between flesh and spirit. First of all, I don't think we should habitually fall into the pattern of phrasing them always as flesh and spirit. When we link them that way with the conjunction *and*, it is true; there are two things flesh and spirit. So, that's true. But it also subtly and subconsciously leads us to approach them as like two flavors of ice cream: chocolate and vanilla. But those two flavors of ice cream are two variants of essentially the same thing. But flesh and spirit are not two variants of the same thing. They're two things that are at war with each other. And that's why I like to at least occasionally remind myself that it's flesh versus spirit—not just flesh and spirit. And at every moment that war is going on over your next thought. And the only question then that you have to ask yourself is whether you know that or not and if you know it, what are you doing with it or not? If you do not know it, then you will tend to coast along most of the time on automatic pilot following the most established thought patterns which we call habits in your mind. The problem is that the most established thought patterns in your mind tend to be in the flesh. Now when you are not aware that there is a battle, then you, of course, cannot engage in the battle. And when you do not engage in the battle, you occupy the default position and the default position is the well worn ruts of the unrenewed mind which we call the flesh.

Now let's look at the result when we do that. Romans 8:7 – Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God. Now the word hostile is a strong word. But that's the word of God. It's strong because it's deservedly so. That's how God views reality. The flesh is hostile toward God because the flesh is 100% self centered and wants to be in control to the point of self worship, assessing everything through what I call the cocoon of carnality of cost, comfort, convenience, and control. So when you do not know there is a battle, you do not engage in the battle, you default to the default position and the default position is the cocoon of carnality called the flesh where in your own self centeredness, you're making every decision based on an analysis of cost, comfort, convenience, and control. Romans 8:8 – And those who are in the flesh cannot please God. So we know two things that cannot please God. Without faith it is impossible to please God and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. And remember Romans was written to Christians. It's always healthy to remind ourselves of that. As Christians we desire to please God. So we need to know if we are functioning in a realm where we not only do not please God; but function in a realm where we cannot please God.

So why can the flesh not please God? Well look at the rest of Romans 8:7 – For it (the flesh) does not subject itself to the law of God for it is not even able to do. So there is nothing in the flesh that can accomplish anything in the Kingdom of God. That's why Jesus said succinctly in John 6:63 – The flesh profits nothing. That's why we're to be careful not to ever mistake activity for productivity. Don't ever mistake Christian activity for Christian productivity; because you can 100% be doing Christian activity in the flesh and it is hostile to God, bringing glory to yourself, will profit nothing in the Kingdom, will put a knife in the chest of the abundant life, bear no fruit, produce dead works and so on. But we have a tendency to glory in the level of activity in our churches. That's why Paul wrote in Romans 7:18 (King James Version) – For I know that in me that is in my flesh (that's the word written by the Holy Spirit through the pen of Paul) that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. The only thing good in you is the Holy Spirit. The next thing good in you is the new creation which has been created in the image of God, and that portion of your mind which is renewed, leading to some element of transformation can be

called good. But anything other than that, there is nothing good in you. That's why Paul would go on to write in Romans 8:6 – For the mind set on the flesh is death. And he's writing that to Christians.

So let's make a distinction about the word death as a product of the flesh. The death referred to, of course, for an unbeliever in Jesus Christ if consistently maintained is eternal death which means the pits of Hell, the lake of fire, with no communion with God, while receiving the fullness of the wrath of God and eternally so with never a millisecond of comfort anywhere along the way. But the death referred to for a Christian who continues to live in the flesh is a different death. That death means dead works, dead abundant life, dead fruit of the Spirit, dead testimony. Every single thing that the Scripture speaks of as good available for the life of the Christian is killed by life in the flesh as a Christian. Hebrews 6:1 – Therefore leaving the elementary teachings about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of...what? What are the elementary things and what do we not want to have to continue to lay a foundation of? Not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God. In other words, the whole Kingdom of God runs on faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That's why Paul would preach nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That's why we bear witness of nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. You see? Faith toward God—that's how it's played out in the life of a Christian; anything that's not flowing out of faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified, is a dead work. These are elementary things that the author of Hebrews is quick to want us to move beyond, you see, to quit drinking the milk and get on eating the meat. But while most of us stay maintained, still needing instruction in repentance from dead works and a faith toward God, how can we move on to access the other more abundant things that He has available for us? So dead works are works done by a Christian, but done in the flesh; they are simply to be repented of because they earn nothing before a Holy God. They yield no fruit in the Kingdom. It's important to remind us that works are important to a Christian. Ephesians 2:10 – For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared before hand that we should walk in them. James 2:26 – Faith without works is dead faith. So which works are dead? Well those done in the flesh. Which works are good? Those that are flowing out of faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Now where is faith? Romans 10:10 – For with the heart men believe. It's not just a mind thing; it's flowing out of the inner immaterial man that we call the heart. So good works are, in fact, a sign of saving faith. They flow out of faith in Jesus Christ, who He is, what He is, what He has done, what He is doing, what He will do, including specifically all that was addressed and purchased and approached by Him crucified. Dead works are those that flow out of self in the flesh realm that is represented by our residual sin nature if you think in terms of that or our unrenewed mind if you think in terms of that.

So what happens to such dead works in a Christian? I Corinthians 3:13 – Each man's work will become evident for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. I Corinthians 3:15 – If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire. In other words, the fire really is of two types: Here on Earth and at the judgment seat of Christ. The fire here on Earth relates to events and circumstances that are part of Your Cross which will reveal the foundation on which you're building. Are you building on the rock solid foundation called Jesus Christ and Him crucified or are you building on some foundation of sinking sand which is anything other

than the foundation of Jesus Christ and Him crucified? And that other foundation ends up being the foundation of self centeredness, in the flesh realm, based on your own personality, your own charisma, your own natural giftings, your own manipulative skill, your own political skill, your own coping skill, your own intellect, your own charm, your own beauty, and so on, to your own glory rather than bringing glory to Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The fire at the judgment seat of Christ, I think of, as Matthew 12:36 – I say to you that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment. Well who's saying that? Jesus! The One that we call Savior is also our judge. John 5:22 – For not even the Father judges anyone; but He has given all judgment to the Son. So we will give an accounting even as Christians of every thought word and deed in the day of judgment at least according to the judge.

So dead works did not gain us entrance into the Kingdom of God. Once we're in the Kingdom, dead works that we insist on producing will be consumed by our cross as part of the loving discipline of Jesus to get rid of everything in the rock that's not a lion. Remember, you chip away everything that's not a lion in order to have the rock become a lion. We will never have Him say, well done good and faithful servant based on dead works done in the flesh to our own glory. That's because works done in the flesh glorifies self. And He tells us in Isaiah 48:11 – He will share His glory with no one. Nor should He because He's the only thing worthy of glory.

So capsulizing some of these concepts to finish: the mind set on the flesh cannot do the work of the Spirit. The work of the Spirit is to bear witness of Jesus. So the work of the flesh is anything done to bear witness of anything other than Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The mind set on the flesh cannot subject itself to the laws of God. The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God. The mind set on the flesh produces dead works. The mind set on the flesh cannot please God. That's why the flesh profits you nothing, nada, zero, null set, zippo, zilch, or anything else in the Kingdom of God that you want to use to apply to it. Because the mind set on the flesh brings glory to self and never to God. And we need to understand that we have these two choices. Two that it may be of love and only two so it's not complicated. So we can't miss it; because even as Christians, saved by faith in Jesus Christ, we can live the entirety of our Christian lives thereafter with our mind set on anything other than bringing glory to Jesus Christ and Him crucified. And in summary that is the printout on everything that is flesh. And that's why it profits you nothing and that's why it's hostile toward God. Hard to believe, isn't it? But that's simply how God views reality as revealed in His Word. So we'll pick it up and go forward next time and look at specific examples of the printout of how life in the Spirit compares with life in the flesh.

So thank you for listening.