

Your Cross – Part 8

Remember overall, we're in the global topic of Kingdom of God; we're in the subtopic of Your Cross; and under Your Cross we have several categories. We looked at the foundation of Your Cross to remind ourselves that we are engaged in a spiritual battle every moment of our lives. We looked at the mechanism of Your Cross which is using the marital model to die to all other choices because you've come to the purpose of choice which is to abide in Jesus. We looked at the purposes of Your Cross including specifically tribulation/revelation—that is to say revealing me to myself, Christ to myself, Christ in me to myself, and Christ in me to others who are witnessing how I am bearing my cross; to fulfill the purposes of Jesus, simply stated, to seek and to save that which was lost, to usher in the abundant life and thereby to destroy the works of the devil. Then last week we began to look at the choices presented to the Christian life, particularly under the duress of Your Cross and we looked at the next poster.

We used this to remind ourselves that God always gives us two choices and only two; two that it may be of love and no more than two to avoid complexity. In a theologic sense, the choice is always God or something other than God, hence the term, ungod. Adam—eat or don't eat. To the Old Testament, the children of Israel, it was obey the law or disobey the law. To the New Testament unbeliever, it's accept Jesus or reject Jesus. And to the New Testament saint, the choices are spirit and flesh. And each of these two choices presents the option that if you choose the ungod expression, you will end up with something dying; and if you choose the God choice out of the two presented, then you will end up, in some way, with life. So for the New Testament saint, in the Spirit, he experiences the abundant life; in the flesh, he experiences a form of death—that is to say dead works, dead testimony, death to the abundant life, death to the fruit of the Spirit, and so on. We ended last time by reminding ourselves of the following: That the mind set on the flesh cannot do the work of the Spirit, it cannot subject itself to the laws of God, the flesh is hostile toward God, it does dead works, it cannot please God, and the flesh profits you nothing; because the mind set on self, as the root of the flesh, brings glory to self and not glory to God.

Again, not wanting to get into any spiritual debate about what flesh is, we know the physical flesh (the body); in a spiritual sense, it's whatever is ungod, whatever varies from how God views reality. In the unsaved, it's every component of himself; so if you use soul and spirit as two separate entities, it involves the totality of himself; because the lost, there is no man who seeks God, no man who does good, and so on. In the spiritual sense of the saved person, it can be expressed as either the persistent sin nature in all its vitality, or simply the residuals left over from the sin nature which would now be considered dead under the second model. And that residual is the unrenewed mind with all of its hot buttons and emotional issues and memories and frames of reference, and so on—the point being that whatever is ungod is flesh. So, hopefully, we can see why it's imperative that the Christian understand the difference between flesh and spirit.

Recall there is a battle; the battle is between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Satan in the spirit realm, of course, is the ultimate antichrist. Because everything that Satan does is antichrist; because Satan's whole purpose is to steal, kill, and destroy anything that would fulfill the plan of God because Satan desires to be his own god. So if you're functioning in the

flesh, and the flesh is hostile to God, hence hostile to His Son, then the simple question needs to be asked. Whose work are you doing? Well the answer should be evident that if in the flesh, doing work that's hostile toward God, you're doing the work of Satan. Now that doesn't mean that as a Christian that you worship Satan (consciously and directly); but the practical implication is that you are doing his work indirectly and subconsciously because the work of the flesh is anti-God, hence antichrist. The flesh is antichrist because it does not regard Him as the foundation of decision making. It doesn't seek Him to see His face more clearly. It doesn't understand Him; it cannot serve Him; thus, cannot have any loyalty to Jesus Christ; thus, cannot in an obedient sense fulfill the purposes, and the plan, and the will of God. So understanding that is the ultimate reason that we need to understand flesh versus spirit in the Christian life. The flesh is in the world operating by the systems and frames of reference of the world, hence of the world. And in II Corinthians 4:4, we're told that Satan is the god of this world. So if we are in the world, functioning according to the system of the world, then we are accomplishing the work of the god of this world which is to oppose God and His plan. So as Paul would say, "may it never be that a Christian would be in that situation."

Now we all know the principle of the prism where light is shown through the prism to break the light up into its component wavelengths. So we'll use that same example now by going on to a contrast of flesh versus spirit. And what we're going to do is to shine flesh versus spirit through the prism, break it up into numerous subcategories, contrast the two, in order to keep hammering ourselves, if you will, of how different these two kingdoms are. On the left side of the poster, I've listed various frames of reference to use as the basis with which to make the contrast. The first one, of course, I have called the basis. The basis of interpretation, analysis, and decision making according to the flesh is self. Remember Adam and Eve. Adam and Eve were told that if you disobey God, eat the forbidden fruit, you can basically be your own god. And so the foundation of that decision by Adam, for instance, was to declare that I can listen to what God said, listen to some other option presented, and I can determine which will be to my best long term outcome, which will lead to my greatest fulfillment. So self looked at self and determined that self could determine this thing better than God could. And that is the basis of what we call the flesh.

Now according to the spirit, the basis for all interpretation, analysis, and decision making is God Himself—that is to be God determined. Now as Christians we know certain things about God. We know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. We know that the Father and Son are one in the Trinity of our one God in three persons. And we know that the Father has spoken to us in His Son in these latter days as the Father progresses to sum all things up in His Son according to Ephesians 1. So to a Christian, the basis of all interpretation, all analysis, all decision making is Jesus. That is simply to build our house on the rock. Anything in your life that you build on anything other than the rock is sinking sand and that sinking sand is simply ungod according to my basic theologic definition of the origin of choice. And we're told then in Revelation that everything is summed up in one of two categories. It's either Christ or antichrist. So the basis, the foundation, the rock on which we build in the spirit is the rock of Scripture which is Jesus Christ Himself. The basis of the flesh is technically anything which is opposed to Jesus Christ; but practically when whatever it's traced to its root, it's always man self determining that he can look at the witness of God given in many ways including specifically His Word, and that man

can determine that something other than Jesus Christ is what he should be serving and building his life on; hence, self making that determination.

The next category is truth. According to the flesh with self as the basis, truth is what I say that it is. And that's a function of the natural mind; the natural mind exploring all the variables and possibilities and self determining that I can determine what truth is. Where Scripture would tell us in Jeremiah 10:23 – It's not even in man to determine his own ways. But man looks at it and says oh yes it is; I can do this thing and I can look at what God has presented, look at what is presented in some other fashion and I can self determine which one is true and which one is false. But truth to a Christian, of course, is revealed to us by the Word of God, quickened by the Spirit of God; and the Spirit of God is called the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Truth bears witness of the One Who is the truth, because remember truth is what God is and how God views everything else. Well Jesus is God and He came to model and to teach us and to explain how God views everything else including how everything is summed up in Himself or a position self determined to be something other than Himself which means, of course, eternal condemnation. So Jesus is how God views reality. And the battle is fought over every thought in your mind over what is truth; and when that question is traced to its root, it is always down at the rootlet (if you will) of how does this relate to Jesus Christ, who He is, what He is, what He did, what He is doing, and what He will do as everything is summed up in Jesus which is how God views reality or summed up in something other than Jesus which is how someone else views the reality. But the basis of truth in the flesh is self stating what I say is truth; but the basis of truth in the spirit is whatever God is and how God views everything else—simply stated, what God says.

The next category is input. The input to the flesh is via the physical realm. Data from the physical realm is received into the natural mind; it's then stored, and is analyzed and compared with all previous material and data stored in that natural mind. And that's used to self determine how well or how poorly everything is going in life. But the input in the spirit realm...is from the unseen spirit realm because remember the fuel of the spirit realm is faith. That faith is in God and specifically in His Son, Jesus and it is from God in the sense that it is a gift from God so that no man can boast. So the spirit realm runs on faith. The flesh realm tends to run on the physical input from this natural world. Simply stated according to how God views reality, the flesh with self as the basis, walks by sight. But in the spirit realm, we walk by faith. And that's really all that I'm saying.

The next category is time. Now this is actually, of course, a subcategory of the physical realm since time is a measurement in the physical realm using physical means. It's oscillation of a tuning fork or oscillation of atoms, but there's something in the physical realm that is used to measure time. No physical realm...no time. That's one way to say that God transcends time because God is not limited by the physical realm. The physical realm could disappear, time could disappear, but God would remain. That is to say He is outside time, transcends time, not limited by time and so on. So in regard to time, that which is in the fleshly realm is called temporal. Since the flesh receives its input from the physical, then the flesh tends to relate to that which is temporal related to time. But the spirit operates in the eternal. The eternal is timeless. So the spirit is never ending. The spirit makes interpretations, analysis, and decision making based on that which is timeless—outside time. That is to say God Himself, and specifically, His Son Jesus Christ.

Next is the standard. In the flesh with self as the basis, self uses the standard of comparison with others. Thus, self is always gaining momentum in one direction or another. That is to increase in either pride or envy. If self is analyzing another and views that someone to be superior, then self is envious. If self is looking at someone else and sees that other person as inferior, then self grows in pride. But in the spirit realm, Jesus is the basis, and thus, the standard. Thus, in the spirit realm, we all fall woefully short of the standard. So whenever we have pride or whenever we have envy, we are operating in the flesh with self as the basis, not operating in the spirit realm with Jesus as the basis.

Next is merit. In the flesh self always believes that it deserves better than it's getting. And that is the root of all human grumbling because self always has something to grumble about because there's always something that's keeping it from being totally fulfilled according to its own assessment of what it should be receiving. But in the spirit realm, one says apart from Christ, I deserve Hell. So the question is always phrased what side of Hell am I on? If I'm on this side, meaning outside of Hell looking forward to Heaven, then at every moment of my life on planet Earth as a Christian, I'm receiving infinitely better than I deserve and thank God I don't get what I deserve. Thus, I never as a Christian in the spirit realm have anything to grumble about no matter what is happening in the natural realm.

The next is self image. Self in the flesh has the self image of pride. Pride is simply self looking at self and saying this is really all about me. But in the spirit, the self image is humility. Humility is simply the self image of one who looks at himself, looks at God, and says I am to be God determined, this is all about God, hence all about His Son since God the Father has said this is My beloved Son, listen to Him. He is the One that I'm summing everything up in. So pride is the self image of self in the flesh. Humility is the self image of self in the spirit realm.

Next is suffering. Self as the basis in the flesh expresses the self image of pride; thus, says I do not deserve to suffer at all and certainly not more than those that I'm observing. But in the spirit the self image of humility accepts suffering while remaining focused on the One that we're told to focus on—namely Jesus Christ, focused on Jesus rather than focused on the suffering; thus, glorifying Jesus rather than glorifying the suffering, glorifying Jesus rather than glorifying self in the midst of the suffering even during the suffering. Because remember the difference between masochism and self crucifixion; remember masochism is the willful seeking of pain because of feeling unworthy of pleasure. But self crucifixion is the willing acceptance of pain that flows out of devotion to a greater pleasure which is the glorification of God specifically done by summing up all things in Jesus.

Next poster. The next category is praise. In the flesh self hungers to receive it, expects to receive it, always thinks that it is receiving less than it truly deserves, and considers anyone who is not flagrantly giving as somehow simply lacking insight into the situation. But in the spirit, one relishes and hungers to give praise to the only truly worthy One and that's Jesus because we're told specifically in the book of Revelation, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ is the only worthy One. And in the spirit we always know that the praise given to the One Who is truly worthy is always less than deserved. So whatever praise comes to humility, humility receives it in the name of Jesus and passes it on to Jesus. That's why our Savior, Jesus, told us in John 5:44

– How can you believe when you seek glory from one another? So the hunger for praise is the revelation that we're functioning with self as the basis in the flesh realm. So hunger for praise is a revelation to the Christian and it's something that I try to look for the log in my own eye as I speak to see how much praise am I hoping to get and why am I hoping to get it from any listener, you see? But when you die to the need for praise from the listener, and your joy is in confessing Him before men, it is independent of how many listen, it's independent of whether they listen at all. Now there's a different measure of joy that comes when someone connects with the truth; there's joy associated with that. But if no one comes, or those who come don't listen, that does not diminish the joy of confessing Him before men if you have died to the need for the praise of man. That is the revelation that you're functioning in the spirit.

The next is the category of thank. Now in the flesh, since self is always believing that it's receiving worse than it truly deserves, then self thanks less often to the point of being thankless. But in the spirit, one always knows that he deserves eternal Hell; but he's only facing temporary circumstances, momentary light affliction as it's called by Paul. Thus in the spirit, one lives in the knowledge that at every moment he is receiving far better than he deserved; thus he's always thankful in all things. Because in the spirit realm, with Jesus is the basis, there's always much to rejoice about; rejoice that your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life; rejoice for what has been provide by the blood shed by Jesus on the cross; rejoice in your relationship with your God; rejoice in your forthcoming eternal destiny. There's always reason in the spirit realm to be rejoicing and to give thanks. That's why Paul could always say rejoice always and in all things give thanks. And if you are, then you're functioning in the spirit realm and if there are broad segments of time when you are not during those segments of time you are functioning in the flesh however spiritual you may think you are.

Next is judge. Now in the flesh self judges all because it views itself as the judge. That's what Adam did, remember? He judged that he was the best judge and when you determine that you're the best judge, you will judge even God! That's the root of all sin is to view oneself as capable of judging God. To listen to what God says and then say no, my ways are higher than Your ways, my thoughts are higher than Your thoughts and I'm perfectly capable of judging this contrary to how you may view reality because I'm the judge of all things and particularly the judge of whatever You say. So it is to position yourself as the judge of God. And we know even in the secular realm that it's always easier to criticize others than it is to improve self. One of my favorite secular quotes is no one yet has ever erected a statue to a critic. Because the people are actually accomplishing things are the ones who get statues made of themselves; but no one who is a professional critic ever has a statue made to themselves. That's a secular point, but has some relevance to us even in the spiritual realm. But in the spirit, one agrees that Jesus is the judge and thus, judges not. Now in the spirit realm when one discerns unrighteousness in another, one carefully looks for the log in his own eye because the likelihood is great that you're looking through a glass dimly through the frailty of your own sinful self and wrongly analyzing some other person as being a bigger sinner than you are. So we're told to always look for the log in our own eye. Once done, then we speak the truth in love and in grace to encourage, edify, and exhort the other without condemnation with a goal of restoration and redemption of the situation, to have that brother let go of whatever sin he has been engaged in his life; and thus, receive the cleansing, come into greater oneness with his creator and Savior, and fulfill the passion that God has to be one with him. So in the spirit realm when one sees sin in another, it is discernment

with a goal of ultimate oneness with God for the brother—never an attempt to pull that brother down to make yourself look better by comparison; because the easiest way to have sin tolerated in your own life is to be good at seeing sin in someone else's life.

The next category is sin and what I mean by this is sin performed by oneself. In the flesh, self tends to discount its own sin. When confronted with its sin in the flesh with self as the basis, self justifies the sin. That is to say, it declares unrighteousness as righteous; or if it agrees that it is unrighteous, it excuses for what is viewed as some valid reason. It accomplishes that through the process we call rationalization. So rationalization is not a surprise, it is the expected and predictable approach when truth is defined as what I say that it is. Because the truth about my own sin is whatever I say that it is. If I say that it's nonexistent, it's nonexistent. If I say that it's excusable, it is excusable; because with self as the basis and truth being what I say it is, all my sin is either wrongly perceived by others or excusable when viewed properly. But in the spirit sin is never excused. In the spirit the revelation of secret sin is relished; because that sin can now be repented of, forgiveness received, purification occur, the knowledge of the grace of God can increase, the joy of the Lord, thus, can increase as I come into greater oneness with my God, your testimony can then be empowered as hypocrisy is eliminated. What's not to like about that sequence of events? So in the spirit, one is delighted to have secret sins revealed. But in the flesh with self as the basis, one always excuses or denies that sin even exists. So our attitude in the spirit is: You're not glad the sin is there; but it is there. And since it's there, you're delighted to know that it's there because knowing that it's there allows you to deal with it in your relationship with your Holy God.

Next is trespass and this is simply a word I've chosen and I'm using it to mean when one feels that one has been trespassed against, that is violated in some fashion by another. In the flesh when self is violated (that is trespassed, sinned against), then self contemplates either revenge or justice, but not grace. It's fulfillment in the flesh comes from seeing the transgressor punished and how much punishment is required? Well it's whatever I say the threshold of enough punishment is in order to have me feel that enough punishment has been given. So one not only considers oneself as the judge of guilt or innocence, one considers oneself in the flesh as the judge of how much punishment and when the endpoint has been reached. But in the spirit, one forgives and there are two reasons for that. One is that we can only worship God in the here and the now; and when you're locked in unforgiveness because you feel that you've been violated, you're living in the past of what was done and living in the future of contemplated future revenge or justice, but never living in the here and the now. That's why Jesus would simply say if you've got something against your brother, leave the altar and go and deal with it and then come back; because if you're at the altar in unforgiveness, you cannot worship me. You're not in the here and the now; you're either in the past or the future. But unforgiveness never allows one to function in the here and the now where the only worship can be given. The second reason for forgiveness is love takes no offense. And you probably remember why we take no offense; because when someone we think has violated us, taken offense at something that we might have done, there are only three possibilities. One is that person is expressing diffuse evil—that is a liar will lie to me; but I can't take personal offense because the person is simply a liar. So I'm not stunned that they would lie to me. That's simply the expression of diffuse evil and there's nothing personal about it so why should I take it personally and take offense?

The next category is, if they are upset because of something they think I've done that is ungodly, then the proper response is to discern before the Lord if it is ungodly and if it is, the response is repentance—not taking offense. And lastly, if someone is upset at something toward me or has violated me in some way because of something they think is ungodly in me, but it's really godly, then what they're doing is taking offense at God, not at me. They're responding to something Christlike in me because Jesus said you'll have tribulation and you'll be persecuted and there'll come a time for those who kill you to think that they're serving God. So there's never a reason for a Christian to take offense because he's always dealing with either diffuse evil or dealing with something godly in yourself in which case it's not for you to take offense; because it has nothing to do with you, it's all about God. Or something in you that is ungodly in which case there's no reason to take offense; you're to repent and be cleansed of it and so on. So the Christian never lives with an attitude of being hung up when he feels trespassed against, sinned against, violated, and so on; because it always falls into one of those categories. That's part of our freedom in Christ. We'll later get to freedom in Christ; but just on the topic as we wind up for today. Can you see the freedom that comes from living in the now with no contemplation of revenge for the future? Without judging the people around you? Operating in love which takes no offense? Think of the time that we would save. Think of how our time would be multiplied if we would simply have Jesus as the basis of all these categories, never wasting one moment thinking about how I really should have gotten more praise than I received and so on. Then our time would be multiplied. Or as Scripture would say, the time would be redeemed for us.

So we have several more categories today, but I can see that my time is up. So we'll pick it up and hopefully, finish with this part next time. So thank you for listening.