

## Your Cross – Part 9

Welcome to Your Cross, Part 9, July 25, 2007. Under Your Cross as a heading, we've done the foundation, the mechanism, the purposes, the choices. Today, I'll finish up with the choices. Next time when we come together I'll begin to approach questions asked by Your Cross which in some way will be a bit of review of some of the concepts we've already covered under the heading of Your Cross. Remember God is, God is love; love requires choice. If you're going to make a choice, you have what we functionally call our will; our will is our chooser, also our worshipper; and there are only two things you can really worship: that is God or something that is ungod. If you choose to worship God, you are choosing to be God determined. When you choose to be God determined, in one way or another, you are choosing life; and for us as Christians, the life is accessed by exercising the choice that the Bible calls life in the spirit. If you use your will to exercise choice to choose ungod, you are choosing to be self determined, not God determined. You, in one way or another, are choosing for something to die and in New Testament Biblical terms, you are choosing life in the flesh.

Last time we began to explore or contrast flesh versus spirit using 24 variables. We covered 13 last time. These included the basis, the truth, input, time, the standard, merit, self image, suffering, praise, thank, judge, sin, and trespass with trespass meaning when someone violates you; when you perceive that someone has sinned against you. We left it last time with the idea that if you're contemplating revenge in the future, living in unforgiveness related to something that happened in the past, then you are in the past in unforgiveness, or in the future contemplating revenge, but not in the here and the now, and therefore, cannot worship God.

So we'll pick it up today with number 14, control. Now the flesh self strives to control others and to control circumstances; thus seeks to control all but self. But in the spirit one seeks to control only self as a manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit called self control. When you're walking in self control, you are giving the glory to God. A self that is out of control will always be calling attention to itself and not to God. So self is out of control when self is seeking to control.

The next is authority. In the flesh, self will claim authority even when it has not been given. But in the spirit, one receives authority. The authority, as is all authority, is received ultimately from God. This God-given authority is never exercised by lording it over other people. It begins and is implemented by walking in godliness with self control and God determination to the point where others recognize it for what it is and under the conviction of the Holy Spirit voluntarily submit to it. So if we are walking and having no one submit to our godliness, it is in one way a revelation that we're walking in the flesh so God-seeking people have no reason to submit to that. It reminds me of that old Chinese proverb, remember, that he who leads and no one follows is simply taking a walk. So in some ways that can give us feedback that if we have no one seeking to submit to where we are functioning in our Christian walk, then probably we are spending more time in the flesh than we are in the Spirit. Now people may seek to be under you because you appear to have your act together. But one way of saying it is, Jesus Christ is not looking for disciples who have their act together, Jesus is looking for disciples who know their act is up. That is to say they are denying self as they follow Him. Now all God-given authority is wonderful; but if asked with the question, what is the greatest authority for me as a Christian?

Is it authority over others? Is it authority over the demonic realm so as to cast out demons in His name? Or is it authority over self, thus meaning authority over the flesh? Then I would say it's authority over the flesh. I would say that because of the command, be ye holy. And that predominantly means having the character of Jesus Christ which, of course, has to include exercising authority over self. After all demons only have access to us through the flesh. If we're walking as He walked, then we would say as Jesus said in John 14:30 – for the ruler of this world is coming and he has nothing in Me (because there's nothing in me that is going to choose to walk by self rather than walk by what God wants me to walk in as His expressed will). Doing it this way is nothing more than what Jesus told us to do. Take the last seat at the banquet and wait to be invited up instead of presuming that you are the one who should be exercising authority over other people.

Next is position. In the flesh, self seeks to be in the position of master. The master, of course, seeks to be in authority to exercise control over others and circumstances. But in the spirit, one is seeking only to serve God and to become like Christ. In Matthew 20:28 Jesus said – I did not come to be served, but to serve. One serves Jesus Christ by serving others as he told us. Matthew 25:40 – Such as you do unto the least of these, you do unto Me. So our highest position is that of servant. We are to be servants because we want to be like Jesus. He was a servant and the servant is not above his master. So if we're to be His disciples, His servants, we cannot seek to be in the position of master.

The next is battle. Now in the flesh self wants to battle others. It sees others as the enemy because others will always be in the way of what self views as its ultimate fulfillment. But in the spirit, the basis is Jesus Christ. So in the spirit, one battles all that is anti-Christ. Ephesians 6:12 – For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, thus, our battle is not against others. In the saint, the battle is against all that is anti-Christ and that begins at foundational ground level in your own thought life. It begins with the part of your mind that is not renewed. We fight the battle beginning with II Corinthians 10:5 – we're taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. So viewed in a global sense, we're battling Satan. But remember we're told to submit to the Lord, resist the devil and he will flee. So we don't start out resisting the devil; we start out by submitting to the Lord; and you submit to the Lord on a grass roots level by capturing every thought to the obedience of Christ and when you do that the devil will flee because he has nothing in you. All he's doing is making you more Christlike by his efforts. So we bear witness only of Jesus. We talk about fellowship with the Holy Spirit; but it's always helpful to remind ourselves what the purpose of the Holy Spirit is. He came to bear witness of Jesus. So when we are bearing witness of Jesus and only Jesus, we're fellowshiping with the Holy Spirit, joining with Him in a common purpose. He came to glorify Jesus. So when we're glorifying Jesus and only Jesus and not self, then we are in communion, fellowshiping, joining in common work with the Holy Spirit.

The next is victory. Now in the flesh self seeks victory. But in the spirit one is really only expressing the victory already won by Jesus Christ. Using death as a finite concrete example, we do not conquer death. We live out of the fact that Jesus conquered death. Since we are in Christ, we are in His victory and our task is simply to express the victory that He has already won. How do we do that? Absence of the fear of death in a Christian is the expression of the victory already won by Jesus Christ. Acts 2:24 – It was impossible for death to hold Him. So since He

overcame death, it was impossible for death to hold Him and since we are in Him, then it will be likewise impossible for death to hold us. That's why we can say, death, where is thy sting? Death has no consequence to the Christian; there's no such thing as death; because as soon as there's physical death, the spirit departs and is now in the company of Jesus Christ Himself—absence from the body, present with the Lord. But we do not overcome death; we are living out of the victory that Jesus has already won over death.

The next is ownership. Now in the flesh self always thinks in terms of personal ownership such as "I don't have time." But in the spirit, one acknowledges the truth of Psalms 24:1 – The Earth is the Lord's and all that it contains including all that dwell therein. So in the spirit one thinks in terms of stewardship, not ownership. We like to focus on how much we give, and some of us draw a concrete line such as 10% while forgetting that we're accountable also for how we use that 90% which we keep; because Scripture tells us, you're not your own. So if even we are not our own, how can our time be our own and how can our possessions be our own when we are not our own?

The next is fear. Now in the flesh, self always fears that which can cause loss. That's because, remember, self lives in the cocoon of carnality, examining every potential eventuality in the terms of its likely influence on my comfort, my convenience, my control and whatever it may cost me. It fears loss of these things; thus it fears anything which can cause such loss. But in the spirit we fear only God. Scripture tells us, fear the Lord. We hold God in absolute and total awe and reverence and then all other fears melt away; because whatever we fear, remember, we're giving glory to and God shares His glory with no one. So fear is faith, it's just faith in the wrong things. We're to walk by faith in Jesus Christ, not by faith in anything else. So when you fear, you are placing faith in that thing which you fear as though it has more ultimate say over your life and your eternal future than does God Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ. One, as a Christian, never fears losing God, thus never fears loss, thus never fears anything.

Next is give. In the flesh self gives to get. The aim is to get one of three things: praise from others for giving, some benefit or advantage, hence the saying, I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine, or self righteousness obtained by having self pronounce self as good, that it gave. But such self righteousness is nothing more than self giving praise to self. But in the spirit, one gives only to give. One gives to bless others, to accomplish the purposes of God and never to get specific praise, advantage, benefit, or ones own righteousness. Whatever we do is unto the Lord and not unto man.

Next is beauty. Now in the flesh, self measures beauty by external appearance. It does that because self walks by sight and not by faith. But in the spirit, one measures beauty based on that which is internal. It does this because we walk by faith and not by sight. To one who is walking by faith, there's nothing more beautiful than faith, and faith is internal. That's why when we look at someone else, we are to diminish analyzing them based on physical appearance and focus on that which has eternal meaning in the spirit realm and nothing has more eternal meaning than faith in Jesus Christ. II Corinthians 5:16 – therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh; and that has several meanings. It means we don't function with them based on their physical appearance. It means we don't function with them by evaluating them

through the eyes of our own flesh. And it means that we are to view them in the spirit as image bearers of God.

Next is pursuit. In the flesh self pursues happiness. The problem is that happiness, remember, is circumstance dependent and time limited. Happiness lasts only as long as the favorable circumstances that produced the happiness remain unchanged. But in the spirit one is seeking joy, the joy of the Lord. And that joy flows out of communion, coming into oneness with your God. Joy is that euphoric, positive emotional condition that is overflowing out of the revelation of the knowledge of the love that God has for you as revealed by Jesus Christ and His cross. In view of Romans 8:35-39 – Nothing can separate us from the love of God. So if your joy is flowing out of the revelation of the love of God and nothing can separate you from the love of God, then the joy of the Lord is circumstance resistant and time prolonged. And when we have fullness of joy which we will only totally experience when we see Him as He is after our death, then we'll be in the fullness of communion, when our joy will then be full and fullness of joy means it's circumstance immune and time eternal. Our joy increases as we know the Word of God. It goes to a deeper level when we understand the Word of God so that the evil one doesn't snatch the seeds away. And it goes even deeper when we obey the Word of God. After all, how can we claim to want to experience the joy of the Lord while resisting the Lord by living in the flesh with self as the basis?

Next is rest. In the flesh, self can never truly rest. It can't rest because it fears loss. If it has no happiness, it fears that it will not obtain happiness. If it has happiness, that happiness is based on favorable circumstances, but the self knows that an adverse change in circumstances can precipitate loss of the happiness; thus, one cannot rest. But in the spirit, one is always at rest because one has entered the rest of God by resting on Who God is, on the finished work of Jesus Christ, and who I am in Jesus Christ for all eternity future. Hebrews 13:8 – Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever. So if Jesus Christ is the basis of the spirit realm and I rest in Him and He never changes, therefore my rest in Him never changes. If I'm not resting, it's the revelation that I'm in the flesh. Even the secular world knows this. Uneasy is the head that wears the crown. Well, in the flesh self is wearing the crown. So self will have an uneasy head that is always dreading what it may lose or not obtain.

So the point of going through these 24 variables is to simply present it in a way that allows us to have concrete ways of assessing whether we are living predominately in the flesh or living predominately in the spirit. I'm going to use a little example that I may have used even months ago, but I'm going to make a point. This is darkness; this is the unsaved condition. You remember Scripture tells us, if what is coming into the eye is darkness, how great is that darkness within? Because there is only one truth and that's Jesus Christ and the unsaved will take untruth and call it truth because truth is what they say it is. So this is the unsaved person living in the kingdom of darkness, serving the prince of darkness, but with no awareness of what truth really is. They don't know that truth is what God is and how God views everything else. But then we begin to get drawn by God; we begin to get a little light and then we reach the point of salvation. We are born again by faith in Jesus Christ. Well what most of us do, is we keep to our faith adding knowledge; we add a little more knowledge, a little more light and so on. And then we stop here. We have enough light to fulfill what Lenin says, that religion is nothing more than the opiate of the masses. We get just enough light to receive an assurance of our eternal salvation

and then we tend to settle in and stop because our anxiety about our human situation and our eternal destiny has been reduced to a tolerable level.

So in some ways we deserve what Lenin defined religion as being, you see. Here's what we need to do though in our thought life using these 24 variables or whatever you may construct on your own to help you come to grips with this and that's the following. We tend to think in terms of things being in close proximity because we're creatures of space and time. So we think of flesh and spirit as being close together because we're thinking of them as being within ourselves. Well, in one sense, they are close together and that's because you're either in one or the other, there's no neutral ground in between. So in that sense, they are close together. You're either serving Jesus Christ or serving Satan at every moment of your thought life; because you're either in the spirit with Jesus is the basis or in the flesh with self as the basis at every moment of your thought life. But in a spiritual sense, these two things are infinitely apart. And here's what we need to do in our thought life to remind ourselves of how far apart they are. They're not apposed; they are as far apart as infinity would allow you to contemplate. As far as the east is from the west are My ways different from your ways. As high as the heavens are above the earth are My ways higher than your ways. So all these thoughts and comparisons about flesh versus spirit, using these 24 variables, are infinitely apart in regard to their spiritual content. So they are in us, so we think that they overlap. They are apposed to each other because you're in either one or the other with no neutral ground. But what we don't really do is pull them apart and see how different they are. There is a vacuum, the nothingness in between, is the vacuum, if you will, these things are so far apart; but at every moment we're functioning in either one or the other. But they are not close together in regard to their spiritual meaning and spiritual content.

Now in the natural world we use stress tests to challenge the heart in order to see how adequate the flow of blood is to the heart. We don't really know what the heart can do and how adequate the blood flow is until it's challenged by exercise. Well likewise in the spirit realm, simply consider Your Cross as the stress test. The stress test will reveal to you and to others if you are functioning in the flesh or functioning in the spirit. These are the only two choices to a saint. The test is not really even the point. The point is, are you living in the flesh or living in the spirit? The test simply reveals you to you. Remember, as the beginning revelation of what I call tribulation/revelation. The pathway to purity and power is to receive that revelation. God likely did not cause your test specifically, but He definitely allowed your test. Why? In order to fulfill His plan and His purposes in you by purifying you; and on planet Earth through you as His ambassador to represent Him. When you receive the revelation of these things, then you can fulfill James 1:2 – And count it as joy even in the midst of your cross. Because every part of the flesh that's being revealed to you can now be repented of, forgiveness received, remember, hypocrisy eliminated, your testimony validated and coming into greater oneness progressively with your God as your mind is renewed into the mind of Christ. Even the world knows this. The secular quote: Circumstances do not make the man; they only reveal him to himself. So you'd think if the secular world knows these kernels of wisdom that Christians would.

After all, God is Spirit; we are spirit. We were saved in the spirit; we're to worship Him in the Spirit and we're indwelled by the Holy Spirit. So is it any wonder that Paul wrote in Galatians 3:3 – having begun by the Spirit, are you now perfected by the flesh? At every moment, you're either in the flesh or in the spirit. How can you know? Well one way is to take these 24

variables and analyze your thought life. Look at your present thinking in light of the variables; then you'll know. Well why is it important? Well ultimately, of course, to give Jesus Christ maximum glory and be the most powerful testimony of Him on planet Earth. Life in the flesh leads only to death. And remember, to the Christian, that means dead works, dead testimony, dead fruits of the Spirit, and dead abundant life. You don't lose your salvation, but you lose the power of your testimony. Our problem, as Christians, is that we want the abundant life while living in the flesh. But the abundant life is never found in the flesh because the abundant life is the fruit of the Spirit and the Spirit will not help you live life in the flesh. He is our helper, but He will only help you live life in the Spirit. He will not help you if you choose to live life in the flesh. So choose life! As it's phrased in Deuteronomy, choose life that you may live. Live the abundant life as a testimony of Christ within you, even in the midst of whatever Your Cross is. But to choose life, you have to choose life in the spirit realm with Jesus as the basis rather than life in the flesh with self as the basis.

II Corinthians 4:4 – Satan is called the god of this world. Well world in a physical sense means planet Earth; but the world in a spiritual sense means all the systems of man that evolve out of and are sustained by the self-centered flesh nature of man. So self determination is the root of self; self is the root of the flesh. People operating in the flesh are the root of the systems of this world and the system of this world is the kingdom of darkness and the ruler of the kingdom of darkness is Satan himself. Flesh in us as saints means at a minimum, our unrenewed minds. So what does Scripture say about this contrast? James 4:4 – You adulteresses. (It's not my word; it's the Word of God.) You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Imagine that! Written to Christians. You adulteresses, you're hostile toward God, at war with God, even as God has blessed you with every spiritual blessing through His Son. So our living in the flesh is friendship with the world while committing spiritual adultery against our bridegroom. John 15:4 – Abide in Me. Well Jesus is in the spirit realm because God is spirit; He's seated at the right hand of the Father in the Heavens. We cannot abide in Him if we are abiding in the flesh and abide we will. We have to constantly dwell somewhere because we can't not be somewhere; so we have to either abide in the spirit with Jesus Christ as the basis or abide in the flesh with self as the basis; but abide we will. The only question is where? We're called to be disciples of Jesus Christ; we're called to make disciples of Jesus Christ. But you can't be a disciple of Jesus Christ while living life in the flesh; because if in the flesh as the Pharisees were, you'll make twice the sons of Hell that you are, just as Jesus told them in Matthew 23:15.

Colossians 3:1-2 – If then you have been raised up with Christ (that's us, we're saints) keep seeking the things above. Where Christ is; that's where He is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things above, not on things which are on Earth. And that means, the way I'm defining things here of flesh versus spirit, to set the mind on the spirit realm with Christ as the basis and not on the physical realm with self as the basis, walking by sight instead of by faith in Jesus Christ. Philippians 3:20 (King James Version) – For our conversation is in Heaven. Same verse in the New American Standard – For our citizenship is in Heaven. So our conversation, our citizenship are to be in the Heavenly places in the spirit realm with Jesus as the basis. How limited is such conversation and the function of such citizenship if we choose to remain with our minds in the flesh with self as the basis. Acts 17:28 (King James Version) – For

in Him (Jesus Christ) we live and move and have our being. But we can't do those things while living in the flesh because Jesus is not found in the flesh. There's nothing good in me, in my flesh. Jesus is good; so if He were in my flesh, Paul wouldn't have written there is nothing good in me that is in my flesh.

Now from a Christian perspective, these three aspects of Acts 17:28 can be thought of in the following way. One is a given, one is a choice, and one flows out of that choice. The given is our being. II Corinthians 5:17 – We are a new creation. Ephesians 4:24 tells us what that new creation is. The new creation has been created in righteousness and true holiness in the image of God. That's our being; that's our identity. That's who we are; and that's how God Himself views us. That's a gimme, our being as saints in Jesus Christ. The choice is related to where we live. We can live out of our being, which is why Ephesians 4:24 says – Put on the new creation which has been created in righteousness and true holiness in the image of God. If it were automatic, we wouldn't be told to put it on. So we have our being; we are the new creation. But we have to choose to live out of that new creation by putting it on, calling it to mind, living in the light of who we are in Jesus Christ. Then our moving will flow out of where we choose to live; because if you choose to live in the flesh with self as the basis, your thoughts and words and deeds, your moving will flow out of that choice to live life in the flesh. But if you choose to live in your being as a new creation indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, then your thoughts and words and deeds will flow out of where you choose to live.

So we'll finish by going back to our core Scripture. Matthew 16:24 – If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me. I hope by exploring the flesh with self as the basis, we can talk about denying self as meaning to deny self as the gravitational center of your universe. It means to deny self as the basis for your interpretation, analysis and decision making. It means to deny life in the flesh as we have examined it by putting it through the prism of these 24 variables. Now follow Me means to live in the spirit realm where He dwells. It means to live life in the Spirit in regard to these 24 variables. This is simply to sum up all things in Jesus. Take up Your Cross means to embrace your present circumstances and whatever tribulation comes as you follow Him as a God given opportunity to reveal you to you. Your present circumstances and your response to your present circumstances will reveal whether you are living life in the flesh or life in the spirit. If in the spirit, fight to remain there. That's called the good fight of faith. It's the good fight because it's the right fight. We are to contend for the faith, to contend to live by faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. So if in the spirit, fight to remain there, because that's where Jesus is. That's where the abundant life is; and by now, we as Christians, should know the truth of Galatians 3:3 – Are you so foolish having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? But if you're living life in the flesh, then turn and choose to live by putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, putting on the new creation, putting on the armor of God, all of which flow out of Jesus Christ, and live life in the spirit. Now Your Cross forces you to choose. Remember, you get to choose; but you don't get to choose not to choose; because if you don't choose, you are choosing life in the flesh; because we are habituated over decades in our lost condition and in our unrenewed minds to automatically do that unless we contend for the faith. Your Cross forces you to choose and reveals your choice to you. So what is your choice? Remember, you get to choose; but you don't get to choose what the choices are. The choices are God ordained. And for us as Christians, it is either life in the flesh or life in the spirit. And the consequence will be either death, dead works, dead testimony,

dead fruits of the Spirit, dead abundant life, or it will be the abundant life, with the fruit of the Spirit in full manifestation, Christlikeness progressively evolving, an earthen vessel bringing more and more of Him and none of self, and so on. So the consequence will be either death or life; but not both. And which one is evolving in your life flows out of your choice of where you live in the spirit or in the flesh.

Well, my time is more than up for today.