Lesson 5 - The Cross of Christ



As sinners, every one of us is under the condemnation and curse of the law (Romans 3:19 and Galatians 3:10). According to God's Word the wages of sin is death, good-bye to life forever (Romans 6:23). In our last study, we saw how Jesus bore this curse of the law for the entire human race on the cross. This is what constitutes the supreme sacrifice. In this study, we are going to consider the cross of Christ as the power of God that saves us from sin.

Legally, no law - God's or man's - will allow an innocent person to die in the place of the guilty one. According to the Bible, the father is not to be punished for the sins of his son, neither is the son to be punished for the sins of his father (see Deuteronomy 24:16 and Ezekiel 18:20). How then could Christ, who committed no sin, legally die for the sins of the guilty world?

This is the great ethical issue that surrounds the cross of Christ. Unless we clearly understand how God solved this problem, we will never be able to fully appreciate the good news of the gospel or experience its total power to save us from our sin problem. That is why this is a most important study.

1. How many have to die because of Adam's one sin? 1 Corinthians 15:22a

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As we saw in Lesson 3, the reason all die because of Adam's one sin is that the human race is the multiplication of Adam's life (Acts 17:26). Therefore, all inherit from him a life that has already sinned and therefore stands condemned to death.

2. When was this condemned life of the world executed and in whom? John 12:31-33

On the cross, the world (human race) was executed in Christ. God could do this because Christ was the second, or last, Adam (mankind). Because all humanity was in the first Adam, by his representative sin he ruined his posterity. Likewise, God united all humanity in Christ so that by His life and death He saved the world. This is the good news of the gospel that we accept by faith.

3. How many were implicated in the death of Christ? 2 Corinthians 5:14b

4. What did God make Christ to be in order to make us righteous? 2 Corinthians 5:21

When Christ was made flesh (John 1:14) and assumed our humanity that needed redeeming, He became the second Adam (mankind). This gave Him the legal right to live and die on man's behalf. It is in this sense Christ was made to be sin for us, that we may be made the righteousness of God in Him. This constitutes the “in Christ” truth that we studied in Lesson 3.

5. Who died when Jesus bore our sins in His body on the tree (cross)? 1 Peter 2:24

Since our sins are the fruits of our sinful nature, Jesus could not bear our sins on the cross without bearing us. As a result of our dying in Christ, God dealt with the very root of our sin problem, our sinful nature. This is the saving power of the cross, which makes holy living possible in the life of the believer.

6. What confession does Paul make about himself regarding the law? Galatians 2:19

Because all have sinned, die we must. Jesus did not come to do away with the death sentence that hangs over our heads but to fulfill it (see Matthew 5:17). That is why the apostle Paul acknowledges that he died to the law in Christ so that he may now live for God.

7. When did the apostle Paul die to the law and why? Galatians 2:20

It is through the cross of Christ that the human race was executed and set free from the sin problem. The cross of Christ is what sets us free from both the guilt and punishment of sin as well as from the power and slavery of sin. Like Paul, we too can by faith experience the power of the cross.

8. How long does the law of God have dominion over us? Romans 7:1

All humanity is born under the law, and because all have sinned, all stand guilty and condemned by the law (see Romans 3:19). Since the wages of sin is death (see Romans 6:23), this condemnation hangs over us as long as we are living. It is only when we die that we are set free from this curse of the law.

9. How did God set us free from under the law? Romans 7:4

God set us free from under the law by our death in the body of Christ. On the cross all humanity died in Christ. When we by faith accept Christ's death as our death, we experience justification unto life and are set free to live holy lives.

10. Having been delivered from under the law how should one live? Romans 7:6

The unbeliever who is still under the law serves God out of fear. This is what it means to serve in the letter. But the believer who has accepted Christ and has been delivered from the law serves God out of love. This is serving in the spirit, since the spirit of the law is love (see Matthew 22:35-40).

11. What truth does Paul declare regarding those who believe in Christ? Colossians 3:3

A Christian is one who has by faith died to the old life of sin and has risen in Christ to serve Him in newness of life. This is the true meaning of baptism, which we will study in Lesson 7.

12. In order for us to live with Christ what must first take place? 2 Timothy 2:11

In this sinful world we begin with life and end with death. In God's kingdom it is the very opposite. We begin by dying to the old condemned life and end with the eternal life of Christ (see Romans 6:8-11). This is what regeneration or conversion is all about.

13. What must take place before we can experience freedom from sin? Romans 6:7

A condemned criminal can only be legally justified or set free for his crime after he has paid the penalty. In the same way, we cannot experience justification unto life in Christ unless we first identify ourselves with His death. The word translated "freed" in your Bible is actually "justified" or "acquitted." Hence, the cross of Christ is the power of God unto salvation (see 1 Corinthians 1:17, 18).

14. From what else does the cross of Christ free us? Romans 8:2

Sin is a dual problem. Besides being the transgression of the law, it is also a principle or a force that resides in our sinful natures. This is what makes us sinners incapable of doing what is right (see Romans 7:14-25). Through the cross of Christ, we are delivered from both these problems. Our death in Christ does not only justify us but it also strikes at the very root of our sin problem.

15. Being made free from sin, what kind of life should a believer live? Romans 6:22

The fact that the cross of Christ has liberated us from the condemnation of the law does not give us the liberty to live as we please. When we accept Christ and Him crucified as our Savior, we are accepting salvation, both from the guilt and punishment of sin, as well as from the power and slavery of sin.

16. What did Jesus say to those who refuse to take up His cross? Matthew 10:38

Since Christ's death on the cross was a corporate death in which all humanity died in Him, to believe or follow Christ is to accept His cross as our cross. This is what makes the cross of Christ the power of God unto salvation.

17. How often must the believer take up his cross to follow Christ? Luke 9:23

Many Christians make the mistake of separating the cross they have to bear from the cross of Christ. This mistake leads to another error - equating the cross with the hardships of life. In Scripture there is only one cross that saves, it is the cross of Christ. When we are baptized into Christ (Lesson 7), the cross of Christ becomes the believer's cross. It symbolizes surrendering the life of the flesh to the cross and walking in the Spirit (see Galatians 5:16, 24).

18. What example did Jesus give from nature to illustrate the cross? John 12:24

19. How did Jesus apply this truth to the believer? John 12:25

The principle of the seed is the principle of the cross. Just like the seed must die in order for it to spring up to life and bear fruit, so also we must die to the old life of sin in order for us to rise in newness of life and bear fruit unto God.

20. What did Paul say about the same principle of the seed? 1 Corinthians 15:36

Christianity is not an improvement or a modification of the old life of sin with which we were born. It is the exchange of our old life that was executed on the cross in Christ, for the eternal life of Christ, which God gave us in His Son (see 1 John 5:11, 12).

21. What attitude must a Christian have towards the flesh (sinful nature)? Galatians 5:24

As Christians we must consider ourselves dead and that our life is hid in Christ (see Colossians 3:3). The German martyr, Dietric Bonhoffer, concluded that this status is the cost of discipleship for "when Christ calls you to follow Him, He calls you to die." Herein lies the significance of baptism, which will be our subject in Lesson 7.

Notes

My Response to Lesson 5

• Do you understand that when Christ died on the cross, the Adamic life you were born with also came to an end in Him? Do you believe that in exchange, God gave you the eternal life of His Son so that you may live forever?

Response: _____

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