

The Mind of Christ

Looking at the Cross

Part Four

INTRODUCTION:

- I. For the past three lessons we have been looking at various ASPECTS of cross of Christ and the SIGNIFICANCE of what happened there.
 - A. As we said from the BEGINNING of these four lessons, the CROSS reveals a SIGNIFICANT amount about the CHARACTER and PURPOSE of Jesus Christ.
 1. It tells us a GREAT DEAL about the MIND OF CHRIST – about WHY He deliberately chose to die on the cross and what He wanted to accomplish in His sacrificial death.
 2. In our LAST lesson, we found that Jesus came as our EXAMPLE.
 - a. He is an example of the same character WE are to copy and reproduce in our OWN lives. According to **1 Peter 2:21-23**, we're to imitate:
 - (1). Jesus' example of UNQUESTIONED OBEDIENCE to God.
 - (2). The Lord's example of TRUTHFULNESS.
 - (3). His example of control of the TONGUE.

(4). The Savior's example in controlling His ACTIONS toward others.

(5). And, the Lord's example of complete TRUST in God's righteous judgments.

3. We also discovered that everything we LOST IN ADAM, we REGAINED through the sacrifice of JESUS CHRIST on the cross.
- a. While we don't inherit the SIN of Adam, we certainly suffer the CONSEQUENCES of his sin.
 - b. Adam introduced sin into the world. Therefore, the fellowship we LOST when WE sinned just like ADAM sinned, we've REGAINED once and for all through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
 - b. And, because of Adam's sin, he was denied right to the TREE OF LIFE in the midst of the Garden of Eden – and eventually DIED.
 - (1). Because we are Adam's offspring, we ALSO suffer the consequences of PHYSICAL death.
 - (2). But, through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we now have the ASSURANCE of a RESURRECTION from the dead, and a home FOREVER in heaven.

4. And finally, we learned that the death of Jesus on the cross made it possible for us to be RANSOMED and REDEEMED, because we were BOUGHT with a price.
 - a. And the PRICE Jesus paid to ransom and redeem us was His own BLOOD – the blood He shed on the cross of Calvary.
- B. But there's MORE we need to understand about the cross of Christ, and what actually happened there.
 1. And so, let's return one last time to the hill of Calvary and focus our attention on the Savior as He's dying on a Roman cross – all of which He did for YOU and for ME.

BODY:

- I. Perhaps the MOST important thing we need to understand about the cross of Christ, is the fact that ON the cross, Jesus Christ became our SACRIFICE.
 - A. There are TWO KEY New Testament passages that speak of this INDESCRIBABLE act of love and mercy.
 1. **Ephesians 5:1-2** – *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*
 2. **Hebrews 9:26-28** – Speaking about what Jesus Christ did in coming into the world, the Hebrew writer said, *now, once at the end*

of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.

- B. But what does the word SACRIFICE actually mean, and what role does it play in CLEANSING us of our sins?
1. Perhaps the most simple way to DEFINE sacrifice is to say it's a GIFT, or an OFFERING to God.
 2. The whole PURPOSE of a sacrifice can be described by the word RECONCILE – a word that means to CHANGE THOROUGHLY from ONE POSITION to ANOTHER.
 3. So, when we put these two thoughts together, a SACRIFICE is a GIFT, or an OFFERING to God for the PURPOSE of RECONCILING US to GOD – of CHANGING our RELATIONSHIP with God FROM one in which we were SEPARATED from God, to one in which we NOW have COMPLETE FELLOWSHIP.
 - a. In other words, the SACRIFICE makes RECONCILIATION POSSIBLE – because WITHOUT the sacrifice, there would be NO RECONCILIATION – NO COMPLETE FELLOWSHIP with God.
- C. To completely understand this concept of SACRIFICE and RECONCILIATION, we need to understand the significance of sacrifices under the Old Testament Law of Moses.

1. When God freed the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage in the days of Moses, and He brought them into the wilderness at the foot of Mount Sinai, God made a COVENANT with the children of Israel.
2. This COVENANT can be thought of as SIMILAR to a CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT. The terms of THIS particular contractual agreement were very simple.
 - a. God promised to be THEIR God, and THEY would be HIS people.
 - b. He would to BLESS them and PROTECT them, and lead them into a LAND OF PROMISE where they would subdue their enemies, take the land as their own, and grow into a GREAT NATION.
 - c. In EXCHANGE for doing all this, God required only ONE THING of the children of Israel – FAITHFULNESS – He required them to be FAITHFUL to the LAW that He gave to Moses, and KEEP all those ordinances out of a deep reverential RESPECT for Him.
3. **Exodus 24:3-8** – *So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has said we will do." And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he*

rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient." And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words."

- a. UNFORTUNATELY, the people of Israel DIDN'T keep their end of the agreement as they said they would.
- b. No matter how BADLY the people may have WANTED to keep the Law perfectly, they still SINNED – they broke one or more of the commandments that comprised the COVENANT or the CONTRACT between God and the children of Israel.
- c. If the matter were simply left THERE, it would mean that the RELATIONSHIP between GOD and the people of ISRAEL would have been IRREVERSABLY SEVERED – there could NEVER be fellowship between God and the Israelites again.

4. But, in an act of GRACE and MERCY, God instituted a whole system of SACRIFICES designed to RESTORE that broken relationship and REESTABLISH that fellowship between man and God.
5. These SACRIFICES would serve as a GIFT or an OFFERING to God to RECONCILE the children of Israel BACK to God – to change their position from one in which they were OUT of fellowship with God, to a position in which they were once again IN fellowship with God.
6. But the SACRIFICE God demanded for RECONCILIATION required the shedding of blood – it required taking an ANIMAL'S LIFE and the shedding ITS blood. And, there's a very important REASON for this:
 - a. God wanted the person offering the sacrifice to understand that the JUST punishment for SIN is DEATH.
 - (1). Those who sin against God, RIGHTLY and JUSTLY deserve to be put to DEATH for their disobedience.
 - (2). God had every right to STRIKE THEM DEAD ON THE SPOT!
 - b. But, in an act of GRACE and MERCY, God allowed the children of Israel to take the life of an animal IN EXCHANGE for their OWN life.

- (1). In OTHER words, every time a man looked down at his sacrifice and watched the life-giving blood draining away, he needed to see HIMSELF – he needed to understand that the SACRIFICE took HIS place – the place of the SINNER who JUSTLY deserved to die.
- (2). And so, when the Jews offered their sacrifices EVERY YEAR, year after year on the Day of Atonement, they were reminded of the SERIOUSNESS of their OWN sins.
- (3). **Hebrews 10:3** – The Hebrew writer says, *But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.*
- (4). It wasn't GOD Who remembered their sins every year, it was the ones MAKING the sacrifice.
- (5). Every year when they killed their sacrifice, THEY were reminded that the punishment for sin is DEATH, and the PRICE of being RANSOMED or REDEEMED from that punishment is the shedding of the LIFE-SUSTAINING BLOOD of that SACRIFICE.

7. But, there was a PROBLEM with those sacrifices.
 - a. The blood of a sacrificial ANIMAL could NOT make the worshipper PERFECT, or WHOLE in the eyes of God.

- b. While the sacrificial animal served as a REMINDER to the SINNER of the SERIOUSNESS of sin, and the high cost ASSOCIATED with sin, it SIMPLY WASN'T ENOUGH.
 - c. To achieve PERMANENT and COMPLETE forgiveness of sins, God would require a GREATER sacrifice than that of a mere animal.
- D. And THIS is where JESUS enters the scene. HE came to be that sacrifice that would take away the sins of mankind ONCE AND FOR ALL.
- 1. AND He would accomplish this with His OWN blood – Jesus would offer HIMSELF as a sacrifice, thereby providing ETERNAL redemption for all mankind.
 - 2. Therefore, God the Son willingly left heaven, was born as an infant, grew up to be a man, lived and died as a man on the cross of Calvary to become the ONLY sacrifice that was GREAT enough to appease God.
 - 3. This is why Jesus is portrayed in the book of Hebrews as OUR High Priest.
 - a. **Hebrews 9:11-15** – *But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood*

He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

- b. Jesus offered HIMSELF as the SACRIFICE – the GIFT, the OFFERING to God – that would APPEASE God, and RECONCILE man to God – reconciling both those under the FIRST COVENANT, as well as those of US under the NEW COVENANT.
- II. Closely related to the concept of Jesus being our SACRIFICE is the fact that on the cross, Jesus became the PROPITIATION (pro-PISH-e-a-shun) for our sins.
- A. There are four New Testament passages that speak of Jesus coming to make PROPITIATION for our sins – THREE of which I want to look at now.

1. **Hebrews 2:17** – Speaking of Jesus, the Hebrew writer says,
Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make PROPITIATION for the sins of the people.
 2. **1 John 2:1-2** – *My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the PROPITIATION for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*
 3. **1 John 4:9-10** – *In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the PROPITIATION for our sins.*
- B. So, what does this word PROPITIATION mean, and how is it that Jesus became the PROPITIATION for OUR sins – and not only OURS, but also the PROPITIATION for the sins of the whole WORLD?
1. The most simple way to define PROPITIATION is with the words APPEASEMENT or SATISFACTION.
 - a. In other words, Jesus offered HIMSELF on the cross to APPEASE GOD – to SATISFY God’s anger, and to keep God

from pouring out His WRATH on us all for our sinful disobedience.

2. Think of it this way. When we SIN, we OFFEND GOD'S HONOR – we DISHONOR His GLORY and His HOLINESS. We BELITTLE and INJURE God's GRACE and MERCY.
 - a. Since we're the CREATION OF GOD, we OWE God honor and glory. We OWE Him total and complete REVERENCE and RESPECT.
 - b. But when we SIN, we OFFEND and DISHONOR GOD. We DENY Him the REVERENCE and RESPECT He deserves by the mere fact that He IS God!
 - c. Therefore, God would be COMPLETELY JUSTIFIED in STRIKING US DEAD ON THE SPOT because we have OFFENDED, BELITTLED, and DISHONORED GOD.
 - d. AND, there were times in both the Old AND the New Testament when a sin was so BLATANT, and so GRIEVOUS that God DID strike the sinner dead on the spot – remember Nadab and Abihu in the Old Testament, and Ananias and Sapphira in the New?
3. But even though we DESERVE to die, God has WITHHELD His wrath.

- a. WHY? Because, Jesus APPEASED the wrath of God by dying for US.
 - b. Thereby, Jesus became our SATISFACTION.
- C. In the days when dueling was popular – when men would solve insults and disputes by dueling to the death with swords or pistols – the concept of SATISFACTION or PROPITIATION was understood a little better.
1. When someone did or said something to offend the honor of another, the OFFENDED party would demand that his honor be SATISFIED or APPEASED through a duel, in which he would attempt to kill the person who OFFENDED his honor.
 - a. If he WON the duel and KILLED the man who offended his honor, he would feel SATISFIED or APPEASED.
 - b. And, if the OFFENDING party killed the man whose honor he had defamed, some OTHER member of the family would step forward to demand SATISFACTION for the honor of the slain man.
 - c. The offense could NEVER be APPEASED or SATISFIED until the OFFENDING party was dead.
 2. Think of the role Jesus played this way.
 - a. When we sinned, we OFFENDED the honor and glory of God.

- b. Therefore, the ONLY way God's honor could be APPEASED or SATISFIED, would be for Him to kill US.
 - c. But, out of His LOVE FOR US, God sent Jesus to offer HIS life in EXCHANGE for OURS. God sent Jesus to DIE IN OUR PLACE.
 - d. And in doing so, Jesus became the PROPITIATION – the SATISFACTION, the APPEASEMENT – for our sins, and not only OURS, but for the WHOLE WORLD.
- D. Now, listen to the passage from 1st John chapter 4 once more, and they we want to consider one last passage Romans chapter 3.
1. **1 John 4:9-10** – *In this the LOVE of God was manifested toward US, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that WE might LIVE through Him. In this is love, not that WE loved God, but that He loved US and sent His Son to be the PROPITIATION for our sins.*
 2. **Romans 3:22-26** – *For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a PROPITIATION by HIS BLOOD, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His FOREBEARANCE God had passed OVER the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His RIGHTEOUSNESS, that He*

might be JUST and the JUSTIFIER of the one who has faith in Jesus.

3. When a CRIMINAL escapes the punishment he rightly DESERVES, and someone who is CLEARLY GUILTY is somehow ACQUITTED of all wrongdoing, we cry out that JUSTICE has NOT been served.
 - a. There is no JUSTICE in freeing a guilty man – there is no JUSTICE in allowing the guilty to go UNPUNISHED.
 - b. JUSTICE DEMANDS PUNISHMENT.
4. There was simply NO WAY God could be JUST in simply forgiving us of our sins and acquitting of our wrongdoing – that's not JUSTICE!
5. But out of His LOVE for us – as an act of God's GRACE and MERCY toward us – He sent JESUS to fulfill the demands of justice, and die in OUR place.
6. That, says Paul, is why God is, "*JUST and the JUSTIFIER of the one who has faith in Jesus.*" **(Romans 3:26)**
 - a. Jesus PAID THE PRICE, He SUFFERED THE PUNISHMENT, He SATISFIED THE DEMANDS OF JUSTICE. And He did it all for YOU and for ME.
 - b. And BECAUSE He satisfied the demands of justice for us, God is now JUST – He is now FAIR – in JUSTIFYING US

when we RESPOND to God's love by having an obedient FAITH in Jesus.

7. The blood of an ANIMAL sacrifice could NEVER completely and permanently appease and satisfy the wrath of God, but the blood of Jesus COULD!

CONCLUSION:

- I. How does it make you feel to know that Jesus died in YOUR place?
 - A. Your sins condemned you to DEATH because your sins offended the HONOR and HOLINESS of your CREATOR.
 1. But Jesus DIED so that YOU could LIVE. He satisfied the demands of justice for YOU, and suffered the PUNISHMENT YOU deserved.
 2. So, how do you feel when you look at Jesus hanging on the cross, and realize that's where YOU should be? YOU should be the one dying with NO HOPE of EVER being reconciled to God again as the result of your sins.
 3. Now do you better understand what John meant when he wrote, *In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. (1 John 4:9)*

- B. If THIS GREAT SACRIFICE doesn't somehow MOVE you, then I'm not sure anything will.
1. If you can look at the cross of Calvary and not be MOVED by the Savior DYING IN YOUR PLACE, then there's simply NOTHING ELSE God can do to demonstrate His love for you.
 2. We often think of the cross of Christ as a portrait of SUFFERING for SIN. But perhaps a BETTER way of thinking of the cross would be to see it as the GREATEST DEMONSTRATION of GOD'S LOVE!
 3. GOD loved you enough to SEND Jesus, and JESUS loved you enough to DIE for you.
 4. THAT'S why John wrote that all-familiar passage in John 3:16-17: For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.
 5. The cross of Christ is a portrait of God's LOVE.
- C. Now it's time for YOU to show God how much you love HIM, and to show Jesus how much His death on the cross has moved YOU.
1. The ONLY way you can demonstrated your love and reverence for God is to come to HIM through Jesus Christ.

- a. Come to Him by believing in Jesus with a heart softened by godly sorrow – a godly sorrow that has moved you to repent of your past sins – and then let the blood of Jesus Christ cleanse YOU by being baptized into Christ for the remission of all those past sins.
- b. And if you are someone who has done all that, but you've turned back to the world, then you ALSO need to come to God with a heart softened by godly sorrow – a godly sorrow that has moved you to repent of your past sins, and confess those sins to God – and the blood of Jesus Christ will ONCE AGAIN cleanse you from ALL SIN.