

## The Principle of The Cross

As long as the believer walks with and worships God solely for what he (the believer) receives through the cross, he lives in shallowness and immaturity—which was the case with me. I initially submitted to Christ for the benefits I received, never considering what the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit might have received (and continue to receive) through Christ's selfless submission to the cross. After all, I was delivered from hell (John 3:16), God would supply all my needs (Philippians 4:19), He would work all things for my good (Romans 8:28), I would reign with Christ (Revelation 20:4), and on and on. In other words, my gospel was a man-centered gospel. I submitted to Christ for what "I" received through the cross. But eventually, as I matured in the faith, I began comprehending what God the Father received through Jesus' sacrifice, what the Son received through the same, and what the Person of the Spirit received as well. This new insight allowed me to begin, and I emphasize "begin," to comprehend how the three Persons of the Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—relate to one another. In essence, the heart of the Triune God, as well as His ultimate plan for man, was revealed in such a new and exciting way that every aspect of my Christian experience was totally revolutionized.

Have you ever wondered why God the Father would subject Himself to the pain of having His Son die on a cross? When I think of having my son Benjamin put to death for any reason, especially by way of crucifixion, I realize my agony would greatly surpass his. The Father's pain must have been excruciating! But consider that the Father suffered this heartache for the sake of the Son, so the Son might receive a body (the body of Christ, the church—which began in Acts 2) through which to express Himself to the universe (Ephesians 5:23, 29-30; Romans 12:4-5; 1Corinthians 10:17; 1Corinthians 12:12-27). The Father suffered also that the Holy Spirit might receive a temple in which to dwell (Ephesians 2:19-22). The Father submitted Himself to such agony solely for the benefit of the other two Persons of the Trinity, the Son and the Spirit. Also consider that the Son went to Calvary, not for what He would receive through the cross, but for what the Father and Spirit would receive. Jesus' statements in John 7:18, John 8:50, 54, and John 14:13 confirm that Jesus never sought His own glory, but desired that through His obedience the Father might be glorified. Through the cross, the Father received a family (John 1:12) that increases numerically as individuals submit to Christ—and, again, the Spirit received a temple that enlarges as believers accept Jesus during the church age (Ephesians 2:19-22). But what is the Spirit's mindset? The Spirit glorifies the Son by revealing what Christ accomplished through the cross and His subsequent resurrection (John 15:26; 16:13-15). Hence, the Spirit's choices are never for the betterment of Himself, but for the benefit of the Son. If anyone knows the Son, he knows the Father also (John 14:9). Therefore, as the Spirit glorifies the Son, He glorifies the Father also. Thus the Spirit's actions are for the benefit of the other two Persons of the Trinity—as was the case with the Father and Son. No selfishness is involved in these relationships!

We, in our lives today, are to love the Father not just for what we receive from the relationship, but to bring joy to Him through being His offspring (John 1:12). After all, we "*exist for Him*" (1Corinthians 8:6). The same principle applies with the Son. We are privileged to be brothers with Christ, not just for what we gain through the relationship, but because we, as His body (Ephesians 5:23, 29-30), can serve as a vehicle through which He expresses Himself to the world. As for our relationship with the Spirit, we are being fitted together into a temple, a temple that serves as a "*dwelling of God in the Spirit*" (Ephesians 2:20-22). Because each member of the Triune Godhead lives for the Others' good, the individual members of the body of Christ, having "*the mind of Christ*" (1Corinthians 2:16), should display selfless living in all relationships, including those with the Godhead.

The Father will sum up “*all things*” in the Son (Ephesians 1:10). The Son, in the process, dedicates Himself to the Father so as to reveal (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22), glorify (John 7:18; 17:1; 21:19), and please (obey—John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38) the Father. After all things are subjected to the Son through the Father, the Son will reign over the entire universe. Once seated in this prominent position of power, the Son will turn everything over to the Father (1Corinthians 15:28). Why? The Son is in relationship with the Father for what the Father receives, never for what He (the Son) receives—and vice versa. Even the Spirit does not glorify Himself, but the Son (John 16:13-14)—meaning that the Person of the Spirit lives with the same selfless mindset as the Father and the Son. God would have us operate from this same perspective, placing the interests of the Godhead and others above our own. Paul functioned in this manner, for he states:

*For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. (2Corinthians 5:13)*

Paul served without regard to self, always placing God’s interests and the interests of others first—the attitude of all who have progressed from self-centeredness to God-centeredness.

The principle of the cross (selfless love), which has eternally existed in each member of the Trinity, was displayed in time by the Son and explained by the Spirit (John 16:13-14). Thus the principle of the cross, which demonstrates selfless love, must control our decisions if we are to embrace God’s way of living. Only when man fails to apply this principle is a cross needed in time—Christ’s cross at Calvary. Had Adam and Eve laid aside their own desires (lived by the principle of the cross), they would have lived by the tree of life (by God’s very life) and matured into individuals who consistently put God’s interests above their own. (An excellent book that addresses this topic is *The Ultimate Intention* by DeVerne Fromke—Sure Foundation.)

Paul said it well:

*For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (2Corinthians 4:11)*

Paul lived by the principle of the cross (by viewing adversity as an opportunity to bring glory to God), which meant that the cross as a principle was continually manifested through his life as he suffered for the cause of the gospel. He experienced great joy in the midst of his trials by realizing that difficult circumstances, coupled with God’s incredible grace, served to remind others that as Christ died, He was also raised. The hearts of the redeemed were empowered by Paul’s lifestyle, for he states, “*So death works in us, but life in you*” (2Corinthians 4:12).

As we begin to understand God’s heart and live as He lives, “self” is taken out of the equation. Only then can we enter into meaningful, fulfilling, and lasting relationships that benefit others. The transformation in our families, churches, workplaces, schools, in fact, in every facet of our lives, would be beyond belief should this type of love be the norm?

We must begin to perceive the cross from a selfless point of reference if we are to properly understand the heart of God and His ultimate plan. Therefore, as we speak with others concerning Christ, we must present a God-centered gospel—never one so shallow as to be man-centered.

*(The Principle of The Cross was taken from Bob Warren’s Ephesians Commentary, ©2014 The Hill Publishing, LLC.)*