SESSION 7:
Why the Cross?
PART 2
Last Week Review:

✓ Sin Defined: Sin is a failure to ___________ and __________ God faithfully.
✓ Sin Impacts 4 Core Relationships:
  • My relationship with God.
  • My relationship with others.
  • My relationship with Creation.
  • My relationship with myself.

Question: How is the Cross Jesus provided God's solution to the human problem?

I. Sin leads to death – both ___________ and ___________ death (Genesis 2:15-17)

15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. 16 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Also see Matthew 10:28)

II. God is holy – totally ___________ and ___________ (Revelation 4:8)

“8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, “HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME.” (Also see Isaiah 43:15, Isaiah 40:25, Psalm 51:4)

Sin cannot exist in the presence of God.

Conclusion Thus Far:

• All Humans are infected with Sin
• God in Heaven made humans to love and glorify Him
• God is righteous and demands everything in His presence to be righteous
• God demands justice for the wrongs committed against Him

III. God requires a ___________ for sin (Leviticus 17:11)

11 For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life. (See also Deuteronomy 17:1)

IV. God was pointing forward to the Ultimate Sacrifice for sin – the ___________ death of ___________ (Hebrews 10:10-14)

“We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, 13 waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. 14 For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

V. The Results of the Cross

• Our relationship with ___________ is restored (John 1:12)
• We receive the gift of the ___________ (John 16:13, John 14:26, Romans 8:26, 1 Corinthians 12)
• We receive a new ___________ and God-loving ___________ (Ezekiel 36:25-27)
• We receive ___________ (Romans 6:5)

The Cross is God’s solution to our human problem of sin.
Welcome to Part 2 of our discussion of the question, Why the Cross? In our last session, we said that the Cross was God's solution to our ultimate human problem, and we defined this problem as sin. Human sin has destroyed both our relationship with God and our relationships with one another. And, since sin has infiltrated our nature and our world so pervasively, we remain powerless to restore these relationships on our own. We are therefore destined for both physical and spiritual death.

Sin, then, is our most critical and universal human problem, but, thankfully, God has addressed this problem in the Cross of Jesus.

1. A Restored Relationship with God

Sacrifice in the Old Testament

• Sacrifice as ‘Atonement’
When John the Baptist sees Jesus approaching, he cries out:

“Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world”. (John 1:29)

These words are carefully chosen, because they summarize a rich universe of ideas concerning the way that a sinful people can approach a holy God. While sin always demands death, God demonstrated, early in the history of His people, His willingness to accept animal sacrifices as a substitute for human judgment. In the Law of Moses, for example, we read that:

“[W]hen anyone becomes aware that they are guilty in any of these matters, they must confess in what way they have sinned. As a penalty for the sin they have committed, they must bring to the LORD a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for them for their sin.” (Leviticus 5:5-6)

The idea here is that God will accept the death of the animal as a substitute for the death that the sinner deserves. The term, “atonement”, therefore, means that justice has been served and a relationship with God is re-established. God allows this animal substitute to serve as the atonement for His people's sin.
Animals chosen for this purpose were to be pure and unblemished. Again, the Law of Moses is explicit in this regard. It says, for example:

“If the offering is a burnt offering from the flock, from either the sheep or the goats, you are to offer a male without defect.” (Leviticus 1:10)

If God is to accept a substitute for someone's sin, the substitute itself must be without fault.

- **Sacrifice as a Sign**

  Over time, it became clear that God was using these animal sacrifices to prepare us for a greater sacrifice. As signs and symbols of something greater, therefore, they have no real value in and of themselves. They cannot, by themselves, “magically” fix our sin problem. Consider, for example, this warning from the prophet Isaiah:

  “’The multitude of your sacrifices—what are they to me?’ says the LORD. ‘I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats.’” (Isaiah 1:11)

  In other words, the effectiveness of these ancient sacrifices depended entirely of the meaning that God attached to them.

### Sacrifice in the New Testament

- **Repeated Sacrifices**

  Eventually, then, the New Testament clarifies God's intention for these sacrifices. They pointed forward to the sacrifice that Jesus Himself would make, which is why John calls Him the "Lamb of God". The writer to the Hebrews discusses this truth in some detail. He says:

  “The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. Otherwise, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins. But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” (Hebrews 10:1-4)

- **A Single Sacrifice**

  In contrast to these repeated sacrifices, Jesus died once, and His sacrifice is effective for all time. By God's will:

  “...[W]e have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Hebrews 10:10)

  As the writer further explains:

  “Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest [that is, Christ] had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.” (Hebrews 10:11-14)

This teaching summarizes the whole point of the Old Testament sacrifices. They point us forward to the sacrifice of Jesus that atones for our sin. His death becomes a sacrifice in place of our eternal, spiritual death. He gives His life in exchange for our life.

### A Divine Exchange

- **His Death for Our Death; His Life for Our Life**

  This divine exchange of Christ's death for our death, and His life for our life, is possible because of the righteous life that Jesus lives. Remember those perfect, unblemished sacrifices that the Law of Moses required? These too pointed forward to Jesus as the perfect Lamb of God. When Jesus dies, He dies not for His own sin, but for our sin. As the Apostle Peter puts it:

  “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.” (1 Peter 3:18)
And the Apostle Paul likewise says:

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”
(2 Corinthians 5:21)

**His Righteousness for Our Forgiveness**
Because of the cross, we now stand before God as forgiven and restored people. Our sin no longer separates us from God. As Paul elsewhere makes clear:

“He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:13-14)

With this barrier of sin removed, we are no longer enemies of God but are now welcomed into His Holy Presence. Paul uses a term that is translated as, “justified,” to indicate that we have been restored and cleared of guilt before God. He says:

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.” (Romans 5:1-2)

Our new peace with God grants us access into His holy presence to speak with Him as our loving Heavenly Father. We have this access through grace, which means that it is God's free gift. We have not earned this access based on any of our own actions. Our only role is to believe in God's promise and to trust His love. This belief and this trust is summed up in the term, “faith.”

2. A Restored Human Nature

1. No Longer Slaves

In our last session, we learned that, because sin has broken our relationship with God, it has also created a critical problem within our own nature. We are enslaved by our own sinful thoughts and passions, and we are powerless to correct this problem on our own. The cross of Jesus is the solution to this fundamental brokenness. The Apostle Peter says:

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed’. For ‘you were like sheep going astray,’ but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” (1 Peter 2:24-25; compare Isaiah 53:4-6)

And Paul likewise says:

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin.” (Romans 6:6-7)

2. A New Spirit

The cross has now given us a whole new reason to live. Our new relationship with God, based on His forgiveness and His grace, allows us to live, not as slaves to our sinful passions, but as new creatures, filled with God's Spirit, as God's children. As Paul also says:

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:1-4)

And he adds:

“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The
In other words, as children of God, we are the beneficiaries of His loving and transforming work. Through the Holy Spirit, God is recreating us in the righteous image of Jesus, who is Himself the true Son of God.

A New Destiny

This righteous image of Jesus is in fact a picture of our future. Our destiny is to be like Him! As Paul says:

“For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.” (Romans 8:29)

Imagine that! Us looking like Jesus, His brother or sister. God certainly has a lot to do between now and then, doesn't he? But God will do it, and we are promised this victory for all eternity. As death, could not hold Jesus, so it cannot hold us. The liberating work of the cross is fulfilled in resurrection. Paul states this clearly when he says:

“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22)

And elsewhere he declares:

“For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his.” (Romans 6:5)

In our resurrected bodies, we are destined to live with God eternally. As Paul triumphantly proclaims:

“When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory.’ ‘Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?’” (1 Corinthians 15:54-55; compare Isaiah 25:8; Hosea 13:14)

3. Restored Human Relationships

Having said all of this, however, there is yet one more healing aspect of the cross that we need to mention. In our last session, we learned that sin has resulted in broken human relationships. Here too the cross provides a solution. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul makes the following point regarding Jesus and this cross:

“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:14-18)

Paul is here talking about the great religious divide between Jew and Gentile. He is saying that the cross is the great equalizer between them. Neither group can access a holy God without the sacrifice of Jesus. All enter the family of God in the same way. We are all sinners saved by grace, and so none of us can judge another.

Based on our common dependence upon this sacrifice of Jesus, we can learn to forgive and accept one another, even with all of our faults and failures. As Paul urges these followers of Jesus to:

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:32)

Conclusion

This then is what the Bible generally has to say about the cross of Jesus. So, if someone were to ask you, “Why the Cross?”, you can now confidently reply that the Cross is God's solution to our human problem. Thank you, and may God reward you and bless you as you continue your spiritual journey.
Discussion Questions

After completing Session 7, Why the Cross?, Part 2, you can use the following questions to encourage discussion within your group.

Why the Cross?

The Cross is God’s solution to our human problem of sin.

Opening

In our previous session, we learned that human sin has destroyed both our relationship with God and our relationship with one another. How have you seen the pervasiveness of sin infiltrate both your world and your own self?

Going Deeper

1. A Restored Relationship with God

✓ The Old Testament teaches us that God is willing to receive sacrifices as a substitute for human judgment. Though God has the right to require such a payment, what gives Him this right? What do you think of the idea that God requires such a sacrifice to atone, compensate for, your sins?
✓ Like the sacrifices in the Old Testament, Jesus’ death becomes a sacrifice in place of our eternal, spiritual death. What makes His sacrifice able to solve the human problem of our sin?
✓ Salvation is a free gift of God’s grace (unmerited favor). What must one do to receive this wonderful gift?
✓ If through Jesus’ death one is “justified,” restored and cleared of guilt before God, what then (if anything) stands between God and a believer?

2. A Restored Human Nature

✓ If you are a follower of Christ, in what ways do you see the Holy Spirit changing you into the righteous image of Jesus?
✓ Describe the hope that you find in the promise that in our resurrected bodies, we are destined to live with God eternally?

3. Restored Human Relationships

✓ How can Jesus’ actions towards us stand as the example by which we can build our relationship with others?
✓ How has your relationship with Jesus helped to restore relationships in your life?

Next Steps

Spend time this week in prayer, thanking God for the new life that you have received through the cross. List the ways in which His saving power has changed you and your relationships with others. After thanking Him for these changes, ask Him to clarify areas in your life in which this power can be more fully realized. What action steps will you take to see these areas change?
Why the Cross? Review Quiz

After you complete Session 6, Why the Cross? Part 1, and Session 7, Why the Cross? Part 2, you can take this Quiz to review what you have learned. You can take the quiz as many times as you desire. This is one of the Quizzes required in order to earn a Bethany Essentials Certificate.

1. In this course, we have described the essential nature of sin as:
   A. Bad choices that we occasionally make
   B. Our failure to love and obey God faithfully
   C. Incorrect ideas about God
   D. A moral force in our world

2. How extensively has sin affected all human beings?
   A. Adam and Eve sinned, but their sin has no connection to our sin
   B. Sin affects most people, but some people are able to avoid it
   C. Most of us can overcome the effects of sin if we sincerely apply ourselves
   D. Every human being has sinned

3. What do the Scriptures teach us about death?
   A. Death is only physical
   B. Death is only spiritual
   C. Death is both physical and spiritual
   D. The Bible is not really clear regarding this issue

4. What do the Scriptures teach us about hell?
   A. Hell does not really exist at all
   B. Hell is a temporary place where the truly wicked repent of their sins
   C. Hell is a symbolic way of saying that sin has bad consequences
   D. Hell is called the “second death” where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth”

5. Old Testament animal sacrifices symbolized “Atonement”, which means that:
   A. Ritual has made someone clean
   B. Justice has been served and a relationship with God is re-established
   C. A person now can be a part of Israel
   D. A person’s character is now spiritually transformed

6. Which of the following statements best describes the purpose of the Old Testament sacrifices?
   A. They point us forward as signs of the sacrifice of Jesus
   B. They were sacred acts that ritually made one clean
   C. They kept the people focused on one true God
   D. None of the above

7. The cross of Jesus is correctly understood as:
   A. An atonement for our sin
   B. A substitute for our death
   C. A perfect sacrifice that can never be repeated
   D. All of the above

8. According to the Apostle Paul, what does the cross do for our “body ruled by sin” (Romans 6:6)?
   A. It is “critically wounded”
   B. It is “now perfected”
   C. It “might be done away with”
   D. It “will get better from now on”

9. Because of the cross, we now have a new destiny, which means that:
   A. We will never taste physical death
   B. We will now live a healthy, prosperous life
   C. We now have a much better chance of going to heaven
   D. We will “be conformed to the image of his Son”

10. What effect does the cross have upon our broken relationships with others?
    A. It makes it possible for us to be reunited, because we are all united in the same Christ
    B. It restores us as individuals, but it really has no effect on our relationships
    C. It allows us to judge people more accurately
    D. None of the above